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# *Quærens*

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*Journal of Theology and Pastoral Life*

*AMOR  
DIFFUSIVUS I:*

**Augustinian Recollect Icons  
and Other Studies**

**In Commemoration of the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
of the Foundation of San Nicolás de Tolentino Province  
(1621-2021) of the Order of Augustinian Recollects**

**EMMANUEL LUIS A. ROMANILLOS**

*Quaerens* is published twice a year, in June and December, by Recoletos School of Theology, Inc. of the Province of St. Ezekiel Moreno, Order of the Augustinian Recollects (OAR). Its name draws its inspiration from the celebrated Anselmian formula for theology: *fides quaerens intellectum*. The title is also very Augustinian. It calls to mind the constancy of spirit required of every restless heart: “Sic ergo quaesumus tanquam inventuri; et sic inveniamus, tanquam quaesituri” (*De Trin.* IX, 1, i).

As a journal of theology and pastoral life, *Quaerens* is committed to the noble mission of deepening the modern-day Christian’s understanding and praxis of the faith, of fostering an atmosphere of dialogue with cultures and religions throughout the world in general and throughout Asia in particular, and of promoting a scholarly theological discourse that addresses the specific pastoral needs and questions of our time.

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# Table of Contents

<b>Messages</b>	
<i>Fr. Miguel Miró OAR</i>	7
<i>Prior General: Order of the Augustinian Recollects</i>	
<i>Fr. Dionisio Q. Selma OAR</i>	9
<i>Prior Provincial: Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno</i>	
<i>Sr. Maxima Y. Pelaez, AR</i>	11
<i>Superior General: Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters</i>	
<i>Fr. Sergio Sanchez Moreno, OAR</i>	13
<i>Prior Provincial: Province of St. Nicholas of Tolentino</i>	
<i>Mother Maria Emy A. Catalonia OAR</i>	15
<i>Prioress, Saint Ezekiel Moreno Monastery</i>	
<i>Order of Augustinian Recollect Contemplative Nuns</i>	
<b>Foreword</b>	17
<i>ÁNGEL MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, OAR</i>	
<b>Author's Foreword</b>	21
<b>Abbreviations</b>	25
<b>Prologue: The Roots of the Augustinian Recollection</b>	27
<i>Ángel Martínez Cuesta OAR</i>	
<b>The First Augustinian Recollect Mission to the Philippines</b>	57
<i>José María Echeverría OAR</i>	
<b>The Philippines' Oldest Carmel Icon at San Sebastian Basilica since 1618</b>	73
<b>Marian Devotions of the Augustinian Recollects in the 17th-Century Philippines</b>	87

<b>Augustinian Recollect Icons</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>Saint Nicholas of Tolentino: Man of God, Mystic and Thaumaturge</b>	<b>153</b>
<i>Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos</i>	
<b>Saint Magdalena of Nagasaki and the Four Augustinian Recollect Martyr Priests</b>	<b>171</b>
<i>Pablo Panedas OAR</i>	
<b>Blessed Vicente Soler: Philippine Missionary</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>Blessed Julián Benigno Moreno and San Narciso in Zambales</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>Father Jenaro Fernández: Augustinian Recollect Canonist and Historian</b>	<b>237</b>
<i>Angel Martínez Cuesta OAR</i>	
<b>Servant of God Mariano Gazpio, Exemplary Missionary and Religious José Javier Lizarraga OAR</b>	<b>251</b>
<b>Bishop Juan García Ruiz de San Agustín OAR (1728-1796) of Nueva Segovia [Vigan]</b>	<b>277</b>
<i>Gregorio Ochoa OAR</i>	
<b>Augustinian Recollect Bishops, Apostolic Prefects and an Apostolic Administrator in the Philippines</b>	<b>291</b>
<i>Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos</i>	
<b>Missionaries in the Philippines, Bishops in America, Europe and China</b>	<b>305</b>
<i>Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos</i>	
<b>Augustinian Recollect Nuns: The Beginnings</b>	<b>317</b>
<i>Ángel Martínez Cuesta, OAR</i>	
<b>Retracing the Ritarian Roots: Dionisia, Cecilia Rosa Talangpaz and the Recollects of San Sebastian Convent</b>	<b>335</b>
<b>Fray Agustín de San Pedro known in Philippine History as <i>El Padre Capitán</i></b>	<b>359</b>
<b>Father Mariano Gutiérrez OAR (1788-1855): Priest, Scientist and Naturalist</b>	<b>369</b>
<i>Manuel Carceller OAR</i>	

<b>Fray José Celis of Santa Cruz, Manila, the Creole Recollect Frar Who Almost Ignited a Revolution in the Late 1820s</b>	<b>381</b>
<i>Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos</i>	
<b>Fray Diego Cera OAR (1762-1832): Maker of the World-famous Las Piñas Bamboo Organ</b>	<b>403</b>
<i>Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos</i>	
<b>Mariano Bernad (1838-1915) and Mateo Bernad (1842-1889): Missionaries in Negros Island and Misamis District</b>	<b>419</b>
<i>Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos</i>	
<b>Padre Mauricio Ferrero (1844-1915): Augustinian Recollect Builder of Bacolod</b>	<b>441</b>
<i>Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos</i>	
<b>Life, Works and Pastoral Ministry of Padre Nemesio Llorente (1852-1931)</b>	<b>455</b>
<i>Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos</i>	
<b>Padre Manuel Gómara, Builder of San Carlos Borromeo Cathedral</b>	<b>479</b>
<b>Bishop Gregorio Espiga: Apostolic Prefect (1953-1955), Apostolic Vicar of Palawan (1955-1987)</b>	<b>491</b>
<i>Renier I. Alviola OAR</i>	
<b>The Foundation of San Sebastian College Manila (1941)</b>	<b>507</b>
<b>Cathedrals in the Philippines Constructed by Augustinian Recollects</b>	<b>521</b>
<i>Pablo Panedas OAR and Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos</i>	
<b>Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity</b>	<b>537</b>
<i>Emilio L. Larlar, OAR</i>	
<b>Augustinian Recollect Chroniclers and Historians</b>	<b>561</b>
<b>The OAR Apostolate in the Philippines</b>	<b>585</b>
<i>Emilio Edgardo A. Quilatan OAR</i>	

Vol. 15: 1-2 (2020) January-December

<b>Glossary of Terms</b>	<b>597</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>603</b>
<b>The Author</b>	<b>605</b>
<b>Index</b>	<b>607</b>
<b>Instructions to Contributors</b>	<b>612</b>

# Message

Fr. Miguel Miró, OAR  
Prior General  
Order of the Augustinian Recollects

In this message I would like to be the interpreter of the sentiments of the Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno and of the whole Order, by expressing to Professor Romanillos our gratitude for the competence, perseverance and affection that for so many years he has been placing the Augustinian Recollect legacy within reach of the very members of the Recollect Family and others. His presence in conferences, cultural weeks, days of reflection and in all kinds of celebrations and festive occasions always comes out indispensable and illuminating. His familiarity with the History of the Order which he has never ceased to cultivate, his historical erudition, his knowledge of Philippine history and geography, his proficiency in native and foreign languages as well as his theological and humanistic baggage put him in condition to contribute data that help him contextualize the events, to personalize the coordinated histories and to provide ideas and reflections that facilitate their understanding. And still it would be necessary to his expository clarity and his availability to share his knowledge.

The title is already shedding much light. Before the reader opens its pages, he puts before his own eyes that moving force of the Order and its religious. That force is no other than love, the love that prohibits the religious to enclose himself in his egotism and urges him to search for the welfare of his brethren. Our Constitutions express well that dynamism upon affirming that “the contemplative and communitarian religious is a generous and effective apostle

because he carries that love within himself, the essence of which is to give and communicate, and the natural impulse of which is to spread itself out among our fellow men in order to claim possession of everyone for God and for Christ” (no. 23). The book offers biographies of a fine group of religious who, guided by that love, consecrated themselves for the welfare of men and successfully showed them the way of the truth and life. Some religious like Nicholas of Tolentino or Ezekiel Moreno did it with a life given up for love and bereft of egoistic attitudes; others like Vicente Soler who shed their blood for Christ; others like the missionaries of China, Palawan or Mindanao, offering their lives day after day for the souls, beset by penury, illness and uncertainties, and at all times by solitude amidst immense and inhospitable territories; and others like the Talangpaz sisters in humility and silence of divine worship and service to the brethren. Furthermore, it sheds more light on the roots of the Augustinian Recollect, on Recollect pioneers in the Philippines, on the first Recollect contemplative nuns and on the Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity.

I wish that this new work of Professor Romanillos may contribute in increasing appreciation of our tradition and help us obtain from it the light and orientation for the future. I wind up by repeating my gratitude in the name of the Order and my wishes that his concerns in illuminating our history and spirituality may bear notable fruits every day.



## Message

Fr. Dionisio Q. Selma, OAR  
 Prior Provincial  
 Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno

The Augustinian Recollects have so much to thank God Almighty at all times. Celebrations of His Divine Providence and innumerable graces bestowed on us in the history of our human existence abound. Perhaps unbeknownst to us, our Lord continually blesses us as we grow and expand our apostolic endeavors, spreading the Gospel in these parts of the world and imparting His divine teachings in various fields of apostolate. And with grateful jubilation, we—the Filipino nation and the Augustinian Recollects—commemorate together in 2021 five major historic milestones: namely, Quincentennial of Christianity in the Philippines (1521), Quadricentennial of our Augustinian Recollection as Congregation (1621), Quadricentennial of San Sebastian Church and Convent in Manila (1621), Quadricentennial of the Augustinian Recollect Presence in Cebu (1621), Quadricentennial of the Creation of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino (1621) whose missionaries joined the four religious orders in Manila in the evangelization work. Out of that Saint Nicholas Province, our very own Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno was created in 1998. We give thanks and praise to to the Lord for such graces and love.

We never cease to share our blessings and love with our confreres, parishioners, teachers and students in the Philippines, Spain, Italy, Taiwan, Sierra Leone, Saipan, Brazil, Cuba, Colombia, and Indonesia, especially with the underprivileged and least fortunate sectors of society. That is exactly the meaning and message of *Amor Diffusivus* in our OAR Constitutions. As Pope Francis himself

told the delegates of our General Chapter at the Vatican City on 20 October 2016: “He gives us this love in many ways; He is always giving us this love and making Himself present in our lives. Let us look at the past and give thanks for the many gifts received. We must adopt this historical perspective by entrusting ourselves to the Lord because it is He who gives us the key to interpreting the past; it is not simply a matter of making history, but of discovering the presence of the Lord in every event, in every phase of life.” The Holy Father then reminded us of our rich past: “The past helps us to return to our original charism and to taste it in all its freshness and integrity. It also gives us the chance to see the difficulties that have arisen and how they have been overcome in order to face today’s challenges with a view to the future.”

It behooves us therefore to thank the author and the contributors for their book *Amor Diffusivus*. We urge you to learn the lessons from the toils and triumphs, the exemplary and holy lives of past missionaries and apply them in our daily lives today.

# Message

Sr. Maxima Y. Pelaez, AR  
 Superior General  
 Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters

Going through the contents of the book, “Amor Diffusivus”, a feeling of pride, joy, gratitude pervaded in me they shed informations about our very own Order. The title itself aptly captures the whole content of the book: love widely spread.

This precious find will feed the exciting curiosity of one who wonders what the Order of the Augustinian Recollect is all about in our native Philippine soil. The first part itself which are Augustinian Icons will draw an ardent, religious esteem for the Order, considering the Saint of Miracle (St. Nicholas of Tolentino), love of the Blessed Mother, many Augustinian Recollect blessed and martyrs, the famous las Piñas bamboo organ, etc. What made this part so special in particular is the retracing of the roots of Augustinian Recollect Sisters which was born in the Beaterio de San Sebastian. The Augustinian Recollect Chroniclers and Historians are depicted in this part.

A primary reader will capture his awe at the evangelization mission of the Recoletos which started on 1606. This zeal of the missionaries spread silently yet with intense fervor to various parts of Visayas, Luzon, and Mindanao, in particular, Masinloc & San Narciso Zambales, and Palawan, Negros Island in particular Talisay and San Carlos. Part of the mission, the missionaries adhered to legacy of arts and culture, and being connected with San Miguel Corporation. Not only did they evangelize by prayers but most importantly they

taught the natives how to live by proper raising of the crops and their proper handling of properties through constructions of roads and bridges. How they taught them of the human dignity by defending them against their adversaries, and schools were opened to educate and raise the literacy of the natives/Filipinos.

Seeds of vocations to Recoletos religious life and priesthood grew which shows the heavenly blessing on the apostolic zeal of the early missionaries to the Philippine soil.

With deep appreciation to the author, Professor Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos who must have done painstaking wide, diffusive researches to come up with this invaluable researches, this book is a great contribution to the understanding and love of the Recoletos legacy and heritage. It is indeed a great possession of knowledge to treasure, for researches' bright references, for inquisitiveness on Recoletos'

Past and present, for the future young Recoletos to retrace their beginnings, and for everyone's learning admiration of the Recoletos presence in our midst.

## Message

Fr. Sergio Sanchez Moreno, OAR  
Prior Provincial  
Province of St. Nicholas of Tolentino

Our Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino celebrates four hundred years of its foundation as a province in the bosom of the Augustinian Recollect Congregation decreed by the Holy See in 1621. It was then decided that the jurisdiction of the Province would be the Philippine Islands. In effect, in that geographical area, its history transpired. The only exceptions were the indispensable support convent or halfway house in Mexico City and the designated territories within what we would term as “spheres of influence” of the Philippine Archipelago at that time; namely, Marianas Islands, Japan and China.

That is why we believe the book of Professor Romanillos that now comes to light to be extremely opportune. It is a publication that gathers—for now—a very long list of titles which affirm this scholar as the most prolific Filipino author on Recollect topics. And, even as his writings are very important, we hasten to add that perhaps they may not be what matters most because Romanillos has been for forty years an untiring propagator—by means of conference lectures, thesis advising, writings in the press and social media, installation of landmarks, promotion of popular initiatives—of everything that may have something to do with Saint Ezekiel Moreno, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, other Saints and personalities of the Order and whatever iconic event, place or relic of the Recollect world.

Not everything in his writings is original. And we say this is not to discredit him, on the contrary. For, far from suffering the virus of intellectual pride, he who is now a retired Professor of the University of the Philippines, has placed at the service of the truth and of the Order his translation skills. Romanillos has an excellent command of the Spanish language; it was not in vain that he has until recently been president of the Filipino Academy of the Spanish Language. And this proficiency has allowed him to translate into English a great part of what is being produced on Augustinian Recollect history and spirituality in Spanish. In the same manner, it made it easy for him to delve into the archival and literary collections of the Order which have been written almost entirely in the language of Cervantes.

This work of Romanillos as translator, to which it is obviously necessary to add his original output in English, makes it possible to remedy—partially, at least—the rupture existent in the Archipelago between a past written in Spanish and the present that does not know that language. Such works as what we now present—wherein Romanillos mixes together his own works—all in English—and his translations put within the reach of the Filipinos of the present the histories of centuries past. A history that is their own, albeit it may have been written in a language that is foreign to them today. It is their history, although oftentimes the protagonists—those missionaries of yore— might have been born in other parts of the world and might be Filipinos “solely” by choice, “solely” out of love.

For obvious reasons, we congratulate Prof. Emmanuel Luis Romanillos. And, as Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, we congratulate ourselves as well because the book we are presenting and the entire work of its author as a whole do permit us to truly return to the Philippines, this land we cherish. It shall be the best way to celebrate the Fourth Centennial of our Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino of the Philippine Islands.

Madrid, 13 November 2020.

## Message

Mother Maria Emy A. Catalonia, OAR  
Prioress, Saint Ezekiel Moreno Monastery  
Order of Augustinian Recollect Contemplative Nuns

Congratulations to the Order of Augustinian Recollects for celebrating its 400 years as Congregation (5 June 1621)!

Congratulations to the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino for its Fourth Centenary as Province (23 November 1621), among the first four Provinces of the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollects!

Congratulations to Prof. Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos for this book which is the fruit of his translation and research works for decades! It is an authentic expression of his continued love for the Order.

The year 2020 likewise commemorates the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the blessing and inauguration of our monastery and chapel (1995-August 19-2020) in Bacolod City. The arrival of the pioneering Augustinian Recollect Contemplative Nuns on 11 August 1992 in Manila completed the presence of the Augustinian Recollect Family in Asia, particularly here in the Philippines. This foundation became possible on account of the assistance and generosity of the OAR Friars of the general curia in Rome, and especially of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino through the Philippine Vicariate, now the Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno. Our deep gratitude for their continuous support to us in many ways from the beginning till now.

With this book, the Augustinian Recollects Friars, through the channels established by the Order, offer tools, means and initiatives

for forming the Nuns in the meaning of the Recollect Contemplative vocation. Books, pamphlets, magazines, and journals on Recollect history, cultural legacy, spirituality and formation are to be regularly provided to the monastery.

We view that this anthology *Amor Diffusivus* speaks so much of our icons in history, heritage, spirituality, pastoral ministry, exemplary lives of our forefathers, those great men and women from generation to generation. It shall truly inspire us to continue our Augustinian Recollect Contemplative journey no matter how many challenges we encounter along the way. By the grace of God and through the intercession of all these Saints, Blessed, Venerable Servants of God, Martyrs of the Faith, we shall continue to persevere in our mission as “missionaries in the heart” of the Church, as beacon that guides lost souls, as torch that lights the path of everyone who seeks the Lord, as source of love, inspiration, hope and strength in these critical times we live today.

Once again, our thanks to Prof. Romanillos for this inspiring book. We thank our dear brother Recollects for their endless dissemination of our real treasure, our spiritual tradition—the iconic persons, books, convents, churches, events in the annals of our common Augustinian Recollect history and heritage! Together in the journey to holiness, we remain united in prayers!



## Foreword

ÁNGEL MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, OAR  
Rome, Italy

Professor Romanillos offers to readers a new book to which he gave a very fitting title. It is replete with a profound Augustinian flavor and it faithfully portrays its author and its protagonists. Above all, the title is the fruit of his love for all what is Recollect. A love that moves him to delve meticulously into archives and libraries, to walk with eyes wide open in search of a monument, an event, an institution, a book or a simple Recollect vestige. That same love later impels him to look at it and once more take another look at it with an attention full of affection in order to give it a face and situate it in time and space. A time and space that for him are not neutral or inert fields, but fertile and tillable fields, where the Recollects left behind remnants of their lives with their illusions, their limitations and with their conditionings in society, in culture and in the Congregation. Romanillos is aware that behind every event, every monument, every trace there is a person, there are circumstances. If one cannot delve into the person, if one is not identified with that person, it will be difficult to provide the deeper meaning of the event because the access key to that person is lacking, and solely through the person are known his motivations, his objectives and the spirit that configure them. If one does not take the circumstances into consideration, the perception of the subject as well as that of the object, shall turn out partial, hazy and even out-of-focused. And his love does not allow him to stop there. It forces him to advance more, to correlate them with other events or monuments and to avail of so many situations that may present themselves to the reading public for the purpose of

getting to know them so that they may likewise be more acquainted with them and enrich themselves and enjoy them all the more.

The author brings all that into reality with simplicity, with no apparent effort, because he avails himself of valuable tools. On one hand, his familiarity with Philippine history and the history of the whole Order, his identification with many of its members and its works, and his human and spiritual sensibility allows him to capture the meaning of facts and events and to tune into their makers. On the other hand, his expository skills help him put within the reach of the reading public with relative ease, whether as a professor in the academe or as a lecturer in an university conference or on the platform of a jam-packed event, or in a round table group reflection and discussion or in the simplicity of an informal conversation.

This miscellaneous book wherein he gathered some of his lectures and research works during these years is a good example of what I have been saying. In it we find the histories and memories of religious, churches, convents, schools, books, sacred images, evangelization processes and methods, their contributions to the material well-being of the faithful, their obstacles and hardships. Sometimes he deals with them with academic rigors, with evidences at hand. At other times, he opts to disclose fruits of research done by others. And still more, he proposes ideas, research projects and studies to undertake.

The author does not take these diversities into consideration. This book deals with personalities or groups of iconic religious. Its eleven chapters focus on the biographical aspects of religious who are prominent on account of their holiness, administrative skills, contribution to the apostolic mission of the Church. Some personalities, like Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, Saint Magdalena of Nagasaki, Blessed Vicente Soler, Blessed Julian Moreno, Diego Cera, Mauricio Ferrero are very well-known. Yet the author offers new perspectives or shares with the Filipino people the latest contributions by other scholars. Other personalities, like the Servant of God Mariano Gazpio and Mariano Bernad, apostolic commissary of the Order from 1901 to 1908, or some of the fifteen bishops, apostolic prefects and administrators are highlighted, likewise have received the attention of other scholars. Four locally known parish priests are highlighted: Eusebio Valderrama, Manuel Gómara and Nemesio Llorente. The same thing can be said of the twenty-

six historians and chroniclers who are featured prominently in the next chapter. More astonishing is his new research on Father José Celis de San Luis Gonzaga, a Creole friar born in Manila in 1798, who harbored pro-independence ideals in the 1820s and underwent protracted proceedings which the political turbulences of the period impeded their realization. Unfortunately, the trail of this curious personality vanished in March 1835 and thereafter. The author has shed light on his adventure which until now is practically unheard of, with abundant documentation culled from archives both public—*Archivo General de Indias* in Sevilla and *Archivo Histórico Nacional de España* in Madrid—and private—Conventual Archive of Monteagudo in Navarra, which was moved to *Archivo Histórico Provincial* in Marcilla.

Of great significance too are the historic beginnings of the Augustinian Recollect nuns as well as the chapter on the Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity whose members in the Philippines are over nine hundred.

Along with such personalities, we find information on Our Lady of Mount Carmel and other five Marian invocations most revered by the Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines—Our Lady of Consolation, Our Lady of Health, Our Lady of the Pillar and the Immaculate Conception—and, on iconic documents, places, events of very special significance. Among the iconic documents he chooses are the *Forma de vivir* [Way of Life] of the early friars (1589), the Constitutions of 1637, the papal briefs that have been forming the constitutional configuration of the Order from 1602 until 1912, iconic books like *Modo de administrar* [Mode of Administration] that for centuries supervised the apostolate of our missionaries, Fr. Aniceto Ibáñez's *Spanish–Chamorro Dictionary* (1864), Fr. Antonio Úbeda's novel *Teresa* (1852) and the *Crónicas* of the Order [General Histories of the Order of Augustinian Recollects]. Among the places he focuses on are the convents of Talavera de la Reina in Spain, San Juan de Bagumbayan and Saint Nicholas friary of Intramuros in Manila, Vigan Seminary, the twelve cathedrals in the provinces, the Basilica of San Sebastian in Manila, and other churches in Zambales, Bohol, Negros and Mindanao. Among the iconic events he highlights are the Great Union (1256), the arrival of the first Recollect missionaries to the Philippines, their return to Negros Island (1848) and the protracted conflict with the Jesuits during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century over the Island of Mindanao.

I am pleased to highlight the attention the author has given to the Talangpaz sisters and their work: the present-day Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters of the Philippines. Indeed, they constitute one of the most distinguished fruits of the long history.

Before I end these lines I wish to congratulate Professor Romanillos for this new fruit of his hard work which offers a panoramic view—precise and exciting—of the presence of the Augustinian Recollect Order of over four hundred years in the Philippines and of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, founded in 1621. I do not doubt that this book will find interested readers and that reading it will help new generations of Filipino Recollects retrace their roots and inspire them to follow the footsteps of their ancestors.

## Author's Foreword

*Amor diffusivus*. The OAR Constitutions no. 23 explains it in this manner: “The love of God diffuses itself primarily in the community of the three Divine Persons, and secondarily in creation. The more man participates in the knowledge and life of God, the more strength he will have to diffuse that love and knowledge with those around him.”

We can link this *amor diffusivus* to what Historian Ángel Martínez Cuesta has written about Saint Augustine’s teaching on *caritas veritatis* and *necessitas caritatis*. Even after his elevation to the episcopate, Augustine continued craving for the *caritas veritatis*, that is, for withdrawal, contemplation, study of the Scriptures and personal sanctification. But the memorial of the Passion of the Lord Christ Jesus, the example of the Apostle Paul, the pastoral works and his heart aflame set him free from “spiritual egoism.” They prod him to go beyond the narrow limits of the monastery and discover clearer and clearer the demands of charity—*necessitas caritatis*. The Church needs our support in her sublime mission of enlightening children for heaven. We would not be good children if we rebuff her. Consequently, the monk must know how to renounce his *otium* [leisure] even with good judgment and only if the Church requires his services: “If the Mother Church would want your cooperation, do not extend it with envious arrogance nor refuse it with indolent negligence.”

The community of brothers, “always sensitive to the needs of the Church, seeks the place and the manner in which it will be most useful in the service of God. All the members of the Church have a right to our services, and our charity ought to embrace the

whole world. We are servants of the Church of the Lord; and our principal duty is to those most in need..." (Const. nos. 25-26).

This anthology deals with those selfless and iconic Augustinian Recollect missionaries and their all-out response to the divine call to serve the needs of Holy Mother Church in the Philippines and Asia. The *Recoletos 400 (1606-2006): Continuing OAR Presence in the Philippines and Asia* highlighted the myriad Augustinian Recollect contributions to the Filipino nation. The much-appreciated conferences on its history, missions, culture and heritage held in Manila were great learning experiences and eye-openers for Augustinian Recollect priests, religious brothers, sisters, formands, Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity members, educators, students, researchers and lay people. Never before was there a great number of competent speakers who dealt with a wide array of OAR legacies. And the best thing which ensued was that a number of timely publications made the historic milestones known far and wide—in the wake of those four significant events: 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great Union of the Augustinian Order (1256-2006); Seventh Centenary of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino's death (1305-2005); Fourth Centenary of the uninterrupted Recollect Presence in the Philippines and Asia (1606-2006); First Centennial of Saint Ezekiel Moreno's death (1906-2006).

We had the good fortune of taking part in the collective tribute to the Order of Augustinian Recollects, the so-called "silent achiever" and unheralded collaborator in the Philippine mission history and culture. In this anthology are my unabridged lectures on Recollect contributions, Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, Fray José Celis, Fray Diego Cera, Fray Mateo Bernad, Fray Mariano Bernad and Fray Mauricio Ferrero. The papers were read in Quezon City, Manila, Bacolod City, Las Piñas City and Cagayan de Oro City.

Here, too, are my research works on Augustinian Recollect icons that have touched lives of Filipinos, like the Recollect bishops, Philippine missionaries who were bishops in China, South America and Spain and other chroniclers and historians who make our memories of things past alive and kicking. I have included the Our Lady of Mount Carmel icon of San Sebastian Basilica, Marian icons, Saint Magdalena of Nagasaki and the four Recollect martyr priests in Japan as well as our own Philippine missionary Blessed Vicente Soler who died for the Faith at the onset of the Spanish Civil

War (1936-1939). Some of our lectures saw print in their abridged versions or excerpted in yearbooks, newsletters, souvenir programs, scholarly journals and other publications. Many research works included in this anthology are unpublished, like the biographies of Blessed Vicente Soler, Blessed Julián Benigno Moreno, Fray Agustín de San Pedro and Fray Nemesio Llorente. The biographies of Saint Magdalena of Nagasaki and the four martyr priests of Japan, Bishop Juan García Ruiz de San Agustín, Servant of God Mariano Gaspio and Venerable Jenaro Fernández likewise are translated in English and hitherto unpublished.

Furthermore, the present anthology is a humble contribution to four great celebrations—Fifth Centennial of the Arrival of Christianity [1521-2021] in our country, Fourth Centennial of the Congregation of Augustinian Recollects [1621-2021], Fourth Centennial of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino [1621-2021], the mother province out of which was born Saint Ezekiel Moreno Province, the Fourth Centennial of the Augustinian Recollects in Cebu Province [1621-2021]. This collection of research works constitutes the expression of my profound thanks to the Augustinian Recollect superiors who view the need of their religious confreres and students as well as our own Filipino Church for a deeper sense of historical awareness, identity, gratitude, solidarity and pride. There is a need to thus instil in our people a deep love and appreciation for the Order of Augustinian Recollects, for its enduring legacy of Faith, holiness, cultural treasures, rich history and evangelization efforts in our country as well as in Africa, China, Japan, Marianas Islands and Taiwan.

Indeed, the love of God has indeed been diffused and continues to diffuse itself in communities where the spiritual sons and daughters of Saint Augustine reside and work for His glory and the eternal salvation of His people.





## Abbreviations

AGI	<i>Archivo General de Indias</i> , Sevilla, Spain
AGOAR	<i>Archivo General de los Agustinos Recoletos</i> , Rome, Italy
AHNM	<i>Archivo Histórico Nacional</i> , Madrid, Spain
AO	<i>Acta Ordinis Augustinianorum Recollectorum</i> , Rome, Italy
AHPM	<i>Archivo Histórico Provincial de Marcilla</i> , Navarra, Spain
ARJC	<i>Archivo Recoleta “Juan de la Concepción”</i> , Bulwagang Recoletos, Mira-Nila Homes, Quezon City
AR	<i>Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters</i>
ARSI	<i>Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu</i> , Rome, Italy
BEF	<i>Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas</i> , Manila
BPSEM	<i>Bulletin of the Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno</i> , Quezon City
BPSN	<i>Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino</i> , Marcilla, Navarra, Spain
BPST	<i>Boletín de la Provincia de Santo Tomás de Villanueva</i> , Madrid
BR	<i>The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898</i> , Emma Helen BLAIR and James Alexander ROBERTSON, 55 vv. Cleveland 1903-1909.
DD	<i>Divinitatis Doctor</i> , Doctor of Divinity
ed.	<i>editor, edited</i>
et al.	<i>et alii</i> [and other persons]
f.	<i>folio</i> [manuscript page]

NHI	<i>National Historical Institute, Manila</i>
NHCP	<i>National Historical Commission of the Philippines, Manila</i>
OAR	<i>Order of Augustinian Recollects, also Recoletos, Recollects</i>
OSA	<i>Order of Saint Augustine, also Augustinians</i>
OP	<i>Order of Preachers, also Dominicans</i>
PNA	<i>Philippine National Archives, Manila</i>
POSITIO	<i>Beatificationis seu declarationis martyrii Servorum Dei Vicentii Soler et VII Sociorum ex Ordine Augustinianorum Recollectorum Positio super Martyrio. Rome 1990</i>
r	<i>rursus</i> [front page of manuscript folio].
SARF	<i>Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity Sinopsis – Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos, 2 vv. Manila 1925</i>
SJ	<i>Society of Jesus, also Jesuits</i>
TTM	<i>The Thomasian Memoir 1948-1949. San Carlos, Negros Occidental. 1949</i>
UP	<i>University of the Philippines</i>
UST	<i>University of Santo Tomas, Manila</i>
v	<i>versus</i> [back page of manuscript folio, as in 13v]
vol.	<i>volume</i>
vv.	<i>volumes</i>

## Prologue: The Roots of the Augustinian Recollection<sup>1</sup>

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Ángel Martínez Cuesta, OAR

### Introduction

The Augustinian Recollection was not a spur-of-the-moment outcome. Neither was it an end-result of a spontaneous combustion. Indeed, the reform movement was a confluence in the distant past of multifarious events, of various kindred factors, of twists and twirls. It was the confluence of learned, hardworking, holy, erudite, brilliant—even of ordinary but indefatigable—men and women who strongly craved for greater perfection. Men and women who earnestly yearned for the realization of the Augustinian ideals of prayer, community and apostolate. Divine Providence and Marian patronage were all too protective and influential in every phase of the Augustinian Recollection in the past, present and future of this great, dynamic reform movement. Such dynamism that incessantly hearkened to the voice of the Holy Spirit and to the Magisterium of the Church. Such dynamism that even anticipated the pastoral, spiritual, moral and educational needs of the People of God.

We look into the charismatic roots of the Augustinian Recollection, even as we study the seeds of monasticism planted by Saint Augustine. We view medieval monasticism and mendicancy, as we move on to the era of the Great Union, to the rich fields of

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<sup>1</sup>This prologue of our anthology is culled from Chapters II through VI of Ángel Martínez Cuesta's *Historia de los agustinos Recoletos I: Desde los orígenes hasta el siglo XIX* (Madrid 1995).

the Province of Castile, to the nascent stage of the Augustinian Recollection. We try to understand the roots and the blooming tree of its ever-present apostolic nature, planted in Spain, America and Asia, as we enter deeper into the third millennium, as we commemorated the momentous fourth centennial of the arrival of the pioneering Augustinian Recollect missionaries in the Philippines.

Only one strongest factor keeps on appearing in the panorama: the ever-present wonderful assistance of the Holy Spirit. The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity has wrought wonders in the Augustinian Recollection and continues to do so, even as we passed the threshold of the new millennium, and we celebrated the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Augustinian Recollects' uninterrupted presence in Asia and in the Philippines.

## From Saint Augustine to the Great Union

### Augustinian Monasticism

Even after his elevation to the episcopacy, Saint Augustine continued craving for the *caritas veritatis*, that is, for withdrawal, contemplation, study of the Scriptures and personal sanctification. But the memorial of the Passion of the Lord Christ Jesus, the example of the Apostle Paul, the pastoral works and its heart aflame are setting him free from “spiritual egoism.” They prod him to go beyond the narrow confines of the monastery and discover clearer and clearer the demands of charity—*necessitas caritatis*. The Church needs our support in her sublime mission of enlightening children for heaven. We would not be good children if we rebuff her. Consequently, the monk must know how to renounce his *otium* [leisure], even with good judgment and only if the Church requires his services: ‘If the Mother Church would want your cooperation,



**Saint Augustine of Hippo  
(378-430): Father and Doctor  
of the Church**

do not extend it with envious arrogance nor refuse it with indolent negligence' (*Letter* 48, 2).

The love for the truth seeks the *otium sanctum* (*holy leisure*); the demand of charity accepts the *negotium iustum* (*just activity*). If no one imposes upon us this obligation we must devote ourselves to the search and contemplation of the truth. But if it is imposed upon us, we must accept it out of the demand of charity. But even in this case must we set aside the delight of the truth, lest bereft of its sweetness the demand burdens us.<sup>2</sup>

At the monastery in Hippo where Saint Augustine was consecrated as bishop towards 395, he established the same spiritual foundations as in Tagaste: "Perfect common life, lived in a climate of fraternal friendship, total self-abnegation and balance between action and contemplation. Only manual work would diminish to give way to study and apostolate, which ate up much of the time in the daily life of the dwellers. All of them took an active part in the life of the local church with which they live in constant communion."<sup>3</sup>

In matters related to poverty, Augustine was unbending. "He saw in individual poverty a condition *sine qua non* and a sign of the union of hearts. Without it common life is impossible, since private property focuses man on himself and on material goods which lead irretrievably towards individualism and discord."<sup>4</sup>

Meals were always served in common. One meal a day was permitted: dinner served at about three in the afternoon. Those who could not fast were allowed to take something at midday. At mealtime, there was lecture as well as conversation and discussion. The food was frugal, with lots of vegetables and legumes. At times meat was served. Wine was always a daily fare. It was not infrequent that invited guests graced the community meals.

Simplicity was shown and observed in the apparel, footwear and furniture. Neither precious nor cheap things were to the monk's liking. Such moderation was another of Augustine's great contributions to the Western type of monasticism: fleeing from extravagance, excess, exaggeration. Penance was subordinated to

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<sup>2</sup>De op. monach. 29, 37; PL 40, 576.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 42.

charity. Monks ought to follow the communal acts. Customs and physical incapacity might give him a right to some special treatment. “Charity loves the monk, respects his personality and sees to it that it will not transform him into a mere number in the community.”

Augustine further set up monasteries for women. This could be towards the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century or in early 5<sup>th</sup> century, numerous communities “where they opted to live unanimously inside one house in one soul and one heart directed towards God.”<sup>5</sup> He disseminated the ideal of virginity and continence, extolled their excellent character and expounded their theological foundations. Their lifestyle might not have differed greatly from that of their male counterparts. Common life was the center-point of his teachings. Time was divided equally between prayer and work. And work of the nuns included education of young girls, reading and copying of codices. Majority of the nuns were virgins but there were widows as well. One of these widows was Perpetua, Augustine’s sister, who joined the monastery after her husband’s death. She became its *preposita*, superior, for quite a long time.

The remarkably great influence of Saint Augustine over the founders and foundations of the monasteries in North Africa cannot therefore be set aside. The succeeding decades following Saint Augustine’s death saw the persecutions of the North African monasteries and convents and the massacres of monks. These events would eventually push them to their eventual demise and extinction in Africa.

### **The Hermit Tradition**

We put forward the following six conclusive landmarks and and sound observations on the state of the Augustinian world from the 12<sup>th</sup> through the 13<sup>th</sup> century:

1. The Order of Hermits of Saint Augustine is not directly nor indirectly rooted on the foundations of or monasteries founded by the saint himself.
2. The Order’s formation—slow and laborious—was the outcome of the several fusions of Italian hermit groups.

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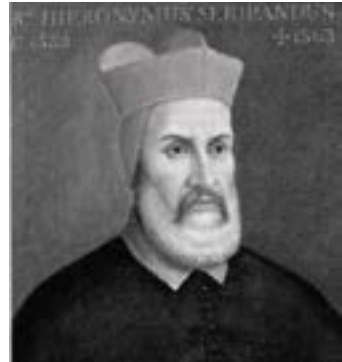
<sup>5</sup> *Epist* 211.

3. The hermit groups that persevered in the union after 1256 had accepted the Rule of Saint Augustine about fifteen to thirty years earlier.

4. The Roman Curia's action and involvement was the determining factor in those unions. The Curia availed itself of the ascendancy and authority of Cardinal Ricardo degli Annibaldi throughout almost the whole process.

5. A twofold objective motivated the Roman Curia: disciplinary and apostolic character. In accord with the religious policies of Innocent III (1198-1216) and the directives of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), there was a proposal to exert supervision and control over some hermit groups what were born and had grown in a spontaneous manner. On the other hand, there was a necessity to give them spiritual and juridical organization for the urban apostolate, which the violently shaken world of the bourgeoisie had much need of. Since the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century religious life was more and more involved in the social fabric of the period. The religious life was headed for a more intense apostolate and a more centralized and homogenous organization.

6. In the *Unionist* process that lasted from 1223 to 1256, the mendicant model was more or less present. An increase of its influence was remarkably noticed in a manner that its excellence was highlighted. In the chapter held in Rome in 1256, the year of the Great Union, the last act in the process, the permeating influence of the flourishing mendicant model was most decisive and vital.



**Girolamo Seripando:**  
Augustinian  
Superior General (1539-1551),  
Archbishop of Salerno (1554);  
Cardinal (1561)

## Medieval Monasticism

Eremitism flourished in the 11<sup>th</sup> century in the West and reached its age of splendor that lasted until mid-13<sup>th</sup> century. Restless souls in groups or by their lonesome selves would leave behind the nascent urban civilization and rush forth to isolation in deserted places. On the whole, they established themselves in inhospitable sites, at the threshold of the forest, where they surrendered themselves

to a life of work with their bare hands, of asceticism and prayer. Others embraced eremitism to atone for their sins; still others, just to follow the trend and fashion, being attracted by some famous hermit of the region.

The hermit was a lover of freedom, with a high concept of the majesty of God and Christian perfection, and unsatisfied by the religious-moral models of society. As a consequence, he flees from the world, many of whose values he deems strange, or even, hostile, and takes refuge in solitude wherein he could run to his ideal with absolute freedom. People look upon him with fondness and admiration. He practices hospitality. At times he abandons his solitude and goes to towns and fields preaching penance and conversion. If he takes up residence in a hermitage by the roadside it is only then that he receives pilgrims and wary travelers. At times he has a following and his disciples gather around and are guided along the path of perfection. Hermits also act as mediators in conflicts or feuds and protectors of popular causes. There are other hermits who even serve chapels and local churches.

## **The Augustinian World**

### **The 16<sup>th</sup>-Century Ambience**

At the outburst of the Protestant Reformation, religious life was still immersed in decadence. There is sufficient proof in the unanimous denunciation by the Humanists, Lutherans and orthodox reformers. The Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517), the local reforms of some ancient religious orders and the rise of the congregations of regular clergy—Teatines, Barnabites and Somascenes—contributed to the correction of some abuses and aroused in many religious the craving for a life in accord with their profession. However, they failed to embody an authentic reform program. During this period the Augustinian Order—so shaken by Protestantism—lacked the religious who would do the right thing in channeling the ideals and projects that were surging in their midst. Prior General Gabriele della Volta (1518-1537) was somewhat apathetic and stayed in Venice for some time during his term as general. He was alienated from the problems the Order was facing.



The situation remarkably improved with the promotion of Father Girolamo Seripando to the post of superior general in 1539. The distinguished theologian was transformed into an excellent administrator. During the twelve years as prior general (1539-1551), wherein he enjoyed the unconditional support of Pope Paul III (1534-1549) and Roman Curia's increasing opening to reforms, Seripando vigorously and constantly exerted great effort in uprooting the gravest vices, urging the compliance of the constitutions, the capitular decrees and the norms he himself had been continually dispatching to most of the provinces.

From November 1539 to April 1542, Seripando tirelessly visited a great number of convents in Italy, France, Spain and Portugal. In all these convents he left behind precise norms, of whose compliance he later exacted strict accounting from superiors. These had reference to divine worship, fomenting theological studies, preservation of certain traditional observances and, most of all, to common life, training of novices and unity of the Order. He did not recognize private property of religious, compelling them to either donate or restore all properties—furniture or buildings, inherited or acquired through whatever means—to their respective convents, and he forbade all kinds of contracts between individual friars or between them and their convents. He was rather tolerant towards the teachers. He trimmed their stipends and abolished the so-called *right of primogeniture*—whereby they monopolized the office of prior provincial. However, he recognized their right to receive “salary”, to maintain servants, special rooms and attendance at chapters. The imposition of the perfect common life was still a critical task.



**Saint Thomas of Villanova  
(1486-1555)**

The reforms instituted by Seripando—continued, although on a lower scale, by his successors Cristóbal de Padua (1551-1569) and Tadeo Guidelli (1569-1581) were useful, but whichever way you look at them, they came out inadequate, especially in the laxest provinces. We can count among them the provinces of Lombardy, Narbonne-Burgundy, Toulouse-

Aquitaine and Bética (Spain) which during this period had definitely acquired autonomy (1582). His work was not very effective in Aragon in Spain and in some other Italian provinces. In all these, there was a great number of grave abuses and there were religious who would not refrain from theft, slander and physical aggression.

The legislation of the Council of Trent was going to be more fruitful. This was taken up in the Order by the General Chapter of 1564 and with more clarity and details by the 1581 Constitutions. The capitular acts banned all business transactions by religious and ownership of properties, prescribed the uniformity of apparel, imposing upon all teachers the obligation to go to the common refectory and banned the ancient custom of proxy voting for an absent chapter delegate. This was a very rampant ruse that allowed chapter presidents to supervise and control at will. Other ordinances fomented the dignity of divine worship and the gravity of studies, reorganized the administration of temporal goods, regulating the going out and absences of religious and trimmed their excessive familiarity with laypeople. The 22<sup>nd</sup> ordinance mandated the frequent reading and faithful compliance of the decrees of the Council of Trent on the reform of the regular clergy in all convents, especially in bigger communities.

But the pre-Tridentine reformist efforts—even those immediately after the Council of Trent—reaped fine harvests only in Castile, Portugal and some Italian provinces. In Castile, they found the field well-fertilized by a prevailing propitious climate and by unrelenting efforts exerted by exemplary religious like Thomas of Villanova<sup>6</sup> (1486-1555), Alonso de Orozco (1500-1591), Francisco de la Parra (†towards 1533), Juan Gallego (†1534), Antonio de Villasandino (†1545), Francisco de Nieva, (†towards 1555) Luis de Montoya (1497-1569) and others.

Saint Thomas of Villanova took a very active part in the government of the province, of which he was provincial (1534-1537), visitor and councilor, besides being a prior of the

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<sup>6</sup>For more on the life and works of Saint Thomas of Villanova, read the article *Saint Thomas of Villanova, a Precursor of the Augustinian Recollection*, in Emmanuel Luis ROMANILLOS, *The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines. Hagiography and History* (Quezon City 2001) 15-25, and José Manuel BENGÓA, *Tomás de Villanueva. El limosnero de Dios* (Marcilla, Navarra) 1993.

convents of Salamanca, Burgos and Valladolid. Everywhere he promoted the dignity of the divine worship, the spirit of prayer, common life, diligence which he considered intimately linked to the respect and advancement of the natural qualities of every religious, and the missions in America, to which he sent expeditions during his term as provincial. Perhaps Saint Thomas was the most Augustinian saint of the Order. No one had done so well—as he did—to merge the Augustinian ideal of religious life: interiority, love for common life, study and apostolate. His influence reached Portugal and Mexico whose missions he favored with enthusiasm and discernment.



**Saint Alonso de Orozco  
(1500-1591)**

Saint Alonso de Orozco was likewise a provincial councilor. He presided over a provincial chapter (1557) and governed the convents of Soria, Medina del Campo, Sevilla, Granada and Valladolid. The saintly superior founded the convents of Talavera de la Reina and Madrid (1590) for men and for women, that of San Ildefonso of Talavera (1562) and those of Magdalena (1574) and Santa Isabel (1589) in Madrid.

The introduction of the reform in Portugal dated back to 1535. Acceding to the petitions of John III, Gabriele della Volta sent as visitors Francisco de Villafranca and Luis de Montoya, two new Castilians with soaring spirit and very much associated with Saint Thomas. The province of Castile designated him novice master at age 24. During six lustrums of uninterrupted administration (1535-1564), the two reformers corrected the most notable abuses, improved common life and the training of novices and even succeeded in founding some houses—among which was the famous college of Coimbra. The generals repeatedly recognized their efforts and extolled them unconditionally. Still this is reflected by the number of Portuguese Augustinians who distinguished themselves during these years in the pastoral ministry as well as in sacred sciences and the attitude they showed towards the missions starting 1572.

The Italian provinces benefited much from their nearness to the general, to the early application of the Council of Trent and the collaboration with some observant congregations, among whom we

must mention that of the Baptistines of Genoa. In the last quarter of the century, the Order incorporated the Sicilian hermits of Centorbi (1579) and San Adriano (1586) and the Calabrian hermits of Santa Maria de Collereto (1592). All of them led a very austere way of life. They walked unshod. They practiced manual labor, observed self-flagellation and devoted long hours to meditation. Of their influence on the Order, nothing can be affirmed with certainty, but they still constitute a topic that is scarcely discussed. Two members of the congregation of Centorbi—Ambrogio Staibano of Puglia and Andrés Díez of Sevilla—gave rise in 1592 to the Congregation of the Discalced Augustinians.

The reform reached Aragon from Castile in accordance with the old threats hurled by Seripando (1547) and Cristóbal de Padua (1557). It was a combined result of the reformist policy of Philip II and the religious zeal of the Castilian Province. The former negotiated in Rome (1568) for the appointment of Father Rodrigo de Solís (†1583) as the general reformer and supported his actions for several years. The latter contributed to the personality of the reformer, who was at time prior of the convent of Seville and that of fifty more religious. Such a great number of religious was so providential that it facilitated the selection of priors and other officials who would be around to guide the reform. Solís gradually replaced the old priors of convents with members of his group and charged them with introducing the Castilian practices in them. Substitution was not always that peaceful. The provincial of Sardinia who kept his residence in the convent of Socorro in Valencia at once relinquished his post to the reformer. However, the provincial of Aragon Vicente Montanés (†1573) as well as the priors of Zaragoza and Barcelona gave them up only on account of the pressure exerted by the king and church authorities.

Little can be said about the practical significance of this reform. Both the ideals and their concrete application remained in the shadow. Carlos Alonso, who has recently studied it with affection and in detail, believes that the reform somewhat uplifted the religious level of the communities of Aragon and assured them several decades of peace and tranquility. Gregorio de Ayala (†1602) took part in it and afterward joined the Recollection and passed away while he was prior of Zaragoza.

In France, the Tridentine reforms bumped into the spread of Lutheran and Calvinist doctrines in the convents and the religious wars that involved three of the four provinces. The Huguenots occupied not less than 20 convents either temporarily or permanently (La Rochelle, Orléans, Poitiers, Beziers, Montpellier, Pamier, etc.) and murdered some of their conventuals. It is not therefore surprising that during his visit to the French convents (1572) Prior General Tadeo Guidelli found them in non-observance and did not notice any influence of the Tridentine decrees. These began only at the close of the century with Esteban Rabache (1550-1616) and his disciples. His reformist work, already extolled in 1592 by prior general Agostino Fivizzano, crystallized in 1625 in the establishment of the observant province of Saint William, more renowned as Bourges community or *petits pères*. That year it had twenty-three convents. Rabache obtained his doctoral degree from the University of Paris and was famous for his public-speaking qualities and for his love for the Rule of Saint Augustine. He translated it into French, made several commentaries on it and found in it an inspiration to put common life in his community and to fight against all kinds of privileges.

Such protracted efforts could not but be reflected in the communities. The very serious abuses were reduced and there was a remarkable improvement in common life, divine worship, formation of novices, elections and others. The cultural and religious level of the Order notably went up, facilitating thus the upsurge of a good number of outstanding missionaries, pastors and writers. These were numerous in the province of Castile. In the second-half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there was a genuinely illustrious group of eminent religious. We now enumerate the most representative names: Thomas of Villanova and Alonso de Orozco among the saints; Juan de Muñatones (†1571) and Pedro de Rojas (†1602) among the bishops; Pedro de Aragón (†1592) and Juan de Guevara (†1600) among the ecclesiastics; Pedro Malón de Chaide (†1589) and Luis de León (†1591) among the litterateurs; Lorenzo de Villavicencio (†1583) and Francisco de Castroverde (†1611) among the preachers; Alonso Gudiel (†1573) among the scriptural scholars; Jerónimo Román (+1597) among the historians, etc.

But it was the missions that contributed the most valuable piece to this rich mosaic. The history of the missions of the province, including that of the Order, began in 1533 with the debarkation

of seven religious at the port of Veracruz (Mexico). In the next decades, their steps would be followed by hundreds of religious who would take the Christian and Augustinian message to majority of the countries in South America: Perú (1551), Ecuador (1573), Colombia (1575), Chile (1595); and to some countries in the Far East: Philippines (1565) and Japan (1602).

The pioneering missionaries left behind everywhere shining examples of self-denial and diligence. Ordinarily, they would give preferentiality to the full integration of the *Indios* to the sacramental life of the Church. They fostered ecclesiastical sciences with certain determination and distinguished themselves through the splendor of their churches. The Augustinian churches of Mexico, Quito, Lima, Manila and others are remembered in the history of colonial art with good reason.

Among them were some eminent religious whose names should be recalled: Alonso de Veracruz (†1584), professor in the University of Mexico and leader of his confreres in the defense of the rights of the natives; Andrés de Urdaneta (†1568), learned cosmographer and discoverer of the return route from the Philippines to Mexico; Martín de Rada (†1578), “the Las Casas in the East”, and bishops Agustín de Coruña (†1589) and Luis López de Solís (†1606).

Agustín de Coruña took part in the first missionary expedition to Mexico. During almost thirty years (1533-1562), he was a vanguard missionary in Mexico and for twenty-five years (1564-1589) he administered the diocese of Popayán in Colombia. In both assignments, he was known for his love for religious life whose discipline and observances he practiced with exemplary fidelity, for his apostolic zeal and for his love for the natives. The love for religious life gave his life an unpretentious mark of austerity and poverty, made him crave more than once for life in the cloister and moved him to favor the foundation of convents of Augustinian friars and nuns. But it did not stop him from confronting them when constrained to defend the rights of the miter. Much more serious and more publicized were his confrontations with the *encomenderos* and civil authorities, which caused his two long exiles in Lima (1570) and Quito (1583) where he died in November 1589. The chronicler Juan de Grijalva repeatedly called him “saint” and “spark”, epithets that express with extraordinary certainty two of the basic traits of his personality. Some characteristics were no longer so evident.

His adversaries deemed him more fit for conventual retreat or work with the natives than for tasks in episcopal life. Others considered him a man with pilgrim character, excessively obstinate—Viscount Toledo called him “hard-headed”—and still there were others who characterized him as imprudent. Some of his actuations indeed attracted attention.

López de Solís traveled to Peru in 1558. Very soon he came to be known for his illustration, honesty and administrative traits. From 1592 to 1606 he governed the Diocese of Quito. He founded the seminary, convoked two diocesan synods marked under the Tridentine sign, fostered the foundation of several convents of nuns and lived just like any other religious, bereft of material goods, with a proclivity for mortification and responsive to the needs of the destitute.

## **The Birth of the Recollection**

### **Yearnings for greater perfection**

However, those successes did not satisfy the yearnings of the most zealous religious or, at least, of those who shared with the experiences that had surged in other orders. On the one hand, they had not successfully banished the privileges contrary to common life, and on the other, they were not contented with the compliance of the Constitutions. They were more radical. They were moving on another level. They longed for a life of authentic poverty, or more prayer, more silence, more austerity and more equality. They wanted to reproduce with absolute faithfulness the way of life, like in the convents during the foundational period of the order.

Faithful to the example set by their holy founder, the Spanish Franciscans established several hermitages, places of recollection and retreat houses. In 1502, some of these houses came to be known as *domus recollectionis* and received a regulation that was rather brief from the hands of Marcial Boulter, vicar general of the Ultramontane observants, that is to say, those non-Italian observants. The regulation he made focused on silence, retreat and poverty.

With the designation of Francisco de Quiñones (1522-1527) as general of the Order, these houses gained new vigor and reached his definitive physiognomy. The constitutions he prepared in 1523

contained with sufficient amplitude his ideals, and structured his daily life and regulated his relations with body of the order.

Other houses had surged around the charismatic figures of Juan de la Puebla (†1497) and Juan de Guadalupe (†1502), but it was only with Peter of Alcantara that they acquired stable configuration. In 1559, the great ascetic formed together with them the Discalced Province of Saint Joseph, and two years later he gave them their definitive Constitutions.

The Constitutions of the Discalced were somewhat more austere than those of the Recollects, but both imbibed from the same source and proposed the same objectives. Both repudiated the mitigations of the Franciscan Rule and gave great importance to the testament of the



**Monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla de Suso  
(La Rioja, Spain)**

founder and to his Rule “*pro eremitoriis*.” Neither the Recollects nor the Discalced could own anything, they walked unshod, and lived in small, makeshift and uncomfortable convents. Their cells were small, and hardly was there any furniture. They observed an almost absolute silence, and prayer occupied a great part of the day. The professed conventuals showed a great appreciation for the Divine Office that they recited it day and night “slowly, well pronounced and correctly paused.” But they gave preference to mental prayer, to which they devoted two or three hours every day. Ascetical practices abounded and varied: discipline that was either daily or weekly, fasting, exercises in humility and penance in the refectory, an hour daily of manual work, etc.

These constitutions governed the Recollect and Discalced movements among the Franciscans of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and exerted a powerful influence on the Recollection and Discalced movements of all the other orders—in male as well as in female branches.



Saint Teresa of Jesus had them in consideration when she brought into this world the Discalced Carmel at the Convent of Saint Joseph in Avila (1562) and when she redacted her constitutions, although it is rather difficult to determine the exact Teresian formulation in her constitutions. The coincidences between her constitutions and the Franciscan constitutions were numerous and profound. The two constitutions both agree in the provisions on absolute poverty—common as well as individual—; the high regard for silence; the length of mental prayer; the preference for the prayer of canonical hours in plain tune with pauses that favored the interiorization of its message; in fixing the definite and reduced number of religious in the community; in the loving conduct with the ill; in the detachment from all temporal affairs; in the presence of hermitages within the parameters of the convent, etc.

Some of these provisions could originate from the ancient Carmelite tradition. In her writings, Saint Teresa oftentimes expressed her desire to “link with the ancient fathers” of the Carmel. She repudiated the “mitigated Rule” which was being followed at the Convent of the Incarnation and she imposed on her daughters in the Convent of Saint Joseph the “primitive Rule” without the “bull of moderation”—the name applied at that time to the bull of Eugenius IV that had dispensed the Carmelites from perpetual withdrawal from their cells and from abstinence from meat. However, despite the contrary opinion of prominent Teresian scholars, those aspirations of Saint Teresa owed greatly to the Franciscan model.

In the next decades, the echo of the Franciscan and Teresian experiences reverberated in almost all the Spanish communities. In 1585, there were two Benedictine monasteries: that of San Millán de la Cogolla withdrew to the solitude of Suso in order to comply there with the Rule of Saint Benedict in all its purity. Four years later, the general chapter approved its wishes, called them *Recollect*, assigned new houses to them and took care of regulating their way of life. The constitutions of 1601 structured their life around “liturgical and mental prayer, *lectio divina*, the cloister, poverty, fasting and abstinence.” Simultaneously, Recollects and Discalced surged forth from Mercedarians (1569, 1591, 1603), Trinitarians (1594), Dominicans (1605), Calced Carmelites as well as from all the female branches in the Iberian Peninsula: Benedictines (1594), Conceptionists (1603), Hieronymites or Jerónimas (1603), Trinitarians (1612, 1685), Poor Clares, Dominicans, Calced Carmelites, Bridgettines (1637), etc.

The Augustinian Order was not left out in the movement. In 1540, the Province of Castile, convened in a chapter, had already approved certain practices of the Mexican missionaries who were imbued with the Recollect spirit. They journeyed on foot, wore hempen sandals and dressed in the coarse ticking or sackcloth “narrow and short sleeve [...] in the way used by the Discalced Augustinians who are commonly known as Recollects in our Spain,” Sicardo would point out a century later in his *Additions* to Grijalva’s *Chronicles*. They used to practice self-flagellation thrice a week, added one more hour to the usual length of their meditation that ensued after the Matins at midnight. They did not accept money-income and added to their own name that of another saint or their place of origin. This lifestyle lasted until 1574 when it was suppressed by order of the visitor general.

In 1565, Tomé de Jesús (†1582), the celebrated author of *The Works of Jesus*, wanted to introduce in his convent at Lisbon—together with Luis de Montoya—the Recollect way of life. Moreover, he stopped when he bumped into the express opposition from the prior general of the Order.

Ten years later, an ordinance of the general chapter—included in the 1581 Constitutions—authorized the provinces to promulgate more rigorous statutes for the religious who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, “would want and be able” embrace a more austere discipline. This article would turn out to be crucial in the birth and development of the Recollection, because it would provide a legal channel to its promoters and initiators.

### **State of the Province of Castile**

The Province of Castile lived the penultimate decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century with restless and divided spirit. The general chapter of 1582 spoke about the “discords” that were shaking it and had forced the postponement of the convening of the provincial chapter. That same year, Fray Luis de León—investigated once again by the Inquisition—wrote that his province was divided into two factions. Philip II and the papal nuncio dispatched one visitor after another, Juan de Guevara (1518-1600) and Agustín de Jesús (†1609) but neither of the two took pains to undertake the visit, despite the repeated requests by several convents and by so adept religious

as Gabriel Pinelo, Pedro de Rojas, Luis de León and Francisco de Castroverde. In September 1583, Juan de Benavente accused the second visitor of having favored through his indecision and frailty the more lenient faction. The spirits remained divided and discipline relaxed. The provincials Pedro Suárez (1576-1579) and Esteban Sánchez (1579-1582) had allowed some religious to negotiate with census and money income and they themselves were implicated in similar transactions.

Some religious believed in the need for a visit by the prior general. In fact, Spirito Anguissola of Vicenza, as soon as he was elected general, intended to visit the province and set himself for the journey. However, after a brief illness, he died in Bologna, unable to cross the Italian border. Other religious, with the exemptions granted by Tadeo Guidelli during his 1573 visit in mind, were distrustful of Rome and sought the intervention of the Spanish King Philip II.

In 1586, the Province convened the provincial chapter against the general's will and was given a superior who was least adept to restore the peace to the friars and convents. Antonio Monte (1586-1588) belonged to the faction of his three predecessors, one of whom he had served as secretary. His relationship with the council was not easy at all. The *Registrum* of Petrocchini records two confrontations, owing to the unilateral appointment of the vicar priors of the convents of Santa María del Pino, Pamplona, Ponferrada, Durango and Alcalá de Henares and to the extravagant expenses he incurred during his trip to Rome on the occasion of the general chapter.

The tension between the two factions increased day after day, and both had recourse to higher authorities in search of support for their own viewpoints. The desire for reform that the two flaunted seemed muddled up by human passions, and it was not always easy to pinpoint what was religious zeal and what was self-assertion, with the consequent humiliation of the opponent. Antonio Monte, who had not made a breakthrough among the teachers, was extremely irked by their privileges, fought hard to drive them away from the province. The fear of not finding support in Spain nor in the general of the order forced him to have recourse to the Roman Curia. To this, he proposed a reform program inspired in the observant past of the province. The Roman Curia would be charged with putting it into practice, without the generalate's interferences. In 1587, Antonio Monte forwarded to Rome a petition that acquired the full support

of Saint Alonso de Orozco. In that request, he sought the immediate abolition of abuses and exemptions that were being infiltrated into the province and he would be put in charge of its implementation.

A role is requested from Your Holiness, so that you can confirm the bulls of observance this province has. Because of the provincial of said Order desires that the things of religion be preserved and be increased and those which for a long period of time have been relaxed and deteriorated from the first institution be returned to the old custom and the first institute. And this cannot be done on his authority. There have been many important people in the province who have pried into it, with the permission of the general and some confirmed by Your Holiness, like the teaching profession, the exemptions arising from them, receiving money-income, maintaining their own deposits, celebrating the mass for themselves, carrying servants [assistants] on horseback, going about with the habit outside of the Order with permission to sustaining their parents, not attending at community acts in the choir or in the refectory, all of which are against our constitutions and our way of life and with much occasion of offending God; I beseech Your Holiness to publish a bull that would repeal all those privileges and exemptions those friars are enjoying and to command the provincial—the incumbent or whomever he may be—not to tolerate those exemptions under grave penalty and censure. (*Bullarium* 1,21)

The other faction was better attuned to the prevailing ambience in the Church of Spain. Fray Luis de León and Pedro de Rojas appealed to Philip II to support the establishment of some houses of greater observance in the province, similar to those existent in other orders.

That in his province there are some religious who desire to live according to the ancient rigor of the Constitutions which are toned down by dispensation and custom, but refrain from doing it in order not to upset with their singularity the peace of the others and because they are not permitted to do so; and this they could do

with in their province there would be some houses designated for this lifestyle, as can be found in other orders; and in it they would do great service to God with the fervor that these religious of more recollection would have; and that by their example they would reduce the others to the old observance which would be an easy and effective way to reform everyone. (*Ibid.*, 30)

Of similar content must be the memorial to the king dispatched during those same dates by María de Covarrubias, a nun in Toledo and niece of Diego de Covarrubias (1512-1577), a former head of the Council of Toledo.

The denounced abuses were not exceptionally dreadful and probably they were not very frequent. But, on the one hand, they did not conform to that ambience of great spiritual impetus. And, on the other hand, that same impetus—in conjunction with trend of the period to restore ancient observances, had highlighted its seriousness and, consequently, had stirred in many souls the yearnings for a more austere and more spiritual life.

### **The Toledo Chapter**

On 16 May 1587, Gregorio Petrocchini of Montélpardo (1537-1612) was promoted to the post of prior general by the express will of his compatriot and relative Sixtus V who granted him in March 1588 the faculties of visitor and apostolic commissary of the Order. On 19 August—following a stormy journey across the Gulf of Lyon, he debarked at Barcelona, without taking so much time he continued his trip to Madrid, passing by Lérida, Daroca, Guadalajara and Alcalá. On 13 September, he reached Madrid where not a few Castilian friars were already waiting for him. Philip II received him in audience on 20 September at El Escorial. The monarch pledged his support to his actions and sent him to his confessor the Dominican Diego de Chaves. On the following day, he interviewed with Chaves who expressed the king's wish to see "houses of Recollects, friars as well as nuns, established in this province and in other provinces in Spain, because on this matter His Majesty has informed many days ago that many religious want it and would so want that the general would deal with men of religion, counsel and prudence, and it were possible, he would implement it."

On 27 September, Petrocchini summoned ten of the “more serious” religious of the province to Madrid, and with his consent decided to advance the date of the chapter from the spring of 1589 to 30 November. They all firmed up their decision to celebrate it in the Convent of Toledo, for it was the most accessible to majority of the delegates.

Then, Petrocchini visited the convent of Madrid and the most important ones in the province: Segovia, Valladolid, Dueñas, Burgos, Medina del Campo, Salamanca and others. In all of them he left behind a message of peace—a word most frequently used in that part of his *Registrum*. He advocated the strict compliance of the new rubrics in the celebration of the Mass and Divine Office; he ordered the acquisition of liturgical books, ornaments and sacred vessels; regulated personal money; prohibited games of chance; dictated norms on silence, the cloister, the dealing with the sick and guests, prohibited reelections; he rebuked the despotism of some superiors; he was preoccupied with study, libraries and administration of temporal goods.

In the decrees with which he used to wind up his visit to different convents, Petrocchini proposed an organic reform that included the principal aspects of religious life. They did not live up to those of Father Girolamo Seripando and were superior to those which Tadeo Guidelli had promulgated fifteen years earlier. Unfortunately, Petrocchini himself was a factor in undermining the effectiveness of his work by repeated—and sometimes imprudent—dispensations. He was lenient in authorizing the long residence of religious outside the cloister and in convents of their own choice. His facility to grant some religious the enjoyment of pensions and chaplaincies would cause some negative outcome. Many of the religious who benefited from such privileges were aged or illustrious ones, and the motives alluded to—publication of books, assistance to impoverished relatives—seemed to justify such concessions. But once the road was opened, it would be extremely difficult to avoid infiltrations of favoritism. It would have been better to submit the use of money to strictest control by superiors. In fact, some of the concessions were aimed only to suit the vanities and whims of the fortunate ones. He permitted some to construct special rooms, and later they would enjoy them for the rest of their lives. He recognized the traditional exemptions and privileges of teachers, although he ordered

them to attend the conventual mass—when they were not reasonably impeded—and at the common refectory unless they felt indisposed.

Petrocchini's character had a penchant for condescendence and benevolence. He loved regular discipline and exerted effort to put it into practice in the Order. Nevertheless, it should never have been easy for him to synchronize with the promoters of the Recollection and the Discalced. Not one word appeared in his registers although occasions for him to approve them had never been wanting. He rarely celebrated Mass and went to the refectory only during significant festivities. He enjoyed it when he was able to be part of the cause for peace and harmony among religious; he preferred love to fear by his subjects; he condoned punishment or, at least, dissimulated it; he listened to legal actions and tried to settle personal grudges as soon as possible; he was preoccupied with the ill and the aged; he exhorted superiors to deal with them with care and accommodate them in well-equipped infirmaries; superiors' harsh words horrified him; he easily absolved canonical irregularities; he raised his voice against any possible maltreatment of *Indios*; and he was very sensitive to the financial needs of the relatives of religious, even to the point of disconcerting the conscience of remiss superiors.

On 29 November 1588, he showed up in Toledo where the capitular delegates had already convened. The atmosphere was tense and the minds were deeply divided. The general must reach out through reason and arguments to urge them to peace and harmony: "*multis rationibus et argumentis nixi sumus eos ad pacem hortari*", he would write in his register (*Bullarium* 1, 35). He then appointed as judges three religious who had accompanied him in his visit—Gaspar de Saona, Andrés de San Ginés and Mariano de Pésaro—and the Castilians—Gaspar de Melo and Gabriel de Goldáraz.

On 2 December, the *Corregidor* of the City and Andrés Fernández showed up at the chapter with similar royal messages. Petrocchini did not specify the meaning of the latter's intervention. He would simply annotate that his words were well



**Fray Luis de Leon (1527-1591):  
Poet, Mystic, Author of *Forma  
de Vivir* (1589)**

received by the assembly and proposed many things—some had been resolved, others yet to be resolved. Fortunately, Andrés Fernández published a document that explained the origin and purpose of that delegation. On 20 November, García de Loáisía (1542-1599), preceptor of Prince Philip and future bishop of Toledo, had sent the king a note wherein he announced the forthcoming chapter and would suggest the convenience of reminding the general about the points taken at El Escorial:

The chapter which the general is having in this Province will take place this coming Thursday. It would be convenient—if it pleases Your Majesty—to write the general and the Chapter so they would recommend to the Lord Your Majesty’s health and that of his Highness, and the matters so be discussed. Likewise, they would elect the provincial without strong feelings, and that about the Recollect houses for the reform, and in general what Your Majesty had ordained to be relayed by Father Diego de Chaves.

**Philip II responded with the following handwritten note:**

It will be all right if you communicate all this to Fray Diego de Chaves and later to the teacher Mateo Vázquez to see what will be good, except for the first question is very good. And as for the other matters, it would be better to write them in the belief that someone who personally tell him and remember it, since they are many people in Toledo for that matter.

From the simultaneous reading of these two sources we can deduce clearly enough that the corregidor of Toledo and Don Andrés Fernández were in charge of transmitting to the chapter the message of Philip II on the establishment of Recollect houses in the province, even though Petrocchini did not affirm it explicitly. He merely said the Corregidor presented two letters from the king. In the first he asked for prayers for his health and for the health of the prince heir as well as for the peace and happiness of the State. In the second letter, he ordered that he listened to Don Andrés whose sole mission was to communicate his will: “*quia quaecumque dixerit e eius voto dicet.*” And it ended with the designated reference to the oral message of



Fernández and to his exhortation to reestablish the peace and follow the royal will.

The next day the election of the provincial took place. The general again felt compelled to encourage the delegates to tone down all strong feelings and to elect the most suited to promote “the glory of God, the growth of the Order and peace in the Province.” The manner of election was then discussed. Fray Luis de León—in his name and in some delegates’ name—suggested that the election would be left in the hands of the general. Pedro de Rojas, the general and others thought it convenient to select religious from another province and to limit the candidates to two or three. Finally, in accordance with the general’s initial proposal, all the suggestions were rejected, and they opted to follow the usual constitutional process and that each one could vote for whomever he wished: “*ita ut unusquisque posset eligere quem vellet*,” so that each one can elect whomsoever he wishes.

The sixty-eight electors present distributed their votes in this manner: “31 voted Pedro de Rojas, of the reformist party and prior of the convent of Madrid; 26 for Gaspar de Saona, a Castilian who transferred in 1569 to Aragon Province, of which he was the incumbent provincial and since Igualada had not separated from the general; six for Gabriel de Goldáraz; three for Gaspar de Melo; one each for Fray Luis de León and for Martín de Perea. When the required majority was not reached, another election ensued; this time in accordance with the Constitutions only Rojas, Saona and Goldáraz were in the list. Rojas got 33, Saona 26, Goldáraz seven. Once again this second vote did not get the desired result. But the general — using his extraordinary faculties—declared Pedro de Rojas elected since he needed only vote: “so that the uproar would cease and the discussion would not continue *ad infinitum: ne esset progressus in infinitum et ne amplius tumultuaretur*” (Bull 1, 41).

On the 5<sup>th</sup> day of December, the full council, composed of nine religious, promulgated eighteen acts or ordinances on governance and life of the province. One of them—the fifth—was the foundational ordinance of the Recollection:

Since there are or can be among us some brothers so desirous of monastic perfection that they would want to follow a more austere plan of life, and whose legitimate desire is to be furthered so that no obstacles be placed in the part of the work of the Holy Spirit,

after duly consulting our most reverend father general and having implored his leave, we determine that, in our Province, three or more monasteries for me be set a side or newly founded and the same number for women, in which a stricter form of life may be practised, which the father provincial with his council shall prescribe after a mature reflection.

The remaining seventeen ordinances of the chapter tried to eliminate some abuses that had infiltrated into the province. But any desire for a more austere life was not apparent in them. Some even departed from the spirit of Tridentine reforms and that of the general chapter of 1564. The seventh ordinance, for example, legitimated the personal *peculium*, and although, it exerted effort to regulate it, even prohibiting the superior from implementing it to benefit the convent, with the pretext that this way it would incite the religious to break the vow of poverty and become proprietors, “*dabitur ipsis magna causa haec nostra statuta violandi ei in proprietatis peccatum incidendi.*” The eighth ordinance approved the play of cards. The eleventh ordinance allowed the application of the Mass for the personal intention of the religious. And the thirteenth ordinance permitted them to defend the honorific titles with debatable applications of Gospel texts. All seemed to indicate that the fifth ordinance was a fruit of a limited group of religious, favored by the monarch whose will the chapter could not go against. On the 5<sup>th</sup> day, the general dispatched Juan de Cahaes and Cristóbal de Santotis to El Escorial to communicate to the king the success of the chapter, and in a more particular way, the election of the provincial.

The general granted his previous consent, as gleaned from that very letter of the ordinance. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of December, he confirmed it together with seventeen other ordinances. And on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April of the following year 1589, he expressly authorized the prior provincial to put it into practice. But apparently Petrocchini did not put special emphasis on it. He did not even take part in the capitular session wherein the ordinance was redacted. The decrees he addressed to the provincial at the end of the chapter revealed the exact compliance of the Constitutions, but did not divulge the cravings for greater austerity. He proceeded to visit the provinces of Andalusia and Portugal. In Sevilla he presided over the provincial chapter of Andalusia. From Braga, he issued some statutes to the latter. But never in a single moment, did he feel any desire to set up Recollect houses.

The reformist party was headed by Jerónimo de Guevara (1554-1589), Luis de León (1528-1591) and Pedro de Rojas (†1602). Juan Quijano (1572-1635), Jerónimo de Guevara's confidante and assistant, confirmed this in *Memorias para la provincia de Castilla desde 1588 hasta 1632* [Memoirs for the Province of Castile from 1588 to 1632]. In a paragraph with a rather awkward syntax, but full of life and truth, he narrated the meeting of the three in the cell of Father Pedro de Rojas on the eve of the chapter of Toledo:

Allow me to say what happened when one night I was inside the cell of Father Pedro de Rojas, at that time prior of San Felipe, and Father Master Luis de León and our Father Jerónimo de Guevara. I was a newly professed, having made the profession only two days ago. Father Jerónimo died within four months. May God keep him in heaven.

The three were very kind to me, although I was still a child, but on different respect [...] they made sit me at the feet of one so I could warm myself. They started to discuss how and in what manner were they to establish the monastery, so poor, so distant from the noise, what constitutions, and in the way they wore the habit and everything. At the end, it was said about the idea of the first constitutions, certainly well established and observant, any way, like the great ingenuities the three had been.

I, though still a child, looked at them and very attentively listened to them, and I remembered that I was reading the life of holy Mother Teresa of Jesus and what she herself wrote: what she also experienced when she



**The Restored Convent of Saint Augustine in Talavera de la Reina, Toledo: Cradle of the Augustinian Recollection (1589)**

was young and was setting up hermitages. She and her mother wanted to be hermits. Father Master Fray Luis de León took my head by the hand and I looked at him and he told me: ‘Fray Juan, and do you wish to come with us to this monastery?’ I told him: ‘Yes, certainly, but are you not going there?’ ‘Well, what do you think,’ he said to me. ‘Why not? I do not think that you are going there; you are not for such a harsh life. Just leave it to Father Jerónimo.’

Father Jerónimo de Guevara, son of the Count and Countess of Escalante and theology professor, loved recollection and penance. Still a young professed, he dreamt of poor and small monasteries. His dealing with Ana de Jesús, prioress of the Discalced Carmelites of Madrid since September of 1586, reinforced such proclivities and helped him plan its structures. In 1588 he spoke with Philip II—who admired his oratory talents—about setting up more observant houses in the province and won the support of some “princes and lords.” One of them was the future Count of Salinas, Diego de Silva y Mendoza (1564-1630), who in the coming lustrums would be the most powerful buttress of the Recollects.

Fray Luis de León laid at the service of the Recollection his extraordinary intellectual, moral and personality qualities. He was a complete man, of a clear understanding and mettle, an enemy of deceitfulness, hypocrisy and wishy-washy attitude. All his life he was ready to fight for equality, studies and discipline. He was not yet thirty years old when he pronounced his famous speech at the provincial chapter in Dueñas (1557). In 1563, he wrote the general in defense of the rights of teachers. In 1579 and 1582, he opposed Pedro Suárez and Juan de Guevara, a friend and colleague in the old competitions at the university. In 1587, he protested against some excesses in authority by the chapter of Burgos and in the following year he asked the provincial Antonio Monte to justify the expenses he incurred during his trip to Rome. Towards 1587, his concerns for reforms were shaping up more concretely.

The influence of Fray Luis de Granada still lived on. He was reading at least since 1572. But the foremost inspiration originated from Teresa de Jesús. His conscientious reading of the saint’s works—whose first complete edition was published in 1588 by the Council of Castile—and the constant contact with her faithful disciple Ana

de Jesús (1545-1621), to whom he had devoted his *Exposition on the Book of Job* in the last days of his life, would endear him to the Carmelite reform where one of his nieces had professed and move him to cast after Teresian patterns the foundation of houses of greater observance in the province of Castile.

Pedro de Rojas' intervention had less importance. The sources recall his belonging to the reformist party (1582), his signature in Fray Luis de León's appeal for the establishment of Recollect houses in the province, his going with the prior general in his visit to the El Escorial and his agreement with Fray Luis de León and Jerónimo de Guevara in the eve of the chapter. After the chapter and during his entire term as prior provincial (1588-1491), he stood by the Recollects. He approved their Constitutions at once, provided them with a house in Talavera and authorized the foundation of a new house in Portillo. His conduct with the nuns ran along the same line. On 6 September, he authorized the foundation of the first convent of the female branch of the Recollection and three months later he invested the habit on the first aspirants.

### **Life at Talavera de la Reina**

Strictly speaking, the first convent of the Augustinian Recollection was at Pastrana in Guadalajara, Spain. It was founded in April 1589 but without the required permit of local and provincial authorities. The admission of the *donado* Francisco de Jesús on 22 April 1589 made him the first professed of the Recollection. In the wake of intrigues created by some clerics of Pastrana, the convent was ordered closed exactly a year later by the cardinal-archbishop of Toledo. The dispersed conventuals went to other Augustinian convents.

The Convent of Talavera de la Reina in Toledo was poor and bereft of comfort. It was Saint Alonso de Orozco who founded it in 1566. Since 1569, it was a novitiate. In 1576, there were twenty religious, known for their poverty and observance. Since the failed experience at Pastrana, many religious who—desirous of embracing the new way of life—had repaired to Talavera. On 19 October 1589, they were able to make their dream a reality. Cristóbal de Orellana, commissioned by the provincial who in turn was pressured by the

monarch and García de Loáisa, dissolved the old community and installed the first Recollect community.

Eight religious composed the group that was headed by Father Francisco Briones and Father José de Parada. The first one governed the community for two years. He then became novice master. Lastly, he lived in Nava del Rey where he died in 1600 with a fame of sanctity. Information has been gathered with a view for his eventual canonization. Father José de Parada excelled in his love for the sick. In order to serve them more, he learned the profession of surgeon. He had to return to the province for health reasons. He passed away in Salamanca in 1619. Quijano recalled having seen him “crippled, unable to move or turn.” Among the members of the community were Baltasar Martel, prior of Pastrana; Andrés Díaz, a professed from Madrid, to whom primitive history would attribute the transfer of the Discalced Movement to Italy; Gabriel Hurtado, Juan de Pamplona, Francisco de Tapia, first prior of Portillo, and García del Prado (*Crónicas* I, 152b).

The life of the friars at Talavera was poor, austere but totally focused on God in whose praises a great part of the day was spent. Their asceticism had earned for them the admiration of the people who for some time provided for their sustenance without the necessity of being solicited by the collection. In 1590 or 1591, a crew of farm workers and mechanics, who were joined by some arrogant noblemen, pulled down the wall that diametrically crossed the orchard of the convent and thus obstructed the ventilation. In January 1603, the town council authorized them to set up a college of ecclesiastical studies in La Estrella, although shortly afterward it had to withdraw the permit in the face of stiff opposition posed by Trinitarians, Franciscans and Dominicans. In 1608, the council defended them against the arbitrary actions of the Calced Augustinian provincial who had ordered them to wear shoes.

The Province closely followed their lifestyle and very soon came other religious who were anxious to share it. Among them was Juan de Castro (1547-1611), a man of great holiness and distinguished oratorical talent. His life showed that those friars did not dissociate themselves from the people. They preached the Word of God, took care of the spiritual needs of the people and cultivated the cult to the Crucified One and the Virgin under the special invocation of Our Lady of Peace.

The devotion to the title of *Ave María* which in time would give the name to the convent dated back to 1629, with the patronage of Marquis of Montecarlos, former viceroy of Mexico and Peru. In his last will and testament, he ordered his executors to comply with a provision in his old last will—done in Lima in September 1614—in which he and his first wife Ana Mejía had provided for the foundation of a Recollect convent with such title.

### **The Convents of Portillo and Nava del Rey**

The foundation of other Recollect convents ensued. The Convent of Portillo in Valladolid was juridically established on 29 June 1590 by Fray Luis de León. Fray Francisco de Tapia, a Talavera pioneer, was appointed prior of the new community. There used to be an ancient hermitage dedicated to the Mother of God under the invocation of *Virgen de la Fuensanta*. In due time twelve friars resided in it. In some occasions, such as Lent, the friars went out to assist adjoining churches in confession and preaching. The town council agreed to their complete sustenance in exchange for some conditions, like no property ownership, and it would perpetually remain Recollect.

The third Recollect convent was founded in Nava del Rey, also in Valladolid, in June 1591. Its site was beside a hermitage dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. The friars were obliged to attend to the spiritual care of the people in exchange for such conditions as sustenance of eight friars in the community, “two of whom should be preachers and another two confessors, and a *donado* tasked to ask for alms.”





# The First Augustinian Recollect Mission to the Philippines<sup>1</sup>

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José María Echeverría, OAR

## Prologue

Before customarily dispatching his royal orders to the president and the official magistrates of the *Casa de contratación* [House of Trade], the Spanish monarch had provided the Augustinian Recollects with necessary travel expenses and a place in Manila where to establish their convents. But the sure thing was that—in spite of the generous royal support—they could not escape the enormous hardships anent a voyage too lengthy and arduous. The transport conditions at the outset of the 17<sup>th</sup> century that left much to be desired were public knowledge. Less known, however, was the royal order issued at the royal palace at Valladolid for the transfer of the missionaries from their convents to their destination, and there were not enough funds to defray all the expenses. Sometimes they arrived in abject poverty, after walking the entire stretch, but the fortunate ones rode on donkeys. The amount allocated daily for each religious was a real and a half, traveling eight leagues a day from their convents to Sevilla designated as the obligatory point of embarkation.

At times, the customary practice was to wait for months at Sevilla. To defray the prolonged stay, a daily allowance of a real and a half was given each missionary. Most of the time, however, this amount was not enough. Thus, the Dominican Diego Aduarte

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<sup>1</sup> This is a translation of the second chapter of the José María Echeverría's doctoral dissertation titled *Orígenes de las misiones de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Agustinos Recoletos en el Extremo Oriente* (1953)27-43.

complained in a report dated 20 January 1606. To all these it was necessary to add the countless inconveniences to comply with the requirements for final approval by the *Consejo de Indias* [Council of the Indies], with the demands by the *Casa de contratación*, and other fees for official employees, as clerk, helper, etc.

### A Journey on foot to Sevilla

The details of the journey of the fourteen heroic Recollects from their convents down to the embarkation point were bypassed by the historians of the Order, who indicated only those important points in the itinerary: Madrid, Sevilla, Sanlúcar de Barrameda. Neither were the dates of their pioneering voyage pinpointed. From a document of the *Archivo General de Indias*, we can deduce that the missionaries arrived in different groups. The last to arrive in Sevilla was Father Juan de San Jerónimo who, in his capacity as immediate past provincial, had to attend the chapter that took place in Madrid and started on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April. According to the same archival document, it was on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of May when twelve of the religious missionaries were already in Sevilla.

The vicar provincial Father Juan de San Jerónimo headed the first mission expedition to the Philippines. The other thirteen missionaries were Father Andrés Cánovas de San Nicolás, Father Jerónimo de Cristo, Father Miguel de la Madre de Dios surnamed Bombau, Father Diego de la Anunciación, Father Argentaes de San Fulgencio, Father Rodrigo de San Miguel surnamed Aganduru, Father Francisco de la Madre de Dios, Father Francisco Bautista and Fray Andrés del Espíritu Santo who was a professed religious but not an ordained priest yet. There were four



**The Monument of the 400 Years of Continuing Presence of OAR in the Philippines and Asia, erected at Plaza Independencia, Cebu City in May 2006**

religious brothers: Juan de San Guillermo, Jerónimo de la Madre de Dios, Juan de San Jerónimo and Simón de San José.

The journey from their convents down to Sevilla was long. The friars had to cross the regions of La Mancha and Andalusia. They were mandated to travel on foot. *Forma de Vivir* [The Way of Life], written by Fray Luis de León for the first Augustinian Recollects, prohibited trips in any manner except on foot or out of necessity on donkeys. Their apparel was not suited for long trips: a coarse dress or black sackcloth, long down to the ankle, with little rough and narrow sleeves, and an inner garment of cloth.

In Sevilla, they lodged at the convent of the Augustinian Fathers of the Observance. That year was terrible for the people of Andalusia. Hunger had spread to towns and cities. It was timely for the monarch to come to the aid of innumerable famished subjects by dispatching to them caravans of wheat from different parts of Europe. The missionaries lived exemplary lives, noted for their continuous prayer and exercises of mortification, at times sprinkling with their blood the floor of the choir loft.

### **From Sevilla across the Atlantic**

During their sojourn in Sevilla from 25 April when the first religious arrived till 25 June, they had time to prepare the necessary provisions for the transoceanic voyage. When the time came for them to embark, they proceeded to Sanlúcar de Barrameda and remained there until they lifted anchor.

It was the custom prior to embarkation to hand over to each missionary a mattress, pillow, a blanket and a habit corresponding to his order, and likewise to supply him with the essential food provisions for the long voyage. With the ship captain, they arranged the fare which varied with the season. Thus in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it was 40 ducats for each religious priest and solely 30 ducats for the religious brother supposedly for occupying less space and for bringing neither books nor accessories. According to a document from the *Archivo General de Indias* [General Archive of the Indies] of Sevilla, such allowance was not denied of the Recollects. According to the same document, they were provided with necessary clothes, mattresses and provisions. Each religious was given a habit, blanket and pillow. In addition, the transport fare was arranged with the captain of the

ship *Santa Maria del Juncal*, Juan Zarco, who was going to Mexico in the company of the fleet of Alonso Chaves Galindo.

The ship lifted anchor on 12 July 1605. Carlos Pereira, author of the book *Historia de la América Española* [History of Spanish America], described the voyage to the Indies. He said sea travel depended upon sea currents, seasonal winds and piratical attacks. The most important route, dubbed as the route to the Indies since the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, departed from Sanlúcar de Barrameda, passing by the Canary Islands, Barlovento Islands, Cartagena de Indias [Colombia], Nombre de Dios [Panamá], Grand Antilles and Vera Cruz in Mexico. The distance between the starting point Sanlúcar and the destination Vera Cruz was estimated to be 1,700 leagues, and travel time was not less than two months and a half.

The most appropriate season for departure for ships was from early April to the first days of June. The distance between Sanlúcar and the Canary Islands was estimated to be 250 leagues. And travel time was eight to ten days. The route was from Canaries to the Atlantic Ocean. The trip would at least take twenty-five days with unfavorable winds. From the Grand Canary Island, the ship would traverse thirty leagues south and from there it headed west and a quarter southeast, until it reached fifteen degrees thirty minutes (15° 30“) latitude where the Deseada Island or the Marie Galante Island was located. This route was later on modified. With the Deseada Island on view, the ship dropped anchor at Dominica.

### **Father Rodrigo de San Miguel describes the maritime voyage**

This was the route taken by the Augustinian Recollects. Here now is the eyewitness account of Father Rodrigo de San Miguel who, gifted with an extraordinary spirit of observation, describes it for us: “We viewed the Canary Islands. Passing through the Bay of the Damas, which was 800 leagues away, we discovered the Deseada Island, Marie Galante, Dominica, Guadeloupe and other villages peopled by Caribbean cannibals. Having replenished our water supply, the fleet moved on and we viewed the island of Santa Cruz, San Juan de Puerto Rico and Española [Hispaniola, Santo Domingo], Jamaica and Cuba. We looked for the gulf and we proceeded to the Gulf of Mexico. In a few days we dropped anchor at the port of San Juan de Ulúa.” With these concise words Father Rodrigo described

the sea voyage. We add some more details from other historians' accounts.

The voyage to the Indies was difficult and risky. Dried meat, hardened biscuit, fish in the least palatable conditions and equally hardly potable water constituted the passengers' daily fare. This undiversified food, on the one hand, and the excessive heat, on the other, produced in the long run devastating effects on the health of those poor travelers, turning ships into veritable hospitals. This voyage to the Philippines, said Father Constantino Bayle, author of the 1936 book *Expansión misional de España* [Missionary Expansion of Spain], was incomparably harsher than any expedition to America. Such voyage across the Pacific was added to that of the Atlantic and on board those most grueling and unsafe ships, with two out of three that ended up shipwrecked.

### **Strict observance of Fray Luis de León's Way of Life**

Nevertheless, these undertakings were not a hindrance nor did they diminish the missionary fervor with which they left their convents. "Those zealous missionaries went on, brimming with God," the author of the *General History of the Augustinian Recollects* Fray Andrés de San Nicolás assures us. Thus, they did not lose their focus on any single provision of their observance and they complied with their religious obligations as they would have done in the most withdrawn novitiate of those they had left behind in Spanish, although they went amid drudgery and bristle that seemed bereft of remedy, so brimful in long voyages to the Indies. They did not stop the two-hour mental prayer, the chanted Divine Office, silence, fasting and discipline. If they had time to spare from these exercises, they used it for preaching and visiting the sick they attended to and served as part of their duty.

The Recollects put into practice the apostolate of charity in other ships where no minister of the Lord was travelling. When fair weather allowed, they boarded the ships, heard the confession of the crew, preached the Word of God, and attended to ailing persons. For this, they were highly admired by their fellow passengers. One of those who sympathized with them was the chief commander of the fleet who made use of all the connections to deal with the priests. He had put so much confidence in those fervent missionaries that he

declared that they expected to arrive safely in Mexico, thanks to their fervent prayers.

### Sojourn at Veracruz and Puebla de los Angeles

On September 17, the squadron docked at Veracruz. After a brief stay in Veracruz, the Recollects continued their journey on foot to Mexico City. It had been a harsh and long transoceanic odyssey, coupled with some long and punishing days of walking on land. The missionaries were constrained to move on to Mexico City in order to present themselves to the viceroy and obtain from him the required passage to the Philippines. The distance was



**Mexican stopovers: from Veracruz eastward to Puebla, then to Mexico City, and finally to Acapulco. Sojourn: 17 Sept. 1605-22 Feb. 1606.**

eighty leagues, and it was necessary to make it in a short time. The royal treasury could only provide the religious with provisions that would last ten days. Now then, to march in groups and not to walk for more than five or six leagues for a day was the rule. Many robust religious could reach the capital in twenty days.

The first stage was Puebla de los Angeles where the Recollects lingered for a few days. They were welcomed guests at the convent of the Augustinians of the Observance. Their sojourn at this Augustinian convent won the admiration of everyone and it left behind a memory of their heroic virtues, particularly abject poverty and deep humility. Their exemplary behavior enkindled a great deal the Augustinian hosts so that some of them offered themselves to the Recollect vicar provincial to accompany them to the Philippines or where he wanted to take them, pledging to live the same Recollect way of life. Father Juan de San Jerónimo did not want to admit them, in the same manner that he did not receive others who made similar pleadings much later despite having the permission to accept them. The reason for refusing them was that he did not have a convent to accommodate them as well as to avoid frictions and misunderstandings with the Augustinian confreres.

**Exemplary lives of holiness and humility in Mexico City**

After a moving farewell, they resumed the journey to Mexico City. The superior of the Colegio de San Pablo in the capital city, Father Diego de Contreras, later named Archbishop of Santo Domingo, went out together with the religious community in a procession to welcome the Recollects. He accommodated them in his college, treating with every kindness possible, and providing them with a room where they sojourned until Father Juan de San Jerónimo could rent a convenient house elsewhere.

The new residence was soon transformed into a convent of the strictest observance. The first step taken once established in the new house was the observance of the early Constitutions of the Augustinian Recollection. During the journey, they tried to implement the *Forma de vivir* but many events beyond their control made implementation partly impossible. The missionaries did not leave the residence unless called for such works of charity as confession and preaching. The main activity of the day was meditation, recitation of the Divine Office and mortification practices. Their yearning for perfection had reached so far that there existed among them a holy emulation to acquire virtues.

The sweet odor of sanctity of the Augustinian Recollect missionaries and their very austere lifestyle had quickly spread throughout the city. A style of so exemplary a life pleased everyone and petitions to stay with them were heaped upon the vicar provincial, and at least some people promised to provide them with a residence. The advantage of setting up a house in Mexico City was to have a residence for subsequent missionaries. Such plan was not unknown to Father Juan. But he believed it would be defrauding the objective of the provincial chapter at that moment. And perhaps to free himself from repeated entreaties for admission he expedited their transfer to the port of Acapulco.

**Acapulco: last stopover of the odyssey to the Philippines**

Acapulco was the last station in the American continent. It was towards the end of 1605 when they left Mexico City for Acapulco. Again there were the irritants in the journey: harsh and annoying roads. Nonetheless, they maintained the same lifestyle

they had observed both at sea and on land. The historians of the Recollection had nothing much to tell us about their two-month sojourn in Acapulco. They were supposedly provided with a house in this port city, like in Mexico City, where they lived the Recollect way of life until their embarkation day.

### **Crossing the Pacific**

On 22 February 1606,<sup>2</sup> the galleon *Espíritu Santo* lifted anchor and went ahead of two other galleons that were to take the same route to the Orient. The fourteen heroic missionaries burst with joy on board the galleon because it was the last phase, albeit the longest, in their odyssey.

The sea travel to the southern sea followed designated routes like those from Spain to the American continent. The distance was calculated between 1,600 to 1,700 leagues, along adopted routes, and time travel for that distance was two months and a half. When the departure was fixed in November, the ship sailed southward from Acapulco harbor down to 12 degrees on the same altitude with the Philippine Islands, thereafter steering directly westward. The return voyage was done along a much longer route because it had to go up north to avoid the opposing winds and to seek northerly winds. The ship went up to 39 degrees, then continuously steering towards the east and following the coast from California. The return trip to America needed twice the time.

### **Andrés del Espíritu Santo on miraculous events on board**

Father Andrés del Espíritu Santo tells us about some events in the ship which their fellow travelers deemed miraculous. They attributed them to the prayers and the saintly life of the religious. The first was a fire that broke out aboard, and the flames almost reached the barrels of gunpowder stocked in the gunpowder room. They discovered it in the nick of time so that a slight delay could have been fatal. The second event was even more remarkable. The

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<sup>2</sup>This date of departure from Acapulco for the Philippines is confirmed by four Recollect historians and chroniclers: Andrés del Espíritu Santo, Andrés de San Nicolás, José de la Concepción and Juan de la Concepción. Another Recollect historian and member of the first missionary expedition, Rodrigo de San Miguel, however, had another date: 26 February.



evening was calm and clear. From the prow came voices that caused alarm among the passengers: "Land ahoy! Land ahoy!" The pilots were bewildered because no signs or indications of shoals or reefs at those latitudes were indicated in their charts. Quickly, they became aware of the risks. Yet all the diligence and the expertise of the sailors proved useless. They earnestly asked the religious for reconciliation with God.

Amidst these uncertainties, the sailors maneuvered the ship through those waves, incapable of steering it in the wind or docking it somewhere, as if passing through a channel. They tried to fathom the depth but the exit of the ship and mooring it in the reefs prohibited the officers from making an adjustment of the computation of the depth. After having navigated a good stretch, they took the same route without any hitch amidst so many reefs. They were at last in the high seas and free from all hazards. They accurately outlined these shoals in the charts. In other voyages a barren island surrounded by reefs was noted.

The occurrence astonished them most because Father Andrés Canóvas de San Nicolás, in a sermon of the previous afternoon, spoke against the passengers' love for comfort and insolence. He exhorted them to hate sin and confess their faults because that same evening a danger threatened them. In view of such omens, life on board radically changed. From then on, the passengers' greatest satisfaction was to listen to the Fathers' teachings, especially those of Father Andrés. What was previously the den of dissipation for soldiers, sailors and cabin boys had turned into a convent of observance where a perfect Christian life was lived.

### **Near the Ladrões Island, the holy Father Andrés dies on board**

Father Andrés Cánovas de San Nicolás fell ill near Ladrões Island. Aware that he was in the end of his journey on earth, he received the holy sacraments. He exhorted his confreres to persevere in the task for the conversion of pagans they had commenced. He prophesied that the Lord had reserved for them a house near Manila then under construction, telling them: "Fathers, don't be disconsolate because Divine Providence is already working in Manila on what would be the first convent." Not long afterwards, this prediction became a reality.

Moments before his death, he asked them to read the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, mourned by all and with the serenity of the saints, he gave up his spirit to God. Convinced that he was a saint, many opposed the plan to hurl his corpse into the sea. The vicar provincial, however, did not accede to the entreaty. Sealed in a wooden box, with a brief inscription of his name on a lead panel, the cadaver was cast into the ocean. In such cases, it was customary to tie to the feet of the dead person a water carafe or a large jar filled with water, well covered, so that with such weight it could not float in the surface. They forgot to do it but to everyone's great surprise the body simply sank when it fell into the sea.

It was to his intercession in heaven that everyone attributed the prodigy when malignant fevers ceased after wrecking so much havoc on the crew. The violent fever overcame the ill persons and caused them to lose their sanity. Some sick people jumped overboard. Forty persons had perished in twenty-two days. But since the demise of the illustrious friar from Zaragoza, Father Andrés, the epidemic ended completely. At his deathbed, he had told them: "When I'll be in God's presence, I shall pray for all."

### **The Recollects land in Cebu on 12 May 1606**

The view of the Marianas Islands overwhelmed the Recollects with joy. They had almost reached their destination. Furthermore, another prediction made by Father Andrés Cánovas de San Nicolás was fulfilled. He had predicted that vicissitudes and perils would arise upon arrival at the archipelago. And so it came to pass that a few days after this prediction a violent storm struck. Miraculously, they came out unscathed. At long last, they arrived at the place they had so much longed for. It was 10 May when the galleon *Espíritu Santo* sailed into San Bernardino Strait. Right there the captain of the ship received orders not to proceed to Manila but to stay awhile in Cebu City. The reason was that the governor general, Don Pedro Bravo de Acuña, was occupied with the conquest of the Moluccas. He wanted at hand the ship as much as those supplies which he had earlier asked from Mexico. Hence, they proceeded to Cebu where they disembarked on 12 May 1606.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>It is evident, says Father Francisco Sádaba, from a painting in the convent of the Augustinian Recollects of that old capital of the Visayas. See Francisco SÁDABA, *Catálogo de los religiosos agustinos recoletos de la*

The thirteen apostles, clad with patched-up coarse habit, walked to the convent of the Augustinian Fathers. Beside the gate of the convent and church, a deeply moving scene that would be engraved forever in the memory of that group of heroes. The Augustinian bishop, Msgr. Pedro de Agurto, accompanied by other religious and clergymen, went out in procession to welcome the new missionaries. He embraced them all, one by one, and kissed the habit they donned, saying: "This is my habit; in this habit, they received me into the Order. This habit was worn for many years in my Province."<sup>4</sup> He then sang the *Te Deum* hymn which he chanted alternately with the priests and choir singers who accompanied him as they moved towards the main altar. He ended the welcome rite by giving thanks to the Almighty for the safe and happy arrival of the religious.

The bishop wanted the Recollects to stay in Cebu to devote their time to preaching the holy Gospel. For this purpose, he offered them a hermitage. The vicar provincial did not accept it because they had to proceed to Manila and to present the royal orders and other dispatches to the governor general. In addition, Father Juan de San Jerónimo's objective was to establish the first house at the Philippine capital.

### **Arrival in Manila on 15 May**

When the first opportunity came, the Augustinian Recollect pioneers left for Manila. It was the season for strong winds. They boarded different ships for the colonial capital and in diverse routes. On 15 May 1606, all were reunited in Manila.<sup>5</sup>

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*Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas desde el año 1606 en que llegó la primera misión hasta en 1606 nuestros días* (Madrid 1906) 34.

<sup>4</sup>The first Augustinians, founders of the Philippine missions, travelled from Mexico and donned a habit of coarse sackcloth of the Discalced and wore espadrilles. They continued wearing this habit for many years in the Philippines. Father Andrés del Espíritu Santo who wrote in 1650 affirmed that they still kept some habits and espadrilles of the founders in the archive of their convent in Mexico. Cf. *Relación del P. Andrés del Espíritu Santo del año 1649*, ARCHIVO HISTÓRICO PROVINCIAL DE MARCILLA, NAVARRA, ESPAÑA, Carpeta 84, f. 6.

<sup>5</sup>The first Recollect general chronicler Andrés de San Nicolás affirms that it was the 15<sup>th</sup> of May when the pioneers arrived in Manila. In 1879, another historian Patricio Marcellán said it was the 12<sup>th</sup> of May, a date

The Oriental metropolis, situated along the seashore and near the mouth of the Pasig River, was a pleasant and happy city. The most varied races lived together in that privileged capital. The magnificence it had over other Philippine towns was first held by the Rajah Soliman court and was improved by Legazpi. Trade with China flourished. It had spacious streets without crossroads. Its proud stone edifices competed with those of Spain. A massive stone wall with ramparts and artillery stations defended Manila from enemy attacks. Such was the Philippine capital when the Augustinian Recollects saw it for the first time. At that time, the bustle and excitement blended with the natural beauty of the city because of the good news stemming from the great success of Governor Pedro Bravo de Acuña with the capture of Ternate.

Father Juan de San Jerónimo had to face a priority problem — where to accommodate his religious. But Providence watched over them. An upright man, albeit poor in resources, offered them a small house with a garden outside the city walls in Bagumbayan where they together lived a recollected life until they found another place. Father Juan did not hesitate to accept it. That small community of Augustinian Recollects felt happier living in the small wooden house than in a pompous palace. The news of their arrival spread like wildfire in the city and many went to visit them. The religious of the Orders in Manila invited them to live in their respective convents but they politely declined it. However, the ailing religious transferred to the infirmary of the convent of the Dominican Fathers. Afterwards, on account of the repeated requests by the Calced Augustinian Fathers, those ailing friars moved to their convent of San Pablo.

### **The first convent at Bagumbayan, Manila**

On May 31, the governor made his triumphant entrance in Manila, after the capture of Ternate. When he knew of the new missionaries' arrival, he visited them at once. But an urgent matter forced him to leave for Cavite, so he was unable to read the dispatches.

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that contradicts the evidence that the first Recollects reached Cebu on that day. A Dominican historian says it was the 31<sup>st</sup> of May which coincided with the arrival of General Pedro Bravo de Acuña from Ternate. Both Marcellán and Andrés de San Nicolás, however, firmly asserted that the governor general was not yet in Manila when Father Juan de San Jerónimo's group reached the colonial capital.

It was the return voyage of the ships for Acapulco.<sup>6</sup> But it was too late for the governor because death suddenly snatched his life when he was at the zenith of his glory. For this reason, the royal orders and other dispatches were suspended for until reviewed by the Royal Audiencia.<sup>7</sup>

The arrival of the Recollects was not only welcomed by all but it also had a singular effect on the Augustinians, as stated by Father Licinio Ruiz.<sup>8</sup> It was evident from the Cebu bishop's letter to the king that in those days there were dissensions among the Calced Augustinians. The Recollects' coming somewhat abated those dissensions and brought peace and tranquility to the troubled community.



[left to right] Father Ángel Martínez Cuesta, Vice President Noli de Castro, NHCP Deputy Executive Director Emelita Almosara stand beside the landmark. The historical marker was unveiled on 7 December 2006 on the exact site of the first Augustinian Recollect convent at Maria Orosa Street, Luneta, Manila.

### **The First Convent of Bagumbayan**

The Recollects did not remain for long in the first house; on 24 July 1606, they took possession of the newly constructed convent at Bagumbayan.

The new edifice included the house and orchard which Governor Pedro Bravo de Acuña had ordered built. The house soon metamorphosed into a convent on 10 September 1606, feast of San Nicolás de Tolentino, the Recollects inaugurated the new convent and church in Manila. Both were dedicated to the great miracle-worker. Since then they were the convent and church of San Nicolás de Tolentino, indistinctly known much later as the Covent of San

<sup>6</sup> JUAN DE LA CONCEPCIÓN, *Historia general de Filipinas* IV, 249.

<sup>7</sup> ANDRÉS DE SAN NICOLÁS, *Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* I, 416.

<sup>8</sup> Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas* I (Manila 1925) 6.

Juan Bautista de Bagumbayan. A solemn mass was celebrated. It was attended by all the religious orders, the cathedral chapter, the Royal Audiencia, the nobility and residents of Manila. The main celebrant was the Bishop Pedro de Agurto. Father Pedro Solier, the provincial of the Augustinians, delivered an eloquent sermon in praise of the Augustinian Recollection.

The Recollects already had a convent of their own. Father Juan then wanted to designate a superior to govern them, although he himself could do it by virtue of the authority and credentials from Spain. He preferred it done in an election by all the religious and they concurred in electing Father Jerónimo de Cristo.

From that time on, a new lifestyle had commenced in the Augustinian Recollection. Until then, contemplation was its primordial characteristic. Thereafter, it was the apostolate without mitigating in the least Fray Luis de León's *Forma de vivir*. They fervently devoted time to spiritual assistance, administering the sacraments and preaching God's Word. Their pastoral work was very effective, especially at night when the city gates were shut and no nearby parishes existed. There were many incidents that disturbed the tranquility of the city, and the Augustinian Recollect missionaries were prepared for anything as it was their task that concerned the health of soul.

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## The Philippines' Oldest Carmel Icon at San Sebastian Basilica since 1618

In the 1991, book *The Spires of San Sebastian. The Story behind the Virgen del Carmen Image and the Only Prefabricated All-steel Church of Asia*, we introduced its first chapter with two direct quotations. One was culled from the main protagonist of the saga of the historic San Sebastian Church. Fray Rodrigo de San Miguel (†December 1626) was vicar provincial (1617-1622) of the Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines and first superior of the Recollect convent in the village of San Sebastian de Calumpang outside the Walled City of Manila. He wrote in 1626:

I set up the formation house—outside the city walls of Manila—and the convent of San Sebastian. Its ministry and confines are about a kilometer and a half away from the City, in the outskirts of Sampaloc. Foundation and estate of *Maestre de Campo* Don Bernardino Maldonado del Castillo, commander of Fort Santiago and patron of the Convent of San Nicolás in the walled city.

Furthermore, in the judgment of Fr. Rodrigo de San Miguel, the estate and house of Calumpang, donated to the Augustinian Recollects in 1621 by the Mexican *Maestre de Campo* Don Bernardino Maldonado del Castillo,<sup>1</sup> was a fitting place for convalescence and

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<sup>1</sup>A native of Mexico City, Don Bernardino Maldonado del Castillo was also a *regidor* [councilor] of the City of Manila. His wife Dona María Enríquez de Céspedes was a pious devotee of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino. The Census and Chaplaincy Book kept at San Nicolás Church until 1945

retirement for the missionaries after the much-needed improvements on its sanitary conditions.

Another source is Fray Andrés del Espíritu Santo (1585-1657), who like Fray Rodrigo de San Miguel came in 1606 to the Philippines with the first Recollect mission and prior provincial for two triennia—1626-1629 and 1632-1635— wrote in his historical account in 1650:

Fort Commander Don Bernardino del Castillo y Maldonado originally constructed a stone house in an estate he owned in those

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tells the story of Don Bernardino's conversion. In the early days of the Recollect missionaries at their first convent in Bagumbayan near the Walled City of Manila, he vehemently opposed through whatever means possible the progress of the Order and even verbally maltreated them. Saint Nicholas, continues the story, appeared to him in a dream, mercilessly whipping him, rebuking his reprehensible attitude towards the Recollects and threatening him with more punishment if he did not mend his ways. The story ends with Don Bernardino's change of heart and his eventual philanthropic undertakings in favor the budding Congregation. Historian Juan de la Concepción simply attributed the illustrious man's generosity to his having obtained a son, who later died, through the saint's intercession. But the impelling motive for undertaking and perfecting the work of both church and convent, Don Bernardino affirmed in a sworn statement, was "his having recognized in the Discalced Augustinian religious, from the time of their arrival in this city, learned, virtuous and serious men; and the knowledge that they were gathering much fruit in this community and among the natives round about." And "he was ready to spend much more, even to the extent of doing away with all his wealth, and to be left with only his assigned salary as fort commander; for the said Recollect religious deserve it by their example and virtue." After their benefactors' death, the Recollects buried them and put up their statues in their own church which was unfortunately devastated by the 1645 quake. Subsequent tremors of 1658, 1722 and 1863 ruined the rebuilt church edifices. San Nicolás church was destroyed during the Liberation of Manila in 1945 and eventually demolished not long after. The benefactors' remains cannot be found now. A bronze plaque, installed in 1952 near the front the door of San Sebastian Convent, pays homage to the hearts of gold of Don Bernardino Castillo Maldonado Rivera and Doña María Enríquez y Céspedes. Cf. RODRIGO DE SAN MIGUEL, *Conversión de Filipinas y Japón* in BPSN 75 (1916) 448; ANDRÉS DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO, 138; Licinio RUIZ. *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* (Manila 1925) I, 83-109; JUAN DE LA CONCEPCIÓN, *Historial general de Filipinas* in BR XXI, 284-285.

areas. Another edifice was annexed to it. A church also made of stone, well-built and curious-looking, was constructed. There was enough accommodation for eight religious.

Fray Andrés states additionally that the humble Augustinian Recollect house at San Sebastian de Calumpang was founded as a house of solace where religious, already fatigued by the labors of their ministry, desirous of seclusion from all noise and wishing to enjoy solace with the permission of their superiors, might have consolation. For this purpose it was founded.<sup>2</sup>

The bequeathed estate of Calumpang was truly an ideal location for spiritual retreat, withdrawal from the world and solace for the religious, very much in accord with the conventual and contemplative orientation of their new province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino of the Discalced, Reformed or Recollect Augustinians, popularly known as Recoletos. Such clearly contemplative orientation of the Augustinian Recollection was reflected in its early statutes. One of them highlighted the need for a house of prayer which Fray Andrés del Espíritu Santo stated in his account on San Sebastian convent:



Fray Miguel García Serrano, OSA  
(1569-1629), Archbishop  
of Manila (1618-1629)

The religious of this sacred Religion [religious congregation or order] have craved for and wanted recollection and solace where it had its beginnings when the Sun of the Church, our great Father Augustine, founded it on the harsh and rugged mountains of Africa and because of which they always carried the title in the Church, a title they enjoy until now. In accordance with that, it is mandated in the Constitutions of our Discalced Congregation that in all the provinces there must be a house and convent dedicated to such retreat and recollection.

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<sup>2</sup>ANDRES DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO, *Relación de la fundación y progresos de esta santa Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino*, in BPSN 55 (1965) 142.

In 1621, the village of Calumpang was an unhealthy place. It was a low-lying area in the outskirts of Intramuros. Hence, it was perennially flood-prone. Nonetheless, peace and quiet reigned in Calumpang “far from the excitement of the city.” It was sparsely populated. Close to 300 people lived in some thirty scattered houses.

On 5 May 1621, San Sebastian Church was opened for public worship to the Christian community at the outskirts of the Walled City of Manila.<sup>12</sup> It was probably Archbishop Miguel García Serrano himself who consecrated and inaugurated the new temple, as required by Roman liturgy. It was indeed an joyful occasion for celebration among the growing Augustinian Recollection whose forty-seven missionaries had been diligently working in various *doctrinas* and *visitas* in the Philippines.<sup>13</sup> The vicar provincial of the Recollects in the Philippines, Fray Rodrigo de San Miguel was concurrently designated superior of the Recollect community.



**Our Lady of Mount Carmel image, venerated since 1621 at San Sebastian Basilica in Quiapo, Manila.**

It was likewise on 5 May 1621 when the miraculous image of *Nuestra Señora del Carmen*, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, was enthroned in the new church with great pomp and solemnity. Suffice it to say that the 5<sup>th</sup> May was a memorable day of jubilation for the residents and devotees of Manila. Fray Benito de San Pablo, prior of San Sebastian for three triennia (1740, 1743, and 1752) with profuse praise and pride describes the enthronement event for us:

Father Vicar Provincial [Fray Rodrigo de San Miguel] was in possession of the treasure of so divine an image and the occasion for such an opportune sanctuary was offered by our benefactor Don Bernardino in the construction of an average-sized church and a residence for a number of religious. He could not find a more fitting site to place this Divine Lady (whose height must be a little over three-fourths meter) than in this church of San

Sebastian of Calumpang where the faithful could obtain comfort in their worries, remedy for their needs as well as solace and succor in their labors.

And so in 1621, this Divine Lady was enthroned in this church with no brief and ordinary festivities but rather with a very solemn novena, attended by all the members of the clergy and laity of Manila. It was public knowledge that this sovereign Lady gladly accepted this hospitality. And to show that she accepted the throne where she was enshrined, she opened her hands of piety and pardon, abundant graces emanating from her, granted profusely to her devotees.<sup>3</sup>

From the same 1747 account of Benito de San Pablo, now revered as tradition by historians, we learn that Rodrigo de San Miguel had brought the holy icon of the Virgen del Carmen to Manila from Mexico City. However, such early Recollect historians as Juan de la Concepción, Andrés de San Nicolás, Luis de Jesús, José de la Concepción and Licinio Ruiz were silent on this matter. All of them did not deny nor confirm altogether that it was Rodrigo de San Miguel who brought the Carmel image. Neither did they deny nor confirm the year of arrival of the Marian icon as 1618. Luis de Jesús and Licinio Ruiz, confounding further the matter, declared that the Carmel image was placed by the missionaries at San Sebastian Church upon disembarking. However, such disembarking could have happened after the church was constructed, hence in 1621 or thereafter, unless there was an earlier church at San Sebastian de Calumpang, but there was none. Licinio Ruiz writes that the canonical foundation date of San Sebastian Church was 16 February 1621 and the canonical document was signed by the Augustinian Archbishop Miguel García Serrano of Manila.<sup>4</sup>

The Recollect historians and chroniclers all stressed the presence of a miraculous Carmel icon, venerated at San Sebastian Church since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The biographer Francisco Sádaba

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<sup>3</sup>Text of Father Fernando Hernández del Pilar, reprinted in R. GARCÍA, *San Sebastián*, 248-249.

<sup>4</sup> Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos I* (Manila 1925) 112.

follows the 1747 account of Fr. Benito de San Pablo: Rodrigo de San Miguel's third Recollect mission of three friars arrived in Manila in 1618, without specifying the month and day of their arrival.<sup>5</sup> He states that Fray Rodrigo headed the expedition that lifted anchor at Sevilla, Spain, on 18 July 1617 and made the customary stopover at Mexico City where he was given the Virgen del Carmen image by the Descalced Carmelite Nuns. He brought the Marian icon to Manila.

Nevertheless, it is quite inexplicable that Andrés del Espíritu Santo, a contemporary of Rodrigo de San Miguel, failed to mention the image of the Virgen del Carmen when he wrote his *Relación* or historical account.<sup>6</sup> The document devotes a chapter to various images venerated in Recollect convents and churches in the Philippines. Historian Rafael García offers an explanation for this: such chapter deals only with icons venerated in Manila and in other major pueblos. The humble church and community of San Sebastian de Calumpang practically served only 300 or so tenants of Don Bernardino del Castillo. Fray Andrés, San Sebastian prior in 1633, proposed to set up an *obra pía* to help defray the tremendous expenses of the Marian devotion.

Benito de San Pablo informs us, too, that the first prior of San Sebastian himself, Fray Rodrigo de San Miguel, introduced the Carmel devotion in the lone Spanish colony in Asia.<sup>16</sup> Fray Rodrigo headed the third Augustinian Recollect mission of four religious to the Philippines and arrived in Manila in 1618.<sup>7</sup> In his memoirs compiled in *La Conversión de Filipinas y Japón* [The Conversion of the Philippines and Japan],<sup>8</sup> he faithfully recorded that he embarked on 18 July 1617 at Sevilla on the long trans-Atlantic journey to New Spain [Mexico].<sup>9</sup> He had not realized the auspicious coincidence then: in Spain's territories in the Indies, the 18th of July was the

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<sup>5</sup>Francisco SÁDABA. *Catálogo de los Agustinos Recoletos de la provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas desde 1606, el año en que llegó la primera misión a Manila hasta nuestros días* (Madrid 1906) 38.

<sup>6</sup>ANDRÉS DE ESPÍRITU SANTO, in BPSN 55 (1965) 174ss.

<sup>7</sup>Two members of the mission —Pedro de San Antonio and Juan de San José—were apparently novices and professed the monastic vows on 26 July 1618 at the Convent of San Nicolás in Intramuros, Manila. Cf. SÁDABA, 46-47.

<sup>8</sup>*La Conversión de Filipinas y Japón*, 448.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*

feast of the Virgen del Carmen.<sup>10</sup> Never did he foresee that during their customary stop-over in the Mexican capital on the way to the Philippines, he would receive the Marian icon from the Discalced Carmelite nuns.<sup>19</sup> The female branch of the strictly contemplative Carmelite Order who, nurtured by the reforms and teachings of the great Mystic and Doctor of the Church Teresa of Avila, lived austere lives in the cloister.

The serene image of the Virgen del Carmen was given to the missionaries as an esteemed token of “chaste and permanent affection.”<sup>20</sup> It was to serve as a worthy testimonial of that special fraternal bond and spiritual relationship between the Discalced Carmelites and Discalced Augustinians, as the Augustinian Recollects were indistinctly called at that time. Both religious families were offspring of both Catholic and Counter-Reformation in the sixteenth century.

In the same manner as what would be accorded the Virgin of Antipolo, *Nuestra Señora de la Paz y Buen Viaje* [Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage], in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century galleon trade,<sup>21</sup> *Nuestra Señora del Carmen* was piously revered by the missionaries as the protectress and patroness of their voyage across the Pacific. The traveling missionaries designated her as their “spiritual guide and captain of the ship.” Fervently they prayed to the Mother of Christ to accord them safety and health as they embarked on the ship for the perilous journey of two and a half months from the port of Acapulco in Mexico through the unpredictably treacherous waters of the Pacific. The third expedition reached Manila safely in 1618.<sup>11</sup>

The arrival of the new missionaries no doubt elicited the usual joyous fraternal welcome by their twelve Recollect confreres in San Nicolás Convent. Certainly, their number was not enough for the increasing missions of the young Order in Cavite, Bataan and

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<sup>10</sup>JOSÉ DE LA CONCEPCIÓN, *Reseña histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino*, in BPSN 14 (1923).

<sup>11</sup> Eminent Recollect historians point to 1618 as the year of Father Aganduru's return to the Philippines. The anonymous author of *La Virgen del Carmen y los Padres Agustinos Recoletos* avers that the third mission reached the islands towards the end of 1617. No Recollect mission arrived in 1617. Cf. *La Virgen del Carmen*, 19. Definitely, it is not 1611, as erroneously and spuriously stated by Visitación R. de la Torre in *Landmarks of Manila: 1571-1930* (Makati: Security Bank and Trust, Co., 1981) 81.

Zambales and parts of Pangasinan. But, as Fray Andrés del Espíritu Santo optimistically puts it, theirs was “equivalent to many missions as far as their zeal in the conversion of souls is concerned.”<sup>23</sup>

Rodrigo de San Miguel must have temporarily put the Marian icon for veneration by the faithful in their San Juan Bautista Church located in Bagumbayan, a stone’s throw from the Walled City.<sup>24</sup> In their San Nicolas Church of Intramuros, there already was a fast-growing devotion to the Mother of God invoked as *Nuestra Señora de la Consolación* [Our Lady of Consolation], a devotion that ran deep in the tradition of the Augustinian family. It was most probably then in their San Juan de Bagumbayan Church where the Virgen del Carmen in the course of time gained affection, fame and devotion as well as pious Filipino and Spanish devotees at a remarkable pace.<sup>12</sup> Thus, we can fully comprehend why on the day she was enshrined in the new church of Calumpang, a considerable number of Carmel devotees flocked gathered for the solemn novena.

When her enthronement at Calumpang, the Virgen del Carmen had already penetrated deeply the hearts of Manileños. She had effectively played an important role in their spiritual activities. The Lady of Carmel had undoubtedly become an essential part of their personal lives. And the humble church of San Sebastian de Calumpang would become in the next four hundred years “the great Carmel shrine in the Philippines.” It would pride itself as the first and oldest shrine and place of pilgrimage of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The People of God have dubbed the Marian shrine as the first Basilica of *Nuestra Señora del Carmen* in Asia.

The Augustinian Recollect priests and brothers most deservedly honored as the “only heralds and proclaimers of her

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<sup>12</sup>Licinio RUIZ, I, 15-16; ANDRÉS DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO, 175-76, quoted in R. GARCÍA, *San Sebastián*, 249-250. In 1634, the *Virgen de la Salud* [Virgin of Health] was installed at San Juan de Bagumbayan Church, a stone’s throw from the walled city. He added the information that the image which was likewise given by the Discalced Carmelite Nuns of Mexico City had been enshrined in a devout procession at Bagumbayan “fourteen years” ago. In SÁDABA, 43, Father Andres left for Spain as *comisario* in 1618, the year when the Carmel image arrived with Father Aganduru. He returned to the Philippines in 1622 with the fifth Recollect mission. Another Marian icon—the Virgen del Pilar—was venerated here in 1623. M. CARCELLER, *La pastoral*, 16.



glories and greatness in those islands.”<sup>13</sup> For they were in fact the first to introduce the Carmel devotion in the Philippines. And for no less than three centuries they would be the Lady's sole chaplains.

Hence, the most remarkable and long-lasting contribution of the Augustinian Recollect Order is that its missionaries had firmly planted the Carmel devotion in Hispanic Philippines. This Marian devotion has ever since been embedded very deeply in the Filipino religious psyche. Indeed, a commendable pioneering feat. An enduring legacy to the People of God in this part of the world. A laudable milestone in the history of the Catholic Church in the Philippines.



**From Mexico Fray Rodrigo de San Miguel, OAR, brought the first and oldest image of Our Lady of Mount Carmel to the Philippines in 1618.**

### **Rodrigo de San Miguel brought the icon to Manila**

Also known in various history books as Fray Rodrigo de San Miguel,<sup>14</sup> the Recollect missionary was born to Antonio Aganduru and Catalina Móriz in Valladolid, Spain in 1584. He professed his

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<sup>13</sup>R. GARCÍA, *San Sebastián*, 243. The Discalced Carmelites arrived in 1923, three hundred and two years afterward after the enthronement of Our Lady of Mount Carmel at San Sebastian Church. Other Carmelite congregations arrived much later. See any edition of the Directory of the Catholic Church in the Philippines for the brief historical sketches of the Carmelites. Carmelite Father Mark Horan brought in 1954 an image of Carmel to New Manila, Quezon City, from Kensington, London. A nationwide campaign was launched to provide her a magnificent church that has been declared the Basilica of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. On July 16, now the fiesta of New Manila, a procession of the crowned and sceptered statue takes place, accompanied by devotees wearing brown scapulars. See *Marian Handbook*, 118.

<sup>14</sup>Luciano P.R. Santiago, however, erroneously calls him Fr. Móriz or Rodrigo Móriz de San Miguel in *Talangpaz*, 229. Fr. Pablo Fernández inconsistently and confusingly alludes to the brilliant Recollect historian and scientist as Fr. Aganduru (p. 393) or Fr. Miguel Aganduru (p. 402). Fr. Licinio Ruiz OAR accurately refers to him as Rodrigo de San Miguel (p. 113) and Rodrigo Aganduru (p. 173)

simple vows in July 1601 at the convent of Portillo, Zaragoza, in Spain. He joined the first Recollect mission to the Philippines that arrived in Cebu City on 12 May 1606. Bataan and Zambales witnessed his zealous missionary efforts in 1607, where he founded the pueblos of Bagac, Mariveles and Subic. As *comisario* of the Province of Saint Nicholas, he was sent to Spain and was able to gather twenty able missionaries from the convents in Spain for the Philippine missions. While in Spain in 1617, he was appointed vicar provincial by Fr. Gregorio Alarcón and re-elected in 1619 by his confreres in the Philippines. It was during his term when the convents of San Sebastian and Cebu were founded in 1621. He sent missionaries to Mindanao in 1622 and accepted the missions in Cuyo and the Calamianes in Palawan in August 1622 upon the request of Fray Pedro de Arce, Augustinian bishop of the extensive diocese of the Most Holy Name of Jesus in Cebu. In December 1622, he abruptly left the Spanish colony for Rome passing by Moluccas Isles, Sumatra and Sri-Lanka. Heading further west, he journeyed on to Goa, Persia and Basora [present-day Basra] in modern Iraq where he converted a considerable number of Muslims to the Christian faith. In Rome he presented a detailed account of his missionary work to Pope Urban VIII who wanted him to return to Persia as apostolic delegate. But en route to his hometown in Spain, Fray Rodrigo fell gravely ill. He died at his ancestral home at Orio in Guipúzcoa on 26 December 1626. He was only 42. He left behind various books of such wide-ranging topics as mission history of Japan and the Philippines, Tagalog and Zambal grammar, medicine and cartography.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Year of Arrival of the Carmel Icon: 1617 or 1618?**

The year 1617, indicated by Blessed Vicente Soler in his long article *Our Lady of Mount Carmel Venerated in San Sebastian* as that of the arrival of five Augustinian Recollect missionaries who brought the image of Our Lady of Mount Carmel to Manila from

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<sup>15</sup>MIGUEL APARICIO, *Tras las huellas de un religioso descalzo. Vida, obras y andanzas de Fray Rodrigo de San Miguel*, in *Mayéutica* 15 (1990) 29-53; VICTORINO CAPANAGA, *El P. Rodrigo de San Miguel, agustino recoleto*, in *BPSN* 20 (1929) 207-217; LUIS DE JESÚS, *Historia general de los Religiosos Descalzos del Orden de San Agustín*, in *BR* XXI, 116; SÁDABA, 38-42.

Mexico, is quite implausible. The long journey of the third Recollect mission that started in Sevilla, Spain, on 18 July 1617, making the necessary stopover in Mexico (Vera Cruz-Mexico City-Acapulco), and ended in Manila towards the end of December of the same year. Blessed Vicente said the journey lasted merely five and a half months.

Customarily, the average transoceanic trips of Augustinian Recollect missions commenced at the port in Cádiz or Sevilla in southern Spain where they lifted anchor for America and reached

Vera Cruz in Mexico along the Atlantic coast after a month or more, depending on the favorable seasonal winds and sea currents. As mandated by the Recollect statutes, they customarily hiked roughly 440 kilometers to Mexico City.<sup>16</sup> From the Mexican capital they continued their travel and finally reached the port of Acapulco City along the Pacific Coast where they spent more time waiting for the earliest galleon to transport them across the treacherous waters of the Pacific until they reached their final destination—Manila. In the seventeenth century, the odyssey by sea and by land took regularly nine months or up to one year.

The pioneering Augustinian Recollect mission headed by Fr. Juan de San Jerónimo stayed for two months in Mexico City as guests in the convent of their Calced Augustinian confreres. The ninth missionary group of twenty-four religious was stranded there for almost two years.<sup>17</sup> The missionaries were constrained to travel to Mexico City in order to present themselves before the Spanish viceroy and obtain from him the required passage to the Philippines. For utter lack of an Augustinian Recollect convent in the Mexican capital at that time, the missionaries suffered the setbacks and inconveniences in their monastic way of life which was strictly mandated by the



**Blessed Vicente Soler, parish priest in Mindoro and Batangas, resided at San Sebastian Convent in 1900-2012**

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<sup>16</sup>See José María ECHEVERRÍA, *The First Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines*, which we have included as Chapter II in this present anthology.

<sup>17</sup> SÁDABA, 97.

primitive *Forma de vivir*, aggravated by the unsanitary conditions of the temporary lodging. For the fourth Recollect mission to the Philippines, Fr. Andrés de Espíritu Santo obtained a royal order to set up the indispensable halfway house in 1620 but the project became a reality only in 1637 when the halfway house was purchased and officially established as *Hospicio de México* or Hospice of Mexico by Saint Nicholas Province.<sup>18</sup>

Oftentimes, the Recollect missionaries were constrained to stay at the port city of Acapulco for months as they awaited an available galleon that would embark them for the last phase of their maritime odyssey to the Spanish colony in Asia. The average duration of the trans-Pacific journey of eight Recollect expeditions in the seventeenth century was 4.5 months.<sup>19</sup>

Consequently, the journey of five and half months of the Carmel image to Manila is untenable. We follow the account of Francisco Sádaba who tells us that Rodrigo de San Miguel's missionary expedition arrived sometime in 1618. Consequently, the revered icon of the Virgen del Carmen of San Sebastian Basilica still is the first and oldest Our Lady of Mount Carmel image in the Philippines.

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<sup>18</sup> Licinio RUIZ I, 472-474.

<sup>19</sup> SÁDABA, 35-115.

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## Marian Devotions of the Augustinian Recollects in the 17th-Century Philippines

### Nuestra Señora de la Consolación

The first Marian icon ever introduced in the Philippines by the pioneering Augustinian Recollect mission in 1606 was the image of Our Lady of Consolation (*Nuestra Señora de la Consolación, Virgen de la Correa*). Much later when their San Nicolás Church was constructed in the Walled City of Manila, it was placed at the right altar of the new church. The Marian icon was “installed there since our Religion<sup>1</sup> was founded in these islands,” thus declares Fray Andrés del Espíritu Santo, chronicler of the pioneering Recollect missionaries, in no ambiguous terms in a historical account he had redacted very probably in 1648.<sup>2</sup>

Fray Andrés del Espíritu Santo continues: “The entire city has a great devotion to her since all those who have truly and sincerely entrusted themselves to her have found protection and favor from God with unnumbered wonders that God has wrought on the devotees of His most holy Mother, the Virgin of Consolation.” In almost all the parish churches, they had constructed in the Philippines in succeeding centuries, the Recollect missionaries always placed prominently an image of the *Virgen de la Correa* on a niche of any of the three altars—more than enough proof of their constant manifestation of their Augustinian devotion to the Mother of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Religious corporation, congregation or order.

<sup>2</sup>ANDRÉS DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO, *Relación de la fundación y progresos de esta santa Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino*, in *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Islas Filipinas* [BPSN] 55 (1965) 175.

### Virgen del Carmen

The *Virgen del Carmen* icon was their second. On 5 May 1621, San Sebastian church—whose church, convent and lot were donated by the Mexican Maestre de Campo Don Bernardino del Castillo y Maldonado and his wife María Enríquez de Céspedes, a councilor of the City of Manila—was opened for public worship to the Christian community at the outskirts of the colonial capital.<sup>3</sup> It was probably Archbishop Miguel García Serrano himself who consecrated and inaugurated the new house of God, as required by Roman liturgy. Without doubt, it was an occasion for joyful celebration in the growing Augustinian Recollection whose forty-seven missionaries had been indefatigably working elsewhere in various *doctrinas* and *visitas* in the Philippines.<sup>4</sup> Vicar Provincial Rodrigo de San Miguel<sup>5</sup> was concurrently named superior of the new Augustinian Recollect community of San Sebastián de Calumpang. He would go down in history as the first prior of San Sebastian Convent.



It was also on 5 May 1621, according to traditional sources, that the miraculous image of *Nuestra Señora del Carmen*, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, was enthroned in the new church with great pomp and solemnity. Suffice it to say that 5 May was a memorable day of jubilation for the residents of Manila and in the adjoining *arrabales*<sup>6</sup> of Sampaloc, San Miguel and Quiapo. Here's how Fray Benito de San Pablo,<sup>7</sup> prior of San Sebastian for three triennia (1740-1743;

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<sup>3</sup>*La Virgen del Carmen y los Padres Agustinos Recoletos, 1621-1921*, in BPSN 12 (1921) 16.

<sup>4</sup>José María ECHEVERRÍA, *Orígenes de las misiones de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Agustinos Recoletos en el Extremo Oriente* (Madrid 1953) 87, 129.

<sup>5</sup>He is indistinctly known as Rodrigo Móríz Aganduru.

<sup>6</sup>The districts of Manila.

<sup>7</sup>The father's surname is Gómez, the mother's Peinado. Thus the Recollect religious could be called Father Benito Peinado Gómez as well.



1743-1746; 1752-1755) with profuse praise and pride describes the enthronement event:

Father Vicar Provincial was in possession of the treasure of so divine an image and the occasion for such an opportune shrine was offered by our benefactor Don Bernardino in the construction of an average-sized church and a residence for a number of religious. He could not find a more fitting site to place this Divine Lady (whose height must a little more than three-fourths meter) than in this church of San Sebastián de Calumpang where the faithful obtain consolation in their worries, remedy for their needs as well as solace and succor in their labors.

And so in 1621, the Divine Lady was enthroned at San Sebastian Church with a very solemn novena, attended by all the members of the clergy and laity of Manila. It was public knowledge that this sovereign Lady of Mount Carmel gladly accepted this hospitality. And to show that she accepted the throne of San Sebastian where she was enshrined, it was said that she opened her hands of piety and pardon, abundant graces emanating through her and granted profusely to her devotees by her Divine Son.

From the aforementioned 1747 account of Benito de San Pablo, now revered as tradition among Recollect historians, we gather that Father Rodrigo de San Miguel had brought the holy icon of the Virgen del Carmen to Manila from Mexico City. However, all such early Recollect historians as Juan de la Concepción, Andrés de San Nicolás, José de la Concepción as well as Licinio Ruiz of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are silent on this matter of Carmel image at San Sebastian Church. Biographer Francisco Sádaba follows the account of Benito de San Pablo, though. All of them did not deny nor confirm altogether that it was Rodrigo de San Miguel. Neither did they deny nor confirm the year of arrival as 1618.

Two historians Luis de Jesús and Licinio Ruiz, however, confounding the matter further, declared that the Carmel image was placed by the missionaries at San Sebastian Church upon disembarking. Such debarkation could have happened after the church was constructed, hence in 1621 or thereafter. Nevertheless, they all did stress the presence of a miraculous Carmel icon, venerated in San Sebastian church since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is rather incomprehensible that Andrés del Espíritu Santo, a contemporary of Rodrigo de San Miguel, failed to mention the image of the Virgen

del Carmen in San Sebastian church when he wrote his *Relación*. In this account he devotes the sixth and last chapter wholly to various images of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the saints venerated in various Recollect churches.<sup>8</sup>

The historian-archivist Rafael García offered an explanation of this subject matter; such chapter, he said, deals only with icons venerated in Manila and other major towns. The humble church of San Sebastián de Calumpang practically served only three hundred or so tenants of Don Bernardino del Castillo. The historian Licio Ruiz, nevertheless, informs us that Andrés del Espíritu Santo—as San Sebastian prior in 1633— proposed to set up an *obra pía* to help defray the tremendous expenses of the Marian cult.<sup>9</sup> Benito de San Pablo confirmed that Rodrigo de San Miguel, first prior of San Sebastian, had indeed introduced the Carmel devotion in the Spanish colony.<sup>10</sup>

Rodrigo de San Miguel headed the third Recollect mission of fifteen religious to the Philippines. In his memoir compiled in *La Conversión de Filipinas y Japón* [*The Conversion of the Philippines and Japan*], he faithfully recorded that he embarked on the long trans-Atlantic journey from Sevilla to Mexico on 18 July 1617.<sup>11</sup> He had not realized then the auspicious coincidence then: in Spain's domain in the Indies the 18<sup>th</sup> day of July was the feast of the Virgen del Carmen.<sup>12</sup> Nor did he foresee that during their customary stop-over in the Mexican capital *en route* to the Philippines, he would receive the Marian icon from the Discalced Carmelite nuns.<sup>13</sup> These female counterparts of the strictly contemplative Carmelite Order who, nurtured by the reforms, teachings and inspired guidance of the

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<sup>8</sup>ANDRÉS DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO, *Relación*, 174-175.

<sup>9</sup>Licio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* I (Manila 1925) 116.

<sup>10</sup>Rafael GARCÍA, *Iglesia de San Sebastián de Manila*, in BPSN 60 (1970) 248-249.

<sup>11</sup>Rodrigo AGANDURU, *Conversión de Filipinas y Japón*, in BPSN 75 (1916) 448.

<sup>12</sup>JOSÉ DE LA CONCEPCIÓN, *Reseña histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino*, in BPSN 14 (1923) 134-135.

<sup>13</sup> All Recollect chroniclers unanimously confirm the Discalced Carmelite nuns of Mexico City as the source of the Carmel image.

great Spanish mystic and Doctor of the Church Saint Teresa of Jesus,<sup>14</sup> lived austere lives in the cloister of San José monastery.

The serene ivory image of the Virgen del Carmen was given to the Recollect missionaries as an esteemed token of “chaste and enduring affection.”<sup>15</sup> It was to serve as a worthy testimonial of that special fraternal bond and spiritual relationship between the Discalced Carmelites and Discalced Augustinians, as the Augustinian Recollects were indistinctly called. Both religious families were offspring of the Catholic Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### Virgen del Pilar

The third Marian image brought to our country was the *Virgen del Pilar*, patroness of Spain, whose feast is celebrated on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of October which is dubbed, too, as *Día de la Hispanidad*. Father Martín de San Nicolás, who was martyred in Japan in 1632, brought an image of *Nuestra Señora del Pilar* to our country and introduced her devotion at San Nicolás church in Intramuros.<sup>16</sup> The birthplace of Blessed Martín de San Nicolás was the Aragonese capital of Zaragoza where the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar has been the



Our Lady of the Pillar icon [at the retablo] of Casiciaco Recoletos Seminary chapel with Prior Bernard Amparado and Anthony Irineo, Augustinian Recollect promoters of the *Cofradía de la Virgen del Pilar de Baguio* on 12 October 2018 with the pioneering members.

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<sup>14</sup>Saint Teresa of Avila.

<sup>15</sup>R. GARCÍA, *San Sebastián*, 248.

<sup>16</sup>Manuel CARCELLER, *La pastoral de los Agustinos Recoletos en la evangelización de Filipinas* (Marcilla, Navarra 1965) 16; *Seminario Mayor-Recoletos*, in Jesús SOBEJANO [ed.], *Los Agustinos Recoletos: 375 años en las Islas Filipinas, 1606-1981* (Quezon City 1981) 78; Agapito C. SANTA ROMANA, *Seminario Mayor-Recoletos*, in Emilio JARUDA [ed.], *Order of Augustinian Recollects, Vicariate of the Philippines and China: A Commemorative Album for the Triennium 1988-1991* (Quezon City 1991) 87-90.

most visited Marian shrine and center of pilgrimages for centuries in Spain.

The college seminary in Baguio City —Seminario Mayor Recoletos, later reverted to its original name Casiciaco Recoletos—is dedicated to Our Lady of the Pillar. Her universal feast on 12 October is celebrated by formators, formands and alumni as Seminary Day. The late Recollect procurator general Antonio Ausejo had informed this writer in 1991 that one of the first superiors of the retreat-house Casiciaco-Recoletos was Esteban Munilla Tejedor (1912-1988) whose father was a *Guardia Civil* in Spain. The patroness of the Spanish *Guardia Civil* is the Virgen del Pilar. He surmised that Father Tejedor had put the new house under her celestial protection.

Prior Provincial Manuel Carceller (1899-1983), himself a devotee of Virgen del Pilar, readily consented to her enthronement as divine patroness of Casiciaco Recoletos. Prior General Eugenio Ayape himself blest the Casiciaco chapel on 19 March 1954. The blessing had taken place two years before Esteban Tejedor was appointed superior of the summer vacation-*cum*-retreat house. Vicar Provincial Jesús Sobejano, author of the Spanish article *Seminario Mayor-Recoletos, Baguio City*, included in his album 1606-1981 commemorating the 375<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Augustinian Recollects' arrival in the Philippines, states that the Casiciaco chapel was dedicated to Our Lady of the Pillar in memory of her devotion at the Recollect *casa-hacienda* of Imus in Cavite. In the midst of the verdant rice fields, vegetable farms and bountiful orchards, the San Juan Bautista estate-house was a fitting residence for ailing and recuperating religious or for religious who just ended their long maritime voyage from Spain and Mexico. The Imus Cathedral, which was wholly made of bricks and whose protracted construction was begun by Nicolás Becerra in 1825 and finished about fifty years after, venerates the Virgen del Pilar as patroness of the diocese.

### Virgen de la Salud

In 1634, a group of Recollect missionaries carried down from the galleon their fourth Marian image, that of *Nuestra Señora de la Salud*. In a devout procession, it was taken to their San Juan de Bagumbayan church. Like the Carmel icon of San Sebastian church, the Brown Madonna was a gift of the Discalced Carmelite nuns of Mexico City.

Father Andrés del Espíritu Santo states in his indispensable account on the first missionaries and icons:<sup>17</sup> “In the convent of San Juan Bautista it must be fourteen years now that an image of Our Lady with the title of *Virgen de La Salud* was enshrined following a multitudinarian procession and gathering of countless devotees. This image was brought from New Spain by some religious who came that year. The Discalced Carmelite nuns of the convent in Mexico very devoutly offered it to them so it could be revered in their journey as protectress and refuge and be put here in some appropriate place.”<sup>18</sup>



**Nuestra Señora de la Salud: this original icon was brought by the Augustinian Recollects to Manila in 1634. Its shrine, San Nicolás Church, in Intramuros was destroyed in World War II. Its devotion was revived in 2016 and she is now revered at San Nicolás de Tolentino parish, Quezon City.**

Storms and sickness besieged the dangerous Acapulco-Manila journey. Father Andrés reported that the timely intercession of the *Virgen de la Salud* miraculously saved them.

In Manila, the small icon was carried in procession to their church at San Juan de Bagumbayan. In the course, of time the residents of the capital developed affection and devotion to the Mother of the Savior invoked as *Virgen de la Salud*.

The church whose patron was Saint John the Baptist was originally dedicated to Saint Nicholas of Tolentino. Its inauguration was done on 10 September 1606. The *Extramuros* temple was demolished twice. The first time was in 1644 when the Spanish

<sup>17</sup> The year of Father Andrés del Espíritu Santo's account was 1649. His *Relación* ended with the 8<sup>th</sup> Recollect mission of 1645. As he said that it has been fourteen years that the *Virgen de la Salud* had arrived in Manila so it could only be the thirteen Recollects of the 7<sup>th</sup> mission of 1634 who brought the Marian icon. The 9<sup>th</sup> missionary expedition came much later in 1653. And the 6<sup>th</sup> mission arrived in 1623.

<sup>18</sup> ANDRÉS DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO, *Relación*, 175; R. GARCÍA, *San Sebastián de Manila*, 249-250; L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* 1, 12-18; *Nuestra Señora de la Salud* in J. SOBEJANO, 14.

governor-general Sebastián Hurtado Corcuera decided to tear it down because the church allegedly posed security risks to the adjoining walled city. The Recollects protested the demolition in vain. After a successful legal suit, Governor Corcuera was forced to pay reparation money amounting to 25,000 pesos. Rebuilt with that sum, the church was again leveled to the ground and erased forever from the face of the earth. This second and last time was the handiwork of British Occupation forces in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The *Virgen de la Salud* icon was transferred to the bigger and more grandiose San Nicolás church. The *fiesta* of *Nuestra Señora de la Salud* in Intramuros coincided with the feast of the Presentation,<sup>19</sup> likewise a big fiesta of the Lourdes Church of the Capuchins. So her feast was later transferred to March 19 and jointly celebrated with the solemnity of Saint Joseph. The *cofradía del Tránsito*<sup>20</sup> was set up for her cult. Much later, the Marian image was moved again to a niche in the altar dedicated to Saint Augustine.

After the destruction of San Nicolás Church in 1945, the Marian icon was taken to the convent of San Sebastian where the vicar provincial held office. In 1970, it moved again to the newly inaugurated vicariate in Quezon City. The historic icon—darkened through the ages—is kept since 1988 at the Museo Recoleta in the Recollect Formation Center, Mira-Nila Homes, Quezon City. The Bulwagang Recoletos, adjacent to the parish church of Our Lady of Consolation, was blest and inaugurated in February 1993, is the actual location of the Brown Madonna. The grandiose edifice shelters the museum, library and archives. “Her glory of yore has turned to complete oblivion; her cult and veneration are no longer known by the public,” laments the author of a 1981 article about her.<sup>21</sup> In 2016, the *Virgen de la Salud* devotion was revived and earnestly by the Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno under its prior provincial Fray Dionisio Q. Selma. A shrine was erected for all devotees beside San Nicolas de Tolentino Parish in Quezon City.

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<sup>19</sup> Every 2<sup>nd</sup> day of February.

<sup>20</sup> Confraternity of the Transition or Passage.

<sup>21</sup> *Nuestra Señora de la Salud*, in J. SOBEJANO, 14.

## La Inmaculada Concepción

The *Inmaculada Concepción* of the Blessed Mother Mary has been the patroness of the Philippines since 1760 and of the Metropolitan Church of Manila. The Augustinian Recollects venerated the *Inmaculada Concepción* of the Mother of God for hundreds of years. Bishop Pedro de Arce had given the Recollect fathers a hermitage and chapel in Cebu City which had been dedicated since 1618 to *Nuestra Señora de la Limpia Concepción* on 4 March 1621. The governor-general approved the bishop's donation on 29 April, officially making the Recollects rightful owners of the Ermita de la Inmaculada Concepción. And on 9, June the first prior of their *Convento de la Inmaculada Concepción*. Fray Juan Crisóstomo de la Ascensión took possession of the hermitage, "outside the walls of this City of the Most Holy Name of Jesus" in the presence of ecclesiastical and civil authorities.<sup>22</sup>



The Immaculate Conception: iconic painting by the Spanish Baroque painter Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682).

The Recollects continued venerating her as Immaculate Conception. Her annual feast on December 8 was marked by masses and procession. The bishop, cathedral chapter and city hall yearly contributed a great sum of money for the solemn festivity of the Immaculate Conception for almost three hundred years. In 1895, the cathedral of Cebu was placed under the invocation of the Immaculate Conception by Bishop Benito Romero, OFM. From 1621 to 1895, the Recollect Marian temple of Cebu had been the center of that devotion in the Visayas.

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<sup>22</sup>Marcelino SIMONENA, *Cebú*, in Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* 1 (Manila 1925) 133. Father Ruiz acknowledged Father Simonena as the author of the historical account on the Recollect convent and church of Cebu City. He had added only some documents as appendix to his confrere's detailed account.

The old Recollect church of the Immaculate Conception was torn down in 1964. On 8 December 1964, Msgr. Julio Rosales, Archbishop of Cebu and shortly after the second Filipino member of the College of Cardinals, blest the corner-stone of what would be the parochial church and the University of San Jose-Recoletos. The newly-constructed Recoletos church was blest and inaugurated by Cardinal Rosales on 18 March 1966. Not long afterward, on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1971, the archbishop of Cebu canonically erected the new Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish. He had wanted the Recollects to change the patronage of their church to that of the *Virgen del Carmen*, a devotion that was very popular in Cebu City since the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup>

### More Marian Icons

The affectionate veneration shown by the Filipino devotees to the Mother of Christ had not been without historical bases. After a long search for the sound roots of the traditional devotion to the Blessed Mother in the Philippines, “the ever-present feature of the findings is the unbroken bond of love binding Mary together with the Philippine people.” Since then, our Marian devotion has always been an integral part of the Filipino-Hispanic brand of Christianity adhered to in these Islands.

Indisputably, the Marian devotion had struck deep roots in the Filipino soul. It began towards the second-half of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century evangelization through the never-ending effort of European missionaries. *Nuestra Señora de los Remedios* in Malate, Manila (1570), *Nuestra Señora de Guía* in Ermita, Manila (1571), *Nuestra Señora de la Caridad* in Agoo, La Union (1578), *Nuestra Señora del Rosario de Manaoag* in Manaoag, Pangasinan (1605), *Nuestra Señora de la Naval* at Santo Domingo Church (1612), *Nuestra Señora de la Paz y Buen Viaje* in Antipolo (1626) are among the earliest Marian titles and devotions so dear to the Filipino people. Since time immemorial, pilgrimages and family visits to the famed Marian shrines have been endlessly made, as visible sign and pledge of their deep affection to Mother Mary and as token of their gratitude for favors granted.

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<sup>23</sup>Jose María S. MARTÍNEZ, *The Parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Cebu City*, in Emilio JARUDA, 119-120.



The other religious orders in the Philippines likewise introduced their own favorite Marian titles and invocations, like *the Nuestra Señora del Santísimo Rosario* of the Dominicans, the *Virgen de la Correa*, a devotion common to the Augustinians, Discalced Augustinians and Augustinian Recollects. The Immaculate Conception was likewise promoted earnestly by members of the Society of Jesus in their own *doctrinas*, mission stations, churches and schools.

## Epilogue

We, therefore, laud no end the zealous effort of the Augustinian Recollects in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Philippines in the assiduous promotion of their *Virgen de la Salud* devotion in San Juan de Bagumbayan, *Virgen del Carmen* in San Sebastian Basilica, *Virgen de la Correa* and *Virgen del Pilar* in San Nicolás, *Nuestra Señora de la Limpia Concepción* in Cebu City, and in other parts of the archipelago as well.

We have since time immemorial the Spanish devotion to *Nuestra Señora de la Paz y Buen Viaje* of Antipolo. Indeed, early on they surely helped in instilling Marian devotion among the Filipinos in the first decades of evangelization. Thus, there is always space ample enough for any new Marian invocation in the heart of the Filipino, like the devotion to Our Lady of Peace of Fatima and Lady of Medjugorje of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and our Lady of EDSA of recent memory.

Up to now, Filipinos hold the Blessed Virgin Mary very close to their hearts and venerate her as their very own mother. Today they keep her affection for the Mother of God for always and with pride profess such love for her through various fervent devotional practices, pious wearing of Carmel scapulars, novenas, Rosary recitation, membership in the Legion of Mary, religious procession, chanting of *Salve Regina* and pilgrimages to her shrines. It is little wonder that Filipinos are called *pueblo amante de María*, a people deeply in love with Mary, and our country appropriately dubbed *islas de María*, the isles of Mary.

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# Augustinian Recollect Icons<sup>1</sup>

## Prologue

The 1995 *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *icon* as “an object of particular admiration, especially a representative symbol of something.” In our context, the icon is a person, edifice, event, infrastructure, book, manuscript [P.O.P.E.: acronym for people, objects, places and events] that have touched the lives of the Filipino people and the Augustinian Recollect missionaries in a special way through four centuries. And as the Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno and the Order of Augustinian Recollects move on in the wake of the fruitful celebration of the 400 Years of Continuing OAR Presence in the Philippines and Asia (1606-2006) and look forward to the Fourth Centennial of the Foundation of the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollects (1621-2021), the Fourth Centennial of the Establishment of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino (1621-2021), and the Silver Jubilee of the Foundation of the Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno (1998-2023), every religious, every Filipino glances in retrospect over the horizon of the glorious past and searches for icons and models of sanctity, for icons of missionary heroism beyond the call of duty. One finds icons that exalt genuine commitment to

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the evangelical counsels and love for the Augustinian Recollect ideals and charism and to the preaching of the Gospel of Christ across the oceans, beyond the comforts of home. One comes across icons symbolizing exemplary dedication to the excellence of divine worship through promotion of church music, sacred liturgy, hymnals, through construction of enduring and magnificent temples, rectories and belfries, through the acquisition of holy images, retablos, relics, pipe organs, bells, for the glory and honor of Almighty God. One finds icons that sang praises of the Order's triumphs and successes in books, manuscripts, catalogues, hymnals, for icons that promoted human dignity and life as well as multifarious community service to the Filipino society at all times, for icons that laid down their lives for their friends amidst perils, calamities and piratical raids.

The seeker is indeed inundated by authentic paradigms and role models of moral uprightness, of unflagging missionary spirit and of unrelenting sharing of knowledge and skills in arts, agriculture, medicine, engineering, architecture, etc., with the People of God for their spiritual well-being and temporal progress, for nation-building. From the following icons, the seeker shall find and gain strength, inspiration, motivation, making him all set to face new hopes, new challenges of another four hundred years.

## **People**

### **Saint Ezekiel Moreno**

A model of fidelity to the Gospel, a fervent devotee of the Blessed Sacrament and Mama Mary and tireless promoter of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was Saint Ezekiel Moreno (1848-1906). He "not only listened intently to the saving message of Jesus of Nazareth and put it into daily practice, but who so lived according to the example of the Lord's life and conduct and so expressed his manner of living that Mother Church does not hesitate through her public celebrations to present him to the entire ecclesial community as an example of living faith and genuine Christian life," said Pope John Paul II in his canonization homily on 11 October 1992 at Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic during the Fifth Centenary of the Evangelization of America (1492-1992).

### **Saint Magdalena of Nagasaki**

Tortured by executioners for her possible apostasy and martyred in her early 20s in October 1634, she was beatified on 18 February 1981 in Manila and canonized on 18 October 1987 in Rome. She is “the symbol of persecuted Japanese Christianity (... over 4,000 Japanese martyrs and European religious were offered on the altars as holocaust, courageously professing their Faith). Her parents and siblings likewise died as martyrs. She surrendered herself to the tyrant, and suffered all kinds of martyrdom. Her figure was destined to be sung with the same tones as those of young virgins and martyrs of yore.” The Augustinologist Enrique Eguiarte admires “her love for the Augustinian Recollect way of life, her passion for the Holy Scriptures, her imitation of Saint Augustine and her courage to confess her faith, including giving up her own life.” She is venerated as the patroness of the Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity. Her feast is celebrated every 20<sup>th</sup> of October.

### **Blessed Vicente de San Antonio and Blessed Francisco de Jesús**

The pioneering Recollects’ apostolic yearnings in our country were joined with the Church’s commitment to the evangelization of Japan where a glorious page of missionary heroism had been written. The first Recollect martyrs of Japan were arrested and imprisoned at Nagasaki in 1629, six years following their arrival from Manila. In the midst of risks to their lives, they fearlessly spread the Gospel in the blood-drenched country and promoted the Third Order and the Confraternity of the Cincture. After they were subjected to tortures, they were burned alive in 1632. They were beatified together with 203 martyrs by Pope Pius IX in 1867.

### **Blessed Martín de San Nicolás and Blessed Melchor de San Agustín**

The seed of martyrdom was sown with the execution of Blessed Francisco and Blessed Vicente. The first fruits were Fr. Martín and Fr. Melchor. Two months after their arrival at Nagasaki, the missionaries were captured in November 1632. They were burned alive a month after, on 11 December 1632. Before their horrendous death, they chanted hymns and preached to fellow prisoners to persevere in their Faith. They were beatified in Rome in April 1989.

**Martyrs of Motril: Blessed Vicente Soler, Blessed Vicente Pinilla, Blessed José Rada, Blessed Julián Benigno Moreno, Blessed León Inchausti**

The Martyrs of Motril were “like sheep led to the slaughterhouse” and they had given a testimony to Christ in the face of danger and imminent death. The Holy Church commends the five former Philippine missionaries who perished at the outset of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 in Motril, Granada, Spain, to the devotion and imitation of the faithful for their exemplary and heroic practice of Christian virtues and their brave defense of the Faith. It was declared in 1997 that “the Servants of God had sacrificed their lives for the faith in Christ.” Their beatification by Pope John Paul II at St. Peter’s Basilica, Rome on 7 March 1999 was a great celebration of Christian heroism. In his homily, the Holy Father said: “They obtained access to ‘the glory of the sons of God’ by the heroic witness of their faith. They did not die for an ideology but freely gave their lives for the One who had first died for them. They offered Christ the gift they had received from him [...] When the supreme moment of martyrdom came, by faith they could face death serenely, comforting the other condemned men and forgiving their executioners.”

**Servants of God Dionisia Mitas Talangpaz, Cecilia Rosa Talangpaz**

Two noble ladies Mother Dionisia Mitas Talangpaz (1691-1732) and Mother Cecilia Rosa Talangpaz (1693-1731) from Calumpit, Bulacan, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century at the outset of their religious vocation had made their personal devotion to the *Virgen del Carmen* as one of their firm spiritual foundations. The two foundresses of the Beaterio de San Sebastian whose beatification process is now in full swing are known for their exemplary lives of prayer, self-denial, total service to the Church and apostolate that attracted young Filipino women. The Beaterio de San Sebastian bloomed into the present religious Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters, bearing fruits of authentic Christian holiness, charity, educational apostolate and genuine spirituality in the Philippines, Europe, Australia and North America.



### **Servant of God Mariano Gazpio**

The Servant of God was born on 18 December 1899 in Puente la Reina, Navarre, Spain. Fr. Mariano Gazpio traveled to Manila to finish his theology. He was ordained as priest in December 1922 and assigned as curate in Cavite City in 1923-1924. Obedience took him to China and served the people of God in Chengliu, Shanghai, Yucheng, Chutsi and Kweiteh (1924-1952). He was novice master and later prior of Monteagudo (1952-1964). Known for humility, piety and service, he spent the last 25 years of his life as spiritual director and confessor in the theology house in Marcilla. He died of cardiac arrest in Pamplona, Navarra, on 22 September 1989. His beatification process started in 2000 and closed in 2004. The Augustinian Recollect Mission Year 2006, as declared by Prior General Fr. Javier Guerra, was a fitting occasion “to contemplate the life and holiness of our confreres who gave themselves to God and to the poor in the missions and to infect both religious and lay persons with the missionary spirit.” In due time, Fr. Gazpio shall be an “intercessor of missionaries and of all Recollects before the Good Shepherd.”

### **Archbishop José Aranguren**

The prelate was born in Barasoain, Navarre, Spain. A young professor of Sacred Theology, Fr. José Aranguren (1801-1861) taught future missionaries in Alfaro, Rioja, Spain, and at San Nicolás convent in Intramuros. In 1831, he administered the parish of Capas in Tarlac and that of Masinloc in Zambales shortly after. As Archbishop of Manila in 1846-1861, out of zeal for souls he visited all the parishes and far-flung mission stations of his vast archdiocese. With tact and prudence, he resolved difficult moral cases and various conflicts. He supported the foundation of *Banco Español-Filipino*. His concern for the ill and for the education of the youth compelled him to invite the Sisters of Charity to Manila. Most of all, he defended the rights of the secular clergy.

### **Bishop Juan García Ruiz de San Agustín**

A native of Madrigalejo, Cáceres, Spain, Juan García Ruiz de San Agustín (1728-1796) was named bishop of Nueva Segovia in

Vigan in 1780 and consecrated in Manila in 1786. He was a tireless recruiter of religious missionaries in Spain to volunteer for the Philippine missions. No sooner had he finished the construction of the episcopal palace than he embarked on a bigger enterprise, *i.e.*, the building of the cathedral, almost exhausting the church coffers in the process.

### **Bishop Joaquín Encabo**

The Recollect prelate from Jarandilla in Extremadura, Spain, who was named bishop of Cebu in 1802, visited his extensive diocese that included Mindanao, Visayas and the Marianas Islands twice. Bishop Joaquín Encabo de la Virgen de Sopetrán (1740-1818) generously aided the poor of his diocese and constructed a hospital for lepers, providing further steady financial support for it. The construction of the cathedral was completed during the term.

### **Bishop Mariano Cuartero**

The future bishop of Vigan, Mariano Sierra Cuartero, took the religious appellation *de la Virgen del Pilar*, being a native of the Marian city of Zaragoza in Spain where he was born on 10 January 1830. He consecrated himself to the Lord by professing the monastic vows in 1850. A professor of philosophy and natural sciences, he taught for some time in the Recollect convent of Monteagudo, Navarre. Shortly after his arrival in Manila in 1863, he was sent to Masinloc to study the language. He was parish priest of Alaminos, Pangasinan (1864-1867) and prior of Recoletos in Manila (1867-1870) and prior provincial (1870-1873). A man of great prudence, he nevertheless was intransigent with respect to the discipline of his religious subjects and curtailment of abuses. He was parish priest of Bolinao and vicar provincial of northern Zambales after his triennium. Named bishop of Vigan in 1874 by Pope Pius IX, he governed the diocese for twelve years and worked tirelessly for the preservation and increase of the Catholic faith. He ceaselessly cared for his flock through his exhortations, exemplary life and pastoral solicitude. After a lingering illness, he joined his heavenly Father and Creator on 2 August 1887.

### **Bishop Toribio Minguella**

A native of Igea de Cornago, La Rioja, Spain, Fr. Toribio Minguella (1836-1920) was appointed to Las Piñas and subsequently to the Cavite parishes of Imus, Silang, Salinas, Kawit, as parish priest from 1860 to 1876. For thirteen years, he worked as commissary provincial, procurator general and vicar provincial of Spain. Pope Leo XIII named him bishop of Puerto Rico in 1894 and, four years later, moved him to the Diocese of Sigüenza in Spain. Minguella wrote the pamphlet *Conquista espiritual de Mindanao por los agustinos recoletos* (1885). An accomplished linguist of vast erudition, he authored the *Ensayo de Gramática Hispano-Tagalog* [Essay on Spanish-Tagalog Grammar], *Estudios comparativos entre el Tagalog (Filipinas) y el Sanscrito* [Comparative Studies between Tagalog and Sanskrit] and a Spanish textbook of young Tagalog students. He penned the first extensive biography of Bishop Ezekiel Moreno in 1909 and compiled three volumes of the saint's correspondence and pastoral letters.

### **Bishop Leandro Arrué**

Born in Calatayud, Zaragoza, Spain, on 3 January 1837, Father Leandro Arrué de San Nicolás de Tolentino professed the religious vows in 1856 and was ordained as priest in 1860. He was assigned to Cagayan de Oro in 1861 and to Bacong in Negros in 1864. He was parish priest of Sum-ag in Negros and then of Liloan, Cebu. After his assignments as procurator general and prior of the Immaculate Conception convent in Cebu City, he was elected prior provincial in 1879. At the end of his triennium, he returned to Bacong to build its parish church and convent. In 1885, he was named bishop of Jaro (Iloilo) by Pope Leo XIII. A model of prelates, he visited his extensive jurisdiction several times and preached God's word in all the churches of his jurisdiction. He took care of the spiritual and bodily needs of the people of his diocese and constructed a hospital for the ailing impoverished people. His manifest generosity was matched only by his blameless character and great management skills. He passed away on 24 October 1897 and was interred at the cathedral of Jaro.

**Bishop Andrés Ferrero**

The Augustinian Recollect priest who would be bishop of Jaro, Andrés Ferrero de San José was born at Arnedo, La Rioja, Spain, on 30 November 1846. With the group of Saint Ezekiel Moreno, he pronounced the vows in 1865. After his presbyteral ordination, he was appointed professor of philosophy, dogma and moral theology in Monteagudo and later in Marcilla, Navarra. A month following his arrival in Manila, he was named superior of San Sebastian convent in Manila in July 1873. He was sent to study the Visayan language in Panglao, Bohol. He was parish priest of Pontevedra for a total of fourteen years (1875-1882; 1888-1894; 1897-1898). In this Negrense parish, he constructed its parochial church, kumbento and cemetery. After having served Saint Nicholas Province as prior of Recoletos in Intramuros in 1882-1885 and provincial councilor in 1885-1888, he was elected prior provincial in 1894. In March 1898 Pope Leo XIII raised him to the episcopal see of Jaro in the most tumultuous period of our history. In 1900, he took possession of his diocese in the midst of the revolutionary wars. He urged his clergy to keep the faith through unblemished conduct and discipline and to maintain the religion and piety of the faithful during those most critical times undergone by the diocese. He staunchly defended the interests of the Church so maligned by her adversaries. In 1903, he resigned from his see—as did the rest of the Spanish bishops in the Philippines—in the wake of the change of sovereignty. He traveled back to Spain and stayed in Marcilla until his death in 22 December 1909.

**Bishop Gregorio Espiga**

On 20 September 1912, Father Gregorio Espiga was born in Santo Domingo de la Calzada in La Rioja, Spain. He professed the monastic vows in 1929. After his theological studies in Athison, USA, and London, where he was ordained priest in 1935, he was sent to the Philippines and was assigned as assistant priest in Brooke's Point, Palawan. He joined the administration of Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos in San Carlos, Negros Occidental, in 1941. During the Second World War, he helped in the pastoral care of Bacolod, Calatrava and San Carlos. After the war, he was rector of San Sebastian College in Manila and later of Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos. He was named apostolic prefect of Palawan in 1953. He

became the first apostolic vicar of Palawan in 1955. In 1980, on the occasion of his silver jubilee as bishop, Pope John Paul II recalled to memory Bishop Espiga's accomplishments: "The diligence you have employed in imparting a catechesis grounded on suitable reasons; your solicitous care in gathering and fomenting vocations to the priesthood; the zeal and care by which you have translated the decrees of the Second Vatican Council into reality."

### **Msgr. Victoriano Román**

A native of Puebla de Arganzón in Burgos, Spain, Victoriano Román was born in 23 August 1875. He joined the Recollect Order in 1893. In December 1897, two months after his arrival in the Philippines, he was ordained as priest and assigned as companion of the parish priest of Lubang under the jurisdiction of Mindoro. He was a captive of the Mindoro revolutionaries in July 1898-January 1900. After three years in Recoletos and San Sebastian, he was sent to take spiritual charge of Araceli, and later of Taytay and Bacuit in northern Palawan. In Palawan missions, he worked for 36 years. He became the second apostolic prefect of Palawan in 1911. The Holy See had earlier decreed the creation of the apostolic prefecture on 10 April 1910. He indefatigably visited his extensive jurisdiction and started the construction of various churches. His health broken, he resigned in 1938. He journeyed back to Spain. He later became parish priest of San Millán de la Cogolla. He had wished to spend the last days of his life at Monteagudo like the missionary saint of Mindoro and Palawan. But the great missionary of Palawan passed away at Tulebras, Navarre, on 27 December 1946.

### **Msgr. Leandro Nieto**

Born on 13 March 1893 in San Millán de la Cogolla, La Rioja, Spain, Father Leandro Nieto made his profession of the evangelical counsels in Monteagudo, Navarra, in 1909. Following his priestly ordination in Manila in 1916, he was given his first pastoral assignment as assistant priest of Cajidiocan in Sibuyan Island. A year later he was parish curate of San Fernando in the same island. His subsequent assignments were: parish priest Sum-ag in Bacolod in 1922-1926; La Carlota in 1926-1929; Talisay, Negros Occidental,

in 1929-1931; vice prior of Recoletos in Manila in 1931-1934; provincial councilor in 1935. In 1939, he was designated apostolic prefect of Palawan. It was his lot to witness the ill effects of the Japanese Occupation: “the killing of the populace, persecution of the missionaries, destruction of churches and convents.” The post-war years saw him traveling from one parish to another administering the sacraments to people who hungered for the consoling presence of God’s minister. He was endowed with a burning zeal for souls and remarkable parish organizational skills. He founded the Seminario de San Jose in Puerto Princesa for the formation of the diocesan clergy. He further established a normal school in Puerto Princesa. After his resignation due to poor health in 1953, Msgr. Nieto spent the last days of his earthly life at Casiciaco Recoletos in Baguio City where he died on 8 July 1960.

### **Father Rodrigo de San Miguel**

Indistinctly known in history books as Fr. Rodrigo Aganduru (1584-1626), the intrepid missionary from Valladolid, Spain, arrived with the first Recollects in 1606. Bataan and Zambales—where he founded the towns of Bagac, Morong, Mariveles and Subic—witnessed his initial apostolic endeavors. As vicar provincial, he sent missions to Palawan and northern Mindanao and canonically erected in 1621 the convents of Cebu and San Sebastian in Manila. Death overtook him in Guipúzcoa, Spain, before he could comply with the wish of the Holy See to send him as apostolic delegate to Persia where he had spread the Word of God. His writings on Philippine and Japan missionology, Tagalog and Zambal grammar, cartography, ethnography, medicine and religion, earn him a niche in Philippine Church history.

### **Father Agustín de San Pedro**

Dubbed as “El Padre Capitán” for his heroic exploits at the height of the Moro piratical incursions, Fray Agustín de San Pedro (1599-circa 1660) epitomizes the 17<sup>th</sup>-century missionary who erected fortress-like temples, forts, palisades and watchtowers to shield his flock from pirates and organized militias to defend the Christian communities from piratical raids. He was often depicted as a soldier of God wielding the cross in one hand and brandishing

the sword in the other. A native of Braganza, Portugal, he joined the Order in Spain. He labored in God's vineyard in Butuan, Cagayan and Tandag in Mindanao. The remnants of stone forts, bulwarks and churches in Lanao, Cagayan de Oro, Romblon and Banton pay tribute to Padre Capitan's commitment and defense of Christianity and to his parishioners' courage and love of freedom.

### **Father Diego Cera**

Mabalacat in Pampanga was the first pastoral assignment of this missionary from Graus, Huesca, Spain. A year after his arrival in 1792, Fr. Diego Cera (1762-1832) had built a pianoforte for the Spanish queen. He likewise constructed in 1798 a grandiose organ for the now defunct Recoletos church of Intramuros, which was damaged beyond repair during the occupation of the church and convent by the American troops. In 1795, Las Piñas townsfolk welcomed their first curate. The stone church that still stands today was his first project. Under his able aegis, the salt and wool industries progressed, and the stone bridges of Pulanglupa and Zapote were built. He went on to place Las Piñas in the cultural map of the world by making the *sui generis* Bamboo Organ.

### **Father Fernando Cuenca**

Born into a family of farmers in Zaragoza, Spain, the future Negrense missionary embraced the Recollect way of life in 1844. January 1850 found him as the first parish priest of Talisay in Negros Island where he passed away forty-two years later. An assiduous community builder, Fray Fernando Cuenca (1824-1902) proclaimed the Good News of the Savior Jesus Christ to northeastern Negrenses and laid the foundations of the towns of Victorias, Cadiz, Escalante, Manapla, Calatrava and E. B. Magalona. Through his efforts, Talisay—once a vast wasteland of cogon grass—was endowed with well-planned streets, aqueducts, edifices, sugar cane plantations and a road to Bacolod. A hydraulic press for milling sugar—his own invention—was first introduced to Negrense planters in 1873; so was abaca and coffee production. People from Negros and Iloilo profited a great deal from his expertise in herbal medicine and hydrotherapy in his kumbento-*cum*-hospital. The appreciative people of Talisay erected in 1975 a stone monument honoring the Recollect priest at

the city plaza. Fr. Cuenca typifies the dedicated friar whose countless contributions to Philippine society, education, culture and economy shall be etched in the minds of grateful Filipinos.

### **Father Juan de San Jerónimo**

Former prior provincial of Saint Nicholas Province, Fray Juan de San Jerónimo (†1610) was named superior of the first missionary expedition to the Philippines since he was its originator, planner and negotiator. In May 1605, he met his 13 missionaries in Seville, Spain, and on 12 July they embarked at Sanlúcar de Barrameda for Mexico. When they reached Vera Cruz, they hiked over 400 kilometers to Acapulco where they boarded the *Espíritu Santo* in February 1606 for our country. On 12 May 1606 the pioneers debarked at Cebu. On 31 May when they set foot in Manila and soon shared in the evangelization enterprise but “it fell to their lot, in general, to minister to the poorest and more hazardous islands, and that they were able, at the cost of much sacrifice, to keep them for Christ and for Spain.” Over 1,700 Recollect missionaries have worked in the Philippines since then.

### **Father Mariano Gutiérrez**

A naturalist and scientist, Fr. Mariano Gutiérrez de los Dolores (1788-1855) taught the people of Jagna where he was parish priest for 33 years how to cure and tan leather of *kagwang* [flying lemur], how to extract tints and dyes from various plants and trees, how to manufacture paper, cigar boxes, ink, cartons and parchment. He collected, identified and studied specimens of birds, mammals, insects, plants, grass, root crops, fruits, minerals and trees. He taught women how to weave cloth from cotton and abaca. He had communication with museums and scientific societies outside of the Philippines.

### **Father Miguel de la Madre de Dios**

An Augustinian friar of Zaragoza, Spain, Fr. Miguel de la Madre de Dios (†1607) later joined the Recollects and the first Philippine mission. He was preaching the Word of God to the Aetas



of Zambales in 1607 when the furious natives hurled stones at him, causing his death a few days after in Manila. Though he did not perish on the spot, he has always been revered as the proto-martyr of the Augustinian Recollection.

### **Father Víctor Baltanás**

A tragic crime rudely shattered the humdrum silence of the sleepy town of Escalante in northeastern Negros Island. A Recollect parish priest, Fr. Víctor Baltanás (1869-1909), fell victim of a vilest sectarian conspiracy on the night of 15 May 1909. Without provocation whatsoever, an Aglipayan adherent murdered the innocent parish priest Father Víctor at the kumbento. “Not for some crime, real or imagined, nor for personal vendetta,” declared the American bishop of Jaro, “but only because he was a Catholic priest and religious, he was martyred by adherents of the Aglipayan sect.”

### **Brother Matías Carbonnell**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Brother Matías Carbonnell (1806-1861) constructed the sturdy bridge named *Isabel II* over Imus River, which people and motorists of Cavite still use. He further constructed dams, bridges, aqueducts, waterways in the Recollect Hacienda de San Juan Bautista of Imus and Hacienda de San Nicolás in Bacoar, both in Cavite. He was one of “those religious who never ceased to show proofs of their fervid zeal working for material and spiritual welfare of the Filipino people solely out of charity for them.”

### **Father Juan de San Severo**

Juan de San Severo (†1697) was the indefatigable builder of the impregnable convent and church-*cum*-fort of Cuyo that could accommodate the whole parish population for the defense against Moro piratical attacks, most rampant in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. He constructed forts, watchtowers and bulwarks in Taytay, Dumaran and Cagayancillo.

### Father Pascual Ibáñez

As newly appointed assistant priest en route to his Zamboanga parish in 1849, Fray Pascual Ibáñez (1821-1851) encountered Moro attackers in two boats at sea and bravely repulsed them. He magnanimously showed charity by caring for hundreds of wounded Christians and Moros in the Balinguigui expedition. He was tasked to lead a company of the 700-man expedition that brought the war into the Moros' own backyard in February 1850. The Visayan-Spanish forces overcame Jolo. Fatally wounded during the assault, he died in early March 1851. Father Ibáñez was a typical missionary in a Mindanao or Visayan coastal parish, who defended his flock against Moro piracies since time immemorial.

### Father Valero de San Agustín

Born in the Aragonese region of Teruel, Spain, Fr. Valero de San Agustín (1732-1788) spent half of his lifetime in the Mindanao parishes of Cagayan de Oro, Surigao, Tandag and Cantilan. He was named vicar provincial of Caraga in eastern Mindanao. In the noble tradition of Padre Capitán, he heroically defended the Christian settlements from the Moro terror. In 1766, he exhorted the faithful against the protracted Moro siege of Tandag and helped the *alcalde mayor* in the victorious military expedition against the besieging forces.

### Father Aniceto Ibáñez

A missionary from Andosilla, Navarre, Fr. Aniceto Ibáñez (1828-1892) worked in Pago, Agaña and Yap Island as parish priest, vicar forane and vicar provincial for over 30 years. He likewise spent six years as parish priest of Cavite Puerto, now part of Cavite City, and one year as prior of the formation house of Monteagudo, Navarra. In Agaña he was director of the Colegio de San Juan de Letrán. He possessed a complete knowledge of the Chamoru [Chamorro] and Caroline dialects of the Marianas Isles and of the customs of its islanders. From his untiring pen came *Cartilla-Silabario Chamorro* (1887), *El verdadero cristiano* (1887), a pamphlet in Chamoru and Spanish for the devotion to Saint Francis Borgia, patron of Rota,

and Saint Dimas, patron of Merizo, and *Gramática chamorra* (1865) which he translated from the original of Luis Mata y Araujo.

### **Father Antonio Úbeda**

In 1852, Fr. Antonio Úbeda (1805-1870) published the best-seller *La Teresa* at that time. If the Tagalogs had their *Urbana at Feliza*, the Cebuano-speakers of the Visayas and Mindanao also had its counterpart, *La Teresa*, a 104-page novella on Boholano customs that imparted lessons on Christian upbringing, ethical standards and social values. Fray Antonio further authored a 48-page catechism booklet widely disseminated in Bohol, Camiguin and Negros Oriental. Titled *Ang pangadyeon sa mga Bisayang Cristianos* [Book of Prayers of Visayan Christians], the pamphlet was published in 1852 and later reprinted in Cebu in 1895. He rejoined his Maker in Marcilla, Navarre, on 25 March 1870.

### **Father Andrés de San Fulgencio**

A theology professor in Salamanca, Spain, he was a missionary for seven years in Romblon, Tandag and Zambales. Through his efforts as prior provincial in 1735 he obtained from the governor general the license to maintain a house of young women devoted to prayer in an exemplary contemplative and communitarian lifestyle withdrawn from mundane affairs. Earlier as prior of San Sebastian and provincial chronicler (1731-1734), he wrote *Fórmula y metodo de gobierno para nuestras Beatas Agustinas de San Sebastián* [Formula and method of governance for our Augustinian Beatas of San Sebastian], the first Rule of the Beaterio. Against the critics and opponents of the Beaterio de San Sebastian, he defended it by asserting the edifying example, service to San Sebastian Church and virtuous lives of Mother Dionisia and Mother Cecilia Rosa.

### **Father Andrés del Espíritu Santo**

A native of Valladolid, Spain, and member of the pioneering 1606 mission, Fray Andrés del Espíritu Santo (1585-1658?) founded the town of Masinloc in 1607 and the convent of Cavite Puerto in 1616. He was superior of the Recollects in the Philippines for a total

of twelve years either as vicar provincial or as prior provincial, deftly guiding the young province in its decisive years of challenges and new missionary horizons. After an 11-month journey from Spain via Mexico, he returned to Manila at the helm of the 23-member fifth mission to Manila in 1622 that included the future martyrs Blessed Melchor de San Agustín and Blessed Vicente de San Antonio. Historians owe it to him for having chronicled the early Recollect convents, missions and missionary arrivals in our country (1605-1645).

### **Father Alonso Jubera de la Concepción**

Toledo, Spain-born Alonso Jubera de la Concepción (1763-1835) was the founder and, in 1820, the first superior of the new convent of Alfaro, La Rioja. After his terms as parish priest in Pampanga and Cavite, he was named in 1800 commissary and vicar provincial in Spain tasked with recruiting friar volunteers from convents of the three existent Recollect provinces for the Philippines. On account of the tumultuous political conditions of Spain stemming from the French invasion, he was tasked with negotiating with the church and civil authorities to set up the convent-college seminary of Alfaro, the first house of formation of the Philippine Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino in the Spanish Peninsula since its foundation in 1621. In view of his excellent administrative qualities, he was again put in charge of establishing the novitiate and college seminary of Monteagudo, Navarra, of which he was the first prior in 1829.

### **Father Pedro de Santa Bárbara**

Known for his tact and diplomacy, Pedro de Santa Bárbara (1722-1794), parish priest of Loboc and vicar provincial of Bohol, was among the first Recollects in Bohol after the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1768. He was at the forefront of the efforts to talk peace with the Boholano rebel in the uplands. A religious of great energy, of proven zeal and of uncommon daring, he mustered enough strength to climb the heights and seek a dialogue with Francisco Dagohoy in his Magtangtang Cave, bearing small gifts for him and his community. Several times the undaunted friar personally met with Dagohoy who showed absolute trust in the Recollect missionary. He was in

due time permitted “to baptize, confess and solemnize marriages of hundreds of insurgents.” Dagohoy, however, would not surrender to the government that refused to grant his demands, like the removal of troops from the towns of Bohol.

### Father Ramón Zueco

A prolific author and translator in Cebuano, Ramón Zueco (1828-1889) published works on healthful ethical counsels for young ladies, married women and young children: *Avisos saludables a las doncellas*, Manila 1863 (64 pp), *Avisos muy útiles para las casadas*, Manila 1873 (48 pp), and *Avisos saludables a los niños*, Manila 1873 (74 pp). Filipinos are forever indebted to this friar philologist for the development and preservation of Visayan Cebuano language by writing grammar books: 222-page *Gramática bisayo-española adaptada al sistema de Ollendorff* (1890) and 152-page *Compendio de la gramática bisayo-española adaptada al sistema de Ollendorff* (1890). Molded in the tradition of dauntless *El Padre Capitán*, Ramón Zueco in 1876 led a successful punitive expedition of Spanish and Visayan troops against Moro lairs in Mindanao and Sulu.

Father José García de la Virgen de los Remedios Born at Ferrara, Asturias, Spain, Fr. José García de la Virgen de los Remedios (1817-1894) was assigned to Loboc and then Bilar in Bohol. He went on to serve the parishioners of Loon for 34 long years from May 1854 to 1888. Fr. García surmounted all the innumerable hardships stemming from dearth of resources or for other reasons that came his way, with admirable steadfastness when he undertook the construction of the magnificent church of Loon wholly made of *mampostería* (rubblework) The massive temple of God has three naves with very splendid columns in the center. Inside the walls the dimensions are 80 *varas* (224 ft.) long and 37 *varas* (103.6 ft.) wide. This crowning glory of Recollect church architecture in Bohol started in 1855 and was completed in August 1866. This religious is worthy of praise for the indefatigable zeal, intelligence, hard work for the spiritual and temporal welfare of his parishioners. After the grandiose church project he went on to construct two spacious stone schools for boys and girls on both sides of the church square.

### **Brother Román Caballero**

A native of Marcilla, Navarre, Spain, the tireless religious brother Fray Román Caballero (1836-1896) was endowed with great knowledge of engineering and agriculture. He was sent to the Recollect Cavite Hacienda that comprised vast arable tracts of land in Imus, Bacoor and Dasmariñas where he constructed the necessary dams and irrigation canals. The most significant was the Prinza Dam in Bacoor, although those of Molino and Pasong-Kastila were extensively used as well in times past. A beautiful cemetery, made of solid mampostería walls, with a mortuary chapel and well-ordered niches was built in Imus by Brother Roman who, despite his old age and having surrendered to the revolutionaries, was later murdered by them in 1896 at the estate house.

### **Brother Lucas de Jesús María**

Fray Lucas de Jesús María (1722-1792) of Zaragoza, Spain, was a sculptor and architect by profession. Named Master of the Royal Works in Manila, he prepared the blueprints of the *Alcaicería de San Fernando* [Raw Silk Exchange of San Fernando] in Binondo, Manila, for trade with Chinese merchants. He drew up the blueprints of and constructed the last support or abutment of Puente España over Pasig River in Manila. Cavite tenants and farmers were grateful to the Recollect religious brother for constructing the Casundit Dam, believed to be “the strongest ever found in these Islands.”

### **Father Benito de San Pablo**

A work that shed light on some aspects of 17<sup>th</sup>-century Philippine culture and history is Fr. Benito de San Pablo's (1685-1768) *Tratado de algunas cosas notables pertenecientes a los conventos de ministerios y administración espiritual de la Santa Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Agustinos Recoletos Descalzos de Filipinas* [Treatise on some noteworthy things pertinent to the Convents of the ministries and spiritual administration of the holy Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino of the Discalced Augustinian Recollects of the Philippines]. The friar from Jarandilla, Extremadura, Spain, was likewise a reliable biographer of the Servants of God Mother Dionisia and Cecilia Rosa Talangpaz. Besides being a superior of

skillful governance, an exemplary prelate and a perfect religious, he was a prolific writer who published several books on sermons and devotional prayers.

### **Father Juan Félix de la Encarnación**

A missionary from Valladolid, Spain, Fray Juan Félix de la Encarnación (1806-1879) spent long years in the parish ministry in Zamboanga, Bislig, Siquijor and Dumaguete. He was elected to the highest position of Saint Nicholas Province for two triennia, after having been appointed procurator general and provincial councilor earlier. He penned several devotional works, translations, census book with geographical and historical accounts of parishes and convents (1851) and studies on Filipino surnames and improvements for Negros Island. He was deemed “a man of great ingenuity, vast learning and firmness of character.” Father Félix is known for his *Diccionario Bisaya-Español* (388 pages, published in 1851) and *Diccionario Español-Bisaya* (364 pages, published 1852). Their revised, corrected and enriched combined edition was published in 1866. The dictionary was deemed by philologists and linguists as unrivalled by publications of its kind. His great love for the Order was manifested in his level-headed defense of the rights of the Augustinian Recollects during the acrimonious Secularization Controversy in Philippine Church history.

### **Don Bernardino del Castillo y Maldonado adn Doña María Enríquez de Céspedes**

Don Bernardino del Castillo y Maldonado, a native of Mexico City, and his spouse Doña María Enríquez de Céspedes recognized the Recollects as “learned, virtuous and serious men and knew they were gathering much fruit in this community and among the natives round about.” The generous couple donated the land and church of the now-defunct Recoletos church in Intramuros, Manila, in 1615-1620, defraying the expenses for its construction and embellishment that amounted to 150,000 pesos. In 1621, they likewise donated the land and church of San Sebastian in Quiapo, Manila, “as a house of solace for religious already fatigued by the labors of their ministry.” A metal plaque located at the left of the entrance of San Sebastian

Convent, Plaza del Carmen, Manila, acknowledges their 1621 donation and perpetuates their philanthropy.

### **Father Aquilino Bon**

Father Aquilino Bon de San Sebastián (1831-1883) was first assigned to Dauis. His subsequent assignments: parish priest of the Saint Peter the Apostle Parish in Loboc in 1855-1859, 1862-1864, 1868-1870, 1879-1883; Tagbilaran in 1859-1862; novice master in Monteagudo, Spain; superior of Recoletos convent in Intramuros, Manila in 1870 and provincial superior in 1876. Kind-hearted to others, but austere with himself, he was deemed as one of the most upright Recollect friars in the Philippines. His infrastructure works in Loboc: tiling of the roof of the stone church and construction of the portico, *ermita*, new and elevated cemetery, school houses and teachers' homes, all made of *mampostería*. In 1870, he authored and published two novenas to Saint Peter the Apostle and Our Lady of Guadalupe. He died of cholera in 1883 and was interred at the parish church which he served for a total of 16 ½ years.

### **Father Juan de la Concepción and Historia general de Philipinas**

This classic work of fourteen volumes *Historia general de Philipinas* (Manila 1788-1792) authored by Fray Juan de la Concepción (1724-1786) and published posthumously, is a “detailed piece of writing and is perhaps most complete of all the histories that issued from the hands of missionaries up to this time.” Among other significant issues in Philippine history, it is from this collection that we could learn almost everything in detail about the Boholano patriot Francisco Dagohoy who with his thousands of followers rebelled against Spanish rule because of the adamant refusal of the Jesuit parish priest Gaspar Benito Morales to inter on sacred ground his brother Sagarino, the *alguacil* sent to the uplands to arrest the *remontado* but slain in a duel.

### **Father Patricio Marcellán**

Fr. Patricio Marcellán de San José (1834-1889) at Buñuel, Navarra, Spain. He joined the Augustinian Recollect Order in 1850



in Monteagudo, Navarra. He belonged to the first group of Recollect missionaries who finished their theology in their new convent of Marcilla, Navarra. He was assigned to Mandaue, Cebu, and to Poro town of Camotes Islands. He was the first *predicador de Manila* or preacher of the Recoletos church at Intramuros, Manila. In July 1870 he was named prior of San Sebastian Convent, parish priest of Ermita in Manila in 1873, and San Sebastian prior again. He was parish priest of Antipolo in 1876 and of Maragondon, Cavite, in 1885. Death came for him at the Convent in Marcilla in 1889.

A biographer describes him as “an excellent preacher.” Fr. Marcellán was given the title of “retired professor” in 1881. As provincial chronicler, he wrote the book which was published without his name in 1879. In 1906, Fr. Sádaba identified Marcellán as the author of the valuable work.

### **Father Mauricio Ferrero**

A friar from Arnedo, la Rioja, Fr. Maurico Ferrero (1844-1915) served the parish of the future capital of Negros Occidental for a total of 33 years, long enough to be deemed as the Father and Builder of Bacolod City. Fr. Mauricio Ferrero’s arrival at Bacolod in 1871 signaled portents to come. Under his initiative and direction, the present magnificent cathedral and convent—which was constructed in 1891-1894 and turned into the Bishop’s house in 1941—were constructed. The cemetery, mortuary chapel, Puerto San Juan [headquarters of the *Guardia Civil* and later the provincial jail] and school edifices were likewise completed during his term. A statue of Fr. Mauricio and that of Fr. Fernando Cuenca stand at the entrance of the Bacolod cathedral, definitely in gratitude to the Recollect priests’ works in the service of Bacolod and the whole Negros Island.

### **Father Mariano Bernad**

A missionary of Cuyo, Taytay, Misamis and Dumaguete for a total of thirty years, Father Mariano Bernad de la Virgen del Pilar (1838-1915) was born in Calanda, Teruel, Spain. In the Philippines, he was a missionary of Cuyo in the Calamianes (August-December 1862) and Taytay from December 1862 until August 1866 when he

was stricken by malaria and sent to Talisay, Negros Occidental for his recovery. He was parish priest of Dumaguete (December 1866-July 1867; 1879-1891; 1894-1897), Misamis, now Ozamiz City (September 1867-1873), and prior provincial (1891-1894).

Father Bernad was appointed by the Holy See as apostolic commissary [superior general] of the Congregation of Augustinian Recollects in 1901-1908. He guided the affairs of the Congregation during the turbulent socio-political years in Spain and the Philippines. In 1899-1901, he founded the first Recollect missions in Brazil in the wake of the tumultuous Philippine Revolution that saw the exodus of missionaries to their convents in Spain and to the missions in Latin America. He firmed up the decision to sell the landed estates in Cavite in 1905. The new Province of Our Lady of the Pillar (later Saint Thomas of Villanova) was established during his term. He authored a Calamian dictionary and a brief historical account of Dumaguete in Negros Oriental.

### **Father Domingo Carceller**

The very prolific Father Domingo Carceller de la Consolación (1894-1967) composed church music, wrote lyrics and compiled sacred hymns in two books [Colección de cánticos sagrados, Collection of Sacred Hymns (Manila 1937) 157 pages, sized 230 mm x 160 mm, and the bigger edition Colección de cánticos sagrados. Acompañamiento de órgano (Manila 1937) 383 pp., sized 310 mm. x 220 mm. The third edition, much enlarged, of Colección de cánticos sagrados (Manila 1952) has 501 pages and is 285 mm. x 220 mm. You can appreciate the tremendous output of the prolific musician's Colección de cánticos sagrados in its three editions. Therein you find as well several versions of the Latin Eucharistic hymns *Tantum ergo* and *O Salutaris hostia*. Carceller's works include *Gloria a Jesús* the winning official hymn of the 33<sup>rd</sup> International Eucharistic Congress that took place in February 1937 in Manila. The lyrics were penned by the Filipino-Hispanic bard Emeterio Barcelón y Barceló Soriano. The melodious Communion hymn *Venid, venid, Jesús a consolarme* [Come, come Jesus to Console Me] can still be heard among the old folks in San Juan, Batangas, where Father Domingo was assigned.

### Father Pedro Gibert

A Cuyo missionary for decades, Father Pedro Gibert de Santa Eulalia (1762-1843) was born in San Sadurní (Barcelona). The Catalan friar was prior provincial for two triennia (1803-1806, 1821-1824) but he spent most of his pastoral work in the Calamianes islands, especially Cuyo and Agutaya. His long stay in Cuyo equipped with much competence in writing a Cuyunin hymn-book *Mga himno nga catantaan, Oracion sa pagdayao cay Jesus, Maria et Jose. Paghalad sa Santo Rosario, sanda anang mga excelencias* [Hymns and prayers in praise of Jesus, Mary and Joseph; the offering of the Holy Rosary and its excellencies], which saw print posthumously only in 1882 in Manila. Its fourth edition appeared in 1955. Father Gibert further published various books of catechism, sermons and panegyrics. At age 80, he returned to his maker at San Sebastian Convent on 5 January 1843.

### Father Celestino Yoldi

While still a theology student at their convent in Marcilla, Navarra, Spain, Father Celestino Yoldi de la Inmaculada Concepción (1863-1935) he already composed various religious hymns. Father Yoldi was born in Obanos, Navarra, on 3 May 1863. Among his parochial assignments were Antipolo, Irirum (Mindoro), Subic (Zambales), San Juan (Batangas). A consummate organist, he composed three hymns: Rosario (1884), sung in three voices with instrumental accompaniment, Letanía (1885), in three voices and with organ accompaniment and Himno (1886) in three voices and with an orchestra for the community literary-musical program during the feast of the Conversion of Saint Augustine. He composed two hymns for Nuestra Señora de la Paz when he was in Antipolo in 1888-1890: Panis Angelicus (1889), motet for duet with organ accompaniment, and Novena (1889) for the Virgen de la Paz, three voices with organ accompaniment.

He further composed the Misa (1891) with mixed songs for the mass with voices and organ accompaniment; two rondelets, Hosana (1893) for Palm Sunday, two voices and orchestra and a rondelet Gloria, laus (1893), two voices and orchestra; a rondelet Viene ya for the Holy Communion (1894), two voices and orchestra.

His Marian hymns included *Stabat Mater* (1894), three voices and orchestra; *Misa* (1902), fifth key, alternate choral singing and duet of treble or soprano voices, *Dos letanías* (1903), duet with organ accompaniment, and *Despedida a la Santísima Virgen*, choir and duet with organ accompaniment. His melodious song in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, *Al Sagrado Corazón de Jesús*, was composed in 1904 with soprano solo and piano accompaniment. Father Celestino passed away in Recoletos, Intramuros on 3 April 1935.

### **Father Victoriano Tarazona**

A friar “with an exquisite for music and acknowledged competence in it,” Father Victoriano Tarazona de San Agustín (1865-1922) was born in Tudela, Navarra, Spain. After his subsequent pastoral assignment in Escalante, Argüelles, Cadiz and Guihulngan, the revolutionaries arrested him in November 1898 and released him in February 1899.

A great number of his musical compositions were destroyed during the Revolution when the revolutionaries captured Guihulngan. What remained were the Marian songs *Flores* (three voices and organ accompaniment) and *Despedida a la Virgen* (for baritone, choir and orchestra) and *Himno a San José* (choir, solo and small orchestra). This hymn to the Patriarch of the Church used to be sung during the flower offering on the penultimate day of the novena held at the Recoletos church. He died at the Convent of Recoletos, Intramuros, on 18 February 1922.

### **Doña María Enríquez de Céspedes**

Father Miguel Avellaneda de la Virgen del Rosario was born on 1 October 1892 at Casalarreina, La Rioja. After his priestly ordination in 1915, he was sent to Venezuela as missionary. In 1920, he became professor of philosophy and theology, and taught the formands [seminary students] in Monteagudo and Marcilla in Spain for thirteen years. He was also put in charge of teaching musical direction and church organ simultaneously. He spent three years as vice prior in Recoletos, Manila (1931-1934), before his assignment to Rome.

He is more known as the author of the second volume of the biographies of Augustinian Recollect religious *Continuación del Padre Sádaba o Segunda parte del “Catálogo de los religiosos de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos”* (1906-1936). Various historical, biographical and literary works came out from his prolific pen. He also prepared a book of thirty-five sermons in Spanish for varied religious feasts and occasions. As proof of his multifaceted talent, Father Avellaneda composed hymns for various religious patronages: Kalenda de Navidad; Joseph, three voices; Ave Maria and *Tantum ergo*.

He composed as well two hymns to Saint Augustine: *Magne Pater* that saw print in the Augustinian Recollect Ritual and *Hymn to Saint Augustine*. His love for the Order is further shown by his musical composition *Hymn to the Augustinian Recollection*. At age 70, he passed away at the Recollect seminary for philosophy students in Fuenterrabía, Guipúzcoa, Spain on 25 December 1962.

### **Don Genaro Palacios, architect of San Sebastian Basilica**

As director of public works in Manila, Don Genaro Palacios was requested by the Recollects of San Sebastian Convent to inspect the earthquake-damaged church in 1880. In 1883, he drew up the blueprints for the future steel basilica. In 1885-1888, he was tasked in Spain with conducting the bids with European firms, monitoring the works at the foundries in Binche, Belgium, and the acquisition of the German-crafted stained glass mosaics and their shipment to the Philippines of the dismantled steel parts for reassembly in Manila to become the only all-steel basilica in Asia.

## **Objects**

### **Fifth Ordinance of the Provincial Chapter in Toledo**

The historic fifth ordinance of the provincial chapter of the Province of Castile of the Order of the Hermits of Saint Augustine in Toledo, Spain, on 5 December 1588 was the foundational act of the Augustinian Recollection. It reads thus: “Since there are or can be among us some brothers so desirous of monastic perfection that

they would want to follow a more austere plan of life, and whose legitimate desire is to be furthered so that no *obstacles* be placed in the part of the work of the Holy Spirit, after duly consulting our most reverend father general and, having implored his leave, we determine that, in our Province, three or more monasteries for men be set aside or newly founded and the same number for women, in which a stricter form of life may be practiced, which the father provincial with his council shall prescribe after a mature reflection.”

### **Forma de vivir**

Mandated by the provincial council, redacted by the erudite Fray Luis de León, approved by Prior Provincial Fray Pedro de Rojas and his councilors on 20 September 1589 and published in 1596, the *Forma de vivir de los Frailes Agustinos Descalzos* [Way of Life of the Discalced Augustinian Friars] was the first constitutions of the reformed Augustinians in their pioneering convents in Toledo and Valladolid, Spain. A work of spiritual and charismatic character, the *Forma de vivir* proposed general and practical norms “on prayer, silence, common life, cloister, penance, formation of religious, quality of apparel, rooms and convent.”

### ***Apostolici muneris* (1602)**

Through the papal brief *Apostolici muneris* of 11 February 1602, Pope Clement VIII decreed the separation of the first Recollects from the province of Castile and the establishment of the “province of Saint Augustine of Discalced Recollect friars of Spain.” There were seventy friars in five convents: Talavera de la Reina (Toledo), Portillo (Valladolid), Nava del Rey (Valladolid), El Toboso (Toledo) and Madrid. El Toboso convent was located in a hermitage dedicated to Nuestra Señora de los Remedios and established in 1600.

### ***Militantis Ecclesiae* (1621)**

Pope Gregory XV issued the papal brief *Militantis Ecclesiae* on 5 June 1621, which raised the sole Recollect province to the rank of congregation under a vicar general who wielded the highest authority. He was authorized to create provinces according to the

geographical distribution of the convents. Twenty convents belonged at that time to the congregation.

### **General Chapter of November 1621**

The general chapter of 20 November 1621 elected Fr. Jerónimo de la Resurrección as vicar general. Three days later, four provinces were subsequently created: Saint Augustine, Our Lady of the Pillar, Blessed [then] Thomas of Villanova, and Saint Nicholas of Tolentino which was missionary in nature and had all its houses, parishes and mission territories in the Philippines. Important documents were thereafter legislated: *Constitutions*, patterned after *Forma de vivir* and the Augustinian constitutions, *Ceremonial*, *Ritual* and *Historia general de la Orden*.

### ***Religiosas Familias* (1912)**

Through the papal brief *Religiosas Familias*, issued by Saint Pius X on 16 September 1912, the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollects was finally elevated to the status of religious order and the vicar general was raised to prior general. It was further granted full juridical autonomy. The most cherished dream of the Augustinian Recollection was at last fulfilled.

### ***Decretum Laudis* (1970)**

The Roman Pontiff Pope Paul VI on the eve of the first ever papal visit to the Philippines ordered the Congregation of Religious the issuance of the *Decretum Laudis* on 20 November 1970 that granted pontifical approval and juridical autonomy to the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters.

### **Virgen de la Correa**

The first image ever introduced in the Philippines by the first Augustinian Recollect mission in May 1606 was the image of Our Lady of Consolation or *Virgen de la Correa* in San Nicolás church in Intramuros. Manila, “installed there since our religious order began its work in these islands.” “The entire city has a great devotion to her,” writes Fray Andrés del Espíritu Santo, a member of the first mission

to the Philippines, “since all those who have truly and sincerely entrusted themselves to her have found protection and favor from God with unnumbered wonders that the Almighty has wrought on the devotees of His most holy Mother, the Virgin of Consolation.” A *cofradía* [confraternity] *de la Correa* was mandated by the *Modo de Administrar* [Manner of Administration] established in the parish under Recollect jurisdiction. Thus, in almost every parish and house of the Order in the Philippines, we can find the loving image of Our Lady of Consolation, a traditional cherished Marian invocation of all Augustinian families since time immemorial.

### **Modo de Administrar**

Enacted in 1626 for the evangelization tasks of the early missionaries, the *Instrucciones y modo de administrar que se han de observar los Padres Ministros de todos los ministerios de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Agustinos Recoletos de Filipinas* or *Modo de Administrar* [Manner of Administration] underwent several revisions in the provincial chapters in the course of the centuries. This Recollect handbook of statutes and instructions for an effective pastoral work aimed at preventing the spiritual decay of an isolated missionary who should set an example of virtue and maintaining his zeal for the sanctification of souls. This pastoral guide consistently advocated the basic need for a profoundly contemplative life as the authentic foundation of a basically active apostolate.

### **Diccionario español-chamorro**

The most significant and enduring work of Fr. Aniceto Ibáñez during his long apostolate in the Marianas Islands, *Diccionario español-chamorro* (1864), was done “out of love for those inhabitants and to forge the bonds with the mother country” for use in all the schools of the Pacific archipelago. The Spanish governor-general expressed his thanks to the prior provincial for Fr. Ibáñez’s undertaking.

### **OAR Constitutions**

Since the initial edition of 1637, the *OAR Constitutions* have been “the most authentic and stable expression of the foundational



charism which, being life-generating, creates an evangelical type of man or woman, alongside that special configuration with Christ that highlights a dimension of His mystery and is projected in the works that he or she performs with the mark of a peculiar spirituality.” The Constitutions are “the golden book” which mirrors the charism and spirituality of the Recollect Order. It is the fundamental book of Recollect spirituality where the descriptive traits of that lifestyle that embodies and lives Christ’s life in a particular manner of sanctification and apostolate take visible form.

### ***El Santo Cristo de Casiguran, Museo Recoleta***

The *Holy Christ of Casiguran* is considered to have wrought miracles. Tradition has been handed down that the miraculous Crucifix had lowered its hand to give absolution to a dying Recollect missionary. The Recollects worked in what is now part of Aurora and Quezon provinces in eastern Luzon in 1658-1704. The age-old Crucifix is in safekeeping at the Museo Recoleta in Quezon City.

### ***Virgen del Carmen of San Sebastian Basilica***

The revered image of *Nuestra Señora del Carmen* [Our Lady of Mount Carmel] was solemnly enthroned at San Sebastian Church on 5 May 1621 by Fray Rodrigo de San Miguel. It was a Marian gift from the Discalced Carmelite nuns in Mexico City in 1618 to the Recollect missionaries as a token of “chaste and permanent affection.” It served as a worthy testimonial of that fraternal bond and spiritual relationship between discalced nuns and friars. Thus the Augustinian Recollects first introduced the Carmel devotion to the Filipino nation. The Marian icon of San Sebastian Basilica is a witness to Filipinos’ steadfast belief in God and deep-rooted confidence in the Mother of Christ.

### ***Virgen de la Salud, Museo Recoleta, Quezon City***

*Nuestra Señora de la Salud* [Our Lady of Health], like the Carmel image, was another gift of the Discalced Carmelite nuns of Mexico City. In 1634, the 7<sup>th</sup> Recollect mission carried down from the galleon the icon of *Virgen de la Salud*. In a devout procession it

was taken to the first Recollect church of San Juan de Bagumbayan [now Luneta] in Manila where it was solemnly enthroned. The devotion to the Mother of God gained numerous devotees along the centuries through the introduction and veneration of more religious icons and the practice of Marian devotions. Hence, it is little wonder that Filipinos hold the Blessed Virgin very dear and close to their hearts. Indeed, they are *un pueblo amante de María*, a people in love with Mary. The Marian image is now kept at her shrine beside the San Nicolás de Tolentino Parish Church in Quezon City.

### ***Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos***

The OAR history series written by various authors and historians is now in its thirteenth volume. The early Augustinian Recollect chroniclers narrated the Order's travails and triumphs, sorrows and successes, town foundations, missionary expeditions, the Filipino revolts, the construction of churches cathedrals, friars' works, photographs and achievements found in the religious' biographies and obituaries, the election of provincials and local priors, as well as events in the missions and convents in Europe, Central and South America—almost everything you've always wanted to know about the Augustinian Recollect Order and the Philippine society from 1606 to 1894.

### **Labor evangélica de los padres recoletos en las Islas Filipinas**

Fidel de Blas' (1875-1920) magnum opus contains highly accurate colored maps. It is said that during World War II the Japanese forces took pains in finding copies of the *Labor evangélica de los padres recoletos en las Islas Filipinas* (Zaragoza 1910) to help them in the occupation of the Philippines. Researchers always cull important information from the book that printed the names of curates, their terms of office, statistics (taxpayers, baptisms, weddings, deaths) of Recollect parishes and missions during the Spanish regime. It is doubtless a very rich source for population histories, demographic growths and historical accounts of Recollect convents and parishes.

***Catálogo de los religiosos agustinos recoletos de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas desde el año 1606, en que llegó la primera misión, hasta nuestros días***

An essential research tool, the *Catálogo de los religiosos agustinos recoletos* (Madrid 1906) by Fr. Francisco Sádaba del Carmen (1871-1925) is an arsenal of valuable data and information, including names of parishes and churches under Recollect jurisdiction. Friar biographers collated data, assignments to various parishes and offices, such myriad feats as construction of churches, rectories, bridges, roads, watchtowers, belfries, markets, introduction of abaca, leather tanning, grammar book-writing, devotional books, sermon collections, hymnals, lexicographies, etc, of every religious priest and brother who worked in the Philippines up to 1906.

***Diccionario bisaya-español, español-bisaya***

Fr. Juan Félix de la Encarnación, expert in the Visayan language and an accomplished writer, authored the two voluminous books of the unparalleled *Diccionario*, “acclaimed by leading Filipinologists as having no rival in their class.” The first volume *Diccionario bisaya-español* has 388 pages and was published in 1851, while the second volume *Diccionario español-bisaya* has 364 pages which saw print a year later. In 1885, his confreres cooperated in the augmented third edition of the two *Diccionarios* which is still in use by lexicographers, historians, Visayan writers and teachers.

***Misa Baclayana, Baclayon, Bohol***

One solid proof of the enduring promotion of sacred music by Recollect parish priests in Baclayon, Bohol and in other curacies in our country. This *cantoral* [choirbook] speaks highly of the rich musical heritage of the Recollect period of Baclayon parish history. Needless to say, the Recollects supported the hiring of musicians, composers and organ-players, the training of *cantores* [choir-singers] and *tiples*, the composition of songs for liturgical celebrations, the copying of choir books, the purchase of the pipe organ and its repair and the acquisition of musical instruments. Thus, a Baclayon parish priest’s [Fray Blas de la Virgen del Carmen (1772-1832)]

“extraordinary ability and interest in music paved the way for the golden age of church music in Bohol,” writes a music historian.

### ***Embriología Sagrada (1856)***

Authored by Fr. Gregorio Sanz (1817-1859), long-time parish priest of Loay (Bohol) and later of Mandaue (Cebu) who possessed a vast knowledge of physiology and medicine, the *Embriología Sagrada* [Sacred Embryology] proved extremely useful for parish priests in isolated curacies and *hilot* or *mananabang* who aided in the safe and hygienic deliveries of babies. Cebu Bishop Romualdo Jimeno lauded the book no end and exhorted all his clergy to acquire a copy for use in their parishes.

### ***La Teresa (1852)***

A novella with 104 pages was published in Cebu. The book in its second printing at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century dealt with Boholano customs that imparted lessons to Visayan families on Christian upbringing, ethical standards and social values. The author Fr. Antonio Úbeda had shown his great zeal for the moral formation, civilization of his parishioners and his admirable tact in dealing with them. It further showed his mastery and expertise in the Cebuano Visayan language as well as his great knowledge of the customs, virtues and vices of the natives. The book was very popular in the Visayas, Camiguin and Mindanao islands.

## **Places**

### **Talavera de la Reina**

In the Augustinian convent of Talavera de la Reina in Toledo, Spain, founded by Saint Alonso de Orozco in 1566, the first Augustinian Recollect community was installed on 19 October 1589. The eight religious were headed by Fr. Francisco Briones, prior for the first two years, who was succeeded by Fr. José de Parada. Life at Talavera was poor, austere but totally focused on God in whose praises a great part of the day was spent. The exemplary life and

asceticism of the friars earned for them the admiration of the people of Talavera who provided for their sustenance without the necessity of begging.

### **Convent of San Juan de Bagumbayan**

The first ever church of the Augustinian Recollect pioneers had as patron Saint John the Baptist, but it was originally dedicated to Saint Nicholas of Tolentino. It was built at Bagumbayan, a stone's throw from Intramuros and was inaugurated on 10 September 1606. People who could not enter the closed gates of the walled city had to spend the night in this church. The temple was demolished twice. The first time was in 1644 when Governor General Sebastián Hurtado de Corcuera decided to tear it down because the church allegedly posed security risks to the Walled City. The Recollects protested the demolition in vain. After a successful legal suit, Corcuera was forced to indemnify the Recollects and paid reparation amounting to 25,000 pesos. Rebuilt with that sum, the convent was again leveled to the ground and erased forever from the face of the earth. This second and last time was the handiwork of the British occupation forces (1762-1765). To honor the memory of this first church, the Recollects named their estate house of Imus in Cavite Hacienda de San Juan Bautista. A stone marker was put up by the National Historical Institute on the spot where it stood along María Orosa Street in Luneta, Manila. It was unveiled in fitting rites on 7 December 2007, attended by Philippine Vice President Noli de Castro, National Historical Institute Deputy Executive Director Emelita Almosara, Prior General Father Javier Desiderio Guerra Ayala, Recollect bishops, priests, brothers and professed confreres.

### **San Nicolás Convent and Church**

The second convent and church of the Recollects in the Philippines were constructed in 1608 in Intramuros, Manila, and named after the Italian thaumaturge, mystic and patron Saint Nicholas of Tolentino. The convent was touted as “the only house of observance where the rigors of our holy statutes are kept in the manner permitted by the climate, with no convent in Spain whatsoever that might surpass it in the observance of the Rule.” It was the residence of the provincial superiors, hospital, theology house, novitiate, home

for the aged, all rolled into one. It was a house of spiritual exercises, where religious devoted themselves to attendance at the choir, to rigorous observance, to fasts, so the missionary might go out to the world, fortified for the conversion of pagans and supervision of converts entrusted to their care. Its patronal feasts of the *Virgen de la Salud*, Saint Joseph and Saint Lucy had countless devotees from the colonial capital and adjoining provinces. The convent and church with its beautiful interior and an adjoining chapel of *Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno* (Black Nazarene) were destroyed during the Liberation of Manila in 1945 and demolished a decade later. At the close of the Recoletos 400 (1606-2006) celebration, a stone marker was erected by the National Historical Institute at Recoletos Street corner Muralla Street on 7 December 2006.

### **San José Cathedral, Romblon, Romblon**

One of the oldest cathedrals in the country, the solid San José Cathedral with a belfry-*cum*-fortress was erected in Romblon by Fray Agustín de San Pedro in charge of the parish in 1645-1651. The evangelization work was endlessly disrupted by Moro raids which constrained him to construct forts in Romblon town and in another strategic hill and islands. The cathedral has a magnificent Baroque *retablo* with Mexican elements, which is adorned by an array of Augustinian Saints. The pipe organ was acquired by Fr. Eulogio Sáez (1859-1917) who also had the edifice painted and windows with multi-colored crystals installed.

### **Virgen del Pilar Cathedral, Imus, Cavite**

The cathedral that took more half a century to finish was commenced by Fr. Nicolás Becerra in 1825. So, too, were the belfry and the convent which in 1961 became the bishop's residence when Imus Diocese was erected. He had spent time as well fighting the *tulisanes* [bandits] that once infested Cavite. The Marian cathedral of Romblon with three naves is all made of bricks.

### **San José Cathedral, Tagbilaran City**

Finished by Fr. Valero de San Sebastián, parish priest in 1839-1855, the San Jose Church—a cathedral since 1941 with the creation

of Tagbilaran Diocese, underwent widening and modifications of façade in recent years. As a proof that the Recollects constructed the church the Order's seal was put on the doors, arches and cornices. An early Jesuit-built stone church and convent had burned down in 1798. Fr. Lucas Coromina erected, embellished and finished the convent—now the bishop's residence—in 1872. Fr. Jose Sánchez, parish priest in 1884-1888, commenced the construction of the imposing stone belfry which his successor Fr. Escolástico Enciso brought to an end.

### **San Sebastián Cathedral, Bacolod City**

Fr. Mauricio Ferrero's most enduring legacy as parish priest of Bacolod is the beautiful and solid parish church, made of coral stones now darkened through the decades. The construction of the temple of God commenced in 1876. It was completed and inaugurated in 1882, although a local historian claims it was finished in 1888. The church, spacious, long and elegant, became the cathedral with the creation of the Bacolod Diocese in 1933 that included the whole island and Siquijor as well. It had a warm, well-lighted interior and thick solid walls with rose-windows. Two galleries of arches are supported by round pillars. Its two sturdy bell-towers dominate the view of the city square.

### **San Agustín Cathedral, Iba, Zambales**

The first mission field of the zealous Recollect missionaries was Zambales where in the course of five years seven missionaries set up twelve new towns. The provincial capital of Zambales, Iba was created into a town in 1681 and in 1982 the episcopal see with the church dedicated to Saint Augustine as its cathedral. It is spacious and made of coral stones. Three bells of equal size used to hang in the belfry crowning the façade. The statue of the holy bishop of Hippo is placed at the central niche. The seal of the Order is at the arch of the main door and that of lateral doors. From the presbyterium the image of Saint Augustine presides over the central nave of the age-old house of God.

### **Cathedral of the Conversion of Saint Paul, Vigan City**

When the Nueva Segovia see was transferred to Vigan in 1758, there was no decent cathedral to speak of. When Fr. Juan García Ruiz de San Agustín (1728-1796) was elected bishop, he at once worked in 1782—even before his consecration (1786)—on the episcopal palace located to the left of the future cathedral. This edifice cost him 12,000 pesos. He began shortly after the construction of the grandiose cathedral. He personally supervised the church project so that his health deteriorated on account of the inhalation of lime and the humid clime. He had to recover his health in Manila, Laguna and environs, in vain. After fourteen months he resumed his unfinished work in Vigan but his health turned for the worse until he died in 1796, four years short of the inauguration of the magnificent cathedral. By 1794, its stone walls had been put up, the imposing façade up to the cornice finished and the sacristy and baptistery completed. The cathedral is 84 meters long, 28 meters wide and eighteen meters high from the ground to the apex of the ceiling. Three doors at the Baroque façade lead to the three naves of the temple which is made of lime and cut stone.

The grandeur of the interior with its gold and silver ornaments and images drained the coffers of the Recollect prelate who literally died impoverished. Bishop Juan Ruiz and another Recollect bishop Mariano Cuartero were buried in this church. Two grand plazas flank the temple: one in front, another on the right side. The Recollect-built detached belfry at the right side of the cathedral has solid of four sides with upper octagonal tiers.

### **Saint Joseph Cathedral, Alaminos City**

The foundation of Alaminos dates back to 1610 when the Recollects had jurisdiction over the parish until the Revolution. The town originally named San José de Soyang was later transferred to a site near the sea overlooking the tourist destination “Hundred Islands” and was renamed San José de Casborrán. A great fire reduced the town into ashes and was once more renamed Sarapsap. The actual name was taken after the governor general Juan de Alaminos who visited it in 1872.

At the helm of the parish in 1838-1849, Fr. Manuel Bosquete commenced the construction of the future cathedral. Fr. José Tornos,



who spoke Pangasinense fluently, administered Alaminos with great zeal for thirty years (1849-1878) and inaugurated the church in 1857. After his death, he was buried in the church. The sturdy church edifice is made of bricks manufactured in the same town. Its majestic structure and spacious interior doubtless call the attention of travelers and tourists.

### **Saint Francis Xavier Cathedral, Kabankalan City**

In 1848, Kabankalan had a fertile plain and was given a parish priest at once. In 1905, Fr. Tiburcio Fernández had to start from scratch in the wake of the Revolution and first built a lowly chapel. Working in a hostile environment after the national upheaval, the Recollects perseveringly exerted great effort in regaining the trust of the people. Fr. Felipe Lerena constructed the church in honor of Saint Francis Xavier and inaugurated it in December 1935. The sugar central and the hacenderos contributed great sums of money and construction materials. The expertise of Engineer M. Sales and Manuel Montinola contributed a great deal to the embellishment of the new church.

San Carlos Borromeo Cathedral, San Carlos City, Negros Occ. The construction of the church of San Carlos Borromeo got underway in 1928 with the parish priest Fr. Leoncio Reta. The solid foundation and a few meters of the walls, all made of concrete, had been finished when lack of funds constrained the parish priest to suspend the project. In May 1935, Fr. Manuel Gómara wanted to continue the project and sought the assistance of the generous hacenderos of San Carlos (the Menchaca, Llantada, Broce and Gamboa families) and obtained it easily. The target amount of 12,000 pesos was not enough and Don Julio Ledesma eventually donated the hefty sum of 20,000 pesos. The frenzied pace commenced at once and on 4 November 1935 the strong church was blest and inaugurated.

The towering temple of God is 51 meters long and 22 meters wide. Its style is a happy marriage of Gothic, Byzantine and Romanesque. The huge lateral windows provided fine light and great ventilation. The church followed the blueprints drawn by Dr. Cereceda and it was built under the supervision of Architect Angel Locsin Yulo. The last Augustinian Recollect parish priests—Fr. Victor Celigueta, Fr. Eusebio Zabaleta and Fr. Rafael Cabarles—ceded the

parish, together with the adjoining curacies of the upland Barangay Quezon and Calatrava, to the diocesan clergy in January 1975. In 1988, the concrete church became the cathedral of the newly erected Diocese of San Carlos.

### **Most Holy Trinity Cathedral, Talibon, Bohol**

Talibon was a visita of Inabanga until 1831 when it was finally separated from its parish matrix. The generous people of Talibon and six Recollect parish priests took part in the protracted construction project. In 1852, Fr. Lorenzo Mayor laid the foundations of the solid church. From 1862 to 1867, Fr. Lorenzo Hernández erected the temple walls up to three meters high. His successor Fr. Manuel Jiménez continued the project until 1868. During José Sánchez's term of sixteen consecutive years (1868-1884), the work of the future cathedral was brought to a happy conclusion. He then started his new bell-tower project. His successor Fr. Francisco Gómez covered the roof of the church with tiles and constructed the three altars.

Fr. Nemesio Llorente who had served in 1888-1889, and 1892-1898 finished the construction of the belfry. "Hard-working by character and temperament," the curate finished dome-like structure of the belfry. A new kumbento was erected in front of the church and was inaugurated in November 1894. Among Llorente's other achievements were the gilding of the altars and pulpit, construction of the sacristy, and the marble and stone flooring of the parish church.

### **Immaculate Conception Cathedral, Puerto Princesa City**

The Recollect missionaries were given the Calamianes and Cuyo groups of islands, north of Palawan in August 1622 by the bishop of Cebu. Puerto Princesa parish, however, was founded by Saint Ezekiel Moreno on 4 March 1872. Recollect apostolic prefects administered Palawan until 1955 when the apostolic vicariate was set up with Bishop Gregorio Espiga as the first apostolic vicar. This remarkable and indefatigable Recollect prelate constructed the cathedral and Cardinal Rufino Santo blessed it in 1961. It was 53 meters long, 18 meters wide; the towers were 40 meters high and the vault 17 meters. Bronze and silver lamps illuminated the interior. The *Via Crucis* was built and donated by inmates of the penal colonies.

The wooden arches were made of *ipil* or *caoba*. Wooden pews were generously donated by parishioners.

### **San Agustín Cathedral, Cagayan de Oro City**

Fray Agustín de San Pedro, *el Padre Capitán* in history, and Fr. Ramón Zueco, helped shape what is now Cagayan de Oro. Fr. Agustín, its parish priest for thirteen years, transferred the *poblacion* to its present site. Fr. Zueco administered it for 28 years (1861-1889) is known for his missionary zeal and cultural contributions as shown in this grammar books and sermons in Visaya Sugbuanon. Both priests led punitive military campaigns against Moro pirates in their southern Mindanao lairs. A solid church, dedicated to Saint Augustine and made of coral stones, was already in place when the Jesuits arrived in 1905. A few modifications and improvements were implemented when it became a cathedral in 1933. The Recollect cathedral was destroyed during World War II.

### **San Sebastián Basilica, Manila**

The solid basilica in Quiapo where in 1621 Don Bernardino Maldonado del Castillo and his wife Doña María Enríquez had donated to the Recollects the land and church is an edifice every Filipino is proud of. It is the first and only all-steel temple in Asia. Its being prefabricated made it a *sui generis*. Cast, assembled, knocked down, shipped in Binche, Belgium, the steel parts of the church—1,527 tons—traveled in eight steamships to Manila. It is a showcase of international ingenuity and skills: Filipino painters, financial resources, Spanish architect, planners and ships, Belgian assemblers, French engineer and chandeliers, English engineer and ships, Chinese carpenters and German stained-glass windows. It is truly an enduring monument to the diligence and perseverance of the Recollects who never failed to erect places of worship in their parishes.

### **Birhen sa Kasilak Church, Loon, Bohol**

Constructed in 1855-1866, the biggest church of Bohol, “the best structure of its kind” and perhaps in the whole Visayas, was the fruit of the collaborative effort of Fr. José García, Domingo

Encondrillas and the cooperative parishioners of Loon. It was the second church edifice built on the site. “It is a crowning example of a later development of colonial architecture in Bohol,” writes an art enthusiast, “illustrating the distinctly Baroque and Muslim characteristics as interpreted by local craftsmen.” The Loon church enshrines the *Birhen sa Kasilak* (Virgin of Light), patroness of the church, whose feast is September 8. The People of God celebrated the quadricentennial of the Marian icon in 2010. The Marian church was completely destroyed in the violent earthquake that struck Bohol and affected the whole region of Central Visayas on 15 October 2013.

### **Church and *Kumbento* of Loboc, Bohol**

Both edifices were built by Jesuits in 1638, but were endlessly embellished, repaired and strengthened by Recollects who constructed the façade and lateral porticoes as well as the massive stone buttresses. The Recollects provided roof tiles for both church and *kumbento*, clock, various images of saints. A *sui generis* three-storey structure, the parish rectory had saved human lives and properties for it served as place of refuge during the devastating floods that inundated the town in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Las Piñas Bamboo Organ, Las Piñas City**

Fray Diego Cera de la Virgen del Carmen began constructing the pipe organ in 1816 by cutting bamboos and burying them at the beach and completed its construction in 1824. In the end, he had utilized 950 bamboo canes to create 832 pipes and added 121 metal pipes for the strong sounds. The pipe organ is the main attraction of the international bamboo music festival held every February at Las Piñas City. It is truly a priceless legacy of the Recollect Order to the Filipino people.

### **Punta Santa Cruz, Maribojoc, Bohol (1796)**

In the *Cosas notables de Maribojoc* [Book of Noteworthy Events], Fr. Lucas Martínez (1839-1911) writes in 1898: “There exists in good condition a stone fort .... Fort of Saint Vincent Ferrer [*Fuerte de San Vicente Ferrer*] finished by Fr. Manuel Sánchez de

Nuestra Señora del Tremedal in 1796. It has two floors and windows for four cannons,“ doubtless for the deliverance and defense of parishioners from Moro piratical raids. The ancient fort—now a tourist attraction overlooking Maribojoc Bay and visible from the sea at some distance—is reminiscent of times past when the curate was warrior and defender of his flock.

### **Jimenez, Misamis Occidental**

A town named after a Recollect missionary exists in Misamis Occidental. Palilan was erected by Fr. Francisco Jiménez de San Fermín (1819-1895) of Tudela, Navarra, Spain, into a *visita* [barrio, barangay]. The parish priest of Misamis [now Ozamiz] converted and baptized innumerable natives in the coastal region from Ozamiz to Baliangao. To promote the material progress of the village, he constructed the great dams that irrigated the lands under his vast jurisdiction. His generosity, selflessness and hard work were forged together for the welfare of his impoverished flock. No wonder why when Palilan was created into a parish in 1859 under the patronage of San Juan Bautista, it took the name of Jimenez to honor that indefatigable evangelizer. A monument of the missionary was put up by the appreciative parishioners a stone’s throw from the church.

### **Saint Augustine Church, Bacong, Negros Oriental**

Bacong was created into a town independent from Dumaguete in 1837. It became a curacy in 1849 with Fr. Joaquín Soriano as parish curate who started the construction of the convent. Fr. Leandro Arrué kept his hands busy in the construction of Saint Augustine Church in 1866-1868. After his term as prior provincial in 1879-1882, he returned to Bacong to finish his project and solemnly inaugurated the church on 28 August 1883. He continued to embellish its interior when his election to the episcopal see of Jaro in 1885 abruptly cut short his term. His successor constructed the adjoining belfry. At the helm of the parish in 1891-1898, Fr. Jorge Carcavilla worked on the installation of the pipe organ earlier bought in Zaragoza, Spain.

### **San Andrés Church, Masinloc, Zambales**

Fr. Andrés del Espíritu Santo founded Masinloc in 1607. The church was built in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries by the Augustinian

Recollects. It is the best example of a colonial church complex in the province, although extensively hit by a recent earthquake. The doorway from the choir loft is carved and polychromatic; it is the most unique feature of the church after the facade.

### **Church of Siaton, Negros Oriental**

The Recollect historians Ricardo Jarauta and Licinio Ruiz both declare that Siaton was ceded to the Recollects in 1848. Fr. Agustín Olmedillas took possession of the parish. Fr. Tomás Mezquita succeeded him after a few months. He climbed mountains to convince the inhabitants to live in the lowlands and he succeeded in baptizing a great number of non-believers. Fr. Mezquita started the construction of both convent and church which were finished by Fr. Manuel Cabriada and Fr. Julián Adán. In 1925, an earthquake partially ruined the church.

The Recollects accepted the parochial administration of Sibulan in 1856. A fire gutted the church and convent and reduced them to ashes. Fr. Tomás Mezquita finished the convent in 1859. The beautiful church of three naves was started by Fr. José María Cabañas and finished by Fr. Pedro Echevarría. The Recollects built the schools and casa tribunal as well the bridges linking the town with Ayuquitán and with Dumaguete. Fr. Eugenio Sola, Manuel Clemente, Francisco Gómez and Nemesio Llorente worked hard for material and spiritual welfare of the Christian community.

### **Church of Zamboanguita, Negros Oriental**

Zamboanguita was separated from Dauin in 1866 and had Fr. Faustino Sánchez as its first parish priest. The temple begun in 1867 took so long until it was finished in 1890. World War II demolished the church. The church was begun and continued by the following Recollects: Fr. Tomás González, Laureano Navarro, Matías Villamayor, Lorenzón Córdón, Manuel Gamboa and Alejandro Osés. A new church rose in 1948 under Father Fermín Samanes who finished it in 1950. Fr. Gregorio Samanes built the convent.

### **Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Valladolid, Negros Occidental**

Erected in 1852, the parish of Valladolid was entrusted to the spiritual patronage of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The coral stone and brick church was begun by Fr. Carlos Ubeda in 1877 but he could not finish the huge church because of the 1898 Revolution. After the Revolution, the Aglipayans occupied the parish church of Valladolid. By 1925, this town was under the parish administration of Bago, whose ministers likewise took care of San Enrique, Pontevedra and Zaragoza. A Recollect priest—Julián de Miguel—passed away in Valladolid in 1872.

### **Our Lady of Peace Church of La Carlota City**

La Carlota, an independent town in 1869, was created into a parish in 1876. The first parish priest was Fr. Andrés Torres, parish priest in 1877-1888 and 1891-1898, began the construction of the church with grandiose dimensions: 75 meter long, 14 meters high, 24 meters wide and 40 meters in the transept but could not finish it because of the Philippine Revolution.

Blessed José Rada was arrested here with four other Recollect confreres and suffered indignities at the hands of the revolutionaries. At total of thirty-five friars were held captive in La Granja, La Carlota City. After the Revolution, the Recollects fought hard and successfully recovered the church from the schismatic Aglipayan sect. In 1925, Fr Leandro Nieto finished the roofing and embellished the church interior. During the term of the parish priest Fr. Santiago Vilda the church was finally blest in January 1936.

### **Vigan Diocesan Seminary, Vigan City**

The first formal experience of the Augustinian Recollects in the systematic education of young Filipinos was the administration of the diocesan seminary in Vigan, Ilocos Sur. It commenced when Msgr. Mariano Cuartero (1830-1887), Bishop of Nueva Segovia (1874-1887), invited them to the Ilocos capital. Toribio Moreno (1857-1896) and Luis Cabello (1858-1926) took charge of the seminary in 1882. In 1883, Celedonio Mateo (1857-1941) was the rector until 1895 with eleven Recollect faculty members during the thirteen-year administration (1882-1895). To the curriculum of

Philosophy, Dogmatic Theology and Moral Theology, new subjects were added: Catechism, Geography, Sacred History, Grammar, World History, Philippine History and History of Spain. Gregorio Alipay, the future military vicar general of General Emilio Aguinaldo and head of *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* [Philippine Independent Church], studied in this seminary.

Despite the fine evaluation of the Recollect teachers made by the new bishop José Hevíá de Campomanes, the decision to pull out the Recollects from Vigan was firmed up in 1895 by the provincial Andrés Ferrero who set up their own school in Bacolod City.

### **Old Bridge connecting Panglao and Bohol**

Of great help to the communication and progress of Panglao Island and to the mobility of people and products is the age-old bridge connecting the towns of Dauis and Panglao with Tagbilaran and the rest of Bohol. It was Fr. Julio Saldaña (1835-1909) who supervised the construction of that big embankment and bridge connecting Panglao Island with the Bohol mainland. Finished in 1864, the bridge is heavily used up to these days.

## **Events**

### **Year of the Great Union of the Order of Saint Augustine (1256)**

The year 2006 marked the 750th anniversary of the Great Union as it calls to mind the general chapter at the Church of Santa María del Pópulo in Rome in March 1256 and solemnly approved by Pope Alexander IV on 9 April of the same year through his bull *Licet Ecclesiae*. Hermit groups in Central Italy adhered to the papal directives and renounced isolation and autonomy to be forged into one sole body. As erstwhile Prior General Father Javier Guerra in his circular letter points out further: these groups “give life to a new mendicant order, that is, to an order founded on fraternity and evangelical poverty, and committed to the apostolate under the watchful and pleased supervision of the Church. The Order was born under the shadow of the Roman papacy that wanted to devote



the energies of those hermits to the great task of evangelizing the growing urban and mercantile society that was surging in Europe.”

### **Arrival of First Recollect missionaries in the Philippines (1606)**

The first group of thirteen Augustinian Recollect volunteer missionaries from various convents in Spain reached Cebu on 12 May 1606. They proceeded north of the archipelago and arrived at the colonial capital of Manila on 31 May. There they established their first convent at Bagumbayan in the outskirts of the walled city and soon after their mother-house San Nicolás church in Intramuros. The acceptance of the Philippine missions strengthened the apostolic character and missionary dimension of the multi-faceted charism of the newly-born Augustinian Recollection.

### **Fourth Centennial of the Recollects in Cebu (1621-2021)**

Augustinian Bishop Pedro de Arce of the Diocese of the Most Holy Name of Jesus in Cebu donated the *Ermita de la Inmaculada Concepción* [Hermitage of the Immaculate Conception] to the Augustinian Recollects under Vicar Provincial Fray Rodrigo de San Miguel on 4 March 1621. On 29 April 1621, under the Royal Patronage system, Governor General Alonso Fajardo in the name of the Spanish monarch approved the episcopal donation, thus officially making the Recollects owners of the hermitage. Over a month later, on 9 June, Fray Juan Crisóstomo de la Ascensión in formal rites took possession of their property which was located at what would be called for almost three hundred years Plaza de Recoletos [renamed Plaza Washington during the American Regime], the present site of Carbon Market, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish and University of San Jose-Recoletos.

### **The Augustinian Recollection becomes a Congregation (5 June 1621)**

The papal decree *Militantis Ecclesiae* issued by Pope Gregory XV on 5 June 1621 elevated the Recollect Province of Saint Augustine to the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollects.

### **First General Chapter and Creation of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino (November 1621)**

The first General Chapter of the new Recollect Congregation gathered in Madrid to elect the vicar general, superior of the new Congregation on 20 November 1621. Three days later, the chapter decreed the creation of four provinces:

### **Recollect Fourth Centennial in Palawan and the Calamianes (1623-1623)**

The same Bishop Pedro de Arce of Cebu handed over the missions of Cuyo and the Calamianes, vacated by a diocesan priest, to the Augustinian Recollects on 27 August 1622. After securing the governor general's official approval on 23 January 1623, the first group of Recollects in Cuyo and from they spread to Agutaya and other islands in the Calamianes.

### **Recollects Return to Negros Island (1848)**

The 20 June 1848 cession of the whole Negros Island by the Bishop of Cebu and the Governor General to the Augustinian Recollects, according to Negros historian Fr. Ángel Martínez Cuesta, marked a new and most brilliant period in Negros history. It was not exclusively religious in character nor a mere change of missionaries. The Recollects' enthusiasm contributed decisively to the creation of a climate of optimism and progress that soon placed Negros at the forefront of the provinces in the Philippines.

Among the rapid social and economic changes was the increased sugar export coupled with such factors as population growth, massive foundation of new towns/parishes, immigration of Spanish and Iloilo farmers, improvement of primary schools, health facilities and communications. There were but seven parishes in 1848 which grew to sixty-seven; sixty new parishes were founded during their watch.

### **Despoliation Decrees of Juan Álvarez de Mendizábal (1835-1837)**

The missionary apostolate in the Philippines saved the Augustinian Recollection itself from possible extinction against the onslaught of the Spanish Liberal government. In 1835-1837, The Liberal minister Juan Álvarez Mendizábal helped enact statutes of despoliation [*desamortización*] which expelled all the monks and friars from their convents into the streets and dispossessed the religious communities of their properties, almost extinguishing thereby religious life in Spain. The Recollect convent in Monteagudo was exempted from such decrees because it continually trained Spanish missionaries who proved useful and convenient for keeping the Philippine colony under the Spanish rule

### **Conflict between Jesuits and Recollects in Mindanao (1859-1861)**

The 30 July 1859 royal decree ordered the cession of Recollect towns in Mindanao to the returning Jesuits. Without prior consultation with the prior provincial of Saint Nicholas Province, the bishop of Cebu and colonial government ordered the Recollects to vacate as well their fourteen parishes they themselves had founded. In January 1769, the expulsion of the Jesuits took place and the governor general's implementation of royal order gave the four military garrisons and two mission stations to the Recollects. The 10 September 1861 royal decree indemnified the Recollect loss of Mindanao with parishes in the archdiocese of Manila. Nineteen towns had been transferred to the Society of Jesus during the 1862-1884 period. An equal number of parishes in the archdiocese had been turned over to the Recollects. Curacies in northern Mindanao were still under the Recollect jurisdiction when another royal decree dated 9 September 1887 put a stop to the indemnifications and handed the vacant curacies of the District of Misamis over to the spiritual care of the Recollects

### **University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos**

Occidental Negros Institute was the original name of what is now University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos. Founded by in

Talisay in 1941 by Antonio Lizares and Francisco Kilayko, it opened to students in the first and second year high school. The Second World War temporarily closed the budding school. The institute reopened in 1946 in Bacolod with the basic and secondary education as well as secretarial, liberal arts, normal education. In 1950 the colleges and other department were transferred to the present site at Lupit Subdivision. Seven years later, in 1957, it became the first university of Negros Occidental. On 25 May 1962, the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino bought the University of Negros Occidental now in an extensive piece of land of fifteen hectares. Fr. Federico Terradillos was the first rector. Since then, twelve university presidents have followed his footsteps. The three-story administration building that later became a most visible landmark in the city was inaugurated in 1968..

Foundation of Saint Ezekiel Monastery of the Augustinian Recollect Contemplative Nuns in Bacolod City (1995) Accompanied by Mother Federal María Cruz Aznar, the first nuns arrived in Manila from Spain on 10 August 1992, thus completing the Augustinian Recollect Family in the Philippines. The five pioneers initially sojourned for a month at the house of the Carmelites of Charity in Quezon City. They proceeded to Bacolod City on 11 September and after the approval of the local ordinary Bishop Camilo Gregorio of Bacolod. With Mother Lourdes Eizaguirre as prioress, they established themselves in Brgy. Villamonte for three years. On 19 August 1995, their Monastery of Saint Ezekiel Moreno was blest and inaugurated. Fray Antonio Palacios, local prior of the Recollect religious in UNO-R (1985-1994), provided the budding community of Augustinian Recollect Contemplative Nuns with all kinds of assistance and support. At present, the religious community is composed of eleven members: eight solemn professed, one simple professed, one novice and one aspirant.

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# Saint Nicholas of Tolentino: Man of God, Mystic and Thaumaturge

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Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos

## Prologue

Nicholas was born in 1245 at Sant'Angelo in Pontano. This town is near the city of Fermo in the March of Macerata in eastern Italy. His parents were Compagnone da Guarutti and Amata da Guidani, a couple known for their religiosity. The small community held them in high esteem. There was not a wealthy family. Nevertheless, Compagnone and Amata had ample resources for a decent life. After several years of marriage, they were not blessed with an offspring. Compagnone and Amata were sad about their childless union. For centuries there existed even in the region of the Marche (*Marches*, in English) along the Adriatic Coast a popular devotion to Saint Nicholas of Bari, the legendary bishop of the fourth century. According to the hagiographer of Saint Nicholas named Pietro da Monterrubiano, the



**First Saint of the Augustinian Family**

childless couple undertook the pilgrimage to Bari in Apulia, southern Italy.

At the Basilica of Saint Nicholas in Bari, they prayed fervently and offered gifts to God and to the saint. Exhausted from the journey, they later lay down to rest on the floor of the church in front of the altar and fell asleep right away. In a dream the bishop appeared to them and assured them that would have a baby boy. The hagiographer informs us what the bishop of Bari told them: “This child would be a very good servant of Christ my Lord. He shall stand out through signs and miracles. His life shall draw to an end in miracles. Go back then and be confident that your petition would be granted. He shall bear my name for he shall be born on account of my intercession.” The pious spouses, confused, but encouraged by such an unusual manifestation of love by the saint, retraced their steps to Sant’Angelo in Pontano. There they went on with their customary daily activities. True enough, Amata shortly after conceived and gave birth to a son. The happy parents had him baptized and gave him the name Nicholas. When the time came, the young boy was provided with a Christian education “in a family atmosphere endowed with an aroma of virtues.”

### **Young Nicholas**

About Nicholas’ youth, an eighty-year-old witness Manico di Forte gave a deposition at the canonization process in 1325 and declared:

He was very devout. He frequently assisted at religious functions. He already knew the spirit of penance. He would not go home from school in order to partake of some food until nine in the morning. Never was he seen playing in the streets with other young kids. He was put in charge by the Guarutti family to give alms; thus he would distribute alms with great charity and piety, most especially to young boys. It was public knowledge at Sant’Angelo in Pontano that Nicholas was saintly and destined to great sanctity...

At a tender age, Nicholas had just turned seven when he began to observe fasting for three days a week. Bread and water were his fare during those days of fast. He partly emulated his namesake

Nicholas of Bari. He got so used to these penitential and ascetic rituals that it would not be difficult for him to carry out in his mature years more severe practices of mortification aimed at perfection.

Indeed, Nicholas lived an uneventful, peaceful and austere youth. He was educated by righteous parents and dispatched to the parochial school to learn the rudiments of reading and writing. Shortly afterward, he established close acquaintance and friendship with the Hermits of Saint Augustine, of the austere Bretinian lifestyle, who had set up a community in the area not so long ago. In this manner, the young Nicholas showed an innate vocation to the religious life. It was not certain if his parents had pressured him to join those hermits whom he admired most for their life so simple and wholly dedicated to God.

### **Religious life**

One day an Augustinian friar named Reginaldo went to Sant'Angelo in Pontano to preach the Word of God. His preaching was exceptionally successful on account of his teaching as well as his exemplary life of humility and poverty. One day the friar preached to the attentive crowd gathered at the town square and proclaimed to all his listeners: "Do not love the world, neither those things of this world because the world passes and concupiscence passes." The preacher's words struck the adolescent Nicholas so profoundly that he presented himself before the friar and asked, nay insisted, to be admitted to his convent. He wanted to abandon the world outright. The Augustinian preacher was amazed at that firm and decisive request by so young a boy. He then asked for more information about him and spoke to his parents. Compagnone and Amata were enthusiastic about the son's choice for they saw in it the fulfillment of that promise made to them by Saint Nicholas of Bari. Fray Reginaldo had no doubts anymore.

The young Nicholas donned the Augustinian habit in his native place. It is probable that the confreres admitted him at the Augustinian convent at San Ginesio to comply with the novitiate year. He professed the vows in 1261 when he was sixteen years old. He began to live a life harsher than that of his confreres. He devoted more time for fasts, vigils, prayers and severe penitential practices. He led a chaste and pure life amid myriad temptations and trials.

To obtain the most desired goal of priesthood, he had to finish all his studies perhaps at Tolentino. An Augustinian community of friars who were well-prepared in grammar, logic and theology, had been established at Tolentino since 1250. Thereafter, Nicholas had pastoral and conventual experiences in various convents: Montegiorgio, Montolmo (Corridonia), Macerata, Montecchio (Treia), Fermo and others. He showed serious and good benefit. He had no proclivity for the sciences or for writing. But it can be deduced from other sources that he was endowed with great intelligence. He thus acquired a solid cultural formation in the spirit of prayer, intended for the service of the Church in order to propagate God's charity everywhere.

### **Priest and preacher**

Nicholas was ordained as priest at Cingoli by a virtuous bishop, the Franciscan Saint Benvenuto from Osimo, probably in 1273 (or 1274). Other sources would point to 1269 as his ordination year. In the initial years of priesthood, he lived in different convents. He was assigned to the Augustinian convent of Valmanente near Pesaro. He was sent to various places as roving preacher to evangelize numerous areas in the Marches along Ancona, besides those regions he had earlier visited during his studies: Recanati, Piaggiolino, Valmanente, Fermo, Sant'Elpidio.

One time Nicholas visited a cousin who was superior of the canons regular of Saint Augustine, in the Monastery of Santa Maria di Giacomo at Fermo. His relative who saw him so pallid and emaciated was taken aback. He advised him, saying:

Dear Nicholas, if you do not have enough nourishment, your body will not withstand the harshness of the penitential acts of your Order which has preserved the stern austerity of the Brettinian friars. Perhaps your Order, beyond the rigor of the Rule, is too impoverished to guarantee the necessary sustenance for its brethren who keep on growing in number. You are still on time; nobody is prohibited from making a different choice. In our Order the grace of God is never lacking. If you wish to continue to pray, here with us prayer is likewise done as in your Order, but it is not

forbidden for religious to reduce themselves into that pitiable state where you are now in.

Indeed, the loving advice offered by his cousin priest was considered by Nicholas as a tempting offer. He had some moments of doubt, but he regained his composure and replied:

My dear cousin, I will stay in my Order where I am serving the Lord for several years now and I want to go on living in this way of life that I have accepted since the time I became a novice. I am convinced that this is the will of the Lord, this is my call. Jesus marks for everyone his life, and for me He has marked the life of the Hermit of Saint Augustine. A voice told me that if I do not remain what I am, I risk becoming a reprobate.

The loving advice of the cousin priest continued to vex him seriously at all times thereafter. So Nicholas prayed harder to the Lord: “O Lord, guide my steps in your presence.” A mysterious hand seemed to touch him and assured him that he would not be alone in making his choice. Then he heard voices telling him, ordering him: “In Tolentino, in Tolentino! In Tolentino it is where you shall be for the rest of your life; remain in the vocation where you have been, be faithful to your initial choice, and there you shall truly find your salvation.” He was calmed by those words and all doubt left him completely and grace sustained him. He would even divulge to his confreres that he would die at Tolentino. His cousin priest kept on admonishing him to mitigate his severe practices in his monastic life. He could not dissuade young Augustinian monk from his austere life. Nicholas had already scorned all temporal things and he did not tarry in moving to the convent at Tolentino.

## **Tolentino**

During the Augustinian thaumaturge’s time, Tolentino was a small city in the Marches with about 2,000 inhabitants. But it was a fast-growing city and in the coming years it would undergo territorial and economic prosperity. In spite of its natural wealth and continued progress, the people lived on a day-to-day basis when they did not

suffer from occasional hunger. In this city, Nicholas would reside at the Augustinian convent where twelve to fourteen friars had been living for the past thirty years.

### **A miracle-worker**

By the power of the Lord he performed countless miracles during his lifetime. But Nicholas would always ask the favored persons: “Do not say anything about it. Give thanks to God, not to me.” His healing power was God’s, not his. Pietro da Monterubbiano would recount the unnumbered miraculous cures and conversions Nicholas performed during his earthly life. The faithful were further impressed upon observing his persuasive powers. When not engaged in his apostolate and works of charity for the underprivileged and the marginalized sectors of Tolentino, he devoted his time to prayer and contemplation. He was favored with numerous visions throughout his life. His sermons were accompanied by great conversions. He administered sacraments to people in the homes for the aged, hospitals and jails.

Nicholas spent long periods of time in the confessional. His exhortations whether in the confessional or at catechism classes, always penetrated hearts and left behind marks that last as long as the persons who heard him lived. And people in the adjoining towns would often come to hear him, and later to visit his tomb, but most of them would seek divine favors through his intercession.

### **A man of God**

Nicholas was wanted everywhere because of the fame of his preaching. His preaching was simple, crystal-clear, sustained by a faith so deep that its words carried an extraordinary force of enlightenment capable of raising the souls to the spring of love. In the tireless activity, he went on with his apostolate not minding the limits of exhaustion and sacrifice set by the Rule of Saint Augustine so much that his health suffered dire consequences.

His fame had preceded him when he moved to Tolentino to stay there permanently: “a man of God, very austere and severe towards himself, amiable, always at the disposal of and open to others.” He was heard to have possessed extraordinary charisms.

Many believed he was a thaumaturge, a wonder-worker. Inside the convent and outside it there was talk that he had seen a vision while he was at the convent at Valmanente in the vicinity of Pesaro.

### **A vision of souls in Purgatory**

During the Second Council of Lyon in 1274, the Church declared in a solemn manner for the first time the Catholic teaching on Purgatory: "After this life there exists a purifying punishment for those who were not sufficiently cleansed of their sins; punishment that can be alleviated by the prayers of the living." Exactly during this period, Nicholas was experiencing an intense mystical experience. For this event, he would become "the personification and symbol of a doctrine and spirituality of that period." He had believed, lived and practised the doctrine of the Communion of Saints.

Pietro da Monterrubiano discloses the mystical vision of Nicholas: "Once he was put in charge of the conventual Mass for the week. On a night before Sunday, he took a short nap in his poor bed and in his sleep a soul called out to him aloud: "Brother Nicholas, man of God, turn to me." Nicholas looked at the soul, trying his best to recognize him. But he was unable to identify who he was when he was still alive. Worried, he asked the soul to appear before him and identify himself.

I am the soul of Friar Pellegrino from Osimo; you know me because I was your companion when I was still alive. I am now in ordeal amid these flames of divine justice. I am in Purgatory because of my repentance although I deserve eternal damnation. God has spared me from Hell. Great is His mercy. Now I ask you to deign celebrate the Mass for the Departed so that I can be taken away finally from these very agonizing flames.

Nicholas replied:

The Savior by whose blood you have been redeemed has been propitious to you, dear brother, unfortunately I am in charge of the conventual Mass which must be celebrated in a solemn manner. Therefore, since it is not possible for me to change my assignment, and least possible for this coming Sunday, I cannot accede to your holy request. I just cannot celebrate the Mass for the Dead.

Trying to prevail over the just objection posed by Nicholas, the soul of Friar Pellegrino then says to him: “Come, come, venerable father, come and see if it is really worthy of you to refuse without mercy the request that comes from such a wretched multitude.” He led Nicholas to another place in the hermitage and showed him the small plain that extended between San Bartolo Hill and Mount Ordizio in the vicinity of Pesaro. The plain was full of a huge number of people from all ages, of both sexes, from all social conditions and religious orders who, prostrate, were appealing to him to be delivered from the torments of Purgatory. “Have mercy, O Father,” Pellegrino once more beseeched him, “have mercy on the multitude so huge and so wretched that await your help. If you celebrate the Mass for the Departed, a great majority of them shall be taken away from the tortures.” After these words were spoken, Nicholas suddenly woke up from his dream and began to implore the Savior in behalf of all those suffering people, with deep faith and in profuse tears.

### **Poor souls delivered from purgatory**

Fray Nicholas went the morning after to the prior and without much ado he sought permission to celebrate the Requiem Masses for the whole week. The superior at once granted him permission and replaced him in the assignment by another friar. Then the entire week he celebrated the Masses for the Dead. Day and night he prayed incessantly and cried profusely for the deliverance of all that throng from Purgatory shown to him.

The next week Nicholas saw Pellegrino anew in a dream and the friar thanked him for the mercy the Almighty God granted to him and for the Masses. The redeemed friar informed him that a great number of the suffering crowd was removed from the atrocious ordeal of Purgatory. He again expressed gratitude for his Masses and fervid prayers that had touched the infinite love of God. Pellegrino who had at last enjoyed the glory of God then ended: “You who have delivered us from the torment have scattered and confounded those who abhorred us.”



**Patron of the Poor Souls  
in Purgatory**



At Tolentino, Nicholas fixed his residence. He lived throughout his life in common life and scrupulously the letter and the spirit of the Rule of Saint Augustine. His itinerary in life was a spiritual journey, a never-ending search for God, a way for the penetration of the divine.

We will never know what transpired in his interior life at Tolentino. We will never be able to translate into words his encounters with the Divinity in his mystical visions. We will never know his sweetest conversations with Christ particularly in the eucharistic celebrations. However, we should never be dazzled by the countless prodigies and miracles which Nicholas had performed in his lifetime and aroused the interest and awe of those who suffered in pain and illness.

### **Strict observance of fast and abstinence**

The austere life of Fray Nicholas at Tolentino was public knowledge. His abstinence from meat in his meals was practised rigorously. The excessive avoidance of meat was one of the most extreme acts of penance, which corresponded to his intimate desire of attaining perfection. Thus, for nearly thirty years, he never ate meat, fish, cheese or eggs. His daily fare consisted merely of bread and water. Extreme abstinence and fasting had regularly caused him pains in the joints, stomach aches, body weakness and deterioration of eyesight. For a long time he used a staff to walk.

One time, a physician had to be summoned by the worried superior in order to look into the failing health and physical weakness on the ailing Nicholas. But the holy Augustinian friar would hear none of the medical prescription; he had put his total confidence on the Divine Healer. The prior could not even bend his will. It so happened that the prior general was sojourning at Tolentino. The highest superior of his Order then mandated him to partake of some meat so he could recover his health. Finally, out of holy obedience, Nicholas decided to eat meat, but only a very small piece of it.

### **The *panecillo*, little bread**

When temptations again tormented him, he was found in a worsening physical condition. But Nicholas believed that his most

bitter enemy who could not corrupt him with the vice of gluttony, then wanted to overcome his soul with the boredom of his desperate illness. As usual Nicholas called upon the aid of the Mother of God and his Father Augustine.

Exactly while he went on praying to his two great protectors, he fell asleep. In his sleep he saw both intercessors by his side. The Mother of Christ told him: “We are here to offer you a healing prescription. Send for a religious to request from that woman at the town square who shall donate a piece of fresh bread in the name of my Son. After you receive it and you soak it in water, you eat it, and you shall recover your health.”

Nicholas did not hesitate and called for a confrere. Without revealing anything, he sent him to look for the piece of bread. The confrere at once got it and took it to him. After blessing the bread with the sign of the cross, he ate the soaked morsel. With that remarkable medicine he regained his health instantaneously. The Blessed Mother had further assured him that others—if they consume the blest bread with childlike faith—would likewise receive her protection. From this vision originated the tradition named “little bread of Saint Nicholas.”

### **The rite for the “Little Bread of Saint Nicholas”**

The Augustinian rite of the blessing of the little bread commences at the singing of the hymn *Te canunt omnes* [They all sing] in honor of Saint Nicholas, as the celebrant approaches the altar. Then it is followed by the reading of the *Third Book of Kings* (17, 9-16) where the account of the miracle of the prophet Elijah in favor of the widow who prepared for him a toasted bread, and from the *Gospel of John* (6, 1-14) on the miracle of the multiplication of the bread and fishes done by the Lord. Then in five successive *Oremus* the celebrant asks the Lord to bless this bread as He had blest the bread in the desert, to purify them from profanation men had made of them, of restoring them to their primitive integrity; of sanctifying it in such a way as to conquer the infernal adversaries who lie in ambush at the salvation of souls and health of the bodies; of granting eternal life and temporal graces to those who partake of them, by invoking the patronage of Saint Nicholas, by defeating

all the enemies who in this earth put obstacle to the attainment of everlasting life.

During the distribution of the bread to the faithful, a hymn exalting the prodigies done by the blest little bread is sung. The rite comes to a close with a prayer to Saint Nicholas wherein his patronage is invoked upon the Church and upon all those who ask him.

Tradition has it that Saint Nicholas, and in accordance with the example he himself had set, and his confreres repeated the rite over ill persons through the invocation of the Divine Physician Jesus and of His holy Mother. The Church has approved the use of the little bread, prescribing a special rite for the blessing, not unlike the blessing of the palms, but reserved for the Augustinian Order.

### **Obedience and abstinence: two roasted partridges**

If obedience sometimes was in contrast to the principles of religious life that Nicholas had in a solemn manner decided to accept and live since the beginning of his call, with his holy ability, he made some options to go out of this difficulty. Politely he would revoke the order, or he would follow it in the least manner suited to satisfy the obedience but not suited to disturb his spiritual vow, or avoiding all argument, he would simply perform a miracle.

In the following account, the ascetic life of abstinence and mortification was put into conflict with the virtue and vow of obedience, the submission of one's will to that of his superior. Nicholas deemed it a great temptation.

Archbishop Berardo of Camerino made a deposition at the process of canonization: "One day two roasted partridges were offered to him to eat. Instead of eating them, Nicholas turned to the little creatures and said: 'Go on your way.' And immediately the two partridges became alive and flew away. It cannot be denied that this, too, would be another happy way of doing obedience."



**The Miracle of the  
Roasted Partridges**

### **The Star of Tolentino**

The earthly life of Nicholas was full of dreams and visions. What he might have seen or heard could perhaps be genuine mystic elation or could be mysterious elaborations of his unconsciousness. But what is certain was: everything for him was a sign of God's presence, a message that revealed His will and plans.

One night Nicholas was praying for a long period of time in his small cell. He had just stretched his frail body on the raw mattress when he was overcome by tiredness and he had barely fallen asleep. In his sleep his attention was caught by a star that radiated its brilliance towards the East. His gaze followed the star. He was surprised when it approached the earth and hovered exactly over his village Sant'Angelo in Pontano. Surprise turned into amazement when he saw that the star went on in its journey and proceeded to stop right at Tolentino, at the Oratory of Saint Augustine. He woke up and remembered the dream in its every detail. He had always considered these dreams as messages coming from Almighty God but he was not able to make sense of it.

In the end Nicholas thought it was nothing but a simple dream and he stopped worrying about the whole affair. But the vision persisted. It was repeated in subsequent nights. With the candor of a little child, he divulged his mysterious vision to a venerable priest. The elderly Augustinian friar at first remained perplexed, but shortly after as if hit by some lightning, he pointed out to Nicholas:

The star is the symbol of your holiness. On the place where it pauses I see a tomb that will be opened not long afterward; it is your tomb and it shall be blessed in the whole world as a fountainhead of miracles, graces and favors for the entire Christendom.

Nicholas remained exceedingly troubled because everything that his confrere had said and foreseen about his death could not be reconciled with his life, especially his humility that he had kept to himself all his life. Ever prudent and timorous as always and thinking that he could be an innocent victim of the guiles of the angel of darkness, he replied to the venerable friar in this manner:

Father, you have a high regard for me that I do not deserve. I have always been a worthless servant. You have been overcome by your benevolence, thus you gave an interpretation of the vision, not according to the spirit of God but according to your good heart. If He wills it so, it shall be God who shall point out the real meaning of His message.

After this conversation, Nicholas no longer saw the star making its bright crossing across the sky, from Sant'Angelo in Pontano to Tolentino. Instead, he started seeing it at daytime and over the altar where he used to kneel down to pray and near the place where he celebrated the Eucharist.

And as long as Nicholas remained in prayer, the star which appeared before him would stay put on the altar. As soon as he left the oratory of Saint Augustine the star would vanish in an instant. He always had this experience again and again. He was therefore convinced that the venerable brother priest had given the exact interpretation of his vision. That was the reason why before he went to his Maker, he had expressed to the prior and to the Augustinian community of Tolentino his wish to be buried at the Oratory of Saint Augustine.

### **Death of a holy man**

Due to customary strict fasts, physical flagellations, mortifications, and all sorts of deprivations, Nicholas was never in the pink of health. He was bedridden until after the feast of Saint Augustine of 1305 when his health turned for the worse. After lengthy periods of prayer, he had a vision of the Holy Mother of Christ who informed him that he would pass away three days after her birthday. Every day of his illness, he prepared himself for his death and confessed his sins. He further asked forgiveness personally from the brethren in the religious community of Tolentino. On



**A fresco at the Basilica of Saint Nicholas, Tolentino, Italy, depicting the holy death of Saint Nicholas surrounded by saints, angels, monks and friars.**

September 10, he confessed his sins for the last time and received the Body of Christ in a most devout way.

Meanwhile, the whole community of religious never ceased reciting the psalms and other prayers to prepare the dying to meet his Creator. At the last moment, a confrere near his death bed heard Nicholas whisper in a faint voice: “I see Christ, my God, in the company of His Mother and our Father Augustine who tells me: ‘Come, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord’.” The confreres saw a smiling and happy Nicholas as he breathed his last, and they all repeated the words of Christ on the cross; “Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit.” They attested that they heard sweet songs sung by angelic voices from a distance. It was the time for vespers on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of September in the year of Our Lord 1305.

### **A holy medieval man, a modern saint**

Nicholas, albeit he lived in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, is a modern saint. True holiness does not suffer from decay, from wear and tear or from old age. It is always young because holiness reflects the eternal Truth. Nicholas appears as a real man endowed with great human virtues even if he is clothed as a religious and priest. He was doubtless a “person who has known the infinite love of the Father.”

Saint Nicholas makes us understand the great value of the little virtues linked to a daily life and relationships with other people. Here lies the relevance of Saint Nicholas. He makes us understand that the call to sanctity is for all. There is a universal call for holiness. All of us can be saints, not because of our personal merits but because of the Savior’s gift of love for us. It is but enough to welcome and accept that gift. The saint teaches us the importance of prayer, the need for apostolic love, especially the greatness of generosity, of a heart of gold.

The judges of the canonization process which commenced in 1325 and ended with the canonization by Pope Eugene IV in 1446, as they had heard so much about Nicholas—miracles, struggles with the devil, untold penance, conversions—wanted to ask the witness who were summoned to make depositions who he really was. And everyone replied that he was a man of common sense and good morals, kind, human and very respectful not only to his superiors but

also to all the religious of the convent. Nicholas had never refused to extend his help to the living as well as to the dead. To everyone from both near and far, “he offered his charity and the sacrifice of his penance, the merits of his prayers.” All men and women are called to form the People of God, in Christ, in the unity of the Spirit.



**Façade and Interior of  
the Basilica of Saint Nicholas,  
Tolentino, Italy**

### **Christ-centric spirituality**

The spirituality of Nicholas is essentially Christ-centric. The figure of Christ dominates the life of the saint even in the early years of his life and in his youth, and particularly in those years that witnessed the copious fruits of maturity.

As a priest, he celebrated mass every morning. People in the church saw how Nicholas was transfigured, “becoming almost one with the chalice and host, becoming only one with Christ who realizes, with the transubstantiation of the bread and wine, the supreme sacrifice at Golgotha.” At Mass, Nicholas felt Christ alive in his hands. He felt the Son of God “more than present in the splendor of the glory of the Risen One, hidden in the humble signs of the Eucharist, receiving from it an insurmountable lesson of self-expiation to offer Himself for the salvation of men.” Nicholas had visions related to the holy Mass, even an acolyte serving the mass. Oftentimes he viewed the happy face of a very beautiful boy in the consecrated host raised by the celebrant.

At his death, Nicholas did not want it different from how he had lived. He wanted to be with most holy Mary and Father Augustine beside Jesus Christ who had endowed him with the gift of mystical vision. He wanted to place close to his breast the silver crucifix which he himself made to safeguard what was believed to be a relic of the wood of the true Cross. He wanted to die like Christ, the Crucified One, in order to resurrect in the end of days in His heavenly

Kingdom. Death for him was not a bloody and painful experience, but the passage from the Church Militant to the Church Triumphant.

### **Augustinian love for the poor**

Saint Nicholas of Tolentino “received from God a concrete and perennial mission: to incarnate the Augustinian ideal of charity for the poor and lowly.” That encompassing and preferential option for the poor, the downtrodden and the underprivileged was spontaneous. Like a true son of his spiritual father Augustine of Hippo, Nicholas practiced the Augustinian teaching of giving honor to God by loving his neighbor, by loving one another, each person being “a son of God, a possession of God, a presence of God.” It is that Augustinian love that continues to reach out to others, particularly to those who have less in life.

### **Epilogue**

With the Spanish lyrics of an opportune hymn penned by Father Javier Legarra Lopetegui and its English version, my own work, I wind up now this paper. The Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino of the Order of Augustinian Recollects—named after the Italian Augustinian saint in November 1621—spearheaded the seventh centenary celebration of the death of its patron; it has published in the internet a timely hymn composed by Father José Luis Sáenz. Its prayerful lyrics pay homage to the great man of God, thaumaturge and mystic. The hymn is a profound prayer of petition, a joyful hymn of praise, thanksgiving and exaltation, an expression of an accepted challenge to go on with the work of Saint Nicholas: to preach the Word of God, to serve the Church anywhere, and as always to succor the impoverished and the marginalized folks of human society at all times.

### **Himno del VII Centenario**

*Venimos, Nicolás, con alegría  
a cantar tu constante protección;  
venimos a pedirte, Santo amado,  
que cuides a los tuyos con amor.*



*Serviste con bondad y con ternura,  
ardiente como brasa el corazón;  
queremos repetir tu misma historia,  
sirviendo en los humildes al Señor.*

*Nos muestran lirios cándidos tus manos  
que brotan del misterio de la cruz;  
brilla en el pecho el fuego de una estrella  
que guía nuestros pasos con su luz.*

*Tu Provincia te venera agradecida,  
tu nombre canta y clama con fervor;  
y va contigo alegre por el mundo  
y anuncia el Evangelio del Señor.*

### **Hymn of the Seventh Centenary**

*We come, O Nicholas, in joy and elation*

*to sing of your unceasing protection;*

*we come to beg you, O beloved Saint,*

*to love and take care of your children.*

*You served with tenderness and bounty*

*fervent like a heart ablaze;*

*we wish to relive your own story*

*serving the Lord amongst the lowly.*

*Your hands show us the white lilies*

*sprouting from the mystery of the Cross,*

*the fire of a star shining in your breast*

*guides our steps with its brightness.*

*Your grateful Province venerates you,*

*sings and acclaims your name with fervor;*

*and gladly it journeys with you to the world*

*and proclaims the Gospel of the Lord.*

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## Saint Magdalena of Nagasaki and the Four Augustinian Recollect Martyr Priests<sup>1</sup>

Pablo Panedas, OAR

Three hundred seventy-five years ago, on 16 October 1634, Saint Magdalena of Nagasaki perished, drowned in the torture at the pits. It is now time to remember this personality. We base our account on the pamphlet we wrote years ago *Mártires del Japón. Llamas de amor vivas* [Martyrs of Japan. Living Flames of Love] and on the magazine *Canta y camina* [Sing and Walk] nos. 7 and 8] on the occasion of her canonization on 18 October 1987.



Saint Magdalena of Nagasaki.  
Oil painting by David Cornejo  
OAR

The main characters of this history of persecution which lasted almost half a century (1597-1637) are the different religious orders which raced from the Philippines, India and Macau to have the privilege of harvesting more martyrs in Japan. In some occasions, the healthy competition turned to rivalry and even degenerated into sectarianism.

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<sup>1</sup>The article “Magdalena de Nagasaki, joven santa de 375 años” was downloaded from [www.agustinosrecoletos.org/reportajes/200910/200910\\_nagasaki.php?id=00](http://www.agustinosrecoletos.org/reportajes/200910/200910_nagasaki.php?id=00), in October 2009, during the 375<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their martyrdom. The article was retrieved on 24 November 2009 and then translated for my book project on Saint Magdalene and the Martyrs of Japan.

It even reached a point of employing means not so holy as the goal to be attained.

The zeal of the religious was great until it seemed imprudent to many. In fact, in the same manner that it turned them to the best ambassadors of their respective countries, it made them jeopardized trade relations between Spain and Portugal and Japan. That is why in some instances, the archbishop of Manila forbade the religious to go to Japan, and the governor general of the archipelago investigated and aborted the mission expeditions which were clandestinely organized in spite of the prohibitions.



**Nagasaki, Japan (marked A)**

This phenomenon provoked emulation from all over the world, rather than fear or pity. At the outset of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the entire Universal Church focused its sight on Japan, attentive to what was going on there, ever anxious of news. Both the letters of the missionaries and the information from the Far East were earnestly devoured. And the Empire of the Rising Sun was changed into a pilgrimage mecca for many Christians from different parts of the world, whether from Spain and Portugal or from the Netherlands and Mexico.

### **First Recollect Martyrs: Francisco de Jesús, Vicente de San Antonio**

The sixteenth century was one with the greatest missionary adventures of the Church. And the Augustinian Order made the leap, first, to Mexico and therefrom to the Pacific shores, to the Philippines where the missionaries first set foot in 1565. It was the first of the five religious orders to evangelize this archipelago. The last order would arrive in 1606: the Augustinian Recollects, another branch of the same old trunk.

Everyone from the first to the last group brought the same Gospel with the same missionary zeal, and underwent the exhaustion and risks of the mission among savages with identical fidelity.

Soon the scattered extension of the 7,000 Philippine Islands would shrink to both Augustinian and Recollect communities. It would make them look far beyond the Philippine horizon, towards Japan, certainly attracted by the massive holocaust of 26 martyrs crucified in 1597.

Carried away haphazardly by storms at sea, the first two Augustinians had stepped ashore on Japanese soil in 1584. But it was until 1602 when Manila superiors sent missionaries to Japan openly. It was the time when the international star of Spain had commenced to fade out. England and Holland disputed it with all kinds of tricks in their trade with the East when Ieyasu Tokugawa imposed his authority over two hundred feudal lords and consequently unified Japan. When Buddhist monks saw it was time to shake off foreign competition, the authorities gave way to their view that missionaries constituted the fifth column of the Spanish monarch. The skirmishes and encounters between Spanish and Japanese or Dutch ships became all the more frequent. In two of such combats in 1610, two Augustinians Juan Damarín and Pedro de Montejo lost their lives.

In 1614, the Japanese emperor, egged on by the English and Dutch, on the one hand, and by Buddhist monks, on the other, outlawed Christianity and expelled all the missionaries. Some of them went into hiding like Hernando de Ayala who outwitted the imperial decrees. One hundred and four priests and religious—among them was Bartolomé Gutiérrez who would later return and die as martyr in 1632—were deported to Manila or Macau. Since that year, Japan was closed to Catholic missionaries who risked the danger of death if they returned and were captured. Despite that, the missionaries did not cease creeping into Japan or at least attempting to gain entry into it. They went there in merchant ships in disguise or in clandestine expeditions defrayed by their own orders.



**The Augustinian  
Recollect Martyrs**

Thenceforth, the Philippine Church followed attentively the news that arrived from Japanese shores, and celebrated as its own

the victories of the martyrs there and exerted effort to acquire their relics. Still, the religious orders in the Philippines tried their best to continue their charitable service to the Church in Japan by sending more missionaries, training seminarians and dispatching more workers within their meager resources.

The sole Augustinian religious who remained on Japanese soil after the 1614 decree was Hernando de Ayala. They finally arrested him only in May 1617, and he was decapitated on 1 June. In August of the following year, Bartolomé Gutiérrez and Pedro Zúñiga successfully entered Japan in disguise. Zúñiga was discovered very quickly, but he eluded martyrdom: he was the son of the former viceroy of Mexico and the governor of Nagasaki shipped him back to the Philippines. However, Zúñiga returned in June 1620, and he was imprisoned practically the whole time until he was burned alive in Nagasaki on 19 August 1622.

The Augustinian Recollects also had their share of adventure in Japan. In a very modest way according to their meager personnel resources, but with great hope, strength and fruit fitting for a religious congregation that was young but full of life.

The first was Francisco Terrero de Jesús, born in Villamediana, Palencia, Spain in 1590. He entered the Recollect convent of Valladolid where he professed in 1615 and three years after he was ordained as priest. The superiors sent him to Salamanca for further studies but he volunteered for the Philippine missions. He arrived in Manila in August 1620, after a journey that lasted one and a half year.

The next batch—composed of twenty-two religious Augustinian Recollects—reached the Philippines in July 1622. One of the members was already a priest and had sought the habit in Mexico. He was Portuguese and bore the religious appellation of Vicente Carvalho de San Antonio. The two, Francisco and Vicente, together with four Franciscans and four Dominicans, were sent to Japan the following year. They arrived there on 20 June 1623 after a journey of two months, dubbed by Vicente as “a journey of miracles.”

The subsequent historical account of the two in Japan was short but intense. The first phase lasted till November 1629—six years of very intense apostolate done in all secrecy—“like rabbits fleeing from greyhounds,” according to a picturesque image used

by Francisco in one of his letters (26 May 1630). Francisco and Vicente were arrested, on the 18<sup>th</sup> and on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 1629, respectively. At first, they were detained at Omura prison, across Nagasaki Bay, for two years.

A second phase—in Francisco’s words—was that of the so-called “Hell in Arima” because of the sulphuric and caustic waters from a volcano, Mount Unzen. The phase lasted thirty-one days, in the cruelest of winter. Here the martyrs still remained firm, without retracting at all, hence, they were taken down to Nagasaki to be burned alive. After another nine months in jail, they suffered martyrdom in the Hill of Martyrs of Nagasaki on 3 September 1632.

### **Martín de San Nicolás and Melchor de San Agustín**

To smother in an instant a great conflagration was not easy. It was not acquired by force of prohibitions, although they might stem from the governor or the archbishop of Manila. Least of all could it be when the fire was internal. The great rivers could not suppress the love (cf. *Canticles* 8, 7). Persecutions could only enkindle the embers and spread the flames. The sacrificial martyrs had the privilege of being chosen among many religious who yearned to go to Japan. The news coming from them that kept coming from it contributed all the more—with news of other martyrs from different parts of the world—in inflaming the angst for the mission and for martyrdom of the entire Order.



**Melchor de San Agustín, in  
HIMLSTEJN-DE GROOS,  
Virorum illustrium... (Prague  
1674)**

Amid this ambience of plenitude and euphoria, the Augustinian Order, like all the others, should send more missionaries. Only the dearth of personnel, and mainly the great hardships in their journey to the Philippines and from there to be able to enter Japan, all that was delaying the plans and it wasted so many endeavors.

Suffice it to say, for example, that between 1624 and 1632 the Philippine province of the Recollects tried to organize five expeditions. It was only able to join one such expedition in 1629 in the company of Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians. Before leaving the Philippines, however, the ship rammed against some reefs and the twenty-four missionaries were saved at a great cost. The following year, the same religious orders were able to gather funds enough to buy a vessel and organize an expedition. When the missionaries set sail stealthily, and far from Manila the ship was discovered by Manila authorities and confiscated by the governor general who did not want any more conflicts with the Japanese authorities.

The 1632, expedition was successful. The Recollects **Martín Lumbreras de San Nicolás**, who took part in the 1629 expedition and maybe in that of 1630 as well, and **Melchor Sánchez de San Agustín**, together with the Augustinians Francisco da Graça Correa and Miguel de San José, were members of that expedition.

The first to suffer martyrdom were the two Recollects. Melchor was from Granada and he arrived in the Philippines in the 1622 expedition with Vicente de San Antonio. Martín was born in Zaragoza in 1598. He was in the Philippines for a year less than his companion and was one of those who, when there was opportunity, customarily volunteered to go to Japan. In fact, he had already joined two failed expeditions and insisted on going there: his only two surviving letters dated 1630 and 1631 sought that permission from his superiors.

Melchor and Martín had left Manila on 4 August 1632 and by 4 September they were in Nagasaki. The day before, their confreres Francisco and Vicente had suffered martyrdom, and they had no other remedy but to take refuge at once in the mountain.

They spent about two months in the uplands and devoted themselves to the study of the language. There they met the surviving Recollect tertiaries and dealt with them. They took up residence with the



**Magdalena tortured at the gallows and pits for thirteen and half days, in J. Puigart and J. Miró (Lit. Hurtado, Barcelona).**



catechists of Francisco and Vicente. But they soon fell ill and were constrained to go down to the city. There the Chinese junk sailors who took them to Japan discovered them and at once denounced them. This was done presumably out of vengeance against the missionaries who did not give the monetary demands which were excessive and unjust with respect to what had been earlier agreed upon.

They were apprehended on 1 November, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. They imprisoned them both near the governor's house, at the same jail where Francisco and Vicente had started their glorious captivity. This time, the tyrant was no mood to coerce the Fathers and break down their resistance. How he viewed the enthusiasm with which they sang their hymns and preached to the prisoners. But, to everyone's astonishment, he ordered them burned alive on 11 December. They perished in the same way and in identical procedure like their two confreres in the habit. They were in Japan for a little over three months only.

The five catechists who accompanied the Recollect martyrs were also arrested. They did not renounce their faith either and four days later they were all executed: one of them was burned alive, while the other four were beheaded. The next missionary to die was the Augustinian Francisco da Graça, a native of Lisbon. He was a resident of Goa, India, since he was 18 years old. When he felt the call to Japan, he sought transfer to Manila with the idea of proceeding to Japanese territory when possible. After a year, on 16 August 1633, he suffered martyrdom at the pits. He was the first Augustinian to undergo it.

### **Magdalena of Nagasaki**

The pits were likewise the same torture suffered by Magdalene, the flower and symbol of the Augustinian evangelization in Japan. **Saint Magdalena of Nagasaki**, beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1981 in Manila and canonized six years later in Rome, personifies and embodies the hundreds of unknown Japanese—lay, tertiaries and confraternity members—who died wearing the Augustinian habit. If the bountiful harvest of saints fertilizes the apostolate and the lives of martyrs, then Magdalene represents the fruit of the sowing of the seeds that the Order carried out.

Magdalene is, moreover, the symbol of the persecuted Japanese Christianity. For she was born, she lived and she died in the catacombs, among martyrs. For she was Japanese, young and beautiful. For she voluntarily delivered herself to the tyrant and suffered all kinds of torture. Her personality was destined to be sung along the same tune as that of Cecilia, Agnes, Lucy, Agatha and so many other virgins of yore.

Magdalene was born in the vicinity of Nagasaki around 1610 or 1612. Her family was Christian and as such she was educated. Since 1614, the Church in Japan lived in a climate of open persecution. Martyrdom was the horizon and ideal of Christians. The same thing that happened in the first centuries of Christianity: exhortations to martyrdom were written and clandestinely disseminated and Magdalene read them. In 1614 – 1624, over 30,000 Christians were estimated to be sacrificed. The parents and siblings of the saint herself died as martyrs. Having suckled this atmosphere and these ideals, it was but logical that Magdalene very soon decided to remain a virgin and consecrate herself to God alone. As it always happened, virginity opened the way and replaced martyrdom.

Luck had it that the enthusiasm and hopes of our young woman would be channelled through Francisco de Jesús' guidance. She was one of the first who in 1624 or 1625 were trained for the missionary's service, enlisting themselves in his religious and apostolic school. Magdalena professed as an Augustinian Recollect tertiary and was given the assignment as catechist. Thenceforth, she consecrated herself to sowing and cultivating the faith of the Church with her catechizing and exemplary life.

In 1628, in the face of persecution raids and arrests, Magdalene fled to the mountains, as did thousands of Christians. There she continued performing her apostolate under the Augustinian Recollects' coordination and encouragement. When the two were no longer around in 1632, she and others grew and increased by preaching and baptizing, confirming the rest in the faith. She went in contact afterwards with the Dominican Father Jordán de San Esteban, likewise a refugee in the mountains. At his requests, without abandoning her being a Recollect tertiary, she donned the habit of the Dominican Third Order, although she was not able to profess as such.

In the first days of September 1634, Magdalene felt inspired to make the last and supreme service to the faith in the Church. She voluntarily presented herself to the tyrant and confessed her Christian faith. The judges thought it was easy to bend the will of the young woman, 20 or 22 years of age, by tempting her with alluring promises which she disdained. Their failure enraged them so much that they commanded that she went through the worst tortures one after another until she apostasized.

They began with water torture. They forced her to consume great quantities of water, and made her throw up in a violent manner. Not long afterwards, the executioners got tired when the victim had nary a complaint. They then inserted long pins or thin bamboo sheets between the nails and the flesh of her fingers and coerced her to scrape the ground. According to the chronicler, “still she showed no signs of pain.”

Having viewed the futility of their efforts, the judges decided to lay their last card: they delivered her to the torture of the “gallows and pits.” The mere mention of that phrase made Christians tremble with fear. In this manner, the executioners succeeded in drawing out some of the most renowned apostasies. At the outset of October 1634, they took Magdalene out of jail together with ten other Christians. They were paraded along the streets of Nagasaki, on horseback, with hands behind their backs tied to their necks towards the place of martyrdom. Magdalene, garbed in her Augustinian Recollect tertiary habit, made the trip full of jubilation, encouraging her companions and exhorting both Christians and pagans along the way.

The torture consisted of hanging the martyr upside down—by the feet from the gallows—in such a way that half of the body was inside the pit. This pit was full of excrement and covered with wooden planks adjusted up to the waist like a trap. They kept the victim for days in this position until she died of suffocation and congestion. Magdalene bore this torture for thirteen and a half days. She died only when she was drowned because the pit was flooded with water one rainy night. As was the usual practice, they burned her body and cast the ashes into the sea.

### The final act

After Saint Magdalene's death, only two Augustinian priests remained alive: Tomás de San Agustín and Miguel de San José. The two were Japanese and spiritual disciples of their novice master Blessed Bartolomé Gutiérrez. Tomás was one of the travellers of the failed expedition of 1630. He was only 28 years old at that time and he eagerly wanted to return to the land of his birth. He did it in 1631. Favored by his native features, he landed a job as equerry to the governor of Nagasaki. Thus he could see and talk a bit frequently with Bartolomé Gutiérrez and with other religious jailed at Omura.

Nicknamed *Kintsuba*, he became an authentic legend in Nagasaki for his knack of outwitting his persecutors. For several years he secretly exercised his ministry within an extensive radius of activity whose center were the stables of governor where he was of service. He was finally captured on 1 November 1636. After cruel tortures, he also perished at the pits on 6 November 1637.

Miguel de San José quickly sought refuge in his native region where he thought he could find more calm and safety. He survived Kintsuba a little longer, as he became the last Augustinian of Japan. He likewise died a martyr's death, surely at the pits, but the date of his martyrdom is unknown.

In fact, it was in 1637 when Japan fell into the darkest night. The last act was highlighted by the Peasants' Revolt of the whole Nagasaki area. Majority of the peasants were Christians, although the causes of the revolt were chiefly economic and financial in nature. In mid-April 1638, the rebellion was quelled in the so-called Battle of Shimabara which ended with the capture of the castle of Hara and the execution of 30,000 rebels. Not counting those who took up arms, some 20,000 were estimated to be executed for the mere fact that they were Christians.

Since that time, the long period of *kakura kirishitan*, "hidden Christians," was extended for over 250 years. During this period, the persecution remained open and the most sophisticated tortures were unabated. In 1862, when Pope Pius IX canonized Pablo Miki and his 25 companions, there was no religious freedom yet in Japan. This would be officially recognized only in 1889. Twenty years before, in 1865, when Japan started to open up to the outside world, the West was astonished to find out how groups of Christians started coming

out, Christians who had preserved the faith for centuries and even the images of their ancestors.

### **Magdalene's world**

The persecution period of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was mirrored again and again and in an inimitable manner by the Japanese writer Shusaku Endo (1923-1996) who was then considered the best Catholic novelist of Japan. His books have reached several million copies in sales and they have been translated into many languages. Several works like *The Samurai* and *Silence* have reflected on what is known "Christian century" of Japan and, most especially, on the religious persecution there during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

From his novel *Silence*, we cull the following scene. Magdalene of Nagasaki could have been one of the characters whose "snorings" a missionary on the eve of witnessing to his faith could hear from his prison cell:

They pushed the missionary and soon he was inside a cell in total darkness. From afar something like a voice could be heard. It sounded like the growling of dogs fighting. The voice vanished suddenly once. But later it could be heard again for a longer time. Instinctively, the priest burst into laughter in a low voice: he realized that someone was snoring. The snoring was heard for awhile, then again it was silence, at one point it was loud, at another soft like a whistle out of tune. He seemed to gaze at the face of the guard in deep slumber: full of sake, fat and well-fed, the pink of health personified. But the sound of that boisterous noise, out of tune, was getting on his nerves, on that most crucial night of his life, and he started banging his fist against the wall. Then the jailor came to him and the missionary begged him to stop snoring.

"You call that snoring?" was the guard's reply. "That's no snoring. It is the death rattle of agonizing Christians hanging at the pits."

Indeed, that was not snoring. It was the fatigued death rattle in the throats of some men hanging upside down with their heads inside the pits filled with human excrement. While he was curled up in the dark, there were others who were weeping, who were oozing with blood coming out of the mouth and nose. A small hole had been pierced behind the ear, and blood flowed from the nose and the mouth through that pore, drop by drop. Those Christians were experiencing the most insupportable agonizing moments that nobody could ever imagine.

### **News about the martyrs disseminated**

The 17th century lacked modern means of communication and Japan was completely closed to the outside world with distances seemingly insurmountable, what was certain was that the whole Christendom — especially Spain and Portugal whence the missionaries came—followed closely those ups and downs of the evangelization in that far-flung archipelago. The progress of the faith and triumph of the martyrs were at once known in Macau and the Philippines where the bases of operations and the headquarters of missionary orders were located. And the news was dispatched to Spain, through personal correspondence, information relayed to the religious superiors, to civil and church authorities.

News disseminated fast enough through sermons, community reading in convents, and in many cases, the printing press. In fact, when Saint Magdalene's martyrdom took place, the Church of Spain and Portugal was still stunned by an extraordinary event: in 1627, Urban VIII had beatified twenty-six martyrs crucified in Nagasaki thirty years before.



**Recollect Martyrs of Japan, including  
Magdalena, in *Historia General OAR* vol 2.  
Engraving by Claudio Coello (1683)**

The celebration of the event was very solemn everywhere, and created a favourable atmosphere for printing many historical accounts about the martyrs—of whom we know not less than twenty, one of them from Lope de Vega—which were read with gusto and which roused the faithful. This atmosphere, overladen with spiritual tension, still became more electrifying when the news of subsequent martyrs arrived. Among them were the Augustinian Recollects Francisco de Jesús, Vicente de San Antonio, Melchor de San Agustín and Martín de San Nicolás, who were burned alive in 1632.

It was in this context that, when the news of the triumph of our martyr came to be known, the process of information was at once begun. Years later, in 1656, the Augustinian Recollect chronicler Andrés de San Nicolás would sing in 1,076 Latin verses about the life of Magdalene. Towards the end of the century, in 1695, Atanasio Bocanegra painted for the Recollect convent of Granada eight big paintings with the scenes from the life and martyrdom of Magdalena.



**Magdalena of Nagasaki.**  
**Official portrait by**  
**Adriano Ambrosioni**

### **The swan song**

Andrés de San Nicolás was a Colombian Augustinian Recollect of the 17th century, the first and chief historian of the Recollection. In 1656, he authored a Latin poetical work entitled *Proventus messis dominicae* [*Gathering of the Harvest of the Lord*]. In that poem, we find Saint Magdalene's biography in 270 stanzas. We have here six stanzas that speak of the mysterious song of the martyr during torture, earlier translated into Spanish by the Jesuit Manuel Briceño Jáuregui.

Hymns shall I sing to Christ,  
And shall you hear my voices  
From the innermost of my breast  
You shall I call to shield me

Sweetly, from then on,  
Like an angel's, her tongue  
intoned sweetest hymns.  
Dreadful was the silence.

Since they knew too well  
—even when they're barbarians yet—  
That an earthly throat  
those voices did not emit.

She went on with more songs  
Stemming from her soul so tender;  
Invoking the sweet names of Jesus  
and Mary, she ceases never.  
Resonant voices they heard,  
Magdalene sweetly echoed;  
Terrified, the sentinels  
gazed at one another.

The traitors abandoned her;  
They would not like to view her.  
And during torture, singing,  
she remained that way—hanging.

### **The shogun**

The shogun or military dictator Ieyasu (1542-1616) was perhaps the most celebrated personality during Saint Magdalene's time. He imposed his control over 200 feudal lords, thus, successfully unifying Japan in 1600. He had transferred the capital to Tokyo in 1590. Following a foreign policy based on astuteness, he initially favored relations with the Catholic powers and later persecuted Catholics (starting in 1614) when trade with Spain and Portugal was no longer indispensable to him. He created modern Japan. The shogunate remained in his family, the Tokugawa, for 265 years (1603-1868).

The third shogun Iemitsu (1604-1651) was the son of Hidetada and grandson of Ieyasu. He governed Japan in 1623-1651. In 1633, he issued an edict banning Christianity in the entire Japan



and forced the people to register in their temples. This harsh measure, together with other factor like overtaxation, provoked the rebellion of Shimabara which drenched Japan in blood. In 1639, Iemitsu ordered the isolation of Japan from the rest of the world.

### **The secular apostolate**

Today we speak a lot about people reaching legal age, about their participation in the pastoral and in the life of the Church. The 17<sup>th</sup>-century Japanese Christianity could well serve as model. At that time, the few priests in Japan suffered endless persecution. Hence, because of that and their proficiency in the language, the lay people became the best agents of pastoral work. As in the case of Magdalene, many lay people were trained as catechists or tertiaries by the missionaries. When the missionaries were arrested or killed, the lay people replaced them in whatever possible way. For that reason, Magdalene comforted the afflicted, strengthened the less courageous, and confirmed the strong and the brave.

At any rate, the missionaries were crowned with the palm of martyrdom. But many more were martyrs who were lay people. The Recollects had been in Japan for a little over seven years. Two years before his death, Blessed Francisco de Jesús estimated the number of Augustinian Recollect confraternity members who died as martyrs to be about three hundred. Still, we have to add many more tertiaries to this estimate and among them was Magdalene of Nagasaki.

### **The martyr according to Saint Augustine (by Antonio Sánchez Carazo)**

The martyrs, by believing, acquired life, and, by speaking, they found death.”

— Saint Augustine

During Saint Augustine’s time, the devotion to martyrs was very widespread and the memory of them filled the life of the Christian community. The martyrs’ tombs were centers of prayer. Their names were invoked daily by all the faithful. Their annual feastdays were attended by multitudes. Saint Augustine shared with

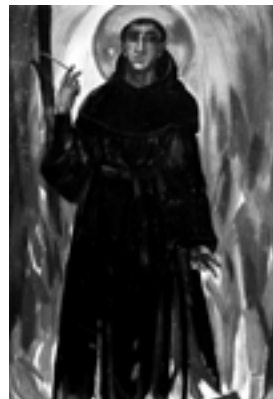
them such affection for martyrs. He dedicated churches to them. He preached a great number of sermons to honor them and, above all, he knew how to inculcate among the faithful the love for them.

Saint Augustine usually started by explaining the meaning of the word *martyr*: “*Martyr* is a Greek work that means *witness*, one who gives witness to Christ, one who confesses Him in word and in deed up even to the point of shedding blood for Him.” The true witness expresses what he carries deep inside and he keeps his mouth shut only when they tear out his heart.” In this aspect, Magdalene of Nagasaki was Saint Augustine’s worthy disciple. A fervent catechist, she could not but proclaim with her word the Truth, the Risen Christ, and this took her to her martyrdom.

But the martyr, the witness needed preparation for the final moment. The martyrs did not pass into eternal life, dancing, drinking or fighting one another, but in prayer, fasting and bearing insults because shame and fear were snares difficult to overcome. And the principal exercise of all was prayer: “May he who wishes to struggle with ease, to overcome with swiftness and to reign brimming with happiness, pray with simplicity.”

With this Augustinian message we cannot but remember our young martyr. Since youth, she surrendered herself to God in order to live thinking of Him, dedicating her whole life to Him. She despised ornaments and worldly glories. She faced up to secrecy with her deprivations and sudden fears, and prayer was her most precious nourishment. This was nothing but the work of love, which in Saint Augustine was like this: “The love for life was conquered by the love for Life.”

But then, the example of martyrs is not to be contemplated upon, it is to be emulated: “He who proclaims Christ wherever he can shall be a martyr.” Every Christian is called to be a witness to his Master always and in whatever way. “Proclaim Christ wherever you can. Faith is asked of you, not eloquence, if you have faith, Christ lives in you.” Therefore, the martyr, the witness is one who lives on faith and works accordingly. That is why



**Francisco de Jesús. Fresco  
at Santa Rita Church,  
Madrid**

“the martyrs, by believing, acquired life, and, by speaking, they found death.”

### **A very long process**

**(by Romualdo Rodrigo)**

Since 1634, the year of Magdalene’s martyrdom, until 1987 when she was canonized, three and a half centuries have passed. Without a doubt, someone would pose this question: “Why did they not proceed to her glorification before?”

In 1638, Father Agustín de Jesús María, Augustinian Recollect postulator, travelled to Macau from Manila to make the documentation process on the Augustinian Recollect missionaries and tertiaries who suffered martyrdom in Japan. Magdalene constituted a special case. Hence, Father Agustín—strangely—besides the general process of proving the martyrdom of the Augustinian Recollect priests, also wanted to gather information exclusively about the young catechist and tertiary. Forty-one witnesses made their depositions. Unfortunately, the minutes of the process were scattered among the dossiers in some unknown archive. Nevertheless, other proofs and documents were available enough so that after many centuries Pope John Paul II was able to proceed with the beatification of Magdalene in Manila on 18 February 1981.

According to jurisprudence on the causes of saints, a miracle was necessary for the canonization of a blessed. The visit of John Paul II to the Philippines and Japan on the occasion of the beatification of Magdalene and other martyrs of Japan gave rise to a widespread devotion to Blessed Lorenzo Ruiz, a Filipino martyr in the group, among Filipino Catholics. Many believers began to entrust themselves to the intercession of the martyrs and countless graces were attributed to them. A cure was attributed to Blessed Lorenzo Ruiz and the Congregation



**Official portrait of the canonization of the Martyrs of Japan. [Foreground] Saint Lorenzo Ruiz. One of the women should be Magdalene of Nagasaki.**

for the Causes of Saints considered it miraculous. Because of that miracle, the whole group of martyrs, beatified in 1981 in Manila, was canonized on 18 October 1987. Among them we have the most distinguished figure of Magdalene of Nagasaki.

### **Recollect or Dominican? A Saint in a tug of war (by Juan Bautista Olarte)**

On World Mission Sunday of 1987, a group of martyrs of Japan headed by the Filipino layman was canonized. Four were Spanish, one French, one Italian, the rest were Japanese. Some were priests; others were religious in various forms of the consecrated life (religious brothers, novices, donados, tertiaries), and still others were lay catechists. The common denominator of the group apparently seemed to have belonged to the Dominican family, although there were discrepancies in this, since part of the propaganda identified Magdalene of Nagasaki as Augustinian Recollect.

Of course, this was no revival of those heated Baroque polemics, at times delightful, between the two orders for minute details of historical honor. What attracts today most our attention was the spontaneity shared in the same adventure in what was divine, like those missions of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, with people of different nationalities and varied spiritualities. When a mission expedition to Japan was organized—mostly from Manila or Macau—Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans or Augustinians took part in it. What we know now of the mission work in the Empire during the persecution period from 1614 to 1640 shows approximately that there was total understanding among missionaries of different Orders. Perhaps what contributed to their strong mutual bond was the difficult plight where they equally lived as well as the fact that majority of them came from the Iberian Peninsula. And not of least significance was that the historical accounts of martyrdom were passed from one



**Magdaleae of Nagasaki. Stained window at San Nicolás de Tolentino Parish Church, Bgay. Bahay Toro, Quezon City**

hand to another, from one convent to another as they were edifying to all.

The case of Magdalene de Nagasaki is symptomatic of this participation and cooperation among the great missionary Orders. When the first Augustinian Recollects arrived in Japan in 1623, she had just become orphan on account of the martyrdom of her parents. She was ten or twelve years old. But we do not know what providential paths that connected her with the two Blessed—Father Francisco de Jesús and Father Vicente de San Antonio—, the former from Palencia, Spain, the latter from Portugal, but both Augustinian Recollects. Magdalene served them first as interpreter and spokesperson, then as catechist. They provided her with spiritual formation. The current of affection created matured her vocation and she sought admission into the family of her new fathers, the Augustinian Recollects, but the peremptoriness of the structures in times of persecution did not allow any other formula than to admit her as tertiary.

In 1632, Francisco and Vicente suffered martyrdom. Two other Recollects destined to take their place were Melchor de San Agustín and Martín de San Nicolás who were arrested as soon as they stepped ashore on Japanese territory. Melchor and Martín were betrayed by the Chinese cosairs who transported them and they, too, died as martyrs. The catechist Magdalene, twice orphaned for she lost both her parents and her spiritual mentors, was removed from the Recollect substratum that had maintained her for nine years and she then took refuge in another religious who likewise practised the Rule of Saint Augustine, the Dominican Father Jordán de San Esteban. He trained her among Dominican tertiaries and, to formalize the change, he admitted her to the novitiate.

Before her profession as a Dominican, Magdalene was executed witnessing to her faith in mid-October 1634. Portuguese merchants who watched her being led to her martyrdom attested that she was wearing the black habit and cincture of Saint Augustine, but that would be the least of all. Today, Magdalene is justly claimed by both Orders: the Recollects because she died an Augustinian Recollect tertiary and the Order of Preachers because her intention was to profess as a Dominican. Both Orders include her in their liturgical calendars.

### **The Secular Augustinian Recollects**

The Order of Augustinian Recollects is not the only branch of the Augustinian Recollect Family. Belonging to this family are the nuns and religious of the active life, on the one hand, and the Secular Fraternity, on the other. To this latter branch belonged Magdalene of Nagasaki, the first Augustinian Recollect Saint. And in this branch, scores of tertiaries-martyrs of Japan in the 17<sup>th</sup> century had also professed, and hundreds of secular confreres did profess and continue to profess thereafter. They are the symbols and witnesses of the apostolic vitality of the Order of Augustinian Recollects and fruitfulness of the Augustinian ideal.

The canonization of Magdalene in 1987 offered a very good chance to rediscover and propose once more the age-old way of life with a history of four centuries behind it, and at the same time, a concrete modern path: the Augustinian Recollect spirituality is for all, for laypeople as well. In 1985, its characteristic traits were revised and updated in such a way that we can well say that if Saint Magdalene were living today, she would have embodied the ideals of the Rule of Life of the Secular Augustinian Recollects, of which we cull some salient points:

The Order of Augustinian Recollects promotes among the faithful, laity or clergy, the living of the Augustinian ideal, motivating them to live the union of hearts and minds and to make the spirit of Saint Augustine a practical reality in the Church and world today.

Love, both divine and human, must always be the center and the heart of our life. If you always act according to love, then you will always act rightly, as Saint Augustine teaches: ‘Love and do what you will, if you are silent, be silent for love; if you cry out, cry out for love; if you correct, correct with love; if you pardon, pardon for love . Let the root of love be there within you. Out of this root only good can come.’

Like Saint Augustine, we must make every effort to illuminate our mind and strengthen our will with frequent reading and assiduous study of the Holy Scriptures.

In harmony with Saint Augustine's thinking, we must consider our work, not as a burden or simply as a means of subsistence, but as cooperation with the Creator in shaping the world and as a service to the human community.

We must see Christ in every man and woman, but especially in the poor.

It is necessary that we always return to ourselves to study and know ourselves.

Our more specific apostolate consists in working so that unity and peace, both fruits of love, be a reality in the family, the Church, and the world.

Our Augustinian life of fraternity requires that we carefully cultivate the values of friendship. Friendship begets and nurtures loyalty and trust, sincerity and mutual understanding.

### **What Saint Magdalene tells us today (by María Isabel Barbeito)**

To Japan went these holy men  
through an impulse sovereign,  
and they encouraged the weak hearts  
to be in God's arms and firm hand.  
The Japanese welcomed them not as strangers, and they  
in the approaching martyrdom inflamed so much the  
desire to build of souls to  
God a thousand altars.

A 17<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish poetess, Ana Caro Mallén de Soto, wrote the verses. They are part of a poem *La Relación de las fiestas por los Mártires del Japón* [The Story of the Feasts for the Martyrs of Japan], that alluded to the twenty-six martyrs crucified at Nagasaki on 5 February 1597. It is conceivable that, had the poetess known about the martyrdom of Magdalene, she would have dedicated to the young tertiary one of her fervent poems.

Though the contrary might seem true, Magdalene of Nagasaki was not a passive woman who could have allowed herself to be loved,

yet she allowed herself to be killed. Her comport was always dynamic. She opted to be a lover in order to deserve to be loved. And so, we view how she donned the habit of the Augustinian Recollect Third Order that carried with it commitments and obligations precisely to exercise the active apostolate of the catechist. It was a task she kept with remarkable efficacy and energy, without sparing any effort. That was an active impulse of character when she delivered herself years later to the executioners. Furthermore, her behavior during torture and martyrdom was impressively dynamic.

If there need be some common trait of the Japanese people's idiosyncrasy, their capacity for assimilation could be highlighted. The message of westernized Christianity, in spite of its purely eastern roots, could and can find a total suitability to the Japanese spirit evidently permeable to the western world. The blood of innumerable Japanese martyrs necessarily should contribute for the Augustinian "City of God" to be extended through the wide territories of that eastern country so close to western states politically, socially and technologically.

But the message of Magdalene of Nagasaki, as a catechist—which is like saying apostle—among her compatriots, perhaps would point still more to that evangelization task in the midst of her people. And it is precisely in the face of that consideration when it would be possible to say the *mea culpa* of lethargy, since excluding those honorable exceptions opposed to sweeping generalizations, it seemed that many tertiaries and catechists would have fallen into some kind of stagnation, to which years of comfortable religious routine could have led them, more attentive to sentimentality than to sensitivity, to exterior facade than to strong foundations.

Maybe, it would be convenient to think seriously of the present discredit of such terms as "charity," "apostolate," "virginity," "humility," "heroism," and of the convenience of making evident what is positive of these values when they have an effective meaning. That was how Magdalene of Nagasaki lived them, from her perspective of spiritual salvation for herself and for her people.

### **On the road of life she died singing**

In few Christians was the image of the road so real as in Magdalene. For eight years—from 1626 to 1634—her existence was



an endless pilgrimage in the mountains surrounding Nagasaki. She was a catechist who had to comply with her ecclesial service: “to preach, baptize, counsel and strengthen those in her company and those who sought spiritual solace.” She trudged the road of faith, the road of the catechumenate with her people. In the end, her pilgrimage culminated in the supreme act of catechesis, her journey from the jail to the place of martyrdom. “She went on the road with her conduct so joyous that she caused admiration among anyone who saw her. She encouraged her companions, preached to non-believers and admonished Christians to persevere in the faith they professed.”

Martyrdom crowned her loyalty and perseverance along the road she made as she accompanied her Church. She was singing, as she was agonizing. All the witnesses declared that while Magdalene was being tortured at the pits, she sang hymns to the Lord “with amazing melody and sweetness.” It was what she had always done: singing with words and with her life as she praised the Lord, cheering others up as they marched and illuminating with her faith the darkness of the road.

Definitely, during those almost fourteen days of ordeal, the young catechist frequently sang the ancient Japanese hymn of trust and exhortation to martyrdom:

Let us go, let us now go  
to the temple of paradise:  
yes, they call it paradise,  
they call it spacious temple.

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## Blessed Vicente Soler: Philippine Missionary

### To be a Missionary

An Augustinian Recollect priest once wrote a confrere, picturing for us what it meant to be a missionary in colonial Philippines:

To be a missionary in those places does not solely mean to be a father and pastor of that portion of the flock of Christ Jesus entrusted to him, to dispense the sacraments and to perform in a peaceful way the other religious duties. Most of all, it also means to seek the flock he has to civilize and Christianize in hardly accessible forest trails, in steep mountains, in the rugged rocky terrain; to be a missionary means to penetrate those lairs where human beings dwell in most abject degradation and misery, drawing them out of such pitiful predicament and bringing them to the settlement in order to teach them to live lives as rational beings; it means to set up towns, construct edifices, constitute authorities and teach those half-savage people how to duly perform the sacred duty.

To be a missionary in those places is to live in total isolation from the civilized world, cast in an unknown island, surrounded by all kinds of privations and compelled to live among those poor Indios for the sole aim of winning them for God.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> CONGREGATIO PRO CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Beatificationis seu declarationis martyrii Servorum Dei Vicentii Soler et VII Sociorum ex Ordine Augustinianorum Recollectorum Positio super Martyrio* [hereinafter *Positio*], (Rome 1990) 25, footnote 49.

The quote is culled from a long letter penned by Father Vicente Muñarriz Soler (1867-1936), a long-time missionary in Mindoro, prior provincial and prior general of the Order of Augustinian Recollects. Pope John Paul II elevated this Recollect prelate to the altars of the Universal Church as Blessed in 1999. Blessed Vicente Soler indeed knew whereof he spoke: he was a zealous missionary for seven years in two far-flung, sparsely inhabited parishes in Mindoro Island in the 1890s. A modern researcher has this to add:

To be a missionary now, with modern travel technology, entails a great spirit of sacrifice. It was much more then. It meant undertaking a long and perilous journey, to be uprooted from one's own milieu, to go through all the pains of adjusting to a new country that would often have difficult living conditions. It meant learning a new language, adjusting to local customs, changing one's personal habits. One can only understand how a man can make this effort from the perspective of the faith.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, it was the same faith and missionary ideals that caused men to traverse oceans and rivers, to trudge mountain trails in search of souls for Christ, to live in hostile settlements in inhospitable climate. The same faith and love of God solely motivated them to abandon the comforts of home, the serenity of monastic life and to risk their lives and limbs for the Gospel of salvation. The same total confidence in Divine Providence and submission to His divine will that steered Father Vicente Soler through the valley of death in various towns and islands in the Philippines, through nineteen months of captivity at the hands of Filipino revolutionary forces in 1898-1900.

### **Martyrs of the Christian Faith**

Vicente Soler and his four confreres Vicente Pinilla (1870-1936), Julián Benigno Moreno (1871-1936), León Inchausti (1861-1936) and José Rada (1861-1936) were those types of devoted and hardworking ministers of God in Philippine mission fields. Proficient either in Tagalog or in Cebuano Visayan tongues, they spent long

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<sup>2</sup>Roberto LATORRE, *The Friars in the Philippines*, in *Documentation Service*, V (May 1992) 29.

years of training and apostolate—the prime years of their lives as God’s ministers—at the Lord’s vineyard in Cebu, Batangas, Bohol, Banton, Romblon, Mindoro, Zambales, Antipolo and Manila, as parish priests, assistant priests, companions or conventuals.

In time, these friar missionaries would be numbered among the growing list of Augustinian Recollect martyrs of the Faith. The five Servants of God were among the countless martyrs who bravely and without hesitation shed their blood for Christ Jesus and the Catholic Faith at the hands of rabid Marxist revolutionists in July-August 1936 at Motril, Granada, Spain.

Together with three more companions—Augustinian Recollect Father Deogracias Palacios, Brother José Ricardo Díez and diocesan parish priest Father Manuel S. Martín—they fell victims of the fratricidal war that raged in Spain in 1936-1939. The beatification—the first step to sainthood—of seven Augustinian Recollect martyrs and the diocesan priest was approved on 8 April 1997 by the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints. The eight valiant martyrs of the Christian Faith, led by Blessed Vicente Soler, were beatified in solemn rites on 7 March 1999 at Saint Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican City, Rome.

### **Birth and Childhood in Spain**

Father Vicente Muñarriz Soler, a native of Malón, Zaragoza in Spain and of the diocese of Tarazona, was elected to the Augustinian Recollect Order’s highest office as prior general in 1926. He was born to Luis Soler and Dominica Muñarriz on 4 April 1867. The following day, the infant received the sacrament of baptism from Father Bonifacio Toledo in the parish of Saint Vincent the Martyr. Matías Milagros and his uncle and namesake Vicente Soler were godfathers.

The biographer tells us more about the great influence of his parents on the growing child: “His parents, simple and righteous folks, gave the young boy a Christian education. In addition, they taught him love for the poor. From them, too, the young Vicente learned honesty, nobility of spirit and piety that characterized his entire life.”

### Vocation to the religious life

Very near the town of Malón is the Augustinian Recollect monastery at Monteagudo in the province of Navarra. Young missionaries for the Philippines were trained at this convent since its foundation in 1828. The monastery enshrined the *Virgen del Camino* [Virgin of the Way], patroness of both town and Recollect community. The Blessed Mother had devotees from that region in Zaragoza and Navarra. People from outlying towns visit the cherished icon of the Mother of God. The young Vicente's devout parents took him to the Marian shrine.

The young boy had the chance to meet the young formands of his own age and attended their liturgical rites at the monastery chapel. Doubtless, from such contacts his missionary vocation was born and his enthusiasm for the great ideals of religious and missionary life was kindled and forged.<sup>3</sup>

At the very young age of twelve, Vicente had already made up his mind to devote himself to God in the religious life. But he needed to prepare himself by studying Spanish grammar and Latin. For that reason, he studied for three years at a seminary in Tarazona, Zaragoza.

### Years of religious formation

Vicente was already fifteen years old when he returned to Monteagudo. He presented himself before the superior of the Augustinian Recollect convent and in a simple rite donned the religious habit for the one-year novitiate training. Exactly twelve months after, on 15 May 1883, he pronounced the evangelical counsels before the prior Father Aniceto Ibáñez (1828-1892), thereby becoming a full-fledged religious with the mandatory promise to serve the missions in the Philippines. It was an event witnessed by the entire religious community. His religious appellation was Fray Vicente Soler de San Luis Gonzaga.



**Blessed Vicente Soler  
in Manila**

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<sup>3</sup>*Positio*, 23-24.

In the wake of his religious profession, he studied philosophy and the sciences for the next two more years at the same monastery. The year 1885 witnessed his transfer to the Recollect convent at San Millán de la Cogolla, La Rioja province, where he began his theological formation. At the monastery of Marcilla, Navarra, he finished another two years of his ecclesiastical courses that included moral theology, canon law and church history. On 15 June 1889, Msgr. Antonio Ruiz Cabal, bishop of Pamplona, Navarra, ordained him as deacon.

### Priestly ordination in Manila

On 18 September 1889, Soler left Marcilla with the 88<sup>th</sup> mission that comprised three priests and eleven theology students. Two days later, they boarded at Barcelona the transoceanic frigate *San Ignacio de Loyola* en route to the Philippines.<sup>4</sup> The mission docked at Manila Bay on 25 October of the same year. At the now-extinct San Nicolás convent, popularly known as *Recoletos*, in the Walled City of Manila the eleven students lodged for the next eight months preparing themselves for the priestly ministry. It was on 31 May 1890 when the Spanish Dominican Fray Bernabé García Cezón (1834-1899), titular bishop of Biblios and retired missionary bishop of Tonking in Indochina, raised him to the holy order of presbyterate. His ordination took place at the now-extinct Gothic Santo Domingo church of the Dominican friars in Intramuros, Manila.

### In Mindoro missions

After his *cantamisa* on 1 June 1890, the new presbyter was dispatched to *Nuestra Señora de la Paz y Buen Viaje* parish of Antipolo in order to acquire a good command of Tagalog. In this age-old pilgrimage town, he was assigned as companion of its parish priest Father Esteban Martínez (1840-1912) for nine months. On 7 March 1891, Father Soler was named assistant priest of Father Dionisio E. Gurbindo (1851-1917) in Saint Sebastian parish of Sablayan in western Mindoro. The mission with a Christian population of 860

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<sup>4</sup>Francisco SÁDABA, *Catálogo de los Religiosos Agustinos Recoletos de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas desde el año 1606, en que llegó la primera misión, hasta nuestros días* (Madrid 1906) 668.

that included Mangyan converts had been set up by Recollects in 1819.<sup>5</sup> The youthful missionary remained in Sablayan for only six weeks.

Father Soler took over the post of Father Ruperto de Blas (1863-1937) as parish priest of Mamburao [present-day capital of Occidental Mindoro], farther north of Sablayan. His confrere had been transferred to Montalban, a town known today as Rodriguez in Rizal province.<sup>6</sup> Father Soler was at the helm of *Nuestra Señora del Pilar* parish in Mamburao from 27 April 1891 to 18 April 1898. The budding parish of 462 parishioners had received its first resident minister only in February 1887 when it was finally separated from its matrix parish of Sablayan. Father Soler later reported that the population of his curacy grew to 925 in 1891 and further increased to 1,431 in 1894.<sup>7</sup> Its nearest town was Paluan, 31 kilometers to the north.

Mamburao was deemed an unproductive stretch of sandy land inhabited by “people inclined to a life of crime.” The fervent efforts of the Recollect missionary turned it into a town with upright and industrious folks. Father Soler left traces of his apostolic zeal and commitment to the impoverished folks. He did not only take care of the human and spiritual development of his parishioners, but also kept himself busy with the construction of the church. The house of God was depicted as made of stone and *tabique pampango*, with a galvanized-iron roof.<sup>8</sup> He did some improvements on the lowly but solid rectory made of nipa and wood.

The *kumbento* served as living quarters, school and dispensary. A Recollect writer Father Javier Sesma (1868-1959) would disclose in 1933 that Filipino revolutionaries had destroyed this rectory at the height of the Philippine Revolution.<sup>9</sup> He additionally tells us that the church built by Father Soler was in an advanced state of ruin.

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<sup>5</sup>Patricio MARCELLÁN, *Provincia de S. Nicolás de Tolentino de Agustinos Descalzos de la Congregación de España e Indias* (Manila 1879) 120.

<sup>6</sup>SÁDABA, 638.

<sup>7</sup> Gregorio Fidel DE BLAS, *Labor evangélica de los Padres Recoletos en las Islas Filipinas* (Zaragoza 1910) 30.

<sup>8</sup> Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas I* (Manila 1925) 583; SÁDABA, 668.

<sup>9</sup> Javier SESMA, *Informe sobre los convenientes e inconvenientes para tomar la provincia de Mindoro como Prefectura Apostólica*, Legajo 53, Núm. 5, ARCHIVO HISTÓRICO PROVINCIAL DE SAN NICOLÁS DE TOLENTINO



## In the vortex of the Philippine Revolution

The second phase of the Philippine Revolution (May 1898-December 1898) found the Servant of God in the Tagalog province of Batangas. It began with the resumption of the Revolution after the return of President Emilio F. Aguinaldo (1869-1964) from his Hong Kong exile in May 1898. It was in the wake of the outbreak of hostilities between Spain and the United States of America that occurred a month earlier. During the predominantly Tagalog uprising, *i.e.*, the first phase of the Philippine Revolution (August 1896-December 1897), thirteen Recollect friars in Cavite and two in Bataan had perished in the hands of the Filipino revolutionaries in the ensuing killing frenzy.

The radical revolutionists had fashioned their war cry from their anti-friar sentiments which they had imbibed from their dauntless compatriots in the Propaganda Movement in Europe. The foremost propagandists and today's acclaimed heroes—like José P. Rizal, Marcelo H. del Pilar and Graciano López Jaena—had authored fiery anti-friar literature. When the national upheaval ended in March 1901, with the capture of President Aguinaldo in Isabela, a total of thirty-four Recollect religious priests and brothers had lost their lives in the revolutionary maelstrom.<sup>10</sup>



A company of Filipino Revolutionary Troops

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DE MARCILLA, Navarre, España [APM], Legajo 53, Núm. 5, f. 7. The author had visited the place in Mamburao and learned that Father Soler's church had been demolished and no trace of it could be seen. The SVD fathers moved the new church and rectory to their present site in the 1960s.

<sup>10</sup>The author of *Varones ilustres del Convento de Marcilla*, in BPSN 603 (1965) 532-535, fails to mention Imus curate Father José María Learte, slain in Cavite, and Father Isidoro Liberal, slaughtered in Cebu City.

## Prisoners of the Revolution

Having set up the Dictatorial Government, Aguinaldo issued on 29 May 1898 a general proclamation ordering all Filipinos to put an end to the maltreatment of Spanish prisoners. He further commanded his military officials to respect the lives of Spaniards “who have neither directly nor indirectly contributed in the taking up of arms against us.”<sup>11</sup> Consequently, about four hundred prisoners of various religious orders were delivered from certain death during the national upheaval. Of these were eighty-four Recollects.<sup>12</sup> Among them were Father Vicente Soler and his two future companion martyrs in Motril, Granada in Spain: Vicente Pinilla and José Rada.

In May 1898, over 80 percent of the active members of the whole Augustinian Recollect congregation were working in the Philippines. It had been transformed into a congregation that had been closely identified with the colonial Church and State in the Asian colony of Spain. Some 330 religious were living in four priories or ministering to the spiritual needs of one million and a half souls in 235 towns in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

## From Batangas to Tayabas

From his Mindoro parish, Father Vicente Soler had been transferred to the curacy of Taysan in the Tagalog province of Batangas on 18 April 1898. He had been named parish priest of Taysan four days earlier. It did not take a month before the winds of the Revolution spread like wildfire to the southern provinces of Luzon. On 29 May 1898, Father Soler went to the adjoining parish of Rosario.<sup>13</sup> On 5 June at the *kumbento*, he discussed the precarious

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<sup>11</sup>Pablo FERNÁNDEZ, *History of the Church in the Philippines (1521-1898)*, (Manila 1979) 335.

<sup>12</sup>Angel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Los Agustinos Recoletos: 375 años de presencia continua*, in BPSN, special issue (1981) 64. In the preceding article, the historian puts the number of captives as ninety-one, whereas in his 1988 pamphlet—published in English in Quezon City as *The Order of Augustinian Recollects: Its Charismatic Evolution* (Manila 1994)—the figure is trimmed down to eighty-four. See page 66.

<sup>13</sup> The old pueblo of Rosario was renamed Padre García. The present Rosario town was an old barrio created into a municipality.

situation of the province wracked by the revolutionary struggle with the assistant priest Father Pedro U. López (1870-1934).<sup>14</sup>

Later on the young Spanish clerics learned from a nervous carriage driver that the four Recollect confreres he had conveyed to Manila fell into the hands of the Filipino patriots in Carmona, Cavite. That same day, the alarmed duo rushed at once to San Juan de Bolbok to further inquire about the latest developments of the insurrection as well as to firm up whatever decision to take. There was an ominous event the two friars were unaware of at that time: the Spanish defenders of Lipa, the provincial seat of Batangas, had capitulated to the superior forces of the Revolution. And then the tragedy that had befallen on their Cavite Recollects in 1896 and on six confreres of Zambales in 1898 could not be easily obliterated from memory. Indeed, serious danger loomed in the horizon.

### On a boat bound for Borneo

Fathers Soler and López conferred with San Juan de Bolbok parish priest Celestino S. Yoldi (1863-1935). The trio then decided to proceed to Lucena, a progressive town of Tayabas [now Quezon] province. At the port of Lucena they had the good fortune of boarding a steamship named *M/S Camiguin*. The vessel was loaded with anxiety-ridden Franciscans, Calced Augustinians and other fleeing Spanish nationals as passengers, yearning to leave the embattled colony. The steamship had been booked to transport them to Borneo off the southern Philippine shores.<sup>15</sup> Before long it lifted anchor and headed south.

The steamer berthed at Looc in the southwestern coast of Tablas Island. In that secluded mission post, the *M/S Camiguin* passengers came upon the Recollect Paulino L. Jiménez (1864-1958) calmly exercising his pastoral obligations. The parish priest was busy laying the groundwork for a much bigger divine temple.<sup>16</sup> When the *Camiguin* lifted anchor and set sail for its destination,

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<sup>14</sup>Recollect chronicler Licinio Ruiz's chief source for the episode in Romblon and Marinduque is Pedro López's prison memoir. This friar's unpublished memoir is kept in APM, *Legajo* 20, no. 5. Father Soler's own diary could no longer be located, as claimed by *Positio*, 26.

<sup>15</sup>Apolinar PASTRANA, *A Friar's Account of the Philippine Revolution in Bicol*, (Quezon City 1980) 267-268, footnote 84.

<sup>16</sup>*Sinopsis* I, 527.

Soler, Yoldi and López firmed up their decision to stay behind at Looc with Jiménez, probably believing it was a safe haven from the revolutionists.

A short while afterward, López took a boat that ferried him to the provincial capital of Romblon—only to be incarcerated there. On 30 July, the three priests were taken into custody by armed revolutionary troops that landed in a boat in Looc. The long and fatiguing journey along the road to Golgotha had forthwith commenced for the Augustinian Recollect captives of the Philippine Revolution.

### **Moored at Romblon**

On 31 July 1898 a steamship *Francisco*, crammed with the imprisoned Recollect ministers of Romblon parishes and revolutionary guards, sailed in the direction of Cavite.<sup>17</sup> However, the huge waves and strong winds—brought about by a typhoon—mercilessly pounded the sea craft and forced it to seek refuge in a barrio in Romblon. The revolutionists lingered for three days before ordering the vessel commander to transport the friars back to the provincial capital. The townspeople of Romblon generously provided the prisoners with everything they needed. By this time, the parish priest of Badajoz [present-day San Agustín] in the northeastern coast

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<sup>17</sup> A few days earlier, patriots led by Mariano Riego de Dios (1875-1935), a Revolutionary general from Maragondon, Cavite and a member of the Council of War that tried and sentenced Katipunan founder Andrés Bonifacio to death, had rounded up the Recollect parish priests of Romblon. The friars had fled to Badajoz. From there they were hauled off to the capital. From the boat, they were forced to wade through two rows of disorderly troops who subjected them to outrages. Inside the Romblon casa tribunal the Caviteño general delivered insulting philippics against the ministers. He interrogated them about their curacies, money and jewels, threatening them: “If you do not tell the truth, I’ll order [my men] to hang you on that cross,” pointing to the huge cross erected near the rectory. Riego de Dios ordered his men to conduct the friars to jail and keep them detained for eight hours. To intimidate the priests no end, he warned them to be ready for outright execution. Instead, they were moved to another house—to their immense relief. All the while Romblon townsfolk showed great compassion, giving their jailed ministers something to wear and to eat. See L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* II, 430-432.

of Tablas Island had been arrested and taken into custody together with his Recollect confreres.

### **Hunger and sneer at Looc, Tablas Island**

On 7 August, a steamship named *M/S Bulusan* with the same Romblon prisoners as passengers, dropped anchor at Looc where Fathers Soler, Yoldi and Jiménez were at the hands of the revolutionists. As the unkempt missionaries debarked from *M/S Bulusan*, they were exposed to ridicule and jeer by the revolutionary troops. The Spanish ministers were lodged in crumbly shanties with leaking roofs. Hence, they found no shelter during the torrential downpour that drenched them by day and by night. In silence they endured the chilly condition of the night and its concomitant discomfort.

The captives suffered from recurrent hunger pangs after being unfed for hours. Unpalatable black rice was on one occasion offered by a sentry for them to boil and consume. It was an offer their famished stomachs could not refuse. The residents of Looc were, on the whole, cold and apathetic to the curates' plight. A number of Spanish prisoners-of-war and three more Augustinian Recollects soon arrived to share the ill fortune of the group.

### **A Caviteño revolutionist's verbal tirade**

The sojourn of the twelve Recollects at Looc was marked by the inexplicable behavior of an unnamed revolutionist from Cavite.<sup>18</sup> At first, the eloquent Caviteño revolutionary heaped encomiums on the friars' significant role in the civilization task and moral progress of the Filipino people. Soon afterward, he did a bizarre turnabout: his panegyrics turned into delivering fiery perorations against the Recollect captives and against the friars in general.

He continued his tongue-lashing at them, indicting them collectively for the abuses and disasters that befell on the colony

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<sup>18</sup> The twelve were Soler, Celestino Yoldi, Pedro López, Paulino Jiménez, Anselmo Ruiz, Federico Serrano, Manuel María Gómez, Julián Ortiz, Miguel García, Agustín Pérez de la Virgen de los Remedios, Félix Lacalle and Juan Calabia. Before long, Dionisio Gurbindo of Boac, Marinduque, joined them.

since the beginning of Spanish rule. The Caviteño orator blamed them for the colonial society's own depraved customs and even for the individual sins of Filipinos. The acrimonious diatribe was reminiscent of General Mariano Riego de Dios' verbal tirade against them at the provincial capital of Romblon.<sup>19</sup> In the face of all the invectives, the friars only kept their peace in silence. Downcast and their heads bowed in utter humiliation, they resigned to their fate, to what would befall on them in the days to come.

### **Ephemeral peace at Boac, Marinduque**

The odyssey to the unknown destination continued. All along, the captives never had any idea of their journey's end. On 23 August 1898, the boat slowly proceeded north and docked at Boac in the island province of Marinduque. The prisoners found its parish priest Father Dionisio Gurbindo under house arrest. Not long afterward, the Caviteño revolutionary guards took their leave and sailed off towards Masbate and other parts of Luzon without telling their captives why.

The friars' plight turned less harsh. Both the provincial governor and the town mayor exerted effort so that the Recollect priests could communicate with their superiors in Intramuros and ask for help. It did not take long for clothing and pecuniary assistance from Manila to reach them. All along, Boac residents showed the prisoners so much compassion and respect that these manifestations of affection certainly assuaged their misfortunes and despondent spirits.

From a private house the thirteen Recollects were moved to the *casa tribunal* [municipal hall] of Boac. The lone sentry of the municipal hall soon got tired of his post and left the friar prisoners to themselves. The detainees' taste of limited freedom would go on till the end of the year.

### **A day in the life of an imprisoned Recollect**

The ordinary day of an imprisoned Augustinian Recollect minister always began with mental prayer. He then continued with other special religious devotions: "In every moment their hearts flew

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<sup>19</sup> L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* II, 436-438.

to God in whom they put all their faith, all their hope.”<sup>20</sup> Never was there a day during their protracted captivity when the prisoners failed to pray the Divine Office. The celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice was definitely out of the question. They were not even permitted to celebrate the Mass, nor to receive the Sacred Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Communion nor to avail themselves of the spiritual benefit and consolation arising from the reception during their captivity. To while away the hours and enliven their humdrum days in Boac, the prisoners organized a choir and fascinated the townsfolk with their splendid religious hymns. The pleased listeners never hesitated to chip in monetary contributions.

In December 1898, a new revolutionary commander took control of Boac and immediately led the prisoners to their next destination—Mogpog—an hour away to the north. Thus, came to its abrupt end the relatively peaceful sojourn that lasted four months.

### **The good-hearted curate and parishioners of Mogpog**

The inhabitants of Mogpog, Marinduque, who were notorious anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish, turned out to be the opposite—to their great relief. To alleviate the captives’ lot, some folks even offered cigars, local wine and trifle objects to them. Most of the time, the guards allowed them to mingle with the people and to freely roam around the town. The friar prisoners were warmly greeted in their daily strolls. The display of Christian charity and respect stemmed, most probably, from the compassionate conduct and good example of their Filipino parish curate, “a worthy minister of the Lord, who thoroughly epitomized charity and love.”<sup>21</sup>

The local diocesan priest of Mogpog, whose name was not recorded for posterity, frequently visited the prisoners and gave them financial assistance. He saw to it that the religious had clean clothes to wear, paying for their



**Cardinal Mariano  
Rampolla, Vatican  
Secretary of State**

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 440.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 441.

laundry from his own pocket. For the first time in many months, the captives were permitted to receive Holy Communion on a regular basis, thanks to the Mogpog diocesan curate's effort. For fear of incurring the revolutionary caciques' displeasure and wrath, however, he did not permit his fellow presbyters to celebrate the Mass.

The four-month sojourn in Mogpog was obviously a life of isolation and meager means of subsistence. Yet they all enjoyed it for its peace and tranquility. They specifically recalled the rare privilege of partaking of the Eucharistic meal that nourished their long-famished souls.

### High-level efforts to secure the prisoners' release

Efforts were already made to secure the freedom of Spanish prisoners as early as 2 August 1898 when Cardinal Mariano Rampolla (1843-1913), Pope Leo XIII's Secretary of State, wrote the papal nuncio to the United States to exhaust all measures within his reach. He sought the collaboration of Cardinal James Gibbons (1834-1921), Archbishop of Baltimore (Maryland), Archbishop John Ireland (1838-1918) of Saint Paul (Minnesota) and other influential prelates. The Apostolic Vicar of Hong Kong himself solicited the American cardinal's assistance on the jailed friars' behalf. In an audience with President William McKinley, Archbishop Ireland was told the US did not recognize the Aguinaldo government but would do everything possible to protect the property of the Roman Catholic Church as well as the lives of friars and priests in his orders to the commanding general.<sup>22</sup>



**Philippine President  
Emilio Aguinaldo**

On the festive occasion of the proclamation of the First Philippine Republic on 23 January 1899, President Aguinaldo had ordered the release of the Spanish prisoners.<sup>23</sup> He further decreed

<sup>22</sup> Isacio RODRÍGUEZ, Jesús ALVAREZ, *Papeles filipinos II: La revolución filipina y los prisioneros españoles*, in *Archivo Agustino* 199 (1997) footnotes 6 and 8, 175.

<sup>23</sup> Pedro S. de ARCHÚTEGUI, Miguel A. BERNAD, *The Religious Coup d'État, 1898-1901: A Documentary History* (Quezon City 1971) 43-44.



the expulsion of friars from Philippine territory. The edict, however, was not implemented. Everywhere the imprisoned regular clergy remained in bondage, including Fray José Hevia de Campomanes (1841-1904), the Dominican bishop of Nueva Segovia, who would be released only in December 1899.

In a communiqué dated 17 January 1899 to the Vatican Secretary of State, the Madrid nuncio conveyed the request of Queen Regent María Cristina of Spain for the Pope to intervene in the release of Spanish hostages. In March Cardinal Rampolla wrote Archbishop Bernardino Nozaleda (1844-1927) of Manila, voicing the Holy Father's deep concern over the imprisoned clergy's fate. He further urged the Spanish Dominican prelate to employ every possible means to have them set free.<sup>24</sup> Months later, Archbishop Nozaleda relayed Pope Leo



Pope Leo XIII

XIII's expression of concern to President Aguinaldo and personally sought the release of the imprisoned friars. Prompted earlier by the Holy See, forty-four Filipino secular priests—in the name of the 700 priests in the Islands—followed suit: they addressed a manifesto to Aguinaldo and to the Filipino Congress, appealing their sense of magnanimity and humanity in behalf of the Spanish prisoners, the religious in particular.<sup>25</sup> The positive effects of these pleas took long in coming.

### Seemingly endless hikes and sea trips

In the midst of such efforts and negotiations, the Augustinian Recollect captives continued their drawn-out Calvary in the islands off southern Luzon. On 29 April 1899, they returned to Boac from Mogpog and from there they traveled to an outlying barrio on foot. From that inland village, they retraced their steps back to Boac. Once more from the provincial capital they marched on to a village named Lupac. The ceaseless hikes were taking a toll on their haggard

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 60-61.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 69-71; I. RODRÍGUEZ, J. ALVAREZ, *Papeles filipinos II*, 193-195. The Augustinian historians believed the native clergy's manifesto greatly contributed to the prisoners' release.

bodies. Before long, they hiked from Lupac to the town of Santa Cruz, in northeastern Marinduque.<sup>26</sup> Finally, their worn-out bodies found their much-needed respite when they sailed to the island of Mompon.

At long last, the seemingly endless sea voyages and marches of more than two months were over. On 3 July 1899, they boarded a steamer bound for mainland Luzon. They reached the shores of the small coastal town of Pitogo in Tayabas province five days afterward. After a quick meal, they frantically rushed to Lucena where according to information relayed to them an American frigate would be waiting at Lucena River in order to convey them to Manila. Their hope of freedom was dashed to the ground when they could not find any ship at all. There was nobody to explain to them why and nobody assigned to take care of them. The prisoners were just lucky to come across with the former Lucena curate's servant who took pity of them. He invited them to his lowly shanty and offered them shelter and food.

### **Malady and misery in Tayabas**

On 9 July 1899, Father Vicente Soler and his nine Recollect confreres were directed by Colonel Eustacio Maloles, the provincial military commander, to march northward to Tayabas, capital of the province of the same name. To their utter consternation, they found themselves in the company of thirteen Franciscan friars who languished in jail. That night, the Recollects shared a decent meal with the spiritual sons of Saint Francis of Assisi.

The dilapidated building in Tayabas where they were lodged for five months was so unsanitary that most of the prisoners were stricken ill. Quite a number suffered from chronic dysentery. The great majority of the captives were morally and physically crestfallen, fatigued, their bodies drained of all energy and strength, brought about by those apparently unending hikes under the blistering tropical sun, sea trips, wretched quarters, hunger and thirst.

<sup>26</sup>Yoldi, Gurbindo and López were petitioned by the good-hearted diocesan priest to stay behind in Santa Cruz. Following the American occupation of Marinduque, the group of Recollects eventually gained their freedom when they boarded a boat that reached Manila Bay on 3 May 1900. Sádaba erroneously includes López as among the bigger number released on 1 March 1900. Gurbindo's liberation day was listed by Sádaba as 4 May 1900.

The friar prisoners spiked high fever that recurrently lasted weeks or even months. An imprisoned Recollect confirmed it in his own memoir as the dreaded malaria. It was the malignant febrile illness, aggravated by countless adversities suffered in confinement and general body weakness that ultimately put an end to the short life of Father Anselmo Ruiz, assistant parish priest of Romblon, on 23 July 1899.<sup>27</sup> He was only 25. Barely a week before, Ruiz and two confreres had been ordered by Colonel Eustacio Maloles to report to Lucena. They were expected to do menial jobs at the stable or the kitchen of the Filipino parish priest. At length, death ended Father Ruiz's woes. For the rest of the friar captives, the road to Calvary was long and winding. Still there was no light at the end of the tunnel.



**Manila Archbishop  
Bernardino Nozaleda OP**

### **Christian work of mercy**

Like genuine believers of Christ, Tayabas folks—especially the dauntless women tertiaries—helped assuage the plight of Father Soler's group, even risking the displeasure of military authorities. Everybody—except the secular priest of Tayabas—made a concerted effort to mitigate the friars' burden. On their own initiative, the tertiaries donated food, mended their clothes and did their laundry.

Oftentimes, the Filipino secular priest of Tayabas personally discouraged the tertiaries who persisted in helping the Spanish priests. One day he rebuked a tertiary for attending to the needs of the captives. The lady could not avoid justifying her action before the diocesan priest and told him: "If helping the prisoners is not fine with you, well, I consider it very good and very holy. So long as there are religious here, I will help them as much as I can." His face flushed with anger, he dashed out of the detention place in a huff.<sup>28</sup> The minister of the merciful God had just been reminded about the act of Christian mercy and charity by a layperson.

<sup>27</sup> Ruiz passed away on 3 July 1899, according to SÁDABA, 729.

<sup>28</sup> L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* II, 445.

### Hike from Tayabas to Lucban

A squad of soldiers was posted to restrict the prisoners' movement in Tayabas. The friars were detained inside the unsanitary edifice until January 1900. By then news had reached Tayabas that United States troops had occupied the adjoining town of Tiaong three leagues away. Thereupon, the civilian members of the local revolutionary junta resolved to grant the friars their long-overdue freedom.

However, the military officers and the Catholic priest of Tayabas strongly objected to the proposal of the civilian revolutionary leaders. The officers and the secular priest would rather have the detained friars meted with the capital punishment. In fact, some Spanish *cazadores* [light infantrymen] had been shot earlier, at the instigation of the secular priest who was “completely bereft of all compassion.” Apparently, the civilians' judgment prevailed over that of the military. For it was consequently decided that the captives should be hastily withdrawn from the clutches of the approaching enemy troops.

On 15 January 1900, the Filipino patriots conducted the prisoners to Lucban. The ailing friars—two Franciscans<sup>29</sup> and the Recollect Father Agustín Pérez de la Virgen de los Remedios (1849-1900), parish priest of Odiongan in Rombon since 1894—were advised to stay behind. Chronic dysentery had been ailing the Recollect friar. His illness soon took a turn for the worse; he eventually died of the same malady in Balong-balong, a barrio of Lucban, on 4 February. “After suffering with heroic patience the harsh chastisements and tribulations arising from such prolonged confinement, Father Agustín Pérez was a victim of unimaginable suffering.”<sup>30</sup>

### Trek to Sampaloc and Atimonan

On 21 January 1900, the prisoners left Lucban and marched on to Sampaloc under the scorching sun. Thence, they resumed their hike to Atimonan, some forty kilometers away. At this coastal town, they momentarily rested from the strenuous journey. Up to 300

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<sup>29</sup>A Franciscan friar, Julián López, died soon after a lingering illness.

<sup>30</sup>SÁDABA, 567-568.

Spaniards, both friars and military personnel who either capitulated or were captured in Tayabas province converged at Atimonan.

In February 1900, hundreds of Spanish captives hiked to the distant town of Guinayangan, about sixty kilometers away. In this town along the coast of Ragay Gulf, a group of over 200 Spanish officers and prisoners-of-war from the province of Ambos Camarines joined them. Their freedom was finally negotiated at Guinayangan. To evade uninformed Filipino troops on patrol, the prisoners moved to Pires, a barrio of Guinayangan. Here, some Spanish soldiers luckily caught the attention of the passing steamer *Alava* that was skippered by an American. The steamship berthed at Pires to board the religious prisoners. It then proceeded to fetch the ailing troops left behind at Guinayangan and ferried them to Manila, now under the United States occupation forces.<sup>31</sup>

### **Deliverance at long last!**

The first of March 1900 was the yearned-for day of deliverance. At long last, the steamer which the eight Recollects—Vicente Soler, Paulino Jiménez, Federico Serrano, Manuel María Gómez, Julián Ortiz, Miguel García, Félix Lacalle and Juan Calabia had boarded in Bicol—docked at Manila. The nineteen months of fatigue, bondage, isolation, uncertainty and seemingly endless, nerve-racking hikes had finally come to a close.

Euphoria and tremendous sense of relief filled the cloisters of San Sebastian Convent and San Nicolás Convent in Intramuros. The superiors and conventuals of both priories welcomed their confreres. The news of the death of Agustín Pérez and Anselmo Ruiz in captivity might have somewhat dampened the fraternal celebration. This plight was further aggravated by the fact that three Recollect confreres were still confined in the distant island of Marinduque.

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<sup>31</sup> John N. Schumacher surmises that all friar prisoners were released in December 1899 in *Readings in Philippine Church History* (Quezon City 1987) 292, 299. Aguinaldo had issued on 1 December 1899 a decree setting all Spanish prisoners free, “without distinction and unconditionally.” See ARCHÚTEGUI-BERNAD III, 76-77.

### Lessons from captivity

The prolonged period of captivity was an extended period of deprivation, apprehension and isolation. But it likewise provided unnumbered occasions for prayer and meditation. Thus, decades later in 1918, Blessed Vicente Soler could write:

Prayer, then, my brothers, continuous and fervent prayer in order to attain that intimate and perfect union with God our Lord so that the Divine Majesty may bless our efforts and crown our undertakings. Only he who knows how to pray perfectly, knows how to live in a holy manner.<sup>32</sup>

Father Romualdo Rodrigo, then postulator general in charge of the Causes of Saints of the Augustinian Recollect Order, tells us about some lessons the Father Vicente Soler had learned from his imprisonment:

He learned how to suffer in silence and to put his total confidence in God. There he also learned how to exercise his apostolate among the prisoners. The experience of his first incarceration will be of service to him later—in his final confinement in Motril in August 1936. He would lift up the spirits of his companions and encourage them to trust in God. In the meantime, he recounted to them how God had helped him during his imprisonment in the Philippines.<sup>33</sup>

### From San Sebastian to San Nicolás priory

Following his release from captivity in March 1900, the future martyr of the Faith was assigned to San Sebastian Convent in Quiapo, Manila.<sup>34</sup> Two months earlier, the last United States Army officers had abandoned the Recollect convent after forcibly

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<sup>32</sup> *Positio*, 31.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>34</sup> The US forces established their barracks therein till October 1899. The last three American officers finally vacated San Sebastian Convent in January 1900. See *Libro de cosas notables del convento de San Sebastián de Manila*, 28r-29r, APM Sección de *Libros* 127a.

occupying it for seventeen months. This development was welcomed by the Recollects who could now accommodate more conventuals in the priory and go about their cloistered life and their religious obligations, unhampered by American interlopers. At the start of the Spanish-American War, both church and convent of San Sebastian were requisitioned by Spanish officials as a military hospital and used for four months until the American Occupation soldiers landed on 13 August 1898. That same day US troops also occupied the Recollect convent and its all-steel church and convent as their barracks.

At the all-steel neo-Gothic house of worship constructed in 1886-1891, Father Soler balanced his time between the confessional and preaching the Word of God. The patroness of San Sebastian Church, the *Virgen del Carmen* [Our Lady of Mount Carmel], whose revered icon arrived in Manila from Mexico City in 1618 and enthroned at the church in 1621, had found a zealous advocate in Father Soler. The Marian devotees and members of the Confraternity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel attended lectures and sermons delivered by this tireless promoter of devotion to the Mother of God.



**San Nicolas Convent  
[destroyed during the  
Liberation in 1945],  
Intramuros, Manila:**

**Motherhouse of the Recollects  
in the Philippines, Office of the  
Prior Provincial, Provincial  
Council of the Province of  
Saint Nicholas of Tolentino,  
Novitiate, Theology School for  
over three centuries**

### **Secretary of the vicar provincial**

On 19 July 1902, the Servant of God was transferred back to San Nicolás Convent in Intramuros. He had been earlier designated secretary of the newly-appointed vicar provincial of the Philippines, Father Manuel Mateo de la Virgen del Carmen (1852-1911).<sup>35</sup> With

<sup>35</sup>In 1907, Father Manuel Mateo, Philippine missionary (1873-1907) and vicar provincial (1901-1907), was designated as the first provincial of the newly restored Hispano-American Province of Our Lady of the Pillar, later renamed Saint Thomas of Villanova Province.

the official seat of the Augustinian Recollect province temporarily moved to Spain,<sup>36</sup> the post of vicar provincial in the Philippines had to be created. This was in the wake of the abnormal and turbulent situation in the Philippines that likewise occasioned the suspension of the triennial provincial chapters of Saint Nicholas Province. For that reason, the Madrid-based superior general of the Augustinian Recollect Congregation and his general council were mandated by the Constitutions to appoint the prior provincial, provincial counselors and other positions of Saint Nicholas Province.<sup>37</sup>

Among Father Soler's duties as secretary were to accompany the vicar provincial in his canonical visitations to the remaining Recollect communities in the new American colony as well as to prepare and disseminate the necessary instructions and communications from the office of the vicar provincial to the Recollect subordinates through whatever means available.

Father Soler still found time to write articles in Spanish for Catholic periodicals in Manila, like *La Estrella de Antipolo* [The Star of Antipolo]. Among his works were the following: *Nuestra Señora del Carmen* [Our Lady of Mount of Carmel], *El taumaturgo de Tolentino* [The Miracle-Worker of Tolentino], and *Nuestra Señora de Antipolo y los Padres Recoletos* [Our Lady of Antipolo and the Recollect Fathers]. He employed such pseudonyms as *Taga-Quiaapo*, *Manolito* and *Stock*.

### Local superior of San Nicolás Convent

In September 1905, Father Soler took possession of his new office as superior of San Nicolás friary, for which he had been named on 17 July. He continued to promote the popular devotion to Saint Joseph at their conventual church. He wrote the bylaws of the Archconfraternity of Saint Joseph.

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<sup>36</sup> In 1913 the seat of the Saint Nicholas Province was finally restored in Manila by the provincial chapter held in Marcilla. See José Javier LIZARRAGA, *El Padre Enrique Pérez, Último Vicario y Primer Prior General de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos (1908-1914)* (Rome 1990) 203.

<sup>37</sup> The prior provincial of Saint Nicholas Province had been appointed since 1900 by the *comisario general*—then superior general of the Recollect Congregation—and his council and had continually resided in Spain.



Father Soler remained in office for a little more than a year. On 8 November 1906, he resigned his post. A humble man, he often refused all types of honors and prelacies and wished to live only as an ordinary conventual, a plain religious.

On 7 November 1906, Father Soler boarded a steamer bound for Spain. Thus ended his seventeen-year apostolate in the Philippines. The missionary period of his religious and priestly life had drawn to a close.<sup>38</sup>

### Missionaries' exodus to Spain

The future martyr had joined hundreds of confreres who had been repatriated to Spain or had transferred to South America, as the Revolution furiously raged in the colony. In such American countries as Brazil, Venezuela and Panama, they established new religious houses. There were but two Recollect convents in Manila that could accommodate a big number of friars who were constrained to relinquish the parishes.

As the Recollect historian Father Ángel Martínez Cuesta accurately observes: "Many of the religious were men who were worn out, ill and devoid of hope: they felt that they were victims of a hate that they did not believe to deserve; some even no longer found meaning in their religious life."<sup>39</sup> They had undergone training solely for missionary work and ministerial apostolate in the Philippines. During the religious profession, they promised to serve the people in the missions in the Philippines and the Marianas Islands. The mission land was the sole horizon in their existence. Forced by adverse circumstances to abandon it, the friars felt rudderless both psychologically and pastorally.

### Epilogue

Father Soler was sent to the congested convent of Marcilla, Navarre. Subsequently, he took up residence at Puente la Reina also in Navarra and then at Motril in Granada. In 1907, the Province of

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<sup>38</sup> Miguel AVELLANEDA, *Continuación del Padre Sádaba o segunda parte del Catálogo de los Religiosos de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos de Filipinas desde 1606 hasta 1936* (Rome 1938) 285.

<sup>39</sup>MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *The Order of Augustinian Recollects*, 66.

Saint Thomas of Villanova was set up and it included the house in Motril. In 1912, he was designated provincial counselor of the new province. For two triennia, he was elected prior provincial of Saint Thomas of Villanova Province. In May 1926, he was raised to the highest position of the Order as prior general. But on 11 December of the same year, he tendered his resignation, citing health reasons. He then took up residence again at Motril.

Father Vicente Soler died a martyr's death on 15 August 1936, feast of Our Lady's Assumption. He had been arrested by the Communist militias on 29 July. In prison, he prayed the Rosary and novena and he further confessed his fellow inmates. He even converted into the Catholic faith a known atheist and revolutionist who was later executed. Minutes before his own execution, according to a fortunate survivor and eyewitness, Father Soler told his eighteen companions: "Entrust yourself to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Most Blessed Virgin, and I will give you the absolution." Almighty God's minister he was till the last breath of his life.

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## Blessed Julián Benigno Moreno and San Narciso in Zambales

### **Zambales and the Augustinian Recollects**

The Zambales of the Spanish colonial years comprised the present-day province of Zambales, parts of Western Pangasinan and the entire Bataan province. Dominican and Calced Augustinian missionaries initially tried to evangelize the vast regions. According to an Augustinian Recollect historian, their attempt was rather sporadic and occasional. Furthermore, no authentic evangelization program was implemented for those regions in western Philippines. In 1591, an Augustinian priest was slain by the inhabitants.

Not long after, the first missionaries abandoned the area. The Calced Augustinians cited the following very valid reasons for their departure: “Unhealthy climate, the natives’ inordinate attachment to their traditions, and the courage and determination with which they defended such traditions.”

The fierce and bellicose nature of the natives and the rugged terrain did not scare the pioneering Augustinian Recollect missionaries at all. Instead, the indomitable people and rugged land stirred up their missionary zeal for the salvation of souls. The Recollects were pleased to accept the *encomendero* Hernando de Avalos’ invitation. The only Recollect religious in 1606 who were proficient in Tagalog which was the chief language of the region were Fray Miguel Bombau de la Madre de Dios, a Spanish Augustinian who had joined the Recollection in Manila, Fray Pedro Vedoya de San José and Fray Francisco de Santa Mónica, a religious brother. The latter two had joined the Augustinian Recollection in Manila. So they journeyed to Zambales and what is now the province of Bataan.

### **Fray Miguel Bombau de la Madre de Dios, Recollect protomartyr**

The hard work and activity of the first missionaries were astonishing. Augustinian Recollect Historian Angel Martinez Cuesta says: “Unmindful neither of the inhospitable terrain, nor the scarcity of food nor the vaunted ferocity and bellicose nature of the Zambals, the unfazed missionaries crossed rivers and creeks and climbed mountains and hills. They reduced the widely dispersed natives in order to impart to them the rudiments of the Christian faith more effectively and to prevent endless skirmishes.”<sup>1</sup>

In early 1607, the pioneers reached Mariveles [now part of Bataan] and started spreading the Good News of Christ’s saving mission. Fray Miguel Bombau de la Madre de Dios<sup>2</sup> spoke of the Christian doctrine when the natives turned hostile and stoned the preacher, wounding him fatally. His was the first Recollect martyr’s blood that would flow profusely in the mission territories of Zambales and Bataan.

More Recollects followed the protomartyr’s footsteps, impelled by apostolic zeal and suffering all kinds of unimaginable deprivations and tribulations. They sought the natives who lived in isolation in the wilderness of Zambales. Extreme hunger and the rigors of the clime soon put an end to the missionaries’ lives. “Just reading the accounts of their ordeal,” says Recollect historian Licinio Ruiz de Santa Eulalia, “can make the soul tremble, even as it proclaims the greatness of their spirit.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Angel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Zambales Missions in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century*, in Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines. Hagiography and History* (Quezon City 2001) 118

<sup>2</sup>An Augustinian friar of Zaragoza, Spain, Fray Miguel Bombau de la Madre de Dios later joined the Recollects and their first Philippine mission. He was preaching the Word of God to the Aetas of Zambales in 1607 when the furious natives hurled stones at him, causing his death a few days later in Manila. Though he did not perish on the spot, he has always been revered as the Order’s protomartyr.

<sup>3</sup>Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas I* (Manila 1925) 21.



### **Early missionary successes**

The early missionaries of Zambales initially founded the towns of Mariveles, Bagac, Cabcaben, Morong, Subic, Cabañaan (now Cabangan), Yba (Iba), Masinloc, Santa Cruz, Bolinao, Agno and San José de Casborran (present-day Alaminos).<sup>4</sup> More parishes were created through the centuries. Zambales was periodically visited by the Recollect prior provincial during his triennium. Sometimes the distance and lack of safe transport constrained some superiors to assign a healthy and knowledgeable provincial visitor to do the canonical visit to the religious convents and parishes. A vicar provincial was permanently appointed to closely supervise the Recollect priests and communities in the region.

Old Zambales towards the close of the Spanish rule in the Philippines had nineteen parishes and two mission stations. These parishes in what is now Zambales were the following: Subic, Castillejos, San Antonio, San Marcelino, San Felipe, Cabangan, Botolan, Iba, Palauig, Masinloc, Candelaria, Santa Cruz and a mission station of Poón-Bato. The parishes in present-day Pangasinan were the following: Dasol, Balincaguíng, San Isidro, San José de Casborran, Bolinao, Agno, Bani and the mission station of Infanta.<sup>5</sup>



### **Creation of San Narciso**

San Narciso started as a small settlement inhabited by farmers and traders from Paoay, Ilocos Norte and Vigan, Ilocos Sur along the Kimmarayan, now Santo Tomas River, after the flood waters of which the place most probably had been named:

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<sup>4</sup>Fidel DE BLAS, *Labor evangélica de los padres agustinos recoletos en las Islas Filipinas* (Zaragoza 1910) 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-17.

*Alusiis* means restlessness.<sup>6</sup> The town was created through a royal decree in 1845 by Narciso Clavería, governor general in 1844-1849, after whom the town was named.<sup>7</sup> Recollect sources affirm that San Narciso was created into a town in 1849. The new town and parish was placed under the spiritual patronage of Saint Sebastian. Enterprising Ilocano merchants in Spanish period set up shacks along the shores to purchase or trade rice or palay of excellent quality for transport and sell to other places.<sup>8</sup>

### The First Parish Priests

The first Recollect parish priest was Fray Alberto Serrano (1820-1889), a native of Tarazona, Zaragoza, who professed the religious vows in September 1845 and came to the Philippines in December 1846.<sup>9</sup> After a two-year stint as companion of the parish priest of Iba, he was put in charge of San Narciso on 10 May 1849. As was always the case elsewhere, the 28-year-old missionary constructed the first church of San Narciso. Apparently, it was a strong church and remnants of it could still be viewed at the back of the present church. He stayed long in the parish in 1849-1852 and in 1863-1882, a total of twelve years.

Fray Claudio del Arco (1825-1882) was the second parish priest who served San Narciso in 1852-1855.<sup>10</sup> Another historian and future prior general Fidel de Blas, however, wrote that Fray Claudio was in San Narciso since 1851 and had reported its population as 4,488. Fray Claudio was transferred to Iba in 1856 and to San Antonio in 1858. He was also parish priest of Santa Cruz in northern Zambales in 1868-1873. We remember him as the superior of

<sup>6</sup> The source of this information is [www.zambales.gov.ph](http://www.zambales.gov.ph). Unfortunately, errors abound in the Zambales local government website. For example, the early missionaries who evangelized Zambales were referred to as *Recollected priests*.

<sup>7</sup>Patricio MARCELLÁN, *La Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de los Agustinos Descalzos de la Congregación de España e Indias* (Manila 1879) 53; Fidel DE BLAS, 15.

<sup>8</sup> MARCELLÁN, 54.

<sup>9</sup>Francisco SÁDABA, *Catálogo de los religiosos agustinos recoletos de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas des-de el año 1606, en que llegó la primera misión a Manila, hasta nuestros días* (Madrid 1906) 443.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 449-450.

Monteagudo when Saint Ezekiel Moreno professed the evangelical counsels in 1865. His health broken during his Zambales mission years, Father Claudio wished to recover his health in Talisay, Negros Occidental, where he passed away in 1882 at age 57.

In 1877, San Narciso had the biggest population in the entire province—7,597 inhabitants. It was followed by Santa Cruz with 7,366 and Masinloc with 6,541. Up to the end of the Spanish Regime, San Narciso was the most populated town of Zambales, Western Pangasinan and Bataan.<sup>11</sup>

### **Father Francisco Moreno, Church Builder**

Fr. Francisco Moreno de los Dolores (1850-1914)<sup>12</sup> of Alfaro, La Rioja, hence a *kababayan*, a contemporary, or perhaps a relative of Saint Ezekiel Moreno, was first assigned to San Narciso as companion of the parish priest Fr. Alberto Serrano from 17 June 1873 to 17 November 1874. In this last date, he was moved to Dasol and much later to San Marcelino. He was parish priest of San Narciso in 1890-1891. The provincial chapter elected him as prior of San Sebastian Convent in Quiapo, Manila. It was during his triennium when the steel Basilica of San Sebastian was finally finished and inaugurated in August 1891. As Fr. Francisco Moreno proudly proclaimed in the *Cosas notables del Convento de San Sebastián*:

God be blest and praised always for giving our Order the glory of erecting in this part of the world the first temple of steel ever built in the world. A project deemed impossible eight years ago. Glory be given also to our worthy superiors who with much perseverance and abnegation sacrificed the Order's interests at the altar of their immaculate and proven affection for the most holy *Virgen del Carmen*.<sup>13</sup>

When he returned to San Narciso in 1894-1898 after his triennium at San Sebastian convent, he wanted to repeat this achievement. He then commenced the building of the present church edifice.

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<sup>11</sup> Fidel DE BLAS, 15-16.

<sup>12</sup>SÁDABA, 560.

<sup>13</sup> FRANCISCO MORENO, *Iglesia de hierro de San Sebastián*, in *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino* [BPSN] 42 (1952) 271.

But the Philippine Revolution caught up with his grandiose project. Fray Francisco Moreno had to leave San Narciso with the magnificent church almost finished. He was arrested by the Filipino revolutionary forces and after a year and a half of captivity he returned to Spain in 1900 and volunteered for the new missions of Brazil.

### A Blessed in Their Midst

A future martyr of the Faith once walked among the Christian folks of San Narciso. He was Blessed Julián Benigno Moreno of Alfaro, La Rioja.<sup>14</sup> His mother was Valentina, a sister of Saint Ezekiel Moreno. Together with twenty friars of the 94<sup>th</sup> Recollect mission, at Barcelona he boarded on 14 September 1894 the steamer *Isla de Panay* which was headed for Manila. The twenty-one Recollect missionaries reached Manila safe and sound a month later, on 13 October. Six days later, on 19 October, Fray Julián Benigno was dispatched to San Narciso as *compañero* of Fray Francisco Moreno. Recollect statutes mandated the study and proficiency the native language of the region where he was to exercise his pastoral ministry. Fray Julián Benigno then studied Tagalog, the language of San Narciso.

In this Parish of San Sebastian, he served the People of God for three years. The usual priestly ministry of Blessed Julián Benigno consisted of the administration of the sacraments, preaching the Word of God and instruction the young children in the rudiments of the Christian faith. Oftentimes, he might have gone to the villages to celebrate masses or hear the confession of the sick parishioners. Definitely, Blessed Julián Benigno had touched the lives of the people of San Narciso.

After passing the rigorous proficiency examination in Tagalog, he was appointed as parish priest of San Felipe in May 1897. His parish administration lasted merely sixteen months. A year later, he was ordered to return to Manila on account of the Philippine Revolution that broke out in 1896. In September 1898, he joined his Recollect confreres who trekked back to the land of their birth and from Spain some confreres later volunteered to other countries in South and Central America.

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<sup>14</sup>SÁDABA, 702.

### **The Martyrdom of Blessed Julián**

The story of Father Julián Benigno's martyrdom began on 25 July 1936. At dawn of that day, Marxist revolutionaries, armed with shotguns, rifles and pistols, seized Father Julián Benigno and his confreres in the convent of Motril, Granada, and went on to set their priory and church on fire. Earlier the group of religious had been rudely roused from sleep by gunfire and violently herded out of their convent. They "were very pale," observed an eyewitness. "With every step they made they would look back to the convent." No one tried to flee nor offer any resistance. The religious were then led "like sheep to the slaughterhouse" to a roadside not far from the convent. Before a hostile crowd, they were gunned down at 6:00 in the morning. This year 2006, we commemorate the seventieth year of their glorious martyrdom.

### **The Philippine Revolution**

The carnage of the national upheaval of 1898 struck the Recollect missionaries of old Zambales hard. In 1897, twenty-four Recollects were serving the parishes in Zambales. And the Philippine Revolution drove them back to the safety of the colonial capital. Others were not so fortunate as to reach Manila. Ten missionaries died in several towns in old Zambales where they had either taken refuge or detained as prisoners. In 1898-1899 period, Recollect curates perished in Infanta, Poon Bató, San Isidro, Palauig and Balingcaguín at the hands of revolutionaries or while fleeing from their clutches.<sup>15</sup>

### **Population statics 1851-1897**

To give us some reliable facts on the increase of the population of San Narciso, Father Fidel de Blas records for posterity the census of San Narciso.<sup>16</sup> The great number of deaths in a certain year could be attributed to a plague or epidemic or to the creation of

<sup>15</sup>Strictly speaking only two Recollects died in Zambales: Julián Jiménez (parish priest of Poón-Bato) and Juan Ortiz (Iba) who was killed in Palauig. Buenaventura Iturri (San Marcelino), Maximino Martínez (Botolan) and Manuel Jiménez (Subic) perished in the waters of Infanta while escaping from pursuers.

<sup>16</sup> Fidel DE BLAS, 15-16.

another pueblo or parish whose villages originated from the matrix. Here now are the statistics:

Year	Tribute	Souls	Baptisms	Weddings	Deaths	Parish priest or Minister
1851	1028½	4488	245	61	147	Fr. Claudio del Arco
1857	1449½	6658	409	109	140	F. José Alba
1861	1096½	4699	282	56	375	Fr. Sebastián Mainar
1866	1398	6356	322	42	124	Fr. Alberto Serrano
1871	1382	6470	336	71	224	The same
1877	1564½	7597	338	41	508	The same
1882	1569	7283	337	56	248	Fr. Celestino Fernández
1887	1573	7124	358	79	202	The same
1891	3392	7236	228	60	372	Fr. Maximino Martínez
1894	3661	7698	389	91	303	Fr. Francisco Moreno
1897	3694	7413	380	59	353	The same

### **A heritage of Christian courage and love for the Gospel**

The Holy Mother Church commended the martyrdom of Blessed Julián Benigno Moreno and his companions to the devotion and emulation of the faithful on account of their heroic practice of Christian virtues of courage, their fidelity to their religious commitment and their brave defense of the Faith. Their only fault was that they were priests and Catholics amid the anti-religious persecution of the Spanish Civil War. Almost sixty-three years after their martyrdom, Pope John Paul II beatified the Blessed Julián Benigno Moreno Martyrs of Motril on 7 March 1999 at Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican City. The Roman Pontiff declared in his homily:

Blessed are you, martyrs of Christ! May everyone rejoice over the honor paid to these witnesses of the Faith. God helped them in their tribulations and gave them the crown of victory. May they help those who are working today for reconciliation and peace.

Such is the lasting legacy of Blessed Julián Benigno bequeathed to the people of San Narciso. Perhaps a great majority of the parishioners of today have not heard about his apostolate, life and martyrdom. Nevertheless, the Holy Father has declared that the legacy of Blessed Julián Benigno was a priceless one: a legacy of Christian courage in the face of religious persecution and life's adversities.

It is a great heritage of fidelity to Catholic tradition and virtues to the *pueblo* of San Narciso. It is an enduring legacy of courageous witnessing to the Catholic belief, of religious commitment love of God, and of undaunted defense of Christian values of community belongingness and solidarity, steadfast faith and constant working for lasting peace and reconciliation.

Just like the Order's protomartyr Fray Miguel Bombau de la Madre de Dios in our land. Just like Blessed Julián Benigno Moreno, a martyr of the Church who eight decades ago shed his blood for the Gospel of Christian—the Gospel of love, salvation and peace he helped spread by preaching it in the Spanish town of San Narcisco a hundred and twenty-six years ago now.

### **Blessed Julian Benigno Moreno**

Alfaro in La Rioja, Spain, was the birthplace of Julián Benigno Moreno. His parents were Ignacio Moreno and Valentina Moreno, sister of Saint Ezekiel Moreno, an Augustinian Recollect friar whose fifteen years of pastoral ministry were spent in Mindoro, Palawan, Las Piñas, Batangas, Manila and Cavite. He was born on 16 March 1871.

At the parish church of Saint Michael, the parish priest Father Pascual Perez baptized him. Antonio Fernandez Carvajal and Benigna Moreno were his godparents. Bishop Cosme Marrodán of Tarazona conferred upon him the sacrament of confirmation in 1875.

### **A young Recollect**

The young Julián entered the Augustinian Recollect convent of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino in Monteagudo, Navarre, in 1886. A year after, on 17 March 1887, he pronounced the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience before his uncle Father Ezekiel Moreno, prior of the convent. From that moment on, he was Fray Julián Benigno Moreno de San Nicolás de Tolentino.



The youthful religious from Alfaro studied philosophy in the same convent of Monteagudo. A four-year theology at Marcilla, Navarre, and San Millán de la Cogolla, La Rioja, ended his sacerdotal formation. He was ordained as priest soon after. The superiors then assigned him as teacher of Latin for externs in Monteagudo and San Millán.

### **A missionary in San Narciso and San Felipe, Zambales**

Together with twenty friars of the 94<sup>th</sup> Recollect mission, on 14 September 1894, he boarded at Barcelona the steamer *Isla de Panay* which was headed for Manila. The twenty-one religious reached Manila safe and sound a month later, on 13 October. Father Julián was immediately sent to San Narciso in Zambales as compañero of the parish priest on 19 October. The religious order's statutes mandated the study and proficiency the native language of the region where he was to exercise his pastoral ministry. And Father Julián studied Tagalog in San Narciso. In this parish, he served the People of God for three years. After passing the examination in Tagalog, he was assigned to San Felipe as parish priest in May 1897. His parish administration lasted merely sixteen months. In September 1898 he joined his confreres who trekked back to Spain.

### **The vortex of the Philippine Revolution**

The carnage and tumult of the Philippine Revolution struck Zambales hard. In 1897, twenty-four Recollects worked in Zambales. The violent Revolution drove some back to Manila. Others were not so fortunate. Ten missionaries were mercilessly murdered in several towns in Zambales where they had either taken refuge or detained as prisoners. In 1898-1899 period, the ten confreres in Zambales perished in Infanta, Poon Bató, San Isidro, Palauig and Balingcaguín at the hands of revolutionaries.

### **Trip to Spain, then to Venezuela**

The safe but overcrowded Recollect convents in Manila (Intramuros and San Sebastian) could not accommodate the numerous friars who had been advised to flee their parishes. Thus, they had to



take the first boat to Spain or to Latin America. More convents were acquired in Spain. More missions were opened in America.

After four years in Spain, Father Julián joined the new missions in Hispanic America. He first went to Venezuela and stayed in Maracaibo. The year 1906 found him in the residence at Panamá where he sojourned until December. In early 1907, he was in the residence of La Victoria, Venezuela until mid-1912. He was successively assigned to Valencia, Coro, Maracaibo and Caracas.

### **In Spain again**

Father Moreno was back in Spain again in 1920. He was a conventual of San Millán de la Cogolla from 1920 to 1923 and Puente la Reina, Navarre, thereafter until July or August 1928 when he opted to go back to the missions in Venezuela. In 1929, he was affiliated to the Province of Saint Thomas of Villanova. He journeyed back to Spain and took up residence at San Sebastián in the Spanish province of Guipúzcoa until September 1930. In 1930, he moved to Monachil, Granada where he resided until 1931. The last five years of his life were spent in Motril in the same province of Granada.

Father Moreno was a fine poet, prolific author and highly cultured man. He wrote countless articles and poems.

### **“Suffering Servant of Yahweh”**

Blessed Julián suffered martyrdom on 25 July 1936 with other confreres during the Spanish Civil War at a street of Motril together with his confreres. “Harshly dealt with, he bore it humbly, he never opened his mouth, like a lamb that is led to the slaughterhouse, like a sheep that is dumb before its shearers never opening its mouth,” so goes a lyrical passage from a Song of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh (Is 53,7). Christian tradition maintains that the songs foreshadow the sufferings and death of the true Servant of God, the Messiah, Christ Jesus.

Eyewitnesses associated the demeanor of the Recollects and a diocesan priest on their way to their place of execution in the manner of the Servant of Yahweh. “On the way to the place of martyrdom, all went with a meek and humble mettle, not unlike sheep led to the slaughterhouse,” observed the witnesses of the 1936 carnage.

**Martyrs of the Faith in 1936**

The story of their martyrdom began on 25 July 1936. At dawn of that day, a horde of Marxist revolutionaries, armed with shotguns, rifles and pistols, seized Deogracias Palacios, José Rada, León Inchausti, Julián Moreno and Brother José Díez, and went on to set their priory and church on fire. Earlier, the group of religious had been rudely roused from sleep by gunfire and violently herded out of their convent. The five “were very pale,” observed an eyewitness. “With every step they made they would look back to the convent.” No one tried to flee nor offered any resistance. The religious were then led “like sheep to the slaughterhouse” to a roadside not far from the convent. Before a hostile armed crowd, the five were gunned down at 6:00 in the morning.

The next day, at 11:00 a.m., another member of the Recollect Motril community—Blessed Vicente Pinilla—was forcibly pushed out of the parochial church of the Divine Shepherdess where he had earlier celebrated mass. At the lobby of the Marian temple, the Marxist revolutionaries peppered his body with bullets. Moments before he was mercilessly cut down by gunfire, Pinilla was heard by witnesses to have uttered: “Forgive them, Lord, for they know not what they do.” In like manner, the diocesan parish priest Blessed Manuel Martín Sierra was driven out of the parish church and was riddled with bullets a few meters from where the Recollect priest had fallen.

The eighth martyr was Father Vicente Soler who had earlier sought refuge in a private residence when he returned to the priory and found no one there. The revolutionaries arrested him on 29 July 1936. His conduct in prison was exemplary: at the risk of his life, he led his jailed companions in the recitation of the Holy Rosary and offered them words of solace. He even offered to take the place of a layman with a family about to be executed. Soler was himself no stranger to the perils and nearness of death that he closely experienced during the Philippine Revolution. At daybreak of 15 August, he was put to death along with eighteen other prisoners. The brave Christians were all lined up in front of the cemetery walls. They were forthwith gunned down under the headlights of the truck that had earlier transported them to the site of martyrdom.

Soler's fellow workers in the evangelization effort in the Philippines—Pinilla, Inchausti, Rada and Moreno—comported themselves bravely. Blessed Deogracias Palacios was a missionary in Brazil and Argentina. The seventh martyr was Brother José Díez. “Like lambs led to the slaughterhouse,” the Inchausti and his fellow prisoners meekly walked—amid mockery and invectives hurled at them by a raucous rabble—to the place of execution that early summer morning on 25 July 1936. A firing squad ended the earthly sojourn of the Recollect heroes of the Catholic faith, victims of revolutionary Marxists at the outset of the Spanish Civil War.

### **Beatification at Saint Peter's Basilica in 1999**

The day of their elevation to the altars of the universal Church was doubtless an occasion for a joyous celebration. The Holy Church from then on commended the martyrs to the devotion and imitation of the faithful on account of their heroic practice of Christian virtues and their brave defense of the Faith. Sixty-three years after their martyrdom, Pope John Paul II beatified the Martyrs of Motril on 7 March 1999 at Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican City. The Holy Father said in his homily: “Blessed are you, martyrs of Christ! May everyone rejoice over the honor paid to these witnesses of the Faith. God helped them in their tribulations and gave them the crown of victory. May they help those who are working today for reconciliation and peace.”

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# Father Jenaro Fernández: Augustinian Recollect Canonist and Historian<sup>1</sup>

Angel Martínez Cuesta, OAR

## Introduction

The craving to be holy was the most constant trait in the life of Father Jenaro Fernández. Holiness was the entire horizon of his life, from his formative years until his death in 1972. His diaries, letters, and homilies are all brimming with aspirations and invitations to holiness. “If I am not holy, what do I want my life for?” thus he addressed the Discalced Augustinian friars during a spiritual retreat. Priests, men and women religious, all the faithful must view holiness as the most natural thing in life.



**Venerable Jenaro Fernández**

The Servant of God took pleasure in recalling the very words with which Cardinal Suenens paid homage to Pope John XXIII at the council hall on the first anniversary of his death: “John XXII lived the supernatural as the most natural thing, he lived the natural as the

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<sup>1</sup>Angel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA. *Semblanza del padre Jenaro Fernández*, 394doc\_semlanza\_jenaro\_fernández.pdf, in <http://www.agustinosrecoletos.com/documents/index/134?page=2>.

most supernatural thing.” As Father Jenaro wrote to a religious in 1970:

Holiness for the soul of a religious is the most ordinary thing [...] Look, my child, do not believe that it is a thing of the other world to desire that the one who writes this may be a saint; that the person to whom this is written may be a saint; that you and I may make all those we can saints.<sup>2</sup>

Father Jenaro would exclaim ever so often: “Jesus, make me *holy*, so that I may sanctify others.” In May 1968, four years before his death, he wrote in his diary: “I do not know how much time left in my life; it could be not that much. I can declare before the Lord that I strove in my life to seek the ideal of perfection; efforts were not wanting. And I am well-motivated: having been born into a holy family, with many holy brothers. My confrere Saturnino is a priest of angelic purity, righteous, one who complied with his duties. How much he influenced my soul!”

### **Born in a deeply religious family**

Father Jenaro Fernández y Echeverría was born on 19 January 1909 in Dicastillo, Navarra, Spain, in the bosom of a profoundly Catholic family that gave two religious sisters, two Augustinian Recollect priests and a diocesan priest, to the service of the Church. Three of the children of his only married brother likewise professed in the religious life, and one of them worked for several decades in the missions of the Amazons in Brazil. His married sister also had two sons who became Augustinian Recollect religious.

### **Religious and priestly formation**

Father Jenaro donned the Augustinian Recollect habit in 1924 at the Convent of Villaviciosa de Odón in Madrid and professed there the monastic vows on 15 October 1925 in the Province of Saint Thomas of Villanova. He studied courses in theology at the Convent of Monachil in Granada, where he pronounced his solemn vows on

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<sup>2</sup> J. FERNÁNDEZ, *Carta a sor Justa*, Roma, 7 junio 1970: *Archivo general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* [AGOAR], Fondo P. Jenaro.

20 January 1930. His great yearning was to spend his whole life in a mission land.

However, the will of the Lord was that he spent it all in the Eternal City. In Rome, he arrived for the first time on 20 June 1931 and he was ordained as priest on 24 January 1932. He continued his studies for a Licentiate in Canon Law at the Pontifical Gregorian University and finished it on 9 July 1934. He pursued his studies until 21 January 1938 when he obtained his Doctorate in Canon Law with the dissertation *De Figura Juridica Ordinis Recollectorum Sancti Augustini*.

### **Religious life**

Father Jenaro was outstanding in a very special way for his simplicity, humility and charity. These virtues were the ones that earned the esteem of his confreres in the community, for whom he was an inspiration and example. His zeal for the sanctification of men was nothing but a reflection of his sincere effort for his own sanctification, of his spontaneous, joyful and growing fidelity to his religious and priestly vocation and of his total abandonment in the hands of God and in his unconditional surrender to the will of his superiors.

He was most fervent in the daily prayer of the Divine Office and the Holy Rosary, in mental prayer and in other spiritual exercises, but especially in the celebration of the Holy Mass. He celebrated it as if he were in intimate contact with the Lord, even as he remained profoundly focused on the eucharistic act he was celebrating. In his homilies, he used to combine the doctrine of spiritual anointing and expository clearness. He knew how to enrich them with examples and practical applications which hit directly the hearts of listeners. There were not a few who came to the chapel to hear him. As he was drenched with God, it was but natural for him to refine it in a spontaneous and generous manner. When anyone saw him, or dealt with him, or communicated with him, without fail, one always got the impression of being with a very extraordinary friar.

### **Apostolic works**

From 1931 to 1972, he had almost always resided in Rome, with the exception of brief periods of time when he stayed



**Residence of the OAR General Curia at Viale dell'Astronomia, EUR, Rome, Italy**

for some years in San Sebastián (Guipúzcoa), Artieda and Granada in Spain. As religious, he performed offices of responsibility: assistant novice master in Villaviciosa de Odón, prefect of the students at San Sebastian, procurator general before the Holy See, procurator general of the missions of the Order, vicar general and first general councilor, postulator general for the causes

of saints and director of the Historical Institute of the Order of Augustinian Recollects. His talent was excellently cultivated. His literary activity was varied and in great abundance; he produced a great number of research works, canonical information, chronicles, poems, etc.

Among his works stand out the aforementioned *De Figura Juridica* as well as the four volumes of the *Bullarium Ordinis Augustinianorum Recollectorum*. When he finished his work on the Bullarium in 1970, he wrote in one of his letters:

*Grazie a Dio ho compiuto il lavoro affidatomi dai Capitoli Generali. Ho amato il mio Ordine come mia madre e ho cercato di servirlo. Intercedano per me i suoi santi, affinché anch'io sia santo* [Thanks be to God I have completed the work entrusted to me by the General Chapters. I have loved my Order as my mother and I have tried to serve it. May its saints intercede for me so that I may be also a saint.]

Father Jenaro was an indefatigable worker in the vineyard of the Lord. A worker who worked with love at all times, searching in that place to give the best of himself, without restrictions and unmindful of the sacrifices. His devotion to the Church and to the Supreme Pontiffs was special; with them he always felt fully identified. John XXIII named him a *peritus* [expert] of the Preconciliar and Conciliar Commission of Bishops and Governance of Dioceses, which elected him secretary of the Subcommittee on Auxiliary and Coadjutor Bishops. He was also named commissary of the Sacred Congregation for the Religious and Secular Institutes and consultor of the same Vatican dicastery; general assistant of the Congregation



of Camaldolese Hermits of Monte Corona. He commented on the appointment thus:

*Così per volontà del Santo Padre, sono figlio della Chiesa. Con tutto il cuore offrirò il mio umile contributo. Il Signore m'illumini*" (Thus by the will of the Holy Father, I am a son of the Church. With all my heart I offer my humble contribution. May the Lord enlighten me).

His letters, rather numerous, are a treasure of beauty and spiritual delicateness. They were addressed to persons from all walks of life, brimming with fervor, simplicity and spontaneity. He encouraged them to seek and follow the will of God at all times. An understanding and fatherly person, he consoled the afflicted and soothed the burdened hearts. He was very affectionate and kindhearted to all people. He spent a lot of time in the confessional or in the consultation room. With sweetness, gentleness and affection, he mollified all those who approached him. Every day and for many years, he had to interrupt several times his work to accommodate those who wished to confess, to make consultations, or even to attend to a simple phone call. The faithful approached him in search for light, consolation, guidance, arbitration, charity, and his affectionate words.

Father Jenaro was a person renowned for his generosity, simplicity and ever-present smile among the lowly, the poor, the youth, the aged, the sick, the dying and all those in need of consolation. At that time, these persons were very numerous, since it was his fortune to live in the World War II years as well as in the post-war period. Hunger pangs were felt, and many approached Father Jenaro asking for alms or material assistance. He tried his best to look for means to be able to help them. He did them all without pomp, not trumpeting it from the rooftops, but rather stealthily, with patience, and with an attitude of service.

### **Visit to the Philippines in 1969**

Thanks to a friend, an Alitalia director, during the occasion of the inaugural Manila-Rome route, Father Jenaro was invited to visit the Philippines, "the first mission land of the Order," from 6

April to early May 1969.<sup>3</sup> It was a visit he had always dreamed and cherished in the past and he had thought it would never come true. Thus he noted in his spiritual diary:

Trip to the Philippines. I am going with a certain devotion to this sacred land: our first missions! How many holy religious! Jesus, let my passage be as if You were passing by. Let anyone who sees me be as if he were seeing You.

Father Jenaro would write in another small notebook that the first missionaries arrived in the Philippines in 1606 with very rudimentary means of transport but with a living and burning zeal to save souls. Manila, Bacolod, San Carlos, Palawan and, lastly, Baguio were some of the places he had seen. In Palawan, how he greatly admired the system used in Iwahig Penal Colony—prison without bars. Some five thousand inmates with an immense field at their



**Prior General Father Javier Guerra Ayala with Father Jenaro's nephews and nieces beside the new tomb in the chapel of the OAR general curia in Rome**

disposal. No walls, no bars, no barbed wires. They could escape whenever they wanted. Only twenty guards—all without arms except one—oversaw them. Some inmates tilled the land with their own families. Father Jenaro comments: “With their work, with the affection of their loved ones, they can find their worth and their redemption.”

The Servant of God observed our customs, traditions and music. He spoke with friars and religious sisters along the way. He really admired the vigor of the Filipino family, the modest clothes, the public recitation of the Angelus, the novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, the public manifestation of our faith, the respect for priests, the hunger for culture and, most of all, the devotion to the Black Nazarene of Quiapo. How his heart bled when he saw the extreme poverty of the

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<sup>3</sup> Angel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Padre Gennaro Fernández. Se non sono santo, per cosa voglio la vita?* (Madrid 2008) 161-164.

people, the blatantly scandalous social gaps and differences! It was his ardent desire that the social conscience of the Filipino people be awakened and such great social injustices be at once remedied:

The day when his awakening of culture would be extended to the solution of the Christian social problem, then we will have a model of faith, of culture and material well-being.

How he wished that the Augustinian Recollects were more keenly active and involved in the apostolate among the marginalized sectors of society. He believed that Recollect schools ought to be opened in impoverished areas. Palawan should be given more attention. He expressed his lasting impressions in this manner:

I had the pleasure of visiting our work places, our missions. I had the pleasure of attesting to the fact that the Filipino people are good, profoundly good. And I have found the root of their goodness in the Christian faith sown and planted by the missionaries.

### Illnesses

On 14 May 1968, he was surgically operated on for a serious hearing-impaired problem, from which he had been suffering for quite some time. Deafness was a particularly painful mortification for him:

*Il Signore mi ha mandato una tribolazione, per cui io dovrò sempre di più isolarmi, assentarmi dal commercio e comunicazione degli uomini: la sordità. Oh, vorrei trasformare questa parola in altra di tre sillabe pure: santità. È Dio che lo vuole: fiat, fiat ... et cum amore sua voluntas. [The Lord has sent me a tribulation, for which I must always isolate myself more and more from dealing and communication with men: deafness. Oh, would I wish to transform it to a word with three syllables: holiness. It is God who wants it: Let His will be done... and let it be done with love.]*

In November 1969, he was taken ill for bronchopneumonia which almost took him to the grave. In early 1970, he felt he had lost

his strength and he accepted the invitation of the Holy Father to offer his own life for the Church:

*Desidero, con la divina grazia, trascorrere questi giorni di dolore con amore, e con la serenità e la gioia con cui vivo i miei giorni di lavoro* [I wish, with the grace of God, to spend these days of pain with love, the serenity and joy with which I live my working days.]

### **Untimely death**

Death came suddenly for him, resulting from a motorcycle accident on 26 June 1972. He was in a state of coma in a hospital bed until his death which took place a week later, on 3 July. During those days, Father Jenaro did not open his eyes nor did he utter a word, but his face always remained serene. He who had always lived in silence, in silence he bade goodbye to this life. The news of his untimely death quickly spread like wildfire in the high society as well as among the simple folks, among all those who had known him and those who had kept him near throughout his life.

The chapel of the Recollect general curia became too small to accommodate the great multitude that wished to offer him their last homage and respects at the wake. It became very necessary to transfer his body to nearby Basilica of Saint Peter and Saint Paul where the funeral mass was later celebrated. In an incredibly multitudinarian funeral procession, the beloved Father Jenaro was interred at the Verano Cemetery of Rome.

### **Spirituality**

Father Jenaro distinguished himself through his goodness, humility, charity and faithful submission to and compliance with his obligations. His personality, his manner of speaking, behaving, looking straight into the eyes, his physical, spiritual and moral figure were simple, devoid of complexes, transparent, and with such brightness that can be viewed among the lowly, the simple, the meek and humble of heart in the Gospel. The sweet perfume of Christ emanated from him and the bright light of the Good Shepherd shone in his personality.

**Cause for beatification and canonization**

Since the Servant of God spent the last years of his life in Rome and passed away in the same city, in accordance with Article 5 of the *Normae Servandae* of 1983, the beatification cause had to be done in the Eternal City, and there the proceedings commenced. The witnesses who lived in Italy would be questioned in Rome too.

However, they had to take into account that many witnesses and documents are found in Spain and the faculty to set up there a tribunal that would work in a parallel manner with the tribunal of Rome was sought from the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. Acceding to the postulator's petition, the Holy See granted said faculty on 23 April 1993 to the Archbishop of Pamplona, and afterwards, again upon the postulator's request, the faculty was passed on to the Archdiocese of Madrid on 15 January 1999.

On 27 May 2006, the *Suplex libellus* for the opening of the cause for beatification and canonization was presented in the Archdiocese of Rome as well as in the Vicariate of Rome. Both tribunals of Rome and Madrid—as in similar cases—were of equal footing and both shall work independently from each other. The petition was made public in the Archdiocese of Madrid on 18 October 2006 by means of an edict wherein all the faithful may manifest within forty days all what is useful to the cause, whether in favor of it or against it. On 31 May 2007,<sup>s</sup> the same was done at the Vicariate of Rome.

Father Jenaro Fernández's immeasurable contribution and service to the Church, to the Second Vatican Council and to the Augustinian Recollect Order, certainly did not merit his cause for beatification and canonization. What truly justified the cause was the fact that, as the edict which was posted on 13 June 2008 at the portals of the Basilica of Saint John Lateran by the Vicariate of Rome had declared to all:

Father Jenaro was an indefatigable worker in the vineyard of the Lord, where every day he manifested clearly and in a most intense manner his joyful fidelity to his religious and priestly vocation and a most living faith drenched with mystical savor. His life reflected the light of the Good Shepherd through his extraordinary humility, simplicity, delicateness,

joviality and paternal solicitude towards those who approached him. Everyone was infected by his fondness to attain his own sanctification and that of the others.

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## APPENDIX

### Prayers composed by Venerable Jenaro Fernández

#### 1. JESUS,

make me the Jesus of my Community,  
the Jesus of my sick people,  
the Jesus of the streets where I pass;  
that I may glorify the Father by being that Jesus,  
that I may save the world by being Jesus,  
that I may carry the cross by being Jesus,  
that I may rise again, glorious, triumphant, agile,  
delightful by being Jesus. Amen.

#### 2. O JESUS!

good and loving and sweet,  
You don't get tired of us,  
You understand us,  
You await us,  
You feel compassion for us:  
You are mad with love.  
Neither will I get tired of seeking You  
until I find You,  
of seeking You more  
after having found You:  
with Your grace  
I also want to become madly  
in love with You.

#### JESUS,

I thank You for all that You do for this Your poor lamb,  
who can't do right except to be at Your side,  
the very first and the most caressed;  
because You are the Good Shepherd  
who desires nothing but lambs to pasture and feed  
and caress and sanctify.

#### MARY,

my good mother,

to whom I am totally consecrated,  
tell your good Son  
that I love Him very much  
and be you my guide toward your Jesus and mine.

**3. JESUS,**  
here I am today,  
always the same:  
the soul that seeks You,  
the soul that loves You,  
the soul that rests in You.  
You are my everything,  
and I am Your delight,  
Your happiness, Your joy.

JESUS,  
I don't know how long I will still live,  
but all of it I will spend to sing to You  
and to give You glory  
and praise You  
and spread You  
and defend You.

JESUS,  
here I am:  
You are with me,  
I am with You,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**4. JESUS,**  
You are very good.  
You are goodness itself.  
Make me like You,  
all goodness.  
JESUS,  
may these years that remain in my life be all for You,  
to glorify You,



to love You,  
to defend You,  
to spread You,  
to be Yours, all Yours,  
even to the deepest of my soul,  
is what I desire.

**5. JESUS,**  
my good Jesus:  
You know I do not love anything else but You;  
You are all my life,  
all my joy,  
all my delight,  
all my strength.  
With You I am happy,  
without You I feel lost.

JESUS,  
love me also with that love,  
that sets Your heart ablaze,  
love me and make me holy.  
So be it.



# Servant of God Mariano Gazpio, Exemplary Missionary and Religious<sup>1</sup>

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José Javier Lizarraga, OAR

Trascribed, translated and edited by  
Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos

A simple and humble friar who allowed himself to be molded by the grace of God by listening to His Word, by fervent celebration of the Eucharist, by intense prayer and constant practice of charity. A religious who radically lived his consecration to God, we may say, in the manner of the religious of times past: perfect observance of the Rule of Saint Augustine and the Constitutions of the Order of Augustinian Recollects, blind obedience to superiors, absolute poverty, love for silence and



**Father Mariano Gazpio, OAR:**  
zealous missionary from Puente la  
Reina (Navarra, Spain) in China,  
1924-1952.

<sup>1</sup>A lecture delivered in Spanish at the auditorium of the Augustinian Recollect Convent in Marcilla, Navarra, Spain, on 29 March 2014 on the occasion of the exhumation, recognition and translation of the mortal remains of the Servant of God Father Mariano Gazpio from the municipal cemetery to the conventual Church of Virgen la Blanca. Retrieved 4 April 2014 and transcribed from <http://www.agustinos recoletos.org: Mariano Gazpio: biografía y descripción de su personalidad.webm>.

contemplation, presence of God, incessant prayer, fame of sanctity in his lifetime and after death.

Obviously, I refer to Father Mariano Gazpio y Ezcurra who was born on 18 December 1899 in Puente la Reina, Navarra. We could say a lot of things about him. But time is brief, as Father Pablo Panedas said in the introduction. I now present to you Father Gazpio's biographical profile and personality traits. I am aware that the two eyes of history are geography and chronology. Hence, in the triptych disseminated earlier is the map of China where Father Gazpio was a zealous young missionary. You can find also a summary of his life replete with dates in order to contextualize our talk. He himself once said that he belonged to the 20<sup>th</sup> century for we know that he was born on the threshold of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. About the first part of his life, I will try to be brief in delineating the years of his youth and religious formation. But I will highlight his life as a missionary friar.

Aside from the seminary formation common to all friars of the Order of Augustinian Recollects, the life of Father Gazpio can be divided easily in two phases: the first phase was the missionary phase of twenty-eight years, as a zealous, intrepid missionary in China. In the second phase comprising thirty-seven years, he was a conventual friar in the main houses of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, we can say, of the Order. Twelve years in Monteagudo, Navarra: nine as master of novices and three as prior. Twenty-five years in this house of Marcilla, Navarra that you know very well.

Father Mariano Gazpio was born at Puente la Reina, one of the fine towns, earliest notable towns belonging to the Kingdom of Navarra. It is located twenty-four kilometers southwest of the capital city of Pamplona on the way to the city of Estella. At the outset the territories of Puente la Reina were deemed old lands because they were annexed early to the Kingdom of Navarra. These lands were highly important because very soon they were Christianized as well. Therefore, the favorable religious ambiance of Puente la Reina was known to our friars who founded a residence there exactly on the day before the birth of Father Mariano.

Puente la Reina had a fervently religious population. When our friars arrived, the chronicle says, the people welcomed them with great approval and satisfaction. Our friars celebrated the inauguration of the convent at Puente la Reina on the 17<sup>th</sup> December, a Sunday, in 1899. And the next day was born Mariano Gazpio, son of Dionisio and Severina.

Our friars in Puente la Reina were religious who left Manila in the wake of the Philippine Revolution and basically looked for two things in Catholic Navarra: a place where they could continue their zeal of evangelization and search for vocations for their Province of Saint Nicholas. And these fully became a reality in Puente la Reina. This noble town had a representative in the Parliament of Navarra. It is at the crossroads on the centuries-old pilgrimage route *Camino de Santiago* [Way to Santiago de Compostela]. It is one of the two earliest routes.

### **The Augustinian Recollects in Puente la Reina**

In Puente la Reina, we had the first house founded originally at Crucifix Street in the outskirts. Not far from it along *Calle Mayor* no. 14 was the renowned chapel dedicated to *Nuestra Señora de la Soledad* [Our Lady of Solitude], handed over to our friars' administration. And a little farther down the same street at no. 94 the Augustinian Recollects set up a grade school in 1905. It was in this school where Father Mariano Gazpio probably studied as a young boy. We are not so certain about such data. We have in our possession twelve books belonging to the period when the Augustinian Recollects were in Puente la Reina. But not one of them, regrettably, has the lists of grade school pupils. Hence, we are not 100% sure but very probably the young Mariano studied there.

### **Young Mariano**

What we do know for certain is that he was an altar boy in that Chapel of Our Lady of Solitude under the spiritual administration of the Augustinian Recollect friars. He was so enthusiastic an altar boy that he was likewise doing the tasks of a sacristan, enthusiastically doing the duties of a sacristan at the Marian chapel.

We do not know much about his youth. However, we have two important testimonies from Puente la Reina. One testimony was provided by Daniela Armendáriz and another by Luis Senosiáin. Daniela was a contemporary of the Servant of God. We have the good fortune that she was endowed with a good memory. She declared at the diocesan tribunal that young Mariano was an altar boy. He was very zealous in his duties; he was even tasked to impose

silence among naughty children. Among them was the mischievous Daniela Armendáriz. Mariano would tap her with a small box to keep her quiet.

More facts were also culled from the testimonies of some friars from Puente la Reina from where excellent Recollect vocations came through the years: Alejandro Osés (1895-1955), his first cousin Dionisio Gazpio (1916-1978), Diego Izurzu (1911-2002), Francisco Izurzu (1901-1969) as well as Isidro Beasiáin (1900-1961) and Pedro Colomo (1899-1979) who were his companions in the missions in China. Many more from Puente joined the Order in later years and José Luis Goñi in the 1970s.

Of the Gazpio ancestors, we know that four generations were born at Puente la Reina. The great-great-grandparents originated from the town of Berastegi in the province of Guipúzcoa along the border with Navarra. They were stonecutters by profession. Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Gazpios went down to Puente la Reina to seek a better quality of life. They worked in important construction projects in Puente. For example, they constructed the cloister of Saint James Parish, wholly made of bricks, then its capitular hall and other construction works.

At a young age, the father Dionisio was a farmer and later in life a stonecutter. We have confirmed the construction projects he finished at Puente la Reina and environs. The mother Severina was a pious, serious lady who regularly visited the Chapel of Our Lady of the Solitude. Our witness Daniela Armendárez described Severina's character as more upright than a curtain rod, very serious. It is probable that Father Mariano likewise possessed the same character, the same as her mother, very pious, very upright.

### **Formative years**

As to his formative phase, the young boy of ten was taken by his mother on a donkey-drawn cart—as was the practice in those days—to the minor seminary of the Augustinian Recollects in San Millán de la Cogolla in the province of La Rioja, where we had a secondary school, a sort of high school seminary, minor seminary. There Mariano finished four years of Latin and the Humanities.

Incidentally, while he was at the seminary of San Millán de la Cogolla he met his future theology classmates and missionary

confreres in China. About his San Millán studies, we have information that he was a remarkably diligent and studious boy and that he received the average of *notable* [outstanding], except two subjects in calligraphy and music for he received the grades of *sobresaliente* [excellent]. While at Puente la Reina known for its great musical tradition, he had learned the solfeggio very well, possessing a very fine ear for music. He became a member of the musical band at San Millán, and during occasions like this one the band would perform musical numbers.

Four years of study passed at the minor seminary of San Millán, and at age fifteen he proceeded to the novitiate of Monteagudo for his complete year of initiation to the religious life. And after a year, at a very young age of sixteen, the youngest in the group in fact, he made the profession of the three evangelical counsels. For his religious appellation, he adopted *La Purísima Concepción*, the Immaculate Conception, as his personal patroness whose icon is venerated until now at Saint James Church in Puente la Reina.

Fray Mariano Gazpio de la Purísima Concepción stayed for his studies in philosophy partly at the convent in Monteagudo and partly at San Millán once more. He was known again to be very diligent and studious. We have the testimony of his very own professor, Father Pedro de la Dedicación (1892-1974), the future procurator general of the Order, who praised the young religious from Puente la Reina how he exerted effort in his studies.

### **Presbyteral ordination and pastoral assignment in the Philippines**

After four years of philosophy, he went on to study four more years of theology: three in Marcilla and the last in Manila.<sup>2</sup>He

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<sup>2</sup>Father Mariano Gazpio was the classmate of his namesake Father Mariano Alegría (1899-1945) from Ablitas, Navarra. Since their admission to the novitiate year at Monteagudo on 22 December 1914, the dates of their religious formation, courses, professions, ordinations and initial trips to Manila and Shanghai were completely identical. Their Philippine assignments, however, differed: Alegría's short stints in Manila (1922), Cebu (April 1923) and Canoan, Siquijor (31 January 1924) and Gazpio's ministry at Cavite City (December 1922-March 1924). Cf. Miguel AVELLANEDA, *Continuación del Padre Sádaba* (Zaragoza 1938) 171-172. For more details on the life of the Servant of God, please see *Timeline of the Servant of God*

was ordained in Manila on 23 December 1922 by the American archbishop of Manila.<sup>3</sup> Two days afterward, he went to the Parish of San Pedro Apóstol of Cavite Puerto in Cavite City, whose Recollect parish priest administered as well the adjoining Shrine of *Nuestra Señora de la Soledad de Porta Vaga* in San Roque. He celebrated his first Mass in San Pedro Apóstol Parish Church on Christmas Day.

### Volunteer for the new mission in China

Father Gazpio volunteered for the first mission in China in 1924. The Province of Saint Nicholas had tried to open a mission in China in the past but due to various circumstances—political, economic—it was not successful. Finally, on 15 November 1923, the Congregation of the Propaganda Fidei granted the petition of the Province of Saint Nicholas for a mission in China.

The Holy See offered us a portion of the Apostolic Vicariate of Eastern Honan [later Apostolic Vicariate of Kaifeng]. This Vicariate which had its episcopal see in Kaifeng was divided into two: Kaifeng and Shangqiu. The eastern area whose most important city was Shangqiu or Kweiteh was assigned to the Augustinian Recollect missionaries. In the map of China we can find in the eastern part the city of Shangqiu where the central office of our mission was located.



[left to right] First Recollect missionaries of Kweiteh, now Shangqiu, 1924-1925: Fr. Sabino Elizondo, Fr. Luis Arribas, Apostolic Prefect Msgr. Javier Ochoa, Fr. Mariano Alegría, Servant of God Mariano Gazpio.

On the work of Father Gazpio as a missionary, we have first to take into account the condition of the China mission. This prefecture of Shangqiu had been earlier evangelized sporadically by the *Pontificio Istituto Missioni Estere*,

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*Mariano Gazpio*, page 35 of this booklet.

<sup>3</sup>Michael James O'Doherty (1874-1949) was archbishop for thirty-three years from 1916 until his death.



Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions [PIME], founded in Milan, Italy. Our area in Shangqiu was the least evangelized. The surface extension was almost equivalent to the present area of Navarra—8,500 square kilometers—and a population five times bigger—2,500,000 inhabitants. The Catholic population was utterly negligible. The population estimate made by our friars when they first arrived on 4 April 1924 was about four to five hundred Christians only.

Shangqiu was therefore a Roman Catholic mission among non-believers. In their midst were five Recollect volunteer missionaries, almost all very young, twenty-four or twenty-five years old.<sup>4</sup> And all of them came from Navarra. They did a formidable work in a brief period of time. The Augustinian Recollect pioneers overcame countless hardships, the immense jurisdiction, countless square kilometers, the climate and, most of all, the wars. For more than half the time that the mission lasted, the ambience was that of wars and revolutions and their consequent loss of countless lives: the civil wars between the North and the South, the World War II between China and Japan, and thereafter the civil war between the Nationalists of Chiang-Kai-Shek and the Communists of Mao-Zedong. In this atmosphere, our friars had to perform their evangelization tasks. It was therefore an exceptionally laborious task but, at the end of it all, the results turned out very astonishing.

From that original population of merely four to five hundred Christians, there were twelve thousand baptized by the end of the missionary work in 1952. A great number of catechumens were likewise preparing themselves for baptism.



**Augustinian Recollect House of Procuration at Shanghai, China, canonically established in 1911 by OAR Vicar General Enrique Pérez.**

There were ten mission stations with all the necessary facilities, and most especially the central residence in Shangqiu, inaugurated on 7 June 1925, which was a stupendous residence with

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<sup>4</sup>Father Pedro Zunzarren (1898-1950) was the eldest of the group. He was twenty-six years old when Father Francisco Sádaba, provincial councilor, took him and other volunteers to Shanghai on 11 March 1924.

rooms for about twenty missionaries. There was the cathedral church constructed and inaugurated on 1 February 1931 by the Apostolic Prefect Msgr. Francisco Javier Ochoa (1899-1976), the seminary (1929). In Shangqiu were also a convent constructed on 30 October 1933 for the religious congregation they founded—*Misioneras Agustinas Recoletas* [MAR], Augustinian Recollect Missionaries—, the school for catechists (1933), a medical clinic (1936) and the *Santa Infancia* Orphanage, established for the care and development of abandoned infants and children.

### **Missionary in Cheng Li Ku**

In these evangelization tasks our friars exerted the best they could. Among those who exerted much greater effort was Father Mariano Gazpio. He arrived with the motley group of missionaries and after solely six months devoted to the intense study of Mandarin Chinese, Father Gazpio was sent as a missionary in the company of Father Maráiano Alegría, his classmate in Monteagudo, San Millán and Marcilla, to the mission of Cheng

Li Ku. He hardly knew how express himself in Chinese. He said he was ashamed to speak the language before the Christians when they arrived at the mission chapel. So he took refuge in prayer and sought the help of the Lord.

His first missionary sally was to the small town of Yang Pu-Low where he celebrated his first Christmas in China in a most dismal manner. He made a trip to that mission with a Chinese man who accompanied him in a small cart loaded with the few things he brought with him. His Christmas dinner consisted of a hot soup and little vegetables served to him at five-thirty in the afternoon. And that was all.

Father Gazpio withdrew to his small room and prayed the Divine Office while the faithful prayed the early evening prayers. Later he joined them and heard the confessions of almost thirty penitents. He was assisted by two or three people in preparing the chapel and the altar for the Mass. He then rested for a little over an hour. Before midnight he got ready for the Nativity Mass, as he was wont to do.

In this mission chapel, the Christmas celebration was in the midst of greatest poverty, bereft of carols, bereft of tambourines, bereft of flowers and lights on the altar, yet Christ's ordained minister

together with the small Christian community commemorated the same ineffable Christmas mystery as it was celebrated in grandiose cathedrals and elsewhere. And in this side of the world, they likewise celebrated it equally with great devotion, with great joy.

Afterwards, the Servant of God made another missionary sally, his second, to a much smaller community. Although there were available trains travelling between large cities, the people in the area usually had to make their trips on foot or in ox-drawn wagons or donkey-drawn carts. Thus Father Gazpio travelled in Shangqui, carrying



**Women and young girls in the mission of Shangqui in 1925**

everything he had, although there was not much to carry at all. The Recollect missionaries had to start from the scratch. Despite everything, despite countless struggles, obstacles and challenges, he was greatly successful in his evangelization tasks.

The adverse plight of wars and horrible famine was coupled with the presence of armed bandits and attackers who robbed travelers and residents no end. It was for this reason why the territory assigned to us was least evangelized. There had never been a missionary with fixed residence in the area in previous years. The PIME missionaries made their missionary sallies in the territory, doing whatever they could. During the Recollect period, on the other hand, the spiritual conditions of Christians improved. There were enough missionaries who had fixed their permanent residence in mission stations.

### **Missionary in Yucheng**

After four years in Cheng Li Ku, the Servant of God was transferred to the mission of Yucheng where he resided in 1928-1934. Yucheng was already a big city with about ten thousand inhabitants, all of them non-Christians. In the mission, however, there was only one Christian and he was eighty-years old and deaf as a post. To make matters worse, he could not be understood at all. In the end, the aged man was able to provide the young Father Gazpio with some accommodation.

The Recollect missionary later looked for a decent lodging where he could live and celebrate the Mass. Such was the lowly beginning of Yucheng mission. It started completely from nothing. In this plight of total paganism, he was convinced that only God could attract the minds and hearts of non-believers. And he devoted himself to prayer.

At the outset, Father Gazpio set up a prayer group with his assistants and the few Christians who approached him. He adopted as a motto: prayer and preaching. Foremost was his prayer that God might move the hearts of the people and then to preach to them. He devoted himself assiduously to the two objectives. He achieved not long after a complete success. In a month's time or so, representatives of the people visited him and told him that they would offer him the pagoda which was no longer of use to them. Additionally, everyone became a catechumen. The pagoda was a house, well-built, made of brick, with a good roof. As usual, Father Gazpio acted with prudence and consulted his superiors on the matter. He was really glad that the people providentially became catechumens at the start.

### **Prodigious cures at the mission chapel**

At the chapel opened in Yucheng, an atmosphere of piety and holiness at once reigned. And prodigious healings took place as well. Ill people entered the chapel and, surprisingly, they were healed merely by making the sign of the Cross with holy water.



**Men and children with two missionaries in the Catholic mission in Shangqiu in 1925.**

Father Gazpio himself narrated stories of such cures but, indubitably, he never attributed the miraculous healings to himself. He reported these prodigious cures that happened in his chapel in letters to Father Mariano Alegría who was then editor of *Todos Misioneros* [All Missionaries] magazine.

Father Gazpio wrote about several cases, like that of a certain Magdalena who was possessed by the devil. This hapless woman had

not eaten anything and was on the throes of death, but by making the sign of the Cross, she was instantaneously and completely healed.

There was another woman who was cured of sores on her face, neck and chest. And two infants at the point of death were likewise cured. The mother could not feed them with her milk she could not produce and the parents were desperate. And there and then, at the lowly chapel the mother began giving milk and one infant who was dying was cured right there after making the sign of the Cross with holy water on them.

### **Father Gazpio as thaumaturge**

Our missionaries often narrated the thaumaturgic power of Father Mariano, the mysterious lever by which he obtained cures and pulled out the community out of very serious problems. Father Jesús Solabre (1915-1992) disclosed the power of his confrere Father Mariano to perform miracles. This Recollect missionary from Los Arcos, Navarra once held the post of vice procurator in Shanghai.

Father Solabre narrated about the period when the whole mission territory suffered from a protracted drought. It prevailed on the land for quite some time until the waterless situation became very desperate. Bishop Javier Ochoa, Apostolic Vicar of Shangqiu, had recourse to Father Gazpio. The prelate told the Servant of God:

“Gazpio, go to the chapel and ask the Lord to give us rain and do not go out of it until the rain falls.”

Hours passed and Father Gazpio prayed and prayed and prayed until finally the rains fell. And it was a heavy downpour. This particular narrative was related by Father Solabre himself. Other missionaries, companions of Father Gazpio in the mission, also narrated similar stories of his thaumaturgic power.



**In Shangqiu with a total land area of over 8,000 sq. kms. and its dearth of missionaries, the role of catechists could not be undermined. In 1933, the Recollects set up a school of catechists tasked to assist them in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ.**

### **Missionary at Chutzi, director of the school of catechists**

Afterward, he was assigned to Chutzi [now Shangqiu-She], a town very near the capital of Shangqiu, from 1934 to 1941. In that mission, Father Gazpio was appointed director of the school of catechists. The missionaries were only a handful in that immense jurisdiction, hence the Recollects realized the essential need for catechists and in 1929 they set up a school to train them. From the start he devoted himself to train very good catechists. In three to four years with his dedication and zeal, Father Gazpio trained catechists who later proclaimed the Good News in their mission jurisdiction.

During this time<sup>5</sup> the Servant of God made a trip to Rome. He accompanied two students Gregorio Li (1917-1989) and Lucas Yuo (1917-1968) whom he left at the residence in Via Sistina. The young Chinese friars were to study philosophy and theology in Roman universities.

Father Gazpio took the opportunity to return to the land of his birth after an absence of fifteen years—three in the Philippines and twelve in China. His father and a sibling had already passed away. The thirty-six-year-old missionary retraced his steps to Puente la Reina to visit his mother and the surviving siblings. It was a bizarre trip by train because at that time the Spanish-French border at Irún (Guipúzcoa) was closed on account of the raging Spanish Civil War. He crossed the border from Lourdes (France) and entered Spain through Dantzarinia in Navarra. After visting his mother, sisters and confreres, he proceeded to visit other houses in northern Spain.



**The open-air Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on Easter Sunday is celebrated in Shangqiu by Msgr. Francisco Javier Ochoa, OAR. Photos such as this saw print in the Bulletin of the Province of Saint Nicholas in 1924-1925.**

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<sup>5</sup>The year referred to is 1936 since the first missionary expedition arrived in China in March 1924. The fratricidal Spanish Civil War had erupted with the military uprising in mid-July 1936.

***Cantamisa of the first Chinese Recollect priest in history***

Father Gazpio returned soon after to the mission in Chutzi. We have some interesting data, an emotional episode. A seminary had been opened for native vocations in the mission in 1929. Then came students who made the religious profession of the vows and eventually the first solemn profession and the ordination to the sacred priesthood in the end.

The native priest was Jose Shan (1905-1975).<sup>6</sup> On 1 January 1939, the prior provincial Father Ricardo Jarauta (1893-1980), a native of Monteagudo, and his provincial secretary Father Martín Legarra (1910-1985), who came from Manila in November 1938 for the canonical visit, were present at Father Shan's *cantamisa*. Father Legarra, who later became rector of



Augustinian Recollect community of Spanish missionaries and Chinese formands at Shangqiu, Henan, China in 1934. [Seated extreme right] Apostolic Prefect Francisco Javier Ochoa is shown in this photo with [seated center] Father Leoncio Reta, prior provincial (1934-1938) of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, who conducted his canonical visit with the provincial secretary Father Isidro Beasiáin. Among the confreres was [second row, second from left] the *Servant of God* Father Mariano Gazpio.

the future University of San Jose-Recoletos in Cebu City and then Bishop of the Diocese of Bocas del Toro in Panamá, witnessed the *cantamisa* and recounted the moving experience in the third volume of his book *De mi acontecer misionero* [About My Missionary Event]. He wrote that when it was time for the sermon of Father

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<sup>6</sup>Father Jose Shan Sie was first Chinese Recollect priest in history. The Recollect Bishop Arturo Quintanilla (1904-1970) in 1952 named him vicar general of Shangqiu after the expulsion of the missionaries from China. In 1955, Shan was condemned by a popular court, accused of being a counterrevolutionary and incarcerated for many years. He perished from hunger and illness in 1965 in the wake of release from prison on account of his greatly deteriorated health. See José Javier PIPAÓN, *The Recollect Missionary Works in China and Taiwan*, in *Missions: Sharing the Faith... Building Lives* (Quezon City 2008) 323. In the *Status Generalis OAR 2010* catalog (p. 218), the year of death was 1975.

Gazpio he approached the communion rail, crossed his arms as he was wont to do and intently listened to Father Gazpio who preached during the cantamisa.

And, as the sermon was in Mandarin Chinese, Father Legarra understood not a single word of it. But, while contemplating the expression and radiance of Father Gazpio's face, he could not control himself but weep and weep during the entire sermon.

At the end of the liturgy, Father Legarra inquired about what he preached. He was told that Father Gazpio began his homily by giving profuse thanks to God for at long last they were able to see a native son able to reach the altar to celebrate his first Mass. They said that a seminary had been founded earlier and at long last a native son had been ordained as priest and had celebrated the cantamisa.



**Present-day [left] central residence, [middle] cathedral church of Shangqiu, Henan, inaugurated by Apostolic Prefect Francisco Javier Ochoa, OAR, in 1931, and [right] old seminary building.**

### **Important positions in Shangqiu**

In Shangqiu later on, he was appointed to important positions of responsibility. He was the vicar general of the diocese. It was a significant task because Bishop Ochoa on account of his character, his personality or due to the needs of the diocese, had to be absent from the episcopal see periodically. Hence, the heavy burden of responsibility had to be borne by Father Gazpio. Furthermore, he was the religious superior in Shangqiu.

I have some new data I wish to share with you. When Shangqiu was elevated from apostolic prefecture to apostolic vicariate, the Order was asked to present three candidates to compose the *terna*. Only one would be chosen as the first apostolic vicar of Shangqiu. In



the terna were Javier Ochoa, Esteban Peña<sup>7</sup> and Mariano Gazpio. The presentation of Father Gazpio was really wonderful: he was depicted as person—mature, responsible, devoted, excellent missionary.

The official list of candidates was presented to the Holy See by the Recollect procurator in Rome, Father Pedro de la Dedicación.

In 1947, when Bishop Javier Ochoa tendered his resignation because he was exhausted and weary of the hardships, wars, revolutions. He recommended the good Father Gazpio as successor. Surely, some confreres would not give him the vote, Bishop Ochoa commented, but by electing him bishop, nobody would be wrong. He was presented as a saint by Bishop Ochoa who further declared that holiness often annoyed one who was not.



**Augustinian Recollect Missionaries in China in 1925 with [standing extreme right] Father Mariano Gazpio.**

### **The Communists take over Shangqiu**

The Communists occupied the Augustinian Recollect missions and the central house in 1950, expelling the missionaries from them. The expelled missionaries had barely enough to live with. In the end, the Communist rule made life impossible for the evangelizers, and all the Spanish missionaries were forced to leave Shangqiu and Shanghai and proceed to the British territory of Hong Kong. The Chinese Recollects were either incarcerated or sent to labor camps.

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<sup>7</sup>The catalogues of Sádaba and Avellaneda do not have Esteban Peña. The lecturer could have committed a blunder. We have Joaquín Peña (1903-1983) and Lorenzo Peña (1899-1975), long-time missionaries in China. After six years in Yucheng, in September 1933, Joaquín was at the helm of the seminary where he taught Latin and philosophy. Lorenzo was missionary in Cheng Li Ku and Palichoang. See Francisco SÁDABA, *Catálogo de los religiosos agustinos recoletos de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino desde el año 1606, en que llegó la primera misión hasta nuestros días*. Madrid 1906; AVELLANEDA, 173; 175.

### **In Monteagudo as master of novices and local prior**

Father Mariano Gazpio was appointed not long after master of novices in Monteagudo in 1952-1955 and 1958-1964. In Monteagudo, he was known as the “bearded friar” for his flowing beard. It was not a beard of “sedition” but rather of obedience to the superior general’s orders. He was ordered to grow and wear the beard in order to bear witness to his mission in China. He wore the beard for roughly three years [in Spain], until 1955 or 1956. But later on, as one witness commented lightly, even superiors general changed their mind. So the superior general suggested to him and to other former missionaries to shave their beards. And Father Mariano shaved his beard right away. In Monteagudo, he was the master of novices, considered by most Recollects as a model, a prototype. A witness at the beatification tribunal remarked that after Father Gazpio there has not been an authentic master of novices. He served the community as master of novices for nine years and its local prior for three years (1955-1958).

### **A much sought-after confessor in Marcilla**

At the end of his Monteagudo period (1952-1964), he was a conventual friar in Marcilla for the next twenty-five years. He was vice prior for the first six years, who was put in charge of the formation of the religious brothers. He performed very simple tasks. This was very well attested to during the diocesan documentation process at Marcilla by sixty witnesses who provided information on the life, virtues and personality of Father Gazpio in 2000-2004.



**The Augustinian Recollect Convent in Marcilla, Navarra, founded in 1866, where the Servant of God Mariano Gazpio studied his theology, professed his solemn vows in 1920 and in 1964-1989 lived an exemplary, humble and holy life of a friar in the religious community until his demise.**

What were his assignments here in Marcilla? Well, he was a well-loved confessor and spiritual director. He was a much sought-

after confessor as he was amiable, understanding, endowed with upright criteria, giving penitents sincere encouragement. Witnesses affirmed that he welcomed everyone with kindness anytime. He always left the door of his room open to whoever wished to be reconciled with God.

The witnesses further declared that he always entreated the Lord to infuse the Holy Spirit upon the penitent. He asked the Holy Spirit to transform him, to grant him the religious spirit, the priestly spirit. At the end, he bade the penitent farewell saying: “Keep it up. Keep it up. Move on.” He was much in demand as a confessor and spiritual adviser in Marcilla as well as in Monteagudo.

### **A friar who performed menial tasks**

The Servant of God performed various simple and humble tasks like being in charge of the military primers to be updated which he did with such perfection that the chief of the office of recruitments frequently congratulated the whole community for Father Gazpio who performed his task with precision, in a clear and meticulous manner. He did other menial jobs like sweeping the corridors, affixing postage stamps, etc.

Father Gazpio likewise assisted the house procurator in matters related to accounting and auditing with scrupulous precision. A house procurator once presented to him a statement of accounts for auditing. Father Gazpio soon after informed him of an error. What was the error about? Just a mistake of one single cent. It was a minimal thing but he was a perfectionist in all things. However, he was always discreet.

### **Father Gazpio’s personality traits**

I would like to speak as well about his personality, the traits of his personality. This is something fundamental. How was Father Gazpio? Physically, he was tan, a bit stout young boy, according to the witness Daniela Armendáriz. He grew up to be a young man endowed with good appearance, with white and a bit rosy skin. He was frugal, clean and tidy man. His demeanor was calm, which infused peace and tranquility to all. He had a strong temper but perfectly restrained by virtue, by the exercise of patience.

### **A man who fully lived the evangelical counsels**

Father Gazpio was an exemplary religious with respect to the practice of the vows of poverty, obedience and chastity. His whole person proclaimed the vow of chastity: the modesty in his looks, in his composure, the continuous self-dominion, the ascetic life cultivated with knowledge. All this showed that he perfectly lived the vow of chastity.

The same thing can be said of his vow of poverty. His figure, his way of life, the ambiance that surrounded him, his room indicated that he was a really poor friar with some limits of pulchritude and balance in everything. With respect to his apparel, several witnesses declared that he did his best to the maximum: he sewed his torn

clothes and mended his socks, his pants. One witness viewed him in his room sewing his own pants: "When I viewed the scene, it made me chuckle a bit as I looked at how he was mending those pants. They were probably forty years old."



**A man of intense prayer, a humble priest who served his confreres in the community, a valid model for an authentic religious life, a true model for all friars today and those generations to come.**

### **A man of God, a man of intense prayer, a contemplative**

Above all, he was a man of God, a man in love with God, a man of great faith, great hope and great charity. Unquestionably, this was the most remarkable trait of his personality: he constantly lived in the presence of God. He was remarkably punctual for the community prayers at the oratory. He prepared himself for the Mass much in advance as well as for the prayers. After Mass he prolonged his time for prayer in order to give thanks to the Lord. At any moment of the day or night he was seen at the oratory, at the chapel, deeply engrossed in prayer.

With regard to the celebration of the Mass, according to almost all the witnesses, he celebrated with much fervor and concentration. A witness, Father José Luis Sáenz (1941-2011), a

longtime Church History professor in Marcilla and archivist of the historical archives of Saint Nicholas Province, said Father Gazpio celebrated the Mass like an angel, very concentrated. He likewise preached with the same enthusiasm, with fervor, disseminating at all times among his listeners a passion for Christ.

The Servant of God was a man of intense prayer life. He was a prayerful man, a contemplative. Such contemplative profile, such incessant prayer, such faithfulness to prayer were most remarkable in him. In this manner he invited the others to do the same. He invited them to pray when one was beset by a personal problem or one in the community, to take the problems to prayer because he was undoubtedly doing it. Despite his discretion in everything, and in prayer as well, once it caught one confre by surprise to find him alone in the silence of the oratory and he was heard to have uttered words as testified likewise by other witnesses. In one occasion, Father Gazpio was heard saying: "Lord, deliver me from myself."

### **A personification of fraternal charity**

Apart from being a man of God, a prayerful man, a contemplative person, he was likewise a community-oriented man, a man of fraternal charity. He was a person who appreciated the common life very much. He spoke of community life with affection. He would perform a thousand menial services for the community, such lowly services like packaging books, and he was decidedly an expert in this task.<sup>8</sup> He likewise was requested to weigh letter envelopes or packages and then affix postage stamps on them. This he did with utmost care.

With respect to life in a community of brothers, there was one thing observed by all: he always spoke well of everyone in the community and those outside of it. He spoke well of the Chinese, even of the Communists who made him suffer so much. He never spoke ill of the bandits, not even of Mao Zedong. One witness said a fellow novice was heard to have said: "May Mao be stricken with diarrhea and the Lord take him away." Father Gazpio said: "What did you say? No, no, no way. Mao is a respectable person. We

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<sup>8</sup>Father Gazpio customarily assisted newly-ordained Filipino priests in packaging theology textbooks and class-notes used in Marcilla to be mailed to Manila and used in their pastoral ministry in the Philippines.

need to pray for him.” Thus there was this respect for community members as well as for visitors. He felt glad when a friar visited the community in Marcilla. And because had a good memory, he always remembered his name, his surname, the office he discharged, his birthday. He remembered very well the birthdays of the members of the community. One witness declared that his birthday was the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of August, and there were few friars in Marcilla as it was summer vacation period and nobody even remembered it by wishing him well. The day was about to come to an end. And Father Mariano approached him and greeted him: “Hey, little brother, today is your birthday. Many happy returns of the day!” He did not forget it, being gifted with a great memory. These details made life pleasurable for the community of brothers and for visitors.

### **His fame of sanctity**

Now on the fame of sanctity of Father Mariano Gazpio y Ezcurra, there were countless testimonies during his lifetime and after his death. I wish to recall here a friar who customarily did not speak well of others. However, when the head of the diocesan tribunal, Father Julio Gorricho who is here with us asked him: “Do you believe that Father Mariano Gazpio had committed any fault against the virtues of faith, hope and charity?”

“Absolutely not!” the friar firmly replied. “Those questions need not be asked. For a friar like Father Mariano, those queries are absolutely unthinkable. They are irrelevant.”

And the declarant added forthwith: “If I were pope, I would canonize him tomorrow!”

A little later, after some moments of reflection, the same confrere stressed: “If I were pope, I would canonize him right now!” Indeed, there were many other identical declarations at the beatification tribunal.

In the community of Marcilla where Father Mariano was known well, we revered him as a saint. There was a session where one of the witnesses was not so sympathetic to the cause of his canonization, not because he did not acknowledge his heroic virtue but simply because Father Gazpio’s temperament did not completely please him.

Even so, this particular witness later became one of the best co-workers of the cause, who enthusiastically gathered objects which belonged to Father Gazpio in his lifetime. Some of those objects are now displayed in the exhibits at the hallway.

To conclude: I do believe Father Mariano Gazpio is an authentic model for friars today and those of the coming generations. Very little have I said here, but in the future you can hopefully read what would be extensively written about him. Without any trace of a doubt, Father Mariano Gazpio is a valid model for an authentic religious life. This only I add: he was a blessing to his religious community of Marcilla, to the entire Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, to our entire Order of Augustinian Recollects. Truly, the Servant of God was a blessing to the whole Church. And I am sure from Heaven he shall continue to be a blessing and from there he shall intercede for us all.

### **Timeline of the Servant of God Mariano Gazpio** **by Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos**

1899, December 18	Birth at Puente la Reina, Navarra, Spain Baptism at the parish church
1902, January 6	Archbishop José López de Mendoza of Pamplona administers the Sacrament of Confirmation to him
1910	Study of Latin and the humanities at San Millán de la Cogolla, La Rioja
1911	Establishment of the Recollect Procuration House at Shanghai, China
1914, December 22	Novitiate at the convent of Monteagudo, Navarra
1915, December 23	Profession of simple vows as Recollect
1915-1916	Study of philosophy, physics and chemistry at Monteagudo
1916, September 20	He studied 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> year of philosophy, mathematics and natural history at the convent of San Millán de la Cogolla
1918, September 21	Study of three Domatic Theology courses, two Moral Theology courses and History of the Church at the convent of Marcilla
1920, December 2	Profession of the solemn vows in Marcilla
1921, September 16	Departure from Barcelona for the Philippines
1921, December 21	Ordination to the diaconate in Manila Theological formation (Canon Law and Sacred Scriptures) at San Nicolás Convent in Intramuros
1922, December 23	Ordination to the sacred priesthood by Archbishop Michael J. O'Doherty of Manila
1922, December 25	<i>Cantamisa</i> at the parish church of San Pedro Apóstol in

	Cavite Puerto
1922-1924	Curate of the parish of Cavite Puerto-San Roque
1923, November 15	The Holy See gives the Order of Augustinian Recollects the Kweiteh mission [Shangqiu] in China
1924, March 11	Departure of the first five Recollect missionaries for China, led by Provincial Councilor Francisco Sádaba who returned shortly after to Manila
1924, March 20	Arrival at Shanghai
1924, April 4	Arrival at Chutzi in Shangqiu with a land area of eight thousand square kilometers and a population of 2.5 million, of whom about 400-500 are Catholics.
1924-1928	Missionary at the new mission of Cheng Li Ku
1925, June 7	Inauguration of the Central Residence at Shangqiu
1927, April	Missionary at Shangqiu
1928, June 19	Shangqiu erected as apostolic prefecture
1928, October	Missionary at the new mission of Yucheng
1929, January 8	Msgr. Francisco Javier Ochoa (1889-1976) named Apostolic Prefect of Shangqiu
1929	Inauguration of the Recollect seminary at Shangqiu
1931, February 1	Inauguration of the Augustinian Recollect church at Shangqiu, later cathedral church
1933, January 30	Inauguration of the school of catechists
1934, August 7	<i>Ad interim</i> vicar general of Shangqiu
1934-1941	Missionary at the catechetical school of Chutzi
1936	Trip to Rome to accompany two Chinese seminarians Gregorio Li (1917-1980) and Lucas Yuo (1917-1968) to study philosophy and theology. He proceeds to Spain to visit his mother and sisters and other Recollect communities in the north
1937, May 18	Shangqiu elevated to Apostolic Vicariate Candidates Javier Ochoa, Mariano Gazpio and Father Peña presented as apostolic vicar of Shangqiu
1939, January 1	Priestly ordination of first Chinese Recollect in history, Jose Shan (1905-1965)
1941, October 5	Vicar general of Shangqiu
1946, April 11	Shangqiu becomes a diocese; superior of the mission
1948	Recommended as bishop by Bishop Javier Ochoa who resigned on 11 December 1947
1949, November 10	Arturo Quintanilla (1904-1970) is named bishop of Shangqiu
1952, January	Expulsion from China and sojourn at the Dominican residence in Hong Kong. Expulsion from China of Bishop Arturo Quintanilla, Father Lorenzo Peña (1899-1975) and Father Francisco Sanz (1910-1986) are expelled last. Nine Chinese Recollects stay behind. Catholic population of Shangqiu: 12,000.
1952, January	Visitation secretary of Father Victorino Capánaga, visitor general who conducts the canonical visitation in the name of Prior General Father Eugenio Ayape to Augustinian



	Recollect houses and religious of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino in Asia
1952-1955, 1958-1964	Master of novices of Monteagudo
1955 or 1956	He shaves his beard as ordered by his superior
1955-1958	Local prior of Monteagudo
1964-1970	Vice prior, in-charge of the formation of religious brothers in Marcilla
1964-1989	Spiritual director, confessor in Marcilla; he does menial jobs like packaging books, affixing stamps on letters, sweeping hallways, tilling the vegetable farm, tending to the orchard, etc.
1967	He accidentally sets fire to a young fig tree while burning dried leaves and broken twigs at the orchard; as replacement, he plants twelve fig trees which produce exquisite figs and preserves till today
1989, September 22	He returns to his Father in Heaven at the Hospital of Navarra, Pamplona, due to cardiac arrest, barely three months short of his 90 <sup>th</sup> birthday. Interment at the Recollect mausoleum of Marcilla
1992	OAR General Chapter in Bogotá urges the canonization process of holy Augustinian Recollects
1993, February 10	OAR General Council mandates all biographical and historical data letters and writings gathered
2000, January 17	Diocesan process opens at Marcilla
2004, March 20	Archbishop [now Cardinal] Fernando Sebastián of Pamplona-Tudela closes the diocesan process
2004, March 24	Documents of 950 pages of depositions by 58 witnesses and Father Gazpio's writings are sent to the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints
2006, January 27	Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints grants the decree of validity on the diocesan process
2014, March 28	His remains are exhumed and officially recognized
2014, March 29	Interment at the Conventual Church of Nuestra Señora la Blanca
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# Bishop Juan García Ruiz de San Agustín, OAR (1728-1796) of Nueva Segovia [Vigan]<sup>1</sup>

Gregorio Ochoa, OAR

**translated from the Spanish by  
Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos**

## Parents and birthplace

Msgr. Juan García Ruiz de San Agustín, Bishop of Vigan, capital of Ilocos Sur and seat of the Diocese of Nueva Segovia, was born on 6 June 1728 in Madrigalejo in Cáceres in the region of Extremadura, Spain. His birthplace belonged to the Diocese of Plasencia. There was an urgent need to baptize him right after birth for fear of an imminent death. Later, the formal baptismal rite was performed at the parish church on 20 June. His parents were Juan García Ruiz and María Corrala, both residents of Madrigalejo.



**Recollect Bishop Juan García Ruiz de San Agustín of Nueva Segovia. Oil Painting at the Palacio del Arzobispado, Vigan City.**

## Admittance in the Order

Juan García Ruiz donned the Augustinian Recollect habit at the Convent of Santa Cruz de la Sierra on 15 August 1744, and

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<sup>1</sup> This article is in *Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* VIII: 1755-1796 (Zaragoza 1928) 610-615.

professed the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience on 16 August of the following year at the Convent of Copacavana in Madrid. He studied philosophy at the Convent Santa Cruz. From this convent he departed for the Philippine missions. He embarked at Cádiz, Spain, on 13 February 1749. During the transoceanic voyage and his sojourn at Mexico, he studied Sacred Theology in which he excelled and, as God had endowed him with a fine memory and great talent, he learned very easily all what he studied which was no small matter, because to his great ingenuity was united his greater religiosity which moved him not to waste a single moment.

### Voyage to the Philippines

After his ordination to the priesthood in Mexico City, he boarded the galleon *Santisima Trinidad* that arrived in Manila on 3 October 1752. On 11 December of that same year, he was dispatched to Mariveles in Bataan. In this parish, he learned after a brief period of time the Tagalog language with greatest proficiency. In the Intermediate Provincial Chapter of 1753, he was named vice prior of Bongabong in Mindoro, just when the Moros were devastating the island with barbaric atrocity.

### Sufferings in Bongabong, Mindoro

The 25-year-old Recollect missionary lived in an impoverished hut constructed for him by some pious natives. A few days after he started his pastoral ministry at Bongabong, the Moro pirates returned to raid the parish and he was constrained to flee and keep himself ensconced in the hinterlands. He suffered from hunger, thirst, lack of clothes and shelter until, fortunately, a renegade named Pedro Marcelo took him in. He lodged the missionary in his house with much charity and generosity.

Father Juan de la Concepción, in his *Historia General de Philipinas*



**Hospice of Mexico City: halfway house of missionaries from Spain to Manila, of which he was superior in 1762 and 1764**

[General History of the Philippines], alludes to the enormous privations of Father Juan Ruiz de San Agustín in the following manner:<sup>2</sup>

In May 1754, he took refuge along the river called Piloto in Mindoro, belonging to the jurisdictional administration of Bongabong which ran perpendicular to the eastern coastline of the island from Pola Point down to Bruruncang. Seventy-four sea crafts of the Moros held their stations there and conducted sallies without restraint along the shoreline. The coastal areas were completely without any defences and the natives were unprotected even in their mountain hideouts.

The minister at that time, Father Juan de San Agustín, a Recollect, underwent untold suffering stemming from these Moro raids. His poor quarters were sacked, leaving him to wander along the shores and mountains, bereft of any tranquil moment. He rested in the place where the night caught up with him, with no other shelter than the trees. This anxiety, the irregular temperatures of the forests, the malnutrition which more often than not consisted simply of herbs and root crops or leaves of some palm trees, or a little cooked rice when available and given as gift. Many times he was alone in the deep hinterlands. He suffered malignant fevers with the cruel symptoms



**The now-defunct Church of San Nicolás in Intramuros, Manila, where Father Juan García Ruiz was consecrated bishop in January 1786**

of vomit and diarrhea that put his life in extreme danger. The hazards forced him to take refuge in the house of a certain Pedro Marcelo, whose asylum he had earlier refused, because keeping such familiar dealing with Moros would make him apprehensive of such asylum. Marcelo lived along with several relatives near the banks of Vasig River. He was a fugitive from justice, wanted by edicts and public

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<sup>2</sup> JUAN DE LA CONCEPCIÓN, *Historia General de Philipinas* XIII, 201ss, no. 12.

proclamations, with a price on his head, dead or alive. The story of this uncommon man cannot be ignored in silence.

Pedro Marcelo was a native of Adán in Panay Island. He was still a young boy when he moved to Manila where he was worked in the service of Spaniards. He acquired skills in the pen and paper, thus he became excellently employed in papers and writings. He possessed an energetic disposition and a somewhat intrepid spirit. He went with Pedro Zacarías to Zamboanga, in whose Mindanao campaigns he was an overseer.

When Zacarías became governor of Zamboanga, he entrusted to Pedro Marcelo the lucrative trade he had in Mindanao and he gave the Spanish official a good accounting of the immense profits from the trade.

Once there was much at stake in a business when Marcelo met a Moro woman of the ruling class and ended up in the marriage. This fact greatly upset Governor Zacarías who made up his mind and lost all his trust in Marcelo. The governor once declared that if ever he captured the native he would put him inside a cannon. He learned about the governor's exasperation and did not dare show himself to him anymore. Still Marcelo submitted to him an accounting of all transactions under his administration, settling the accounts with very expensive goods. He further explained to Zacarías that his marriage to the Moro woman did not allow him to put himself in his presence. Nevertheless, he did not feel any remorse for what he did, as the stipulated conditions were that she would convert to the Christian faith and would go with him wherever he would take her. He did not have any resentment at all it, except for the governor's wrath, and to shun this occasion he decided to take the safest choice. Such serene and upright attitude did not satisfy the Spanish official at all but annoyed him all the more. He declared to everyone that Marcelo had kept many goods for himself and ordered Mindanao natives to surrender him. Some greedy men who looked down at marriages with



**The 1949 Vigan Cathedral marker on its façade fails to acknowledge the Augustinian Recollect prelate who started its construction in 1786.**



someone of different faith became suspicious of him. Marcelo then acquired a big boat and with his wife and his trusted men boarded the boat, headed for his birthplace in Panay and lived there in hiding. It did not take long for the news of Marcelo's whereabouts to be known.

Governor Zacarías filed a big court case against him, as if against the most criminal man of all. On account of this, he dispatched arrest warrants and rewards to the governor of Panay. And this official who received many favors from Zacarías took up the whole matter with strongest determination. The Panay governor stationed several spies and whenever news of the fugitive's whereabouts were received, at once armed troops were dispatched to that place. Marcelo mocked these efforts because he had counterspies in his employ as well and he was informed at once about the governor's every move. Thus the government troops would find out that Marcelo had already moved elsewhere.

Marcelo did not like this troubled way of life. He was aware that the governor was travelling from one town to another with few escorts. Marcelo met him and told the government forces to stop and but majority of them fled as they were caught by surprise by Marcelo and his company. He inquired from the provincial governor what the persecution was all about and by virtue of what order that they were trying to arrest him with so much eagerness. These were hopeless efforts, Marcelo said, for he owed nothing to God or to the monarch. Why did they persecute him ruthlessly? The governor who was carried in a hammock stood up and, with a pistol in his hand, treated him like a thief and apostate. Marcelo tried to calm him down but it was not enough. Then a gesture not meant for anything made by the governor was misinterpreted by an armed man in Marcelo's group,



The Palacio del Arzobispado was constructed in 1782-1785 by the Augustinian Recollect Bishop Juan García Ruiz de San Agustín

who immediately pierced him with a spear, an action that needed no second thrust. The governor's escorts at once scampered away in all directions. Marcelo checked the wound to see if there was still a remedy. He felt sorry about the spear thrust, as it was not his intention at all, but that made the problematic situation from bad to worse. The governor passed away. Native troops were soon dispatched for Marcelo's immediate arrest. But Marcelo acted as if nothing had happened, but he as well as his relatives still went around fully armed. The encounters never stopped without any dead or wounded person. His group became stronger with more men joining him. He was so much feared in the whole island that the governor general dispatched troops from Manila for his arrest.

When Marcelo saw that he could not keep himself for a long time in military campaigns and that if he were captured, he would pay for his life in the scaffold, with prudence he decided to flee, as he did so to Mindoro Island and settled at Vasig River where his Panay townmates had formed a settlement. With them and his relatives they set up a good community. Here Marcelo lived in peace. The Moros did not disturb him nor did they cause him or his wife, a woman of the ruling class who inspired respect, any inconvenience. Marcelo likewise was a courageous man among decent people who respected him and among the Moros who somewhat feared him.

In this fugitive's house, Father Juan took refuge. He was in such an extremely bad health condition that his recovery was very difficult. Marcelo welcomed him with much affection into his house. He started to energize his languishing guest with chicken soup, using in this what was permitted by his meagre resources with much generosity. Marcelo was smart and employed practical home remedies and with them he attended to him in order to alleviate his illnesses which were so many that the cure took a much longer time.

The Moros frequented those areas. However, Marcelo prevented them from proceeding to his house where they could find the missionary. And Marcelo would be forced to defend him at all cost. Through the captives the Moros had surely known that the father minister was in his house and they were resolved to seize him. Marcelo was not uninformed about this. Thus he met them halfway and stopped them along the riverbank with his trusted and well-armed men. He queried the Moros with a booming voice about their purpose but they did not dare say they were looking for the

priest. They said they only wanted to go up to his house. He told them that it was not possible because there were inconveniences, that there were natives under his care and protection who would be very scared at the mere sight of them. The Moros insisted on going up. But Marcelo told them that it would be over his dead body and his companions' bodies. The ruthless Moros restrained themselves in the face of such resolve and Marcelo bade them goodbye after giving them some little gifts.

Despite his infirmities, Father Juan took heart with the assistance of some Moros and ensconced himself in the hinterlands where Marcelo later retrieved him and accommodated him in his house. He explained to the missionary that he was in grave danger on account of the Moros' persistence, and that his deliverance was rather due to audacity than to valor.

Marcelo continued to attend to the missionary and providing him with gifts as much as he could in the riskiest manner that caused him ordinary intermittent fevers. Marcelo then told him that it was impossible to be cured completely there because everything was scarce, that it was better to go to Calapan to have more relief and that he should not worry about the trip because he himself would take him there at no risk at all. The father minister agreed that that thus he would be free from so many jolts and dangers. Marcelo provided him with a boat and safely handed him over to some natives. He did not dare go personally to Calapan to avoid risking his life too much.



**Vigan and adjoining towns, cities and provinces**

The missionary was so grateful to his benefactor—as if to someone to whom he owed his freedom and life—that he divulged these services everywhere. Many natives likewise disseminated their favors received from Marcelo: freed from captivity by him or rescued by him sometimes through provisions, at other times through

cunning: in such a way that the asylum he provided was the common refuge of the miserable, hapless and impoverished people.

Father Juan found minimal security in Calapan because for the second time the Moros had entered it and destroyed everything the natives had rebuilt. The missionary was taking so much risk of being captured so were two of the boys at his service. Thus the local officials totally agreed that the natives were dying of hunger. This forced them to withdraw to other territories and shun the risks of death, as it did Father Juan who later withdrew to Batangas.”

### **Convalescence in Batangas and return to Mindoro**

The Recollect missionary was welcomed at the Convent of the Calced Augustinians in Batangas where he was attended to with fraternal solicitude and care by them. Eventually, Father Juan recovered from his illness completely.



**Bishop Juan García Ruiz de San Agustín commenced the construction of the Vigan Cathedral after the Palacio del Arzobispado was finished in 1785, but the Recollect prelate did not live long enough to see it completed as he died in 1796 due to humidity and inhalation of lime stemming from his daily inspection of the building project**

Governor General Manuel de Arandia finally decided to repair the damages wrought by the Moros and ordered the Corregidor José Pantoja to return to Mindoro with his valiant native troops from Pampanga. Hence, Saint Nicholas Province likewise dispatched in their company Father Juan as prior of Calapan and vicar provincial of Mindoro on 4 May 1755.

The four walls of the church which had been razed to the ground by the Moros served as residence and accommodation for the Recollect missionary and the soldiers. The natives of Calapan were encouraged by the departure of the Moros and little by little began to settle down in the capital. One day they conducted a counter-attack from the church edifice, wounding and killing a great number of Moros

who vaunted their past victory and wanted to try their luck with their remaining warriors who stayed behind.

### Offices he held in Saint Nicholas Province

Father Juan served the parish of Calapan as prior and Mindoro as vicar provincial until 1758 when the provincial chapter made him a provincial councilor and recalled him to the Convent of San Nicolás in Manila. On the first of April 1759, the administration of the parish of Cavite Viejo [present-day Kawit] was entrusted to him. Cavite Viejo and Silang by force were handed over to the Recollect administration in exchange for Cagayan in Mindanao. The Spanish monarch disapproved this abusive transfer. Thus, Cavite Vejo and Silang reverted at once to the secular clergy. Thanks to Father Juan's zeal and prudence, the splendid dam of Casundit which later gave rise to the Hacienda of Imus was constructed.

The 1761 provincial chapter elected him prior of Cavite Puerto. On 5 February 1762, he was elected *presidente* of the halfway house or hospice of Mexico City, and he embarked on the *Santísima Trinidad* to discharge his office. But by that time the war with the British had erupted and they invaded the Philippines. The British captured the ship and all its passengers and Father Juan was forced to return to Manila as prisoner. When he regained his freedom, he was named prior of the Convent of San Nicolas in Manila on 11 February 1764. The provincial chapter of that same year elected him prior of San Sebastian Convent.

In a provincial council meeting of 15 May 1764, Father Juan García Ruiz de San Agustín was again elected superior of the Hospice of Mexico City, which served as the halfway house of Recollect missionaries from Spain headed for the Philippine missions. He embarked in Manila on the frigate



Central nave and main altar of the Vigan Cathedral today.

*Rosa* which reached Mexico luckily and safely. However, the commissary who had left Manila together with him for Spain perished in the voyage but since Father Juan was appointed as substitute commissary he was obliged to embark on the next ship for the Peninsula. In the royal court of Madrid he was the first to obtain the order from the Spanish monarch to have the royal exchequer defray the Augustinian Recollect mission that Father Juan himself had organized. This mission group consisted of sixty-six religious: sixty priests and six religious brothers.

Since the mission was numerous, the father commissary, Father Juan dispatched the mission to the Philippines very appropriately in two groups. The ship *Dragón* with first group which he himself headed, lifted anchor at Cádiz on 22 December 1768 left for Veracruz, Mexico, and reached Manila on board the frigate *San Carlos* on July 1769. On 10 December 1770, during the provincial visit to the ministries, he was named vicar provincial. The 1773 Provincial Chapter elected him provincial councilor, and on 6 May of that year, he was designated as *prior presidente* of San Sebastian Convent in Manila. In the 1776 chapter, the capitular fathers in a unanimous vote elected him prior provincial, an office he discharged with great calm and prudence.

### **Bishop of Nueva Segovia**

After his term as provincial ended to everyone's great satisfaction, Father Juan remained as conventual of the Convent of San Nicolás, Manila, where he resided until the 1782 provincial chapter named him prior of San Sebastian because the news of the high honor awarded to him by the king had not yet arrived. He was in such office when he received the official appointment as bishop of Nueva Segovia on 11 May 1782. King Charles III had honored him on 20 December 1780 with the episcopal office of Nueva Segovia. When the news about his elevation to the episcopacy was divulged, general jubilation enveloped the whole colony since his remarkable qualities were very renowned.

A day after receiving his designation he gave up his position as prior of San Sebastian. Shortly afterward, he transferred to his episcopal see in Vigan in order to do construction work needed with urgency. It was for this reason that he was not consecrated bishop

until the month of January 1786. His solemn episcopal consecration took place at the Recollect Church of San Nicolás in Intramuros, Manila [present site of the newspaper *Manila Bulletin* offices].

### Construction of the palace and the cathedral of Vigan

Before he was consecrated bishop, he had finished the construction of the Bishop's Palace of Vigan [now known as *Palacio del Arzobispado*], a magnificent work for which he had spent fourteen thousand pesos. Hardly had he gotten out of the debts incurred from those hefty expenses when he commenced at once the construction of the cathedral church of the Diocese of Nueva Segovia.



**Bishop Juan García Ruiz was elevated to the episcopal see of Vigan on 20 December 1780, and not 25 June 1784 as this epitaph erroneously tells us. He received his appointment only in 1782 and built the bishop's residence at once. Buried beside him is his Augustinian Recollect confrere Bishop Mariano Cuartero y Sierra.**

It seemed incredible how much that a zealous and peace-loving prelate could do when no experience of construction of such magnificent work had taught him. Everyone—men and women, young and old, common people and ruling class—lent a hand to that very holy undertaking. On account of that, the exterior part of the building was finished in so short a time, although it was done with the loss of a prelate—zealous and desirous of peace.

### Protracted illness and a holy death

The Augustinian Recollect bishop was continually present at the construction site. For that reason, he fell ill due to extreme humidity and malignant inhalation of lime. Consequently, he was constrained to withdraw from Vigan and went to Manila hoping to recover his health. Nevertheless, he was unable to recover from his illness neither in the colonial capital nor in the thermal springs of Laguna nor in any adjoining province of Manila. After fourteen

months, he returned to his diocese where his health condition turned from bad to worse until his earthly life came to an end on 2 May 1796 at his new palace in Vigan, a month short of his 68<sup>th</sup> birthday. He was the bishop of Nueva Segovia for fifteen years and six months.

To the great edification of his parishioners, Bishop Juan had received beforehand the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Extreme Unction. In truth, the Augustinian Recollect prelate died a poor religious since all he received as a bishop had been spent for the construction of the episcopal residence and the cathedral as well as for the adornment of the church with precious gems of gold, silver and fine ornaments.

Taking into account his zeal and munificent character, doubtless he could have filled his diocese with honor and glory, but the Lord had already found sufficient the abundant toil that Bishop Juan García Ruiz de San Agustín had undergone for the love of God who cut short his life to grant him the eternal reward of glory.

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[The *gcatholic.com* article mirrors this website. The list of archbishops and bishops of Nueva Segovia in this website does not include the name of Bishop Juan García Ruiz de San Agustín! His predecessor Bishop Miguel García San Esteban OP died on 11 November 1779. His successor Bishop Agustín Pedro Blaquier OSA was appointed on 20 July 1801. The gap should be filled by the Recollect prelate.]

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## Augustinian Recollect Bishops, Apostolic Prefects and an Apostolic Administrator in the Philippines

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Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos

### Archbishop José Aranguren of Manila

The prelate was born in Barasoain, Navarra, Spain, on 16 February 1801. Father José Aranguren de San Agustín professed the monastic vows in 1825 at the Augustinian Recollect convent of Alfaro, La Rioja, Spain. A young professor of Sacred Theology, he thereafter taught future missionaries at the same Alfaro convent and then at San Nicolás friary in Intramuros, Manila, where he arrived in 1829. In August 1831, he administered the parish of Capas in Tarlac. In 1835, he served as pastor of Masinloc after a 50-year hiatus of Recollect ministry in Zambales. In Masinloc, he built a strong church made of hewn stones and lime. The provincial chapter of 1843 elected him prior provincial.



As Archbishop of Manila, he was preconized by Pope Pius IX on 9 January 1846. Out of zeal for souls and for the glory of God, Archbishop Aranguren visited twice almost all the parishes

and far-flung mission stations of his vast archdiocese. With great tact and prudence, he solved difficult cases and various conflicts. He supported the foundation of *Banco Español-Filipino* [now *Bank of the Philippine Islands*]. His concern for ill people and for the education of the youth compelled him to invite the Sisters of Charity who finally arrived in Manila a few years after his demise.

Most of all, Archbishop Aranguren defended the rights and interests of the native secular clergy of his archdiocese. After his death on 18 April 1861 in Manila, his secretary, Father Pedro Peláez, as vicar capitular of the archdiocese *sede vacante*, dauntlessly took up the cudgels for the late friar archbishop in favor of the native diocesan priests.

### **Bishop Juan García Ruiz de San Agustín of Nueva Segovia (Vigan)**

A native of Madrigalejo, Cáceres, Spain, where he was born on 6 June 1728, Father Juan García Ruiz de San Agustín was preconized as bishop of Nueva Segovia in Vigan on 26 December 1780 and was consecrated in Manila in 1786.

As Augustinian Recollect provincial commissary, he was a tireless recruiter of religious missionaries from Spanish convents to volunteer for the Philippine missions. His pastoral assignment included Bongabong and Calapan in Mindoro, Kawit and Cavite Puerto in Cavite. He was appointed prior of the convent of San Sebastian and later of San Nicolás in Manila. The provincial chapter of 1776 chose him as prior provincial.

No sooner had Bishop Juan García Ruiz finished the construction of the episcopal palace, which cost him 14,000 pesos, than he embarked on a much bigger enterprise, *i.e.*, the construction of the Vigan cathedral, almost exhausting the church coffers in the process and affecting much his deteriorating health due to the lime he used in the construction. At age 68, the Recollect prelate died in office on 2 May 1796 and was buried inside the cathedral.



**Bishop Joaquín Encabo de la Virgen de Sopetrán of Cebu**

Father Joaquín Encabo de la Virgen de Sopetrán is the only Recollect bishop of Cebu in history. He was born in Jarandilla, Extremadura, Spain in 1740. He professed the vows in Madrid in 1759. He volunteered for the 22<sup>nd</sup> mission of 41 Recollects who arrived in Cavite in 1768. At first, he was a professor of Theology in Manila, but he was later sent to Loon to learn Cebuano and to perform his priestly ministry. He then served as parochial vicar of Dauis in 1770-1773. The 1773 provincial chapter designated him as vice prior and novice master in San Nicolás friary in Intramuros, Manila. Three years afterward, he was elected provincial councilor.

In 1779, he was elected prior of San Sebastian convent. He rose to the highest post of the province in the Philippines in 1782 when the provincial chapter voted him as prior provincial. In 1786, the bishop of Diocese of Nueva Segovia Juan García Ruiz de San Agustín assigned him as secretary. In 1788, he was again elected prior provincial. The provincial chapters of 1794 and 1797



appointed him provincial chronicler. He was later named vicar provincial of Manila in 1796 and prior of San Sebastian in 1800. The Spanish monarch recommended him to the episcopacy in 1802. Father Encabo took canonical possession of the Cebu diocese in June 1805. Twice he visited his vast diocese that included the Visayas, Mindanao and the Marianas Islands. The bishop brought the construction of the cathedral to a happy conclusion and blest it himself in 1811, as his epitaph would declare: “...*perficit et consecravit Ecclesiam Cathedralem.*” In 1816, he established a hospital for lepers and supported it through an *obra pía* [pious work]. Bishop Encabo passed away at the Augustinian Santo Niño convent on 8 November 1818 and was buried, according to his wishes, at the Augustinian Recollect Church of the Immaculate Conception which is now Our Lady of Mount Carme Church.

### **Bishop Mariano Cuartero of Nueva Segovia (Vigan)**

The future bishop of Nueva Segovia, Vigan, Mariano Cuartero y Sierra, took the religious appellation *de la Virgen del Pilar*, being a native of the Marian city of Zaragoza in Spain where he first saw the light of day on 10 January 1830. He consecrated himself to God by professing the monastic vows in September 1850.

A professor of philosophy and natural sciences, he taught for some time at the Recollect convent of Monteagudo, Navarra. Shortly after his arrival in Manila in 1863, he was sent to Masinloc to study the language. He served as parish priest of Sarapsap, present-day Alaminos, Pangasinan in 1864-1867. He was elected prior of Recoletos in Intramuros (1867-1870) and prior provincial (1870-1873).

A man of great prudence, nevertheless he was intransigent with respect to disciplining his religious subjects and curtailing their abuses. After his triennium, he served as parish priest of Bolinao [now part of Pangasinan] and vicar provincial of northern Zambales.

Pope Pius IX preconized him in a public consistory on 16 January 1874 without any intervention by the Spanish government. The Roman Pontiff says in his papal bull: "... you have worked with all diligence and zeal in the performance of the church ministry and about whose knowledge, seriousness, and propriety of customs and practice in the concerns, we are informed through reliable sources."



He governed the Diocese of Nueva Segovia for twelve years and worked with untiring dedication for the preservation and increase of the Catholic faith. He incessantly cared for his flock through his pastoral exhortations, exemplary life and pastoral solicitude, visiting his parishes and mission posts several times. During his term, he requested the prior provincial for Saint Nicholas Province to administer the diocesan seminary of Vigan. Recollect formators then replaced their Calced Augustinian brothers and managed the seminary in 1882-1897.

After a lingering ailment, Bishop Cuartero joined his heavenly Father on 2 August 1887 at age 57. His mortal remains were interred inside the cathedral church in solemn rites.

### **Bishop Leandro Arrué of Jaro**

Born in Calatayud, Zaragoza, Spain, on 13 January 1837, Leandro Arrué de San Nicolás de Tolentino professed the religious vows in 1856 at Monteagudo, Navarra. He arrived in Manila in July 1860, and was ordained to the holy priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ in September. Thereafter, he was dispatched to Cagayan de Oro in 1861 to learn the Cebuano Visayan language and in 1864 to Bacong in Negros Island, as curate. In this parish, he built the convent and began the construction of the stone church of Saint Augustine in 1866. For some months in 1868, he administered Sum-ag, now part of Bacolod City.

Father Arrué served as parish priest of Liloan, Cebu, from September 1868 to May 1873. Following his assignments as procurator general in Manila and prior of the Immaculate Conception convent in Cebu City, he was elected prior provincial in 1879. After his triennium, he retraced his steps to Bacong. The parishioners had sought his return many times. Father Arrué continued the construction of its church and finished it in time for the patronal feast when the first mass was celebrated on 28 August 1883.



On 27 March 1885, he was preconized in a public consistory by Pope Leo XIII who lauded his pastoral care of souls in the Philippines and his solicitous zeal in the ecclesiastical ministry. A model of prelates, the Recollect bishop visited his extensive jurisdiction several times and preached God's word in all the churches. He took special care of the spiritual and material needs of the people of his diocese and constructed a hospital for ailing and destitute folks. His generosity was matched only by his unblemished character and great managerial skills.

At 60, Bishop Arrué passed away on 24 October 1897 and was interred at the Saint Elizabeth of Hungary Cathedral with a massive attendance at his funeral rites.

### **Bishop Andrés Ferrero of Jaro**

The Augustinian Recollect priest who became the third bishop of Jaro, Andrés Ferrero y Malo de San José was born at Arnedo, La Rioja, Spain, on 30 November 1846. With the batch of Saint Ezekiel Moreno, he pronounced the monastic vows in 1865. After his sacerdotal ordination in 1869, he was named professor of philosophy, dogma and moral theology in Monteagudo, Navarra and later in Marcilla. A month following his arrival in the Philippines in June 1873, he was named superior of San Sebastian convent in Manila. Then he was sent to study the Visayan language in Panglao, Bohol.

Father Ferrero then served as parish priest of Pontevedra in Negros Occidental for a total of fourteen years: 1875-1882, 1888-1894, 1897-1898. In this Negrense parish, he constructed the parochial church, convent and cemetery. He served Saint Nicholas Province as prior of Recoletos in Intramuros in 1882-1885, provincial councilor in 1885-1888 and vicar provincial on 5 September 1885. The provincial chapter elected him prior provincial for the 1894-1897 triennium.

In March 1898, Pope Leo XIII raised Father Andrés Ferrero to the episcopal see of Jaro in the most tumultuous period of Philippine Church history. Consecrated in November 1898 in Manila, he took canonical possession of his diocese in September 1900 amid the revolutionary upheaval. He urged his clergy to keep the faith through their blameless conduct and discipline and to maintain the religion and piety of the faithful during the critical times undergone by the diocese. Through pastoral letters, he staunchly defended the interests of the Church maligned by adversaries, especially by schismatic clergy and adherents.





In 1903, Bishop Ferrero resigned from his see—as the rest of the Spanish bishops in the Philippines had done earlier—in the wake of the change of political sovereignty in the country. It was with a heavy heart that he had to leave his cherished flock in Panay and Negros.

The last Spanish bishop of the *Patronato Real* [Royal Patronage] regime travelled back to Spain in October 1908 and opted to spend the remaining years of his life at the Recollect convent of Marcilla, Navarra. He refused any other episcopal see offered to him because he wished to be united with his Jaro diocese to the end. Bishop Ferrero journeyed back to the Father in heaven on 22 December 1909 at age 63.

### **Bishop Gregorio Espiga, Apostolic Vicar of Palawan**

On 20 September 1912, Father Gregorio Espiga e Infante was born in Santo Domingo de la Calzada, La Rioja, Spain. He professed the monastic vows in on September 1929 in Monteagudo Navarra. He studied theology in Athison, USA, and in London, England. After he was ordained as priest in May 1935 in Plymouth, England, his superiors sent him to San Sebastian Convent in Manila.

In 1937, Father Espiga served as assistant parish priest of San Carlos in Negros Occidental, and in 1939 he was transferred to the parish of Brooke's Point in Palawan. In 1941, he joined the school administration of Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos in San Carlos.

During the Second World War, Father Espiga courageously assisted in the pastoral care of Bacolod, Calatrava and San Carlos. The undaunted minister of God earned the moniker “Guerrilla Padre” because he always risked his life crossing Japanese lines in order to administer the sacraments to war refugees, guerrillas and their families in the mountains and forests of San Carlos and Calatrava. For his remarkable war apostolate, he was declared by the municipal council as *Adopted Son of*



*San Carlos* on 9 February 1952. In 1946, he was named rector of San Sebastian College in Manila and, a year after, rector of Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos. He was the first rector of Santo Tomas de Villanueva minor seminary in 1948. In May 1952, the provincial chapter elected him provincial secretary of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino Province.

In 1953, Msgr. Espiga he was named apostolic prefect of Palawan and was later appointed local ordinary of the Apostolic Vicariate of Palawan on 10 September 1955 by Pope Pius XII. In 1980, on his silver jubilee as bishop, Pope John Paul II recalled to memory his achievements: “The diligence you have employed in imparting a catechesis grounded on appropriate reasons; your solicitous care in gathering and fomenting vocations to the priesthood; the zeal and care by which you have translated the decrees of the Second Vatican Council into reality.”

The bishop’s legendary generosity, amiability and thoughtfulness endeared him no end to his clergy and to his flock as well. Bishop Espiga constructed the neo-Gothic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception and inaugurated it in 1961. He built several churches as well as the bishop’s residence at Puerto Princesa City. He attended the opening session of the Second Vatican Council on 11 October 1962 as well as the conciliar sessions in 1963 and 1964.

After nearly seven lustrums as apostolic prefect and apostolic vicar, Bishop Espiga resigned on 18 December 1987 at the mandatory age of 75 and resided at San Sebastian convent for almost a decade. On 15 April 1997, the tireless bishop, at age 84, finally rested in the Lord’s bosom at the Manila Doctors’ Hospital. Monsignor Espiga’s mortal remains were flown to Puerto Princesa City for burial at the cathedral church beside the altar.

### **Msgr. Victoriano Román, Apostolic Prefect of Palawan**

A native of Puebla de Arganzón in Burgos, Spain, Father Victoriano Román y Zárate de San José was born on 23 March 1875. His simple profession was in 1893. In December 1897, two months after his arrival in Manila, he was ordained as priest. In February 1898, he was assigned as companion of the parish priest of Lubang Island under the jurisdiction of Mindoro.

Father Román was a prisoner of the revolutionary forces of Mindoro in July 1898-January 1900; he was subjected to untold indignities and deprivations during his long incarceration.

After two years in the convents of San Nicolás in Intramuros and of San Sebastian, the superiors sent him to Araceli in northern Palawan in May 1902, and in July 1903 assigned him to Taytay and Bacuit. He was a missionary for a total of 36 years in Palawan and in the Calamianes islands.



In the wake of the early resignation of his 60-year-old confrere Fernando Hernández (1850-1930) due to health reasons, Msgr. Román became the second apostolic prefect of Palawan on 21 April 1911. The Holy See had earlier decreed the creation of the apostolic prefecture on 10 April 1910. The untiring Msgr. Román regularly visited his extensive archipelagic jurisdiction by land and by sea, dubbed by an Augustinian Recollect confrere as “an immense territory [fit] for his sacerdotal zeal...” made all the more challenging by Palawan’s “scorching climate, lethargic moral and material life, very laborious administration due to adversities of all kinds.” Ever the indefatigable missionary, he started the construction of various churches and chapels of Palawan archipelago.

The historical accounts of the evangelization efforts of Msgr. Román and his missionaries in these frontier lands of the Philippine archipelago were published in the mission magazine *Todos Misioneros*, *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino* and *La Vanguardia*, a Manila periodical. His health broken, Msgr. Román resigned in 1938 and journeyed back to Spain. When he recovered his health, he was named parish priest of San Millán de la Cogolla in La Rioja. Like the zealous missionary of Mindoro and Palawan Saint Ezekiel Moreno, Msgr. Román had always longed to spend his last days at their convent in Monteagudo where he had consecrated himself to God Almighty as a young Recollect religious.

But the tireless missionary of Palawan, at age 71, after receiving the last Sacraments, returned peacefully to the Father’s bosom in Tulebras, Navarra, on 27 December 1946.

**Msgr. Leandro Nieto, Apostolic Prefect of Palawan**

Born on 13 March 1893 in San Millán de la Cogolla, La Rioja, Spain, Father Leandro Nieto y Bolandier de San Nicolás de Tolentino made his profession of the evangelical counsels in Monteagudo, Navarra, in 1909.



Following his sacerdotal ordination in Manila in 1916, he was given his first assignment as assistant priest of Cajidiocan in Sibuyan Island of Romblon Province. A year later, Father Nieto served as curate of San Fernando parish in the same island.

His subsequent assignments were: parish priest of Sumag, then La Carlota, and finally Talisay, all in Negros Occidental, in 1922-1931; vice prior of Recoletos, Intramuros, in 1931-1934; provincial councilor in 1935 with residence at Recoletos.

On 28 November 1938, Father Nieto was named apostolic prefect of Palawan. It was his unhappy lot in life to witness the gory and catastrophic effects of World War II: "...murder of parishioners, persecution of missionaries, destruction of churches and convents."

The post-war years saw him travelling from one parish and island to another as he administered the sacraments to people who hungered for the consoling presence of God's minister. Msgr. Nieto was endowed with a burning zeal for souls and remarkable organizational skills. He founded the Seminario de San José [San Jose Seminary] for the formation of the diocesan clergy. He further established a normal school at the capital of Palawan.

After his resignation due to poor health in 1953, Msgr. Nieto spent his last days amid the cool climate at Casiciaco Recoletos in Baguio City where he departed for the House of the Father on 8 July 1960 at age 67. The missionary was buried at the public cemetery not far from the Recollect formation house.

**Msgr. Jesus Pastor E. Paloma, Apostolic Administrator of Calbayog in Samar**

Father Jesus Pastor Escaño Paloma was born of Leyteño parents on 4 February 1943 in San Francisco, Camotes Island in the Province of Cebu,. He finished his philosophy at San Jose Seminary, Quezon City.

Following his novitiate year at Monteagudo, Navarra, Spain, he professed his vows on 3 September 1965. In 1969, he was ordained as priest in Marcilla, Navarra, where he had finished his theological studies

Having finished two licentiates, namely, Sacred Theology from the University of Santo Tomas, Manila, and Sacred Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome, he subsequently taught at the Recollect formation houses of Marcilla (Navarra, Spain), Seminario Mayor-Recoletos, renamed Casiciaco Recoletos Seminary (Baguio City), Tagaste Seminary (New York, USA), Miranila (Quezon City), Suba (Bogotá, Colombia), and at the Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome). His biblical scholarship focused on Pauline theology.

Father Paloma was appointed prior of Collegio Internazionale di Sant'Ildefonso in Rome (1976-1979), Casiciaco Recoletos Seminary where he was novice master as well (1979-1982), and Casa San Ezequiel Moreno in Madrid (1990-1993). He was elected prior and president of San Sebastian College-Recoletos in Cavite City in 1982-1984.



Furthermore, he had served as parochial vicar of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage parish in Tondo, Manila, and of Las Ferias parish in Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia, his last pastoral ministry.

When the ailing Bishop Sincero Lucero (1935-1993) of Calbayog Diocese in Western Samar resigned in October 1984, the Holy See appointed the Recollect priest as Apostolic Administrator. In this ministry, Msgr. Paloma served from October 1984 to October 1985. He resigned afterwards for external reasons.

Father Paloma led an extraordinarily busy life, either at his own volition or his superiors' mandate that transferred him from one assignment to another in Asia, Europe, North and South America. Oftentimes he accepted invitations from religious communities, schools, seminaries, schools and lay groups to conduct spiritual retreats and recollections. Patiently, he had all ears to the problems of his confrere or subordinate.

Besides Filipino and Visayan Cebuano languages, he was proficient as well in foreign tongues including Greek, Hebrew, German, Italian, Spanish and English. He further put to good use his talents of painting and writing.

At age 53, Father Paloma succumbed to an acute myocardial infarction on 9 November 1996 in Bogotá, Colombia, and was buried in that Latin American city. His mortal remains were flown back to Manila years later.

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# Missionaries in the Philippines, Bishops in America, Europe and China

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Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos

## Prologue

Our study deals with Augustinian Recollect missionaries who exercised their ministerial or educational apostolate in the Philippines and went on to become bishops in America, Europe and China. Three prelates finished their theological studies in Intramuros, Manila and were then ordained as priests (Saint Ezekiel Moreno, Bishop Luis Arribas, Bishop Toribio Minguella); one was ordained as bishop in Manila (Bishop Javier Ochoa); four were either missionaries or parish priests (Saint Ezekiel, Bishop Miguella, Bishop Ochoa, Bishop Martin Legarra); four were missionary chroniclers, authors of historical accounts or grammar books (Saint Ezekiel, Bishop Arribas, Bishop Minguella, Bishop Legarra); and one was a conventual in Manila for nine months (Bishop Arturo Quintanilla).

Only Bishop Nicolas She had not been to the Philippines but he underwent novitiate and theological formation in China under Recollects from Manila. In the minor seminary in Shangqiu, the future Servant of God Mariano Gazpio, who was ordained in Manila and served as assistant priest in Cavite City, regularly conducted spiritual exercises and monthly retreats to twenty-eight Chinese seminarians, including Nicolas She. All these religious prelates are authentic icons of Augustinian Recollect spirituality, charism and missionary apostolate worthy of emulation today by clergy and laity alike.

### **Bishop Ezekiel Moreno of Pasto, Colombia**

The holy friar was born at Alfaro, La Rioja, Spain on 9 April 1848. Following the footsteps of his brother Father Eustaquio in the Philippine missions, he joined the Augustinian Recollect Order and professed his monastic vows at Monteagudo, Navarra, in 1865. He then studied theology at their convent in Marcilla, also in Navarra.

In October 1869, Ezekiel Moreno y Díaz de la Virgen del Rosario travelled to Manila where he arrived on 10 February 1870. He received the minor orders at the cathedral of Jaro in Iloilo. Ordained as priest in Manila on 2 June 1871, he was dispatched to Calapan, Mindoro for his first mission work. He subsequently ministered to the People of God in Palawan, Calapán once more, Las Piñas, Santo Tomas (Batangas), Intramuros, Santa Cruz (Manila) and served as prior of the religious community at the Recollect Estate House of Imus (Cavite).



**Saint Ezekiel Moreno,  
Apostolic Vicar of Casanare  
(1894-1896), Bishop of Pasto,  
Colombia (1896-1906)**

In 1885, he was elected prior of their novitiate house in Monteagudo. In 1888, he volunteered to work in Bogotá, Colombia in order to restore the Augustinian Recollection in that South American country. In 1894, Bishop Moreno was appointed apostolic vicar of Casanare in Colombia. In 1896, Pope Leo XIII transferred him to the Diocese of Pasto, also in Colombia.

Afflicted with cancer of the nasopharynx, Bishop Moreno traveled to Madrid for two surgical operations in 1906. He then expressed his wish to spend his last days beside the *Virgen del Camino* [Our Lady of the Way], celestial patroness of their convent in Monteagudo. In the odor of sanctity, Bishop Moreno joined his Father in Heaven in the morning of 19 August 1906.

A model of fidelity to the Gospel, a fervent devotee of the Most Blessed Sacrament and of Blessed Virgin Mary and ardent promoter of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus was Saint Ezekiel Moreno. His close contemporaries and confreres viewed him as a faithful observant of the evangelical counsels, a dedicated

missionary, a staunch defender of Church teachings, a perfect exemplar of the charism and spirituality of Augustinian Recollect Order and zealous promoter of community life. This modern saint, as former Prior General Javier Pipaón observes, “encompasses all the characteristics of the ideal Augustinian Recollect: prayer, apostolic work and common life.”

Saint Ezekiel Moreno “not only listened intently to the saving message of Jesus of Nazareth and put it into daily practice, but who so lived according to the example of the Lord’s life and conduct and so expressed his manner of living that Mother Church does not hesitate through her public celebrations to present him to the entire ecclesial community as an example of living faith and genuine Christian life,” declared Pope John Paul II during his homily at the canonization rites attended by thousands of bishops, priests, religious men and women as well as laypersons in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic on 11 October 1992 during the Quincentenary of the Evangelization of America.

### **Bishop Toribio Minguella of Puerto Rico**

A native of Igea de Cornago, La Rioja, Spain, where he was born on 16 April 1836, Toribio Minguella y Arnedo de la Virgen de la Merced professed his monastic vows in 1854. He joined the Recollect mission to Manila in 1858 and a year afterward he was ordained to the order of priesthood. After his pastoral ministry in Silang where he mastered his Tagalog, he was subsequently assigned to Las Piñas and to the Cavite parishes of Imus, Silang, Salinas, Kawit as parish priest from 1860 to 1876. The 1867-1870 triennium saw him as secretary provincial.

For thirteen years, Father Minguella exercised his priestly ministry as provincial commissary, procurator general and vicar provincial of Spain, whose main tasks were to defend the interests of Saint Nicholas Province at the royal court of Madrid as well as to send missionaries for the Philippines. In 1879, the provincial



**Fray Toribio Minguella,  
Bishop of Puerto Rico  
(1894-1898), Bishop of  
Sigüenza in Spain (1898-  
1916)**

chapter elected him as prior of the college seminary of San Millán de la Cogolla, La Rioja, and in 1888 as provincial chonicler. Pope Leo XIII appointed him bishop of Puerto Rico in early 1894. Four years later, in 1898, the Roman Pontiff transferred him to the Diocese of Sigüenza in Guadalajara, Spain.

Bishop Minguella was doubtless a man of great learning. He wrote in 1878 the pamphlet *Conquista espiritual de Mindanao por los Agustinos Recoletos* [Spiritual Conquest of Mindanao by the Augustinian Recollects]. An accomplished linguist of vast erudition, he authored the *Ensayo de Gramática Hispano-Tagalog* [Essay on Spanish-Tagalog Grammar], *Estudios comparativos entre el Tagalog (Filipinas) y el Sanscrito* [Comparative Studies between Tagalog and Sanskrit], and a Spanish textbook for young Tagalog students. He authored various historical books and articles as well as delivered funeral orations. Bishop Minguella penned the first extensive biography of Bishop Ezekiel Moreno in 1909 and compiled three volumes of the saint's correspondence and pastoral letters. Without his thorough documentation work on the life, writings, virtues and fame of sanctity of his holy confrere and contemporary, Bishop Moreno could have taken much longer to be raised to the altars of the Universal Church.

Bishop Minguella suffered an attack of uremia and died at Cintruénigo, Navarra, on 14 July 1920 at age 84. He was interred at Monteagudo, Navarra, beside Our Lady of the Way and his beloved Saint Ezekiel Moreno.

### **Bishop Francisco Javier Ochoa of Shangqiu, Henan, China**

Father Francisco Javier Ochoa y Ullate de la Virgen del Carmen was from Monteagudo, Navarra, where he was born on 31 January 1889. He professed his religious vows in 1907. He studied his theology at San Millán de la Cogolla, La Rioja, and moved to the United States of American in 1911.

Having finished his theological studies at Villanova University, USA, he received the holy order of presbyterate in Philadelphia in 1914. The young priest's first pastoral assignments were in Venezuela and Trinidad. He travelled to the Philippines in 1918 and was named parish priest of Corregidor by the American archbishop of Manila.

In March 1920, Father Ochoa was transferred to Shanghai. Four years later, he was appointed superior of the Mission of Kweiteh, now Shangqiu. On 11 March 1924, five young Recollect missionaries from Manila, including Luis Arribas y Martínez (1900-1970) and the Servant of God Mariano Gazpio y Ezcurra (1899-1989), joined Father Ochoa in the mission work in Shangqiu. To contribute to the evangelization of China was a plan dreamed of by the Recollect Order for centuries.

In 1929, Msgr. Ochoa was named apostolic prefect of Shangqiu, which at that time had more than 100,000 inhabitants. There were but 500 Catholics in 1924; the number grew to 10,366 twenty-five years later.

In 1937, the prefecture of Shangqiu was elevated to apostolic vicariate and Bishop Ochoa was consecrated as bishop in Manila by the apostolic delegate Archbishop Guglielmo Piani (1875-1956) on 31 October 1937 with Bishop Casimiro Lladoc (1893-1951) of Bacolod and Bishop James McCloskey of Jaro as co-ordinating prelates. On 5 June 1947, Shangqiu became a diocese with Msgr. Ochoa as First Bishop and titular bishop of Remesiana.



**Fray Francisco Javier Ochoa,  
Bishop of Kweiteh [present-day  
Shangqiu], Henan, China (1937-  
1948)**

In 1931, Bishop Ochoa built the cathedral of Shangqiu and two more churches in his diocese. The Shangqiu mission had a central mission center, a minor seminary, a dispensary which served as a school of medicine, an orphanage, a publication *Todos Misioneros*, a school for catechists and several chapels. Bishop Ochoa steered his diocese through the difficult times of the Japanese invasion and the nationalist-communist civil war that wracked the country for years.

Bishop Ochoa invited Augustinian Recollect nuns and sisters to the Shangqiu mission with “the charge of the instruction or education of nuns-to-be, the beneficial advancement of the Holy Childhood [which took charge of abandoned children], as well as the initiatives derived from it.” The first Augustinian Recollect nuns from Madrid and Granada, and Recollect Sisters from Manila arrived

in May 1931 at Shangqiu with Bishop Ochoa who personally talked with Pope Pius XI during his *ad limina* visit on the need for such religious sisters to assist in the various apostolates.

The 18<sup>th</sup> of January 1947 is commemorated as the canonical foundation date of what is now the Congregation of the Missionary Augustinian Recollect Sisters whose mother-house is located in Monteagudo, Navarra.

Bishop Ochoa's resignation on account of his poor health was accepted by the Holy See on 30 January 1948. Bishop Emeritus Ochoa spent the remaining years of his earthly life at their Convent in Monteagudo. He had attended all four sessions of the Second Vatican Council in Rome. The titular bishop of Remesiana passed away at Monteagudo on 6 September 1976 at age 87. His mortal remains were interred in the mother-house of the Missionary Augustinian Recollect Sisters, the congregation he had co-founded for the missions in China.

### **Bishop Luis Arribas of Shangqiu, Henan, China**

To succeed Bishop Ochoa in Shangqiu Diocese, Father Luis Arribas y Martínez, a native of Monteagudo, Navarra, where he was born on 1 June 1900, was designated by Pope Pius XII on 9 June 1949. He had pronounced his monastic vows in 1916 and received the priestly ordination in 1923. In Manila, he joined the first Recollect mission to China in 11 March 1924. Although he expressed his wish not to accept his episcopal appointment on 19 July 1949, the apostolic delegate wanted him to take possession first of his diocese.



**Bishop Luis Arribas of Shangqiu: Appointed by Pope Pius XII to succeed the resigned Bishop Ochoa**

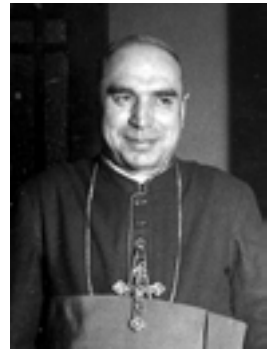
Bishop Arribas went on to take canonical possession of Shangqiu Diocese on 11 October 1949. But the bishop remained in Yuncheng and appointed Fray Arturo Quintanilla as vicar general of Shangqiu. The Recollect prelate's resignation was accepted on 17 October 1949 and left China in mid-1951. He passed away in Valladolid, Spain, on 3 February 1970.

**Bishop Arturo Quintanilla of Shangqiu, Henan, China**

A native of Berceo, La Rioja, Bishop Arturo Quintanilla y Manzanares de la Virgen del Rosario was born on 1 September 1904. He professed his vows in 1920 and was ordained as priest in 1927.

He resided in Manila from November 1927 until August 1928 when he was assigned to China. As curate, he exercised his ministry in Shanghai, Huchiao and Kuotsuen. He was editor of the mission magazine *Todos Misioneros* in 1931-1932.

Pope Pius XII appointed him bishop of Shangqiu on 18 November 1949; he was ordained bishop on 29 January 1950 in Shanghai. After his episcopal consecration, Bishop Quintanilla returned to his diocese on 24 February to continue his risky ministry of sanctifying, teaching and governing. He had been vicar capitular since 7 February 1948 and vicar general since 11 October 1949. In September 1948, the communist troops had overcome Shangqiu. And the cruel religious persecution soon after commenced. Bishop Quintanilla and Fray Lorenzo Peña were imprisoned from 18 April to 18 June 1951. For two months, they suffered harsh prison conditions. Chinese and foreign missionaries were subjected alike to constant monitoring, hate campaign, discredit and all forms of harassment. Several Chinese Recollects were imprisoned in labor camps for years.



**Bishop Arturo Quintanilla  
of Shangqiu, Henan,  
China 1949 1970)**

After their release from prison, Bishop Quintanilla and Fray Lorenzo were subjected to house arrest. Other Chinese Recollects were likewise incarcerated since early 1951. On 21 September 1951, Bishop Quintanilla and three Recollect confreres (Pedro Colomo, Lorenzo Peña, Mariano Gazpio) sought official permission to leave the mission. On 30 August 1952, Bishop Quintanilla was finally expelled from China and followed by nine Spanish Recollect confreres. Nine Chinese Recollects, two philosophy seminarians, and twenty-two religious sisters in Shangqiu remained to keep the faith.

At age 66, Bishop Arturo Quintanilla died on 21 November 1970 in Valladolid, Spain.

Before his expulsion, the prelate appointed Father Jose Shan (1905-1965) as vicar general. He was ordained to the presbyterate in 1938 and became the first Chinese Recollect priest in history. Accused of being counter-revolutionary, he was sentenced to incarceration and languished in prison camps in 1955-1965. A very sick Father Shan died soon after release from prison.

Through the decades of communist rule, the ethnic Chinese Recollect priests were methodically humiliated, imprisoned and subjected to tortures and indignities. They suffered hunger, exhaustion, extreme cold, hard labor in communes and eventually death due to debilitated health. The untold atrocities of the Cultural Revolution committed against the persecuted Church of the People's Republic of China lasted ten years. The survivors were able to communicate with the vicar provincial of the Philippines in the late 1980s. These last few years saw gradual positive changes in China's religious policies, and Catholicism has been declared as one of the five legal religions.

### **Bishop Nicolas She [Shi] Jing Xian of Shangqiu, Henan, China**

Fr. Nicolas She Jing Xian replaced Fr. Jose Shan, the vicar general named by Bishop Quintanilla before he and then vicar general Lorenzo Peña were expelled from China in 1952.

Nicolas She was born on 3 February 1921 in She-Liou-Lou, Che-cheng, in Honan, China, and studied his elementary and secondary education in Shangqiu, his philosophy in the seminary of the Jesuits in An-Hui. He was admitted to the novitiate of the Augustinian Recollects in 1940. He took up his theology in Shangqiu where he professed his solemn vows in 1946 and was ordained as priest by Bishop Felipe Coté of Suchow on 29 June 1948. Nicolas was "a man of learning with a profound spiritual life, prudent and faithful; he personifies the legacy of the missionaries, the embodiment of the spirit of the martyrs of the Church in China during the years of most ruthless persecution." He was deemed a counter-revolutionary by the Communist government and imprisoned for two years. After his release in 1964, he took care of aged mother and lived in misery as "enemy of the people" for fifteen years. He was suddenly rehabilitated in 1979 and taught English until 1987, being banned from his priestly ministry.



The first Chinese bishop of Shangqiu, Msgr. Nicolas She Jing Xian, was ordained as bishop clandestinely on 8 May 1991 by Bishop Anthony Li Duan of Xi'an. He was openly installed on 13 May 1999 and reclaimed the old Recollect Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Together with fifteen Recollects and 25 Augustinian Recollect Missionary Sisters, he exercised pastoral care over 20,000 Catholics [of the total population of 2.5 million of Shangqiu] in three communities. The 88-year-old Recollect prelate passed away on 21 September 2009. Former Prior General Javier Pipaón depicted Bishop She at the Third OAR International Mission Congress in Manila in 2006 as the person whom “Divine Providence placed in Shangqiu to revitalize the Christian and religious life.”

May the Lord Jesus put under His protective and loving mantle the mission territories nurtured by the Recollect prelates, the Servant of God Mariano Gazpio and the indigenous Chinese missionaries and catechists.

And may the blood of the martyred prelates, priests and religious of the Augustinian Recollect Family and of all other religious congregations as well as the hundreds of thousands of persecuted and martyred Christians of China fecundate the land and hearts where the seeds of Faith had been sown in the past by selfless missionaries. And they shall not have labored in vain for the evangelization of China.



**Bishop Nicolas She  
[Shi] Jing Xian of  
Shangqiu, Henan,  
China in 1991-2009.**

### **Bishop Martín Legarra of Bocas del Toro, Panamá**

Fray Martín Legarra y Tellechea was the first rector of Colegio de San Jose [now University of San Jose-Recoletos] in Cebu City and director of Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos in 1958-1961 in San Carlos City. Martin Legarra y Tellechea was born on 25 January 1910 at Murguindeta, Navarra, Spain. He professed the three vows at the convent of Monteagudo in 1926.

After his ordination to the priesthood in Manila in 1933, his superiors assigned him to Calapán (Mindoro), Cavite City, Pola (Mindoro), and San Sebastian Convent in Manila. He served as secretary provincial in 1938-1945. As rector of Colegio de San Jose-Recoletos, he managed the prestigious school in its delicate pioneering decade from 1947 to 1957 and later wrote its 300+-page history. Bishop Legarra retraced his steps to his beloved San Jose twice.

After his two-year stint as provincial councilor in Madrid, he was assigned in 1963 by His Holiness Pope Paul VI to the newly erected prelature of Bocas del Toro in Panamá, where he was later consecrated as First Bishop in 1965. Bishop Legarra labored zealously for the evangelization of Indian tribes under his episcopal jurisdiction. He actively took part in the Second Vatican Council in Rome. In 1969, Bishop Legarra was transferred to the Diocese of Santiago de Veraguas, also in Panamá. In 1975, he tendered his resignation as bishop of Santiago de Veraguas but continued to serve the People of God in Panamá.



**Fray Martín Legarra, Bishop of Bocas del Toro, Panama (1963-1969), Bishop of Santiago de Veraguas, Panama (1969-1975).**

The three volumes of his *De mi acontecer misionero* [About My Missionary Event] tell us about his missionary activities and serve as inspirational reading to young and old readers. He wrote innumerable articles in the *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás* and *Misiones católicas en el Extremo Oriente* [Catholic Missions in the Far East].. A pastor to the very end, Bishop Legarra served the parish of San Francisco de la Caleta in Panama where his parishioners revered him very much and where the prelate finally succumbed to lung cancer on 15 June 1985 at age 75.

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# Augustinian Recollect Nuns: The Beginnings<sup>1</sup>

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Ángel Martínez Cuesta, OAR

Translated from the Spanish by  
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## The Setting

*Reform and yearnings for greater perfection in the post-Tridentine Church of Spain.*

The Augustinian Recollect nuns saw the light of day after the Council of Trent, and, in some measure they owed their life to its reform decrees enacted in December 1563 and taken in by the Augustinian Order in the 1564 general chapter and, with more clarity and extension, in the 1581 Constitutions. But their most characteristic traits—those that highlighted their spiritual physiognomy, those that set their direction and assigned to them a niche in the history of the Church—came from other sources.

The Council of Trent proposed a reform markedly disciplinary in nature. It limited itself to regularizing discipline and banishing from the convents the grave abuses that were desiccating their vital juices: forced admissions, too early professions, disproportion between the number of religious and the income of the convent, infringement of the cloister rule, too much familiarity with friars and clergymen,

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<sup>1</sup>Origen de las Agustinas Recoletas, in Angel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA. *Agustinas Recoletas*. Fidelidad carismática (Madrid 1993) 49-73.

personal money, scandalous inequalities within the community, and a long list of other abuses and excesses.

Logically, such proposals did not satisfy the yearnings of the religious of the period. In the Spanish convents of the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, magnanimous souls abounded, souls in love with prayer, longing to make a distinction in the service of Jesus Christ and to share His poverty and deprivation. They were anxious and radical souls, enemies of mediocrity, who wished to join the founders of their respective orders and to duplicate in their convents the system instituted by them. They craved for an authentic poverty, replete with deprivations, rejections and sufferings, for a life of more prayer and recollection, of more silence and austerity, for a common life simpler and egalitarian.

All these ideas had surged forth and were conceived in a Franciscan home during the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It gave origin to countless hermitages, places for recollection, houses of prayer and retreat. In 1523, the prior general Francisco de Quiñones codified such ideals in the constitutions destined to exert a definite influence upon all the Discalced and Recollect movements of the era.

The dwellers of those houses were few and on their own free will. The silence was almost absolute and it tended to create an atmosphere of quietude and calm that facilitated the exercise of prayer, which should fill the whole day of the religious: "Having complied with Divine Office and with obedience, the entire time of the religious has to be reading, prayer, meditation and contemplation. Poverty must shine in the apparel which should be made of sackcloth; in the footwear, hemp sandals or galosh; in the bed, "... let them not use any cushion [...] or small pillows"; and in the refectory: tables without tablecloth, abstinence from meat, very frequent fasts. Ascetical practices likewise were very abundant: "*capítulos de culpis*," disciplines, exercises of humility and penance in the refectory, detachment from temporal business dealings, etc.

Henceforth, no Spanish reformer of the 16<sup>th</sup> century would manage to do without these constitutions. In the 1550s, Saint Peter Alcántara (†1562) integrated a great part of his norms into the Discalced Constitutions of the province of Saint Joseph. Saint Teresa of Jesus shortly after kept them very much in mind in her reform of the Carmelite Order in Spain, although she did not enrich them with the seal of her overwhelming personality and with the explicit recourse

to primitive Carmelite tradition. In the next decades what she had done would reverberate in almost all the Spanish communities.

Between 1585 and 1612, Discalced or Recollect reforms surged forth among the Benedictines, Dominicans, Cistercians, Mercedarians and Trinitarians as well as in almost all the feminine religious orders of the Peninsula: Augustinians (1589), Bernardines (1594), Conceptionists (1603), Jeronimes (1603), Brigittines (1637) and some convents of Poor Clares and in the female counterparts of the Benedictines, Calced Carmelites and Dominicans.<sup>2</sup>

The Tridentine reform was slow and laborious. Before making headway in the convents, it was necessary to declare an aggressive war against the centuries-old customs and against those barriers not easy to hurdle. The four-estate structure of society was mirrored inside the monasteries, giving rise to privileges and inequalities that went against the very roots of community life. At the end of the century, in monasteries there were still ladies of noble families who were surrounded by servants with their individual rooms opulently equipped with furniture and well-provided with material goods and who lived in common life together—or better who coexisted—with simple religious who were deprived of what was most essential.

In the convents there were religious or clergywomen who were in put in charge of choir services and who monopolized the privileges of the monastery, and lived together with poor lay women, assigned to domestic chores with no right whatsoever to take part in chapters or in responsible posts in the organization and administration of the community. Towards 1576, at the convent of Saint Anne in Avila there were nuns who availed themselves of up to six rooms: visitors' room,



Saint Alonso de Orozco (1500-1591)

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<sup>2</sup> Their origin and ideals have been discussed in detail in Angel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *El movimiento recoleto en los siglos XVI y XVIII, in Recollectio* 5 (1982) 5-47.

bedroom, oratory, kitchen, bathroom and room for servants.<sup>3</sup>

The precarious economic situation of a great number of monasteries, which stemmed from the excessive number of religious, the maladministration and the absence of dowry, habitually brought about a negative impact on religious life.

Neither was there a dearth of ladies constrained to withdraw to the convents in the absence of their husbands or young maidens waiting for marriageable age. Their presence did not always result in any damage to community life. Occasionally, they proved to be beneficial to the nuns, their community and to the very civil society. But such practice doubtless brought with it detrimental seeds that compromised the tranquility and even the spiritual welfare of monasteries. The documents of the period speak about too frequent visits of relatives and gentlemen, infringements of the cloister rule and theatrical performances devoid of edifying aims.

In 1572, the archbishop of Zaragoza was scandalized by the freedom in the administration of two Cistercian convents in Catalonia. In 1580, the nuncio Felipe Sega denounced before Rome the abuses against the cloister rule and against religious decency he had encountered among Franciscan tertiaries of three convents in Zamora. In 1586, the Count of Barajas, president of the Council of Castile, cried out against theatrical presentations in nunneries and monasteries. In 1587, Sister Beatriz Escudero, a religious of the Royal Discalced nuns of Madrid, wrote the king about the scandalous conduct of a certain María Pacheco and her servant during the four years she had been living in the monastery. Two years later, it was Doña Luisa de Cárdenas, the betrothed of the Count of Fuensalida, who was sowing unrest and disorder with her irregular life in the nunnery of La Concepción of the Order of Saint Jerome in Madrid.

The Roman Curia tied to chop off the roots of such abuses. In 1595, Clement VIII censured and banned that customary practice with grave sanctions. But his norms encountered opposition from the Castilian parliament that instead saw in it the best safeguard for women and for the husband fighting in battle fronts as well as for “young noble and decent maidens without fathers nor mothers nor grandmothers.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> José SÁNCHEZ MORA, *Mujeres, conventos and formas de la religiosidad barroca* (Madrid 1988) 128.

<sup>4</sup> The substantiating proofs are in A. MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Las*



### **Its repercussion in the Augustinian nuns**

No news of such abuses among the Augustinian nuns of the period has survived in the present. But it does not seem their convents were completely immune from them, even though the 1581 constitutions had enacted norms severe enough with respect to admission of candidates, elections, cloister, access of friars as well as the election and behavior of confessors. The minimum age for admission to the habit and profession was fixed at twelve to sixteen years old, respectively. Elections would be done through secret ballot and would be always held in the presence of the provincial or his delegate. Cloister was adjusted to the strict demands of Pius V and Gregory XIII—with grilles, veil and chaperons. The confessors should be elected by the council for one sole biennium and should be of mature age, serious and prudent.”<sup>5</sup>

The priors general were anxious to compel the compliance of these norms, at least during their infrequent visits to nunneries. But apparently they were unable to successfully uproot the centuries-old customs. The life of Mother Mariana de San José records the presence of young girls at the convent in Ciudad Rodrigo as well as some infringements against cloister rule. Her sister Francisca entered that convent in 1569 when she was barely four years old. Ten years later, she herself did the same at age eleven only. She was forced to cross the threshold and stayed in the cloister against her will: “I felt very sorry for having to remain here, and so I cried a lot, like a little girl and blind in casting away such blessed lot.” A little later she spoke of other girls and boys who entered the cloister and played with them.<sup>6</sup>

Keeping personal money and preferential treatment for religious of noble origin must have been more rampant. Some nuns availed themselves of personal money. During a visit, the prior general Gregorio Petrocchini tried to regulate the keeping of personal money but without attempting to eradicate the practice. The nuns of the Augustinian convent in Madrid where those of noble ancestry abounded were treated with utmost respect by the prior general who

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*agustinas recoletas. Cuatro siglos de vida contemplativa, in Recollectio* 14 (1991) 201-202.

<sup>5</sup> *Constituciones OSA* (Rome 1581) 162-169.

<sup>6</sup> Luis MUÑOZ, *Vida de la venerable M. Mariana de S. Joseph, fundadora de la Recolectión de las monjas agustinas* (Madrid 1644) 7, 10, 13.

always addressed them as “Mesdames” or “Ladies” [*dominae*] or by another similar title. He gave permission to one of them, Inés de Escobar, to construct her own cell and make use of it throughout her life. He authorized another nun in the convent of Saint Ursula in Toledo to hire the services of a “servant” in the duration of her illness. In 1589, Princess Anne of Austria entered the convent of Madrigal with a lifetime income and other privileges hardly reconcilable with community life. The inequalities had been so natural even in a very observant nunnery like the convent of Our Lady of Grace in Avila. Still in 1631, Sister Catalina Arriola del Espíritu Santo, one of the first professed in the convent of La Visitación, bewailed the needs encountered by three Recollect nuns who sought refuge in it during the crisis of 1611.

The same poverty of the communities had negative effect on common life. Toward 1650, the convent of Talavera de la Reina, erected a century before (1562) by Saint Alonso de Orozco, was still unable to reassure the sustenance of its community. Consequently, every nun had to work for her own food and sustenance; she ordinarily consumed her food in her cell.

The existent abuses did not seem flagrant and perhaps they were even infrequent. On the one hand, they were not deserving of praise inside that atmosphere of spiritual strength. But, on the other, that same strength highlighted their grievousness and, in union with the trends of the period to restore the old observance, the situation brought about in countless souls the anguish to establish in the religious order a more austere and perfect lifestyle. Some men and women religious gazed with holy emulation the Discalced and Recollect experiences of the other orders and wished to pass them on in their own congregation. In that manner they hoped to extirpate the flaws that still sullied the face of their communities, and simultaneously, to satisfy up their yearnings for more silence, more penance and more prayer.

María de Jesús (1561-1611) of the illustrious Covarrubias lineage, a young professed in the convent of Toledo, was the first in echoing these anxieties by reporting them to the superiors of the Order as well as to the king himself in 1587. Few months later it was the prior provincial himself who advocated before Philip II the reform of friars and nuns. He recommended to the monarch the establishment of some houses of recollection: “If it is to your pleasure to your Majesty

that some religious men and women of the same Order had petitioned, that is, the foundation of some houses of recollection dealt with.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Birth and first steps**

#### **The Provincial Chapter of Toledo**

Fortunately, the king had all ears to these petitions. On 21 September 1588, the monarch took advantage of the visit paid by the general in the royal palace of El Escorial in order to manifest his will that “in these provinces and others in Spain, houses of the Recollects—for friars and nuns as well—be established because his Majesty has been for many days notified about the matter and many religious want it.” He did not content himself with this notification. On 2 December, he dispatched his own emissary to the provincial chapter of Toledo that the general was presiding with the specific instruction to ask for the foundation of Recollect houses in the Augustinian province. The chapter could not fail to hearken to such an explicit call, and on the fifth day of December it enacted an ordinance. We, the Augustinian Recollect friars and nuns, have always seen it as our birth certificate:

Since there are or can be among us some brothers so desirous of monastic perfection that they would want to follow a more austere plan of life, and whose legitimate desire is to be furthered so that no obstacles be placed in the part of the work of the Holy Spirit, after duly consulting our most reverend father general and having implored his leave, we determine that, in our Province, three or more monasteries for me be set aside or newly founded and the same number for women, in which a stricter form of life may be practiced, which the father provincial with his council shall prescribe after a mature reflection.<sup>8</sup>

The provincial council quickly implemented the orders of the chapter. In a meeting on 20 September 1589, it approved the *Forma de vivir* [Way of Life] of the friars yearning for greater perfection and a month later it placed at their disposal the convent of Talavera de Reina.

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<sup>7</sup> *Crónicas OAR* I, 127-128.

<sup>8</sup> *Bullarium OAR* I, 43-44.

### **The Convent of La Visitación and Saint Alonso de Orozco**

The reform of the nuns followed a very similar rhythm. On 6 September 1589, the provincial authorized the foundation of a convent for anyone who wished to embrace the reform. It entrusted the necessary channels to the “prudence, letters and conscience” of Saint Alonso de Orozco. On 23 October, he accepted the houses which one of those under his spiritual direction, Prudencia Grillo, owned at Príncipe Street in Madrid.

On 24 December, the same provincial installed in those houses the first female community of the Recollection. It was a small community composed of two religious who came from the Augustinian convent of Avila and five novices devoid of any religious experience: Prudencia Grillo, who had a frivolous past, her three servants and María Delgado San Miguel, a young woman whose Recollect vocation the saint two years earlier had foretold: “Do not be afraid, my daughter, since I will make you a nun, because you are going to be the first nun of my convent.”<sup>9</sup>

Saint Alonso de Orozco himself was put in charge of formulating the rule which, in union with the general Constitutions of the Order, would direct their life. In it was a simple note that was ascetic in nature, without any theological motivations. Everything was centered on the spirit of poverty and penance, common life and cloister. No religious could possess any private property. The fruit of her work as well as personal gifts or donations would go to the common fund, from which everyone would be provided with according to her needs, without distinction or privilege. Every religious would receive equal treatment, and honorific titles would be downright banned: “No one shall be called *doña* or *madame*, but *sor*.”



**Venerable Mariana de San José (1568-1638)**

<sup>9</sup> *Información sumaria del proceso de beatificación* (El Escorial 1991) 212.

In the ascetical aspect which was not exceptionally rigorous, the rule underscored fasts, abstinence from meat during Advent and Lent and thrice a week for the most part of the year, and self-flagellations. The life of piety possessed an unmistakable Eucharistic tone.<sup>10</sup> Surprising, however, is the absence of mental prayer which was the most characteristic observance of the Recollect movement. The nuns or maybe Saint Alonso de Orozco himself must have taken notice of this absence very soon and they did not take long to designate for meditation a place of importance in their daily activity. In 1610, they already devoted two hours to meditation practiced meticulously in every Recollect convent of the period.

The first years of the Recollect nuns in the convent of La Visitación bore fruit. With the fervor common to all initial foundation and under the farseeing gaze of Saint Alonso de Orozco, even the restrictions of the place and the conditions of poverty did not pass unobserved.

Their lifestyle at La Visitación did not remain unnoticed in the Order's convents for women. Sor María de Covarrubias attentively followed its progress from her convent in Toledo and would have wished to be part of its community with two more companions.<sup>11</sup> In Ciudad Rodrigo another young professed who bore the name of Sor Mariana de Manzanedo, who would go down in history as Mother Mariana de San José, was craving to join the pioneering nuns.<sup>12</sup> In the end, the two had to wait for a better occasion to fulfill their wishes. In the meantime, the two nuns were replaced by a good and commendable group of candidates who came from the outside world. From December 1590 to December 1592, eleven novices pronounced their religious vows at La Visitación.

Unfortunately, the material foundations of the convent were weak, without any resistance or capacity to sustain the structure on which it was brought into being. As what he had done years before at Talavera (1562), also this time Saint Alonso de Orozco somewhat ceased to worry about the material aspects of his foundation. With his death in September 1591, the first alarm sounded. The alms

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<sup>10</sup> This rule can be read in T. de HERRERA, *Alphabetum augustinianum* II (Madrid 1644) 154, and A. DE VILLERINO, *Esclarecido solar de las Religiosas de N. P.S. Agustín* I (Madrid 1690) 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. A. DE VILLERINO, *Solar* I, 144b-145a.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. L. MUÑOZ, *Vida*, 45.

dwindled, and the nuns were deprived of their guide and mentor. Soon the dwellers noticed the discomforts of their edifice; poverty began to be felt, and dismay was little by little spreading. In 1594, the superior—it could not be ascertained if it was out of zeal or just to escape from a difficult situation—left La Visitación in order to open the second Recollect convent at Salamanca.

The community accepted the big blow but it did not get discouraged at all. Still, it was an active community with sufficient internal cohesion and capacity to get new vocations. Between 1593 and 1609, twenty-two new novices professed the vows in the convent. Their spiritual level was more than discreet. Otherwise, Juan de Alarcón would have hardly had recourse to them in 1606 in order to give life to the first convent of the Discalced Mercedarian nuns. Attachment to its traditions, its capacity to resist against the pressures exerted by the queen, the services that the nuns rendered very shortly after to society and, above all, their survival in such a hostile hub, constituted proof enough to support the hypothesis.

### **Mother Mariana de San José (1568-1638)**

In spite of everything, the reform seems to have already lost its primitive luster. To the eyes of strangers, the reform would even seem disillusioned and in decadence, without the guts to channel the spontaneous spiritual current which within the Augustinian Order had already resulted in the foundation of three new Recollect convents. This impression, strengthened by evident views of social and charitable order, could explain the intervention of Margaret of Austria which culminated in December 1610 with the transfer of the community to Colegio de Santa Isabel and imposition of a somewhat different way of conceiving the Recollection.

This new or second Recollection responded better to the signs of the times, for it had at its disposal better structured laws and, above all, it was managed by a charismatic figure with very outstanding human and spiritual qualities. And, if this were not enough, it counted further on the support of Queen Margaret.

Their promoters were Father Agustín Antolínez (1554-1626), a professor of the University of Salamanca, future bishop of Santiago, and at that time vicar provincial of the Augustinian Province of Castile, and Mother Mariana de San José (1568-1638), that young girl who recently professed in Ciudad Rodrigo had

already cherished the idea of becoming a Recollect in La Visitación. At the end of 1602 in Valladolid, Father Antolínez got an invitation from Bautista de Elejalde in order to establish in Eibar (Guipúzcoa) a reformed convent of his Order. Antolínez did not expect the generous offer of the gentleman from Eibar, but neither did he find himself completely unprepared. He knew of several religious who yearned for a stricter life, and he did not fail to take advantage of that very favorable occasion in order to please them. After commenting about it with some close persons, he went to Ciudad Rodrigo in order to personally interview Mother Mariana, to whom he wanted to entrust the administration of the projected foundation.

Mother Mariana initially refused to accept it, but in the end she lowered her head and placed herself at his orders. "I returned to the father provincial," she herself would write years later, "and with tears I told him that if he thought I could go and I am fit for that foundation, it would be for me the great compensation that the Order could give me."<sup>13</sup>

With the nun's availability the chief unknown factor was set aside, and the provincial could move along with the procedures at full speed. On 8 May 1603, Mother Mariana was already in Eibar ready to finalize the foundation. After confession and receiving communion in the parish, she entered the cloister and with a small group composed of three religious, two *beatas* from Salamanca and some young women of the town, she commenced the first Recollect nunnery.

The life of the convent was regulated by the constitutions written by the Father Antolínez. In subsequent years the mother superior retouched them and perfected them until 1616 when they reached their definitive form. In 1619, the constitutions merited the Paul V's confirmation, and six years later in November 1625, Urban VIII implemented them in all the monasteries of the Augustinian Recollect nuns.

These constitutions are the basic charismatic text of the female branch of the Recollection. On the one hand, they contain the most genuine expression of its primitive inspiration and, on the other hand, in three long centuries of juridical existence they have been molding a great part of the configuration of their present human spiritual physiognomy. Though not excessively lengthy, the thirty-

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. L. MUÑOZ, *Vida*, 54a.

nine chapters surpassed those of the other Recollect movements of the period. Worthy likewise of note is the conformity between the orientations that are ascetical and spiritual in nature and the practical norms. In this balance, without a trace of a doubt lies one of the causes of their survival. Still today many of the pages of the constitutions preserve the luxuriance of youth.

The constitutions consist of thirty-nine chapters and a prologue which certainly is very substantial. The divine origin of the community is affirmed in the prologue. Its objective is spelled out and the community is placed under the protection of the One who brought it into being. In the Order, God has stirred up generous souls who want to keep “with all perfection the Rule that our glorious father has given to the nuns and that primitive spirit of solitude and prayer.” The thirty-nine chapters translate these yearnings into norms of life. According to the prologue, “most of them would come from those accepted in the whole Order.” The affirmation responded to the reality, if we would limit ourselves by using purely quantitative parameters. The regulation of elections and governance, the handling of the sick, the color of the habit, great part of the norms which channeled the daily progress of the community, penal law and, in part, the doctrine on the vows, were etched deeply along Augustinian traditions. But the basic ideas of the constitutions that define the uniqueness originated from other sources. The focal point, duration and modality of mental prayer, regulation of liturgical life, love for contemplation, effort to build a perfect community life, exclusion of all preferential treatment, intensive penitential life and a long list of pertinent matters are new in the Augustinian order and proclaim their dependence on the Discalced and Recollect movement towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and at the outset of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In perfect consonance with the other Discalced and Recollect constitutions of the period—both male and female groups—the constitutions of the Augustinian Recollect nuns prescribed two hours of mental prayer daily as well as the plain and slow recitation of the canonical hours, for the purpose of facilitating the internalization of their spiritual message. Silence and recollection were held in great esteem. There was preference for small communities wherein peace and fraternal charity were observed very easily. Advent was celebrated in advance in mid-September. Notably, they increased the frequency of Holy Communion and discipline which became



a practice thrice a week. And most of all, they longed to create an authentic community life which abolished as principle anything that reeked of privilege or elitist treatment.

Its ecclesial spirit wherein the Augustinian heritage and the tradition of reforms were initiated by Saint Teresa of Jesus attracted attention as well. The Recollect nuns offered their lives “for the needs of the Church,” for which “these needs being continuous needs, their prayer must likewise be continuous.” In a special manner, the Church was kept in mind in the Wednesday discipline. Recollection was another most repeated idea in the text of their constitutions. Solitude, silence and recollection are recommended in many pages. However, they stand out most of all. Here solitude is presented as absolutely essential in order to reach perfection, since without it prayer is next to impossible and without prayer the every attempt to attain perfection would result to naught. Consequently, the nun must stay during the great part of the day withdrawn in contemplation in a “cell apart,” “alone” with God, and oblivious of what goes on around her. External solitude would be of no use to her if she is worried about everything that happens inside and outside the house. And she has to persevere in her solitude, although she may encounter great adversities, considering any toil as well done, aware that “by overcoming difficulties, eternal goods are attained.” For love of contemplation, “needlework” and entry of lay persons in the cloister “although they may don the habit of a nun” are banned. The use of individual rooms is made a general practice. Recollection was especially rigorous during Communion days when even community recreation was suppressed.

The maximum number of religious in every convent was fixed at twenty nuns and three *freilas*.<sup>14</sup> In special cases, one more nun could be admitted but they may not be more than twenty-four. The reasons of this predilection for small communities are not given. But it is already known that this preference was a characteristic feature of all these Recollect movements. As affirmed by the *Forma de vivir* of the Augustinian Recollects, they believed fraternal love was best maintained in these small communities. Peace and love

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<sup>14</sup>The *Real Academia Española* dictionary defines *freila* as *religiosa lega de una orden regular* which is translated as *lay sister of a religious order*. Cf. REAL ACADEMIA ESPAÑOLA, *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* (Madrid 1992) 994.

among sisters, on top of responding to the strict mandate of Saint Augustine in his Rule, is a sign and condition essential to the Spirit's presence in the community, "because the Spirit does not dwell among wills in disagreement, but He surely lives in peace-loving hearts."<sup>15</sup>

### Charismatic relationship with the Recollects

Just a superficial comparison between the nuns' constitutions and the *Forma de vivir* of the Augustinian Recollects is enough to discover the correlation in them and in many other ideas as well as to clearly manifest their intimate spiritual relationship. The two texts fully coincide in so substantial elements as the length and type of mental prayer, liturgical life, orientation toward recollection, love for the perfect community life, elimination of personal money and every privilege, exemption or preferential treatment, the intensity of penitential life, etc. Both texts prescribe two hours of mental prayer. Both preferred the plain and slow recitation of the canonical hours. Both showed a high regard for silence and recollection. Both preferred small communities. Both imposed discipline thrice weekly. Both celebrated Advent in advance in the middle of September and Lent to the Third Sunday before Lent. Both agreed in a multitude of ascetical practices. Both increased very remarkably the frequency of the reception of Communion. And finally both abolished as principle anything that reeked of privilege or elite treatment.

Surprising it is then that recently there was an attempt to disconnect the female branch of the Recollection from the male one, disregarding the very basic data and their simultaneous birth in the Toledo Chapter and the identity of their religious ideals. According to Balbino Rano, the Recollection of Mother Mariana would be a Recollection of roots, of new characteristics and



The Royal Monastery of the Incarnation in Madrid, Spain where Mother Mariana de San José lived in 1626-1638. Photo: Jesús DIEZ, Mariana de San José, *mística y fundadora* (Madrid 2017) 63.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. L. MUÑOZ, *Vida*, 26.

objectives, very different from those of the Discalced Recollection that was conceived in Toledo and intimately related with those of the Calced Recollection whose creation was ordered by the Province of Castile in the 1598 Chapter.<sup>16</sup>

This theory is new, unknown to Muñoz, Herrera, Andrés de San Nicolás and even to Villerino himself and those writers of the 17<sup>th</sup> century who wrote Mother Mariana's biography and the origin of the female branch of the Recollection. Neither did the Augustinian Recollect nuns have found any relation at all with that [1598] Chapter, whose existence they were unaware of. Rano's foundations were likewise very tenuous. He merely cites the dissimilarity of footwear and the color of the habit worn inside the convent as well as the different mindset they showed with respect to the possession of goods held in common:

While the movement of the Discalced Recollects did not necessarily wear shoes nor don the white habit nor keep possessions outside the walls of the convent, the Calced Recollect movement of men as well as that of women, had the need to wear shoes (not to walk barefoot). It spoke of donning the white habit and keeping possessions outside the convent or monastery.

In the face of the aforementioned union of the fundamental aspects in religious life, the shoe, hempen sandal or any sandal should be of no consequence. Towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Father Diego de Santa Teresa had noticed the risk of exaggerating their importance and had been adamant in paying more attention to the constitutional precepts regarding prayer, community life and asceticism.

This author [Alonso de Villerino] affirms that  
the venerable Recollect nuns, just by wearing shoes

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<sup>16</sup> Father Balbino Rano expounds these ideas almost always with the same arguments in the following articles: *Fisonomía y fin de los movimientos de recolección y descalcez de la orden agustiniana en España*, in *La Ciudad de Dios* 182 (1969) 30-65, especially 35-52; *Documentos en torno al breve pontificio 'Religiosas Familias' (16.IX.1912), documento fundacional de la orden de agustinos recoletos*, in *Analecta Augustiniana* 49 (1986) 311-349, especially 334-335; *Los primeros tiempos del convento de agustinas de Puebla de los Angeles en los documentos de su archivo y del Archivo Vaticano*, in *Archivo Agustiniiano* 71 (1987) 235-390, especially 258-267.

doubtless belong to the Observance, although they had nothing distinctive from the Observance. Since how much more, despite the wearing of shoes, shall they belong to the Discalced movement, so much so that they don the habit made of coarse cloth, wear narrow sleeves and live according to laws of the reform [...] A strong issue is that the shoe and hempen sandal, not going through the religious state of mere accidents, must be necessarily considered as essential and constitutive element and as the only basis of difference [...] if the Recollect nuns, although they don the habit of coarse cloth, wear narrow sleeves, and live according to the laws of the reform, for wearing shoes they are not within the jurisdiction of the Recollection, much less by wearing shoes shall they belong to our very religious Observance, not having anything else that would put them under the jurisdiction of the Observance.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>*Crónicas OAR* 3 (Zaragoza 1743) 25. On this, read Martínez Cuesta's article: *Las agustinas recoletas*, in *Recollectio* 14 (1991) 213-222. Herein the interchangeable nature of "*Recolección*" and "*Descalcez*" is affirmed. The meaning of the white habit and phenomenon of Calced Augustinian Recollects—an ephemeral episode with no influence at all on the evolution of the province is limited—and some information that demonstrates the different way of thinking with which the communities of the men and women religious faced the problem of communal poverty. In general, the Discalced and Recollect nuns admitted ownership of goods in common, while the preferential option for communal poverty prevailed among the friars. It was the most logical option—almost the only one possible—given the nuns' cloister regulation.

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# Retracing the Ritarian Roots: Dionisia, Cecilia Rosa Talangpaz and the Recollects of San Sebastian Convent<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

*We retrace the roots of Saint Rita College in Manila. In the horizon, we view the foundresses of the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters: Mother Dionisia and Mother Cecilia Rosa and the Augustinian Recollects of San Sebastian Convent. The foundresses were sisters who were born in Calumpit, Bulacan. They left their hometown in 1719 and travelled to San Sebastian de Calumpang in Manila where the image of Our Lady of Mount Carmel revered since 1621. They resided at Bilibid Viejo where they lived a life of seclusion, contemplation and mortification. Their daily schedule had some six hours of mass, prayer, other spiritual practices at San Sebastian Church. Their virtue and piety attracted the Augustinian Recollects. Not long after the Beaterio de San Sebastian was founded. It was 16 July 1725 when they professed as terciarias and followed the Rule of Saint Augustine under the protection of the Recollects of San Sebastian Convent. Soon, more women were admitted into their lifestyle. The observance*

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<sup>1</sup> With slight changes and enriched bibliography, it is reprinted from *Philippine Social Science Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1 (January – June 2019) 97-112.

*of silence was strictly mandated, as it greatly aided them in communing with God. They continued their service to San Sebastian Church and attended to all related to its upkeep and solemn divine worship. Their lifestyle soon focused on Christian education on top of their service to the age-old Carmel shrine. In 1907, the Recollects urged the Beaterio to open a school for girls. And it came into being as Saint Rita Academy, later as Saint Rita College.*

## Prologue

Retracing the roots of a venerable institution or a prominent person somewhere in the remote past is indeed a great challenge faced by any historian who's worth the name. You pore over archival manuscripts, articles, periodicals, photographs and books, and try to put the puzzling pieces into place. You read the countless related sources and bibliographic data and you try to make some sense of it. You need, put within your reach and utilize essential research tools like paleography, command of a foreign language (in our case, Spanish and Latin), fine dictionary and knowledge of style that can help you understand what the whole thing is all about. But you try to be objective at all costs after analyzing the sources and having to interpret the data at hand.

Oftentimes you have to shift through facts, contradictions, half-truths, conjectures, probabilities, prejudices or simple blunders in translation. At times you got to meticulously compare the sources. You customarily ask yourself: "Who copied whom?" "Who repeated whom?" "Who is more reliable?" "Who is contemporary or closer to the persons or events being analyzed?" You evaluate oral tradition as well. You read personal memoirs, diaries and letters and take them *cum grano salis*, with a grain of salt, at times.

You may find the truth in the end and you relate to your readers, listeners and fellow seekers of truth intelligibly. You relate to them in a language they can understand. And sometimes you succeed. And this is what I hope to do as I narrate to you my personal effort in retracing the roots of Saint Rita College in 1907: Mother Dionisia Mitás de Santa María, Mother Cecilia Rosa de Jesús and the Augustinian Recollects of the San Sebastian Church in Manila.



### Talangpaz progenitors of Calumpit, Bulacan

Dionisia Mitas and Cecilia Rosa were natives of Calumpit, Bulacan, a parish managed by religious of the Order of Saint Augustine. A Filipino biographer Luciano P. R. Santiago traced their lineage to *principalía* families in Pampanga and Bulacan in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Their father was Capitán Andrés Talangpaz y Mayari, two-term *gobernadorcillo* of Calumpit. Their mother, Isabel Costanza Pamintuan y Panalangin, gave birth to six children, five girls and one boy, Miguel who grew up to follow the footsteps of both father and grandfather as the town's chief executive.<sup>2</sup>

### Talangpaz sisters

Dionisia Mitas, second daughter and third child of a brood of six, was born on 12 March 1691 and baptized five days later. On an undetermined day and month in 1693, her younger sister was born and she was baptized Cecilia Rosa on 26 July. When Archbishop Diego Camacho of Manila made a pastoral visit to Calumpit in 1699, both girls received the sacrament of Confirmation. Childhood period for the two sisters was uneventful. Presumably, they studied the rudiments of their education and Christian faith in a parochial school of their province. Dionisia Mitas and Cecilia Rosa steadily grew in piety.



**Servants of God Dionisia and Cecilia Rosa Talangpaz, holy foundresses of the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters**

Sensing their vocation to a life of seclusion and recollection, the sisters sought the Augustinian friar's assistance. They expressed their desire to live in prayer, contemplation and reclusion at Calumpit in a special way. They then begged this Augustinian parish priest to permit them to don the habit of *mantelatas* or *terciarias* according to the statutes of the Augustinian Third Order. Despite the sister's

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<sup>2</sup> Luciano P.R. SANTIAGO, *The Stars of Peace. The Talangpaz Sisters* (Manila 2001) 48-54.

insistent pleas, the parish priest did not grant their wish for reasons unknown to us.

Divine Providence had other hidden plans for them, auspiciously notes the Augustinian Recollect Father Benito de San Pablo, a faithful chronicler of the Virgen del Carmen devotion and the Talangpaz sisters' earthly odyssey, in his 1747 chronicle entitled *Tratado de cosas notables en el convento de San Sebastián* [Treatise on Noteworthy Events in San Sebastian Convent].<sup>3</sup>

The rejection no doubt caused anguish in the hearts and souls of both Dionisia Mitas and Cecilia Rosa. But it did not put an end to their prayer and mortification. It was just the first of a series of cruel tests of their vocation and heart-rending travails the Talangpaz sisters had to undergo with nary a word of protest. With more persistence than ever, the two young women prayed to God and to the Holy Mother of Christ to show them the path to attain their goals in life to which they had set their mind and heart. For the Lord's counsel was: "Seek and you will find; ask and it will be given to you; knock and the door will be opened to you" (*Mt 7:7*). Fr. Benito de San Pablo, the Recollect chronicler of the Beaterio de San Sebastian, tells us about a strange coincidence: "There was no prior mutual understanding between the two sisters for they themselves could not offer any explanation: all of a sudden they felt a very strong desire to submit themselves to the protection of our Lady of Carmel whose favors and prodigies were now very familiar to them."<sup>4</sup>

The Talangpaz biographer recounted that Dionisia Mitas and Cecilia Rosa left behind everything in Calumpit, their family, relatives, friends and ancestral home to tread the radical path of the Gospel in 1719.<sup>5</sup> Doubtless they found consolation in the reassuring

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<sup>3</sup> The complete title of the manuscript is *Tratado de algunas cosas notables pertenecientes a los conventos de ministerios y administración espiritual de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Agustinos Descalzos de Philipinas*. The original manuscript found its way into the library of the Pontifical University Urbaniana, Rome, Italy. A photocopy of the manuscript is now available at the *Archivo Recoleta "Juan de la Concepción"* in Bulwagang Recoletos, Mira-Nila Homes, Quezon City, Philippines.

<sup>4</sup> G. OCHOA, 34.

<sup>5</sup> Later chroniclers and documentary sources accepted Fr. Benito de San Pablo's claim that the Talangpaz sisters arrived at the *pueblo* of San Sebastián de Calumpang towards the end of 1724. This would mean that

words of Christ Jesus: “Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life” (*Mt* 19: 29). Father Benito de San Pablo goes on to say that they did not reveal to anyone their final decision to leave for the *pueblo* of San Sebastián de Calumpang.<sup>6</sup> They had been living practically apart from their relatives as they had vowed to do after their rejection by the Augustinian priest of Calumpit. The Talangpaz biographer metaphorically portrayed them as “thirsty young does running toward the abundant fount of mercies of the most holy Virgen del Carmen to quench their spiritual thirst.”

As soon as they set foot at San Sebastián de Calumpang, the sisters proceeded straightway to the shrine of the miraculous image of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and prostrated themselves at the foot of her sovereign throne. It was an intensely poignant episode: they poured their hearts out in fervent prayer, unabashedly shedding copious tears of joy and expressing heartfelt thanks for all what Our Lady had thus far done to them. Dionisia and Cecilia Rosa renewed the offer earlier made at Calumpit to devote themselves totally to the service of the Blessed Mother. They begged the Divine Lady to cover them under her maternal protection and to shower them with her Son’s bountiful blessings.

Their next move was to look for a small house where they could continue living a life of seclusion, contemplation and mortification. In Bilibid Viejo at San Sebastian de Calumpang, they found the place they precisely wanted: so conveniently near the

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the sisters had been living in the vicinity of San Sebastian Church, going to and coming from church, serving the Lord for a few months. The Recollect historian Fr. Gregorio Ochoa follows the 1724 line of Fr. Benito. Cf. BENITO DE SAN PABLO, *Principio de la fundación y progreso del Beaterio de San Sebastián, extramuros de la Ciudad de Manila, de Agustinos Recoletos Descalzos*, in *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino*, 61 (1971) 171; G. OCHOA, 34. We accept the eyewitness account of Fr. Andrés de San Fulgencio who wrote the *Fórmula y Método de gobierno para nuestras Beatas Agustinas de San Sebastián* and defended the Beaterio from secular interferences in a petition to Governor General Fernando Valdés Tamón on 20 May 1735 and pointed to 1719 as the sisters’ year of arrival at San Sebastian. See José GARCÍA DE SAN LORENZO MÁRTIR, *Un Plantel de Sampaguitas en el Vergel Recoleta Agustiniiano o la Congregación de Agustinas Recoletas Misioneras de Filipinas* (Zaragoza 1954) 127-131.

<sup>6</sup> BENITO DE SAN PABLO, 170.

shrine of the Blessed Mother who would watch over them from a distance. During this time they continued to wear ordinary street clothes like everyone else. But Dionisia and Cecilia Rosa would outshine everybody else in virtue and piety.

For a number of years, their daily schedule included some six hours of mass, prayer, meditation as well as other devotions and spiritual practices at San Sebastian Church “from the moment the church doors were opened to ten o’clock in the morning and in the afternoon from the hour of vespers till way past five.”<sup>7</sup> Their spirituality and lifestyle was basically sacramental: regular confession, daily Masses and frequent reception of Holy Communion. Their constant prayer intention was that “the Virgen del Carmen would willingly accept them as her daughters and handmaids.” The sisters further offered their voluntary services for the day-to-day physical upkeep of the shrine of their spiritual patroness.

### **Enter the Augustinian Recollects**

The Spanish Augustinian Recollects of San Sebastián Convent were not deaf and blind to what they had observed about the Talangpaz sisters. Their exemplary life and conduct did not escape the attention of the Recollect friars. Certainly, the religious priests “noted with care their continued assistance in the church, frequency of the holy sacraments, their withdrawal and example in which they had lived outside. In all this care, it enkindled in them a loving propensity to encourage the two sisters in their holy exercises, to console them in their affliction and to their perseverance in their good aims.”

Before long, the Recollects appreciated the edifying lifestyle of the Talangpaz siblings. The missionaries likewise showed concern for the future beatas: they encouraged them to persevere in their laudable conduct and assisted them in their basic needs as well. This caused the sisters to disclose to the Recollects the reasons why they had come to San Sebastian under the watchful eyes of the Virgen del Carmen. Dionisia and Cecilia Rosa revealed that with the Virgin’s succor they hoped to obtain what they had focused their heart and mind upon not very long ago: to don the habit of Augustinian Recollect tertiaries. The Recollects welcomed the idea. Whereupon,

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<sup>7</sup> BENITO DE SAN PABLO, 171; G. OCHOA, 35.

the Talangpaz sisters urged them to request the prior provincial to admit them as *terciarias*. The provincial—at that time Father Juan de San Andrés—was informed in due time of the sisters’ excellent qualities and steadfast intentions. Their Recollect spiritual director, Father Juan de Santo Tomás de Aquino, corroborated the information only too gladly.

### Official Establishment of the Beaterio de San Sebastián

By virtue of the Recollect Order’s Constitutions, specifically the twin provisions of the *Monialium*<sup>8</sup> and *Ipsarum Mantelatarum*,<sup>9</sup> the Augustinian Recollect prior provincial in the Philippines authorized the prior of San Sebastian Convent to admit the sisters, ladies as members of the Third Order.<sup>10</sup> On 16 July 1725, feast day of the Virgen del Carmen, Fr. Diego de San José, prior of San Sebastian, presided over the investiture rites of the Talangpaz sisters. It was a religious rite that was witnessed by mass-goers and residents of San Sebastian de Calumpang.

The wide black wimple was imposed on their Recollect habit and cincture of the same color. As Christ and His Mother were

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<sup>8</sup> My translation of the *Monialum* provision of 1664 Constitutions goes thus: “In Pope Clement VIII’s time nuns were entrusted directly under the supervision of our Friars. In truth, the same observation can be made about mantelatas. And on account of it, we order that they are never admitted to the Habit unless they are women of good repute and proven virtue, are at least 40 years of age and have all what is necessary for subsistence lest they constitute a burden to the convents. However, they may not be admitted to the profession unless with the permission of Father Vicar general or with that of the Provincial with his counselors who after a very thorough evaluation when possible shall grant it. We further ordain that permission for the admission of the abovementioned mantelatas must be done beforehand, and reports about their lifestyle as well as their moral conduct must be made.”

<sup>9</sup> Here’s the *Ipsarum Mantelatarum* provision I translated from its Latin original: “We entrust the special supervision over mantelatas themselves to the Prior of the convent in close proximity (unless the Father Provincial may ordain otherwise) with the prerogative of designating one from the confessors of his community [family] for them, who shall be assigned for aims in accord with the apostolic authority granted to Friars, and it is known to have been instituted within our holy Order.”

<sup>10</sup> G. OCHOA, 36.

part of their lives, they took the religious appellation *Dionisia de Santa María* and *Cecilia Rosa de Jesús*. They felt overjoyed that their cherished dream had at last become a reality. “An ineffable joy which they could only express with abundant tears of happiness and in stammering words,” writes Father Benito de San Pablo. Sor Dionisia de Santa María and Sor Cecilia Rosa de Jesús, who had abandoned home and family, now officially belonged to the large family of men and women who lived according to the Rule of Saint Augustine on 16 July 1725.<sup>11</sup>

### Activities of the Beatas at the first Recollect-built House

Fr. Diego de San José then constructed for them a small bamboo hut with thatched roof in a small clearing adjacent not far from the courtyard of the convent and church.<sup>12</sup> This was aimed at segregating the new beatas to avoid unnecessary contact with the laity that could hinder their spiritual progress. Fr. Prior arranged their *Ordo domesticus*: community prayer, mass and other devotions in the morning and late afternoon at the nearby Carmel shrine.

The rest of the day was devoted to embroidery and needlework from which they earned their daily bread. The observance of silence was strictly mandated, as it greatly aided in communing with God. The sisters’ daily service to San Sebastian Church consisted

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<sup>11</sup> Benito de San Pablo and Gregorio Ochoa refer to 16 July 1725 as the date of the foundation, and rightly so. See G. OCHOA, 36. The *Decretum Laudis* of 20 November 1970 of the Sacred Congregation of Religious of the Holy See has officially accepted this date. José García Martínez de San Lorenzo Mártir, however, points to another date—16 July 1728—after the demolition of their first residence and return to their old house. It was the new provincial Benito de San Pablo who ordered Cristóbal de la Soledad, the prior of San Sebastián, to allow them to don the habit of the mantelatas once more and to take care of them in accordance with the Constitutions. Diego de San José again built a house where the Talangpaz sisters would reside. Thus it was on 16 July 1728 when the sisters were once more given the habit at the church of San Sebastian. Cf. José GARCÍA DE SAN LORENZO MÁRTIR, *En torno al Beaterio de San Sebastián*, en *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino*, 42 (1952) 62-63.

<sup>12</sup> The lowly house was built because the Recollects “either wanted to award the *mantelatas* for the prolonged services to the shrine of San Sebastian or they wanted them to be near God’s temple and be protected from mundane dangers.”

in attending to the good order, cleanliness and decency of God's temple. They further made by hand very fine Carmel scapulars for distribution to the Lady's countless devotees.<sup>13</sup>

The Beaterio de San Sebastian was thereby established with its original members. Its unquestionable foundation date was 16 July 1725, the Talangpaz sisters' day of entry to the Third Order of the Augustinian Recollects. Not long afterward, two more women, impressed by the pair's good reputation of virtue and piety, presented themselves at the portal of their humble residence. Very soon two more applicants joined the burgeoning community. After having proven themselves worthy of the habit of the Third Order, they all sought the Recollect fathers' consent to wear it, which was likewise granted them at formal investiture rites. "The community of Recollect terciarias," declares Benito de San Pablo, "was already a formal body constituted by six fervent sisters who lived a common life and took pleasure in spiritual detachment and in the practice of all virtues."<sup>14</sup>

The fact that Mother Dionisia and Mother Cecilia Rosa had sought affiliation with the Augustinian Recollects and governance by the Rule of Saint Augustine indicated in no uncertain terms the coenobitic character of the nascent beaterio. Such conventual and communitarian spirit was further enhanced and crystallized by the subsequent admission of four ladies thus constituting the primitive community of what would become in the course of centuries the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollects Sisters.

### **Gauntlet of trials and contradictions**

The incipient community was very soon dissolved by no less than the irascible prior of San Sebastian himself. The hut near San Sebastian church was torn down. Defrocked and distraught, the sisters went back to the old residence in Bilibid Viejo and the other terciarias returned to their respective families.

This sad episode in the Beaterio's existence was deemed a "terrible contradiction" for the sisters.<sup>15</sup> It was one of those trials

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<sup>13</sup> Patricio MARCELLÁN, *Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Agustinos Descalzos de la Congregación de España e Indias* (Manila 1879) 29.

<sup>14</sup> G. OCHOA, 38.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

and travails that often assailed the spiritual progress of people on the road to sanctity. What Fr. Diego de San José did was to save the unity and harmony in his own religious community which had been wracked by factionalism arising from admission polemic. One faction favored the optimistic view wherein entry to the beaterio should not be unhampered. Divine Providence would take care of their subsistence. The opposing group held on to the belief that the Order's Constitutions which banned uncontrolled admission ought to be followed to the letter. Beaterio applicants without any means of subsistence would constitute additional burden to San Sebastian Convent. The financial misfortunes of Saint Nicholas Province had been caused by endless Moro piratical raids of their missions and parishes, which included the payment of hefty sums of money for kidnapped provincials and religious subjects. Apparently, this group prevailed.

Dionisia and Cecilia Rosa saw in this "contradiction" as another great opportunity to truly discern their divine call. Their life of prayer in the Beaterio changed because of this rough interruption. Fr. Benito de San Pablo again describes for us what they did afterward: In full conformity to the will of God, they worshipped His inscrutable plans and continued to keep themselves constant and persevering in their first vocation, clinging on to their firmest hope in the protection of the Virgen del Carmen who will confirm their intentions and hearken to their pleas.<sup>16</sup>

### **Rehabilitation on 16 July 1728**

Upon his election as provincial in April 1728, Fr. Benito de San Pablo, who was aware of the exemplary "behavior and character" of the two sisters, acceded to the favorable recommendation of the friars in San Sebastian. He thereupon ordered the new prior Fr. Cristóbal de la Soledad to readmit them as terciarias and to shelter them in a new residence which would be constructed for them by Fr. Diego de San José himself.

On 16 July 1728, the devout pair donned the habit once more. Before Fr. Cristóbal de la Soledad, the sisters knelt before the altar and in his presence swore in a pious manner to live according to the Rule of Saint Augustine and the Constitutions of the Tertiaries of

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<sup>16</sup> G. OCHOA, 39.



the Augustinian Recollect Order. They wore the habit of the tertiaries or beatas thereafter.<sup>17</sup>

The beatas all the more intensified their prayer life and mortification. Their reception of the sacraments became more frequent. In San Sebastian church, they spent more time before the “throne of the Queen of Carmel,” shedding copious tears and expressing fervent petitions not to be left abandoned because they “never wanted to belong to anybody but to her and to her Divine Son.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Subsistence and number of tertiaries grew**

A large house was constructed for them in San Sebastian. They were, as prophesied, joined by young women until, around 1732 when the beatas formed a community of thirteen. For the beatas’ sewing and embroidery work, the Beaterio was given twenty-three pesos a month and one hundred cavans of palay a year, as subsidy from the Recollect community of San Sebastian Convent, plus another twenty-five pesos a month and two hundred cavans of palay from the Recollect mother-house of San Nicolás Convent of Intramuros in the Walled City of Manila.<sup>19</sup>

A group in Manila soon publicly denounced this re-established Beaterio. The grave charges were: “...that some girls in the beaterio were there without their parents’ consent; that the girls were forced to make a vow of chastity against their will; that the beatas lived in community against the law and to the prejudice of the State, which had to support them; and that all this scandalized the city of Manila, which could not view, without indignation, the privations and miseries suffered in the beaterio by girls from prominent families.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> J. GARCÍA, *Un Plantel de Sampaguitas*, 91.

<sup>18</sup> G. OCHOA, 38.

<sup>19</sup> Nick JOAQUÍN, *Culture and History*, in *Compilation of Documents on the Life, Virtues and Reputations of the Servants of God Mother Dionisia de Santa María and Mother Cecilia Rosa de Jesús* (Manila 2002) 233. The compilation was a collaborative work of Fr. Emilio Edgardo A. Quilatan OAR, Dr. Luciano P.R. Santiago and Prof. Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos, members of the Historical Commission of the Beatification Cause of Mother Dionisia and Mother Cecilia Rosa Talangpaz.

<sup>20</sup> *Compilation*, 233-234.

In the end, the charges turned out to be baseless and devoid of truth; they were consequently ignored and quashed.

### **Dionisia and Cecilia Rosa returned to the Father's House**

The younger foundress Mother Cecilia Rosa returned to her Maker on 31 July 1731 after a lingering illness. She had professed the evangelical vows of poverty, chastity and obedience on 11 March 1731 in the presence of San Sebastian prior Cristóbal de la Soledad. A twentieth-century Spanish biographer accurately dubs her “the Little Flower of the Beaterio de San Sebastián,” patterned after Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, the Little Flower of Lisieux.<sup>21</sup>

On 12 October 1732, Mother Dionisia, the first superior of the Beaterio, passed away in the odor of sanctity. Six days earlier, she had professed the three evangelical counsels. Mother Dionisia de Santa María was thereupon succeeded by Mother Margarita de Santa Mónica. The beata from Arayat, Pampanga, administered the Beaterio until her demise in 1748.

### **The Recollects to the rescue**

In a communication requesting a license dated 20 May 1735 to the governor general Fernando Valdés Tamón, the prior provincial Fr. Andres de San Fulgencio had only good words to the sisters. He declared that the beatas could freely leave the primitive convent anytime and anywhere but they voluntarily refrained from it, instead they devoted their time to the service of Our Lord God and to His most holy Mother of Carmel and to the frequent reception of the sacraments to the edification of all the faithful, “for which they come to the church always and when convenient to them.”<sup>22</sup> Their food was solely at the expense of the mercy and alms of the impoverished San Sebastian convent and shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Some noble and pious residents of Manila promised to provide them with sources of income, once the Beaterio's stability was achieved. It was and never would be the intention of Saint Nicholas Province

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<sup>21</sup> J. García, *Un Plantel de Sampaguitas*, 92.

<sup>22</sup> Francisco MORENO, *Instrucciones para las Hermanas Mantelatas, o Terceras del Orden de Recoletos de Nuestro Padre Agustín, y otros documentos referentes al Beaterio* (Tambobong 1894) 59; J. GARCÍA, *Un Plantel de Sampaguitas*, 128.

or its subjects to harm the royal rights of the Patronato Real. Its only objective was to “foment the spirit of said mantelatas for the greater honor of God, of his most holy Mother and the welfare of their souls.”<sup>23</sup>

After the deliberation, on 17 June 1735, the Royal Audiencia, the Fiscal of the Audiencia and Governor General Valdés Tamón granted the license to the province to maintain a house of young women devoted to prayer in an exemplary contemplative and communitarian lifestyle, *collegialiter*, as well as withdrawn from mundane affairs. Evidently, there was no royal license yet before it.

### How Recollect writers view the Talangpaz sisters

The Augustinian Recollect writers highlighted the exemplary life of Christian virtue and prayer of the Beaterio foundresses Mother Dionisia and Mother Cecilia Rosa.<sup>24</sup> From the earliest documents on the Talangpaz sisters written by Recollects, we observe the young Bulakeñas’ love of detachment from the world, symbolized by their wearing of the habit of the Augustinian beatas. They especially viewed their propensity for prayer and meditation, especially amid tribulations. Some writers focus on their remarkable patience and perseverance during trials and adversities. A 20<sup>th</sup>-century author stresses their love for manual work.

Fr. Benito de San Pablo provides us with a poignant description of their commitment to religious poverty and detachment from material things and concerns. The theological virtues of faith, hope and charity were likewise visibly mirrored in their daily lives. Their frequent reception of Sacraments was further stressed. Their Marian spirituality is clearly pictured for us by the Recollect writers. It was their love for the Mother of God under the invocation of the Virgen del Carmen that led them to her shrine at San Sebastian Church, “like thirsty young does they ran to drink and quench their thirst in the everlasting founts of mercies of the most holy Virgin of Carmel.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>F. MORENO, *Instrucciones*, 59.

<sup>24</sup> Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *The Talangpaz Sisters in the Eyes of the Augustinian Recollect Writers*, a paper read before school administrators, faculty, staff and students in a symposium on 18 July 2001 at the Saint Rita College Auditorium, Manila.

<sup>25</sup> G. OCHOA, 34.

**Fr. José Abel Salazar's views**

According to Father José Abel Salazar, erstwhile secretary general of the Augustinian Recollect Order, who, besides stating that the foundation year was 1725, wrote the following entry in the *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione* in 1974: "The special objective that the Institute strives for since 1754 was the Christian education of the young girls, without excluding at all their service to the Church in missions and other apostolic works within the limits of their means and capacity. The legislation, revised by the special general chapter, does not offer peculiar aspects worth mentioning."

Fr. Salazar stresses that the spirituality of the Augustinian Recollect Congregation is that of the Order of Augustinian Recollects, to which the Sisters in the Philippines are closely bonded since their origins."<sup>26</sup>

**Threats against the survival of the Beaterio**

Francisco José de Ovando y Solís,<sup>27</sup> the first Marqués de Ovando (1693-1755) was governor-general of the Philippines in 1750-1754. He extended the royal patronage's protection over the Beaterio. In the end, he exempted it from all royal tributes.

General Marqués de Ovando had earlier issued an order on 15 July 1754 mandating the immediate inclusion of the occupants in the royal census for tribute purposes, the discontinuance of the use of beatas, terciarias, or mantelatas, of any religious appellation, and of the wimple, habit and cloister, the limitation of the number of occupants, and the ban of the use of Tagalog within the Beaterio premises. He further ordered the continuation of teaching activities

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<sup>26</sup> José Abel SALAZAR, *Agostiniane Recollette, delle Filippine, Hermanas Agustinas Recoletas, Augustinian Recollect Sisters (AR)* in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione* I (Rome 1974) 239-240. The same dictionary entry was translated into Spanish as *Agustinas Recoletas, de Filipinas, Hermanas Agustinas Recoletas, Augustinian Recollect Sisters*, and was published in *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino*, 74 (1984) 59-60.

<sup>27</sup> Javier ORTIZ DE LA TABLA DUCASSE, *El Marqués de Ovando, Gobernador de Filipinas (1750-1754)* (Sevilla 1974), 27. Named governor general in 1746, he took possession of his office in Manila on 20 July 1750 and was succeeded by Pedro Manuel de Arandía on 19 July 1754.

in schools by those he termed *ladinas*, referring to the beatas who were proficient in both Tagalog and Spanish.<sup>28</sup>

The governor-general then dispatched his representative to pay a visit to the Beaterio and later to report the results of his visit directly to him. The fiscal of the colonial government had earlier insisted that the beatas should pay the royal tributes. But Marqués de Ovando recalled his previous order, eventually made the Beaterio exempt from all taxes and reported all what he did to the Spanish monarch. At his royal palace at Aranjuez in the Spanish province of Madrid, King Ferdinand VI (1713-1759) then issued a real cedula on 26 May 1756 that sanctioned all the official acts and recommendations by his vice royal patron at the colonial capital.<sup>29</sup>

Marqués de Ovando's subsequent solicitude for the terciarias may be deduced from the fact that he was an active member of the Third Order of Saint Francis of Assisi. His last will and testament provided for the burial of his body wearing the habit of Saint Francis. His second child María Manuela, who was born in Manila in 1753, later became a Dominican nun at the Convent of Santa Rosa in Puebla de los Angeles, Mexico.<sup>30</sup>

### **Inklings of the educational apostolate of the Beaterio**

A month earlier, on 14 June 1754, Marqués de Ovando ordered an *escribano* Vicente López Pilares to personally visit the Beaterio and select from the beatas those most qualified and prepared to teach. Chosen were Sister Nicolasa de San José, superior of the beaterio since 1748, Sister Ignacia de la Santísima Trinidad and Sister Clara de Santa Rita. This was the first inkling, the initial evident proof that the beatas were tasked with the teaching mission.<sup>31</sup>

### **San Sebastian prior as director of Beaterio (1811)**

The second implicit proof that some kind of teaching was being done at the Beaterio and elsewhere can be found in an

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<sup>28</sup> Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* 1 (Manila 1925) 624-625; J. GARCÍA, *Un Plantel de Sampaguitas*, 20-21.

<sup>29</sup> J. GARCÍA, *Un Plantel de Sampaguitas*, 131-132.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

ordinance of the 1811 provincial chapter of Saint Nicholas Province which had entrusted to the local prior of San Sebastian Convent the “inspection and spiritual direction of the Beaterio.” The local prior was tasked to see to it that the instructions issued by the provincial chapter to the Beaterio were complied with and implemented. This had been the practice since time immemorial.

In this ordinance, the provincial chapter urged the prior of San Sebastian Convent to report anything “that happened in the Beaterio against the good conduct, decorum, contemplation, temporal administration, etc., that must always reign in a house of recollection of adult persons so desirous of eternal salvation and of the *niñas educandas* (young female students) entrusted to their care and protection.”<sup>32</sup>

### 1814 permit issued to San Sebastian prior on Easter precept

The third implicit proof was in 1814. In that year Father Mariano de San José, prior of San Sebastian Convent in 1812-1815,<sup>33</sup> had asked the necessary permission from Fray Juan Antonio de Zulaibar, Dominican Archbishop of Manila (1805-1824), for both the poor and the well-to-do *niñas educandas* as well as for the twelve members of the Beaterio to observe the annual Easter precept of Holy Communion and Confession at San Sebastian Church which would be most convenient for their “calm, tranquility and spiritual well-being.”

Through the *secretario de cámara y de gobierno* Fr. Raymundo Roxas, the Dominican prelate answered Fr. Mariano de San José on 15 March 1814 that for the “best economic management and spiritual welfare of the *niñas educandas* del Beaterio” he granted the necessary permit for “said young girls” to comply with the Easter obligations at San Sebastian Church of the Recollect fathers.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> F. MORENO, *Instrucciones*, 72.

<sup>33</sup> FRANCISCO SÁDABA, *Catálogo de los Religiosos Agustinos de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas desde el año 1606, en que llegó la primera misión, hasta nuestros días hasta 1906* (Madrid 1906) 366.

<sup>34</sup> F. MORENO, *Instrucciones*, 70-71. The 15<sup>th</sup> March 1814 is the date of archbishop’s response to the request to the Recollect’s letter, not the date of Father Mariano de San José’s letter, as erroneously translated or affirmed by Sister Bernardita VILLAMOR in her work *Congregation of*

### A pure-blooded Spanish beata and teacher

Not all those who entered the Beaterio de San Sebastián were Filipino native women. An *española insular*, Mother Melchora de Santa Tersera was a beata who was born in the Philippines and whose father and mother were both Spanish. She professed the religious vows before the prior Fr. Francisco Vidal de San José in 1835 on the birthday of her spiritual Father Saint Augustine, 13<sup>th</sup> day of November.

Mother Melchora was a very learned beata, well prepared for teaching. Indeed, she was the *maestra de las niñas del Beaterio*, teacher of the young girls of the Beaterio. She exercised her teaching profession for some thirteen years. The Spanish beata breathed her last on 24 September 1847.<sup>35</sup>

### Archbishop O'Doherty: "Teaching is Beaterio's second goal"

On 19 August 1929, Michael J. O'Doherty, archbishop of Manila, decreed the erection and approval of the *Instituto de las Hermanas Terciarias Recoletas de Filipinas* as a religious congregation of diocesan right. He describes the events leading to the decree of establishment and points out among others that: "The goal of this Institute or religious state is not only to assure the salvation of one's own soul by complying with the precepts of the Lord and fleeing from the perils of the world but also by acquiring perfection of the virtue, holiness, by following the evangelical counsels, in particular the sublime advice of the Divine Master when he told his disciples: 'Be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect'."<sup>36</sup> Archbishop O'Doherty then states: "The secondary goal [of the Beaterio de San Sebastian] is the teaching, education and care of girls."

### The birth of Colegio de Santa Rita

From the very decree of erection and approval by Archbishop Michael J. O'Doherty, we find more details of the unheralded

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*the Augustinian Recollect Sisters (AR). Past and Present* (Manila 1991) 8.

<sup>35</sup> F. MORENO, *Instrucciones*, 74.

<sup>36</sup> See *Archdiocesan Archives of Manila*, 39.b.4: Folder 12-Augustinian Recollect Sisters. The pertinent document is now part of the *Compilation of Documents*, 304-306.

beginnings of Saint Rita College. After the strong earthquake that struck Manila and environs in 1880, the old Beaterio had to undergo major repairs. The adjoining San Sebastian Church was damaged beyond repair. The year 1881 saw a refurbished Beaterio rising from its ruins.

Decades later, on February 1906, the provincial council of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino Province in a session on 22 February 1906 urged the prior provincial to make a study of what can be done to the Beaterio-Colegio de Santa Rita with respect to the proposal of the construction project at the Beaterio.

The provincial council met again on 3 August of the same year 1906 and approved the blueprints and budget for the construction works at the Beaterio. It further considered as very appropriate and convenient the decision of the prior provincial Fr. Tomás Roldán to open a free school for girls in the Beaterio-Colegio de Santa Rita. The sum of ₱18,000 was the approved budget for the expansion project. By the end of May 1907, the construction and painting of the whole building were over. The new conventual chapel was blest and inaugurated on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of June.<sup>37</sup> The incumbent superior Mother Toribia de la Paz had longed for this day. In her second term in 1905-1908 [having been superior in 1878-1893], this dream came true. A sung mass with a fitting sermon was celebrated. The rooms and halls of the new building were all blest in a most solemn manner.

The Blessed Sacrament was taken in a procession to the new chapel or semi-public oratory in the second floor where it was permanently kept for adoration by both sisters and pupils. Thereafter a Recollect priest who served as chaplain celebrated mass daily at the chapel.<sup>38</sup>

In that same month of June, the school for girls was opened.<sup>39</sup> Thus, started the first formal education in the teaching tradition and

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<sup>37</sup> *Archdiocesan Archives of Manila*, 39.b.4: Folder 12-Augustinian Recollect Sisters. See also *Compilation of Documents*, 304. It was not on 1 June 1907, as claimed earlier by Luciano P.R. Santiago, in *The Talangpaz Sisters; Foundresses of the Beaterio de San Sebastián de Calumpang (Now the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters)*, in *Recollectio* 13 (1990) 90. This error is repeated in his *The Stars of Peace. The Talangpaz Sisters* (Manila 2001) 128-129.

<sup>38</sup> Ricardo JARAUTA, *Album de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* (Zaragoza 1931) 82.

<sup>39</sup> See *Compilation of Documents*, 304-306.



apostolate of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters. The school enrolment then was 30 young girls in 1907. By 1910, the number had gone up to 130. By 1928, the school—called Saint Rita Academy since 1921 and with its primary and secondary courses approved by the Bureau of Private Schools, had increased to 200 externs and interns. On 23 July 1928, the provincial council decided to officially donate and cede to the religious of the Beaterio de San Sebastian the property of all the lot where the school edifice stood, its dependent properties and the whole land parcel occupied by the convent of the women religious.<sup>40</sup>

### **The legacy of education spreads to Cavite City**

The apostolic delegates of the Roman Pontiff [later called papal nuncios] regularly visited the mother-house and constantly exhorted the sisters to work for the education of the youth. At one time, the total of 150 girls studied at the Colegio de Santa Rita in accordance with Catholic principles and with rigid government requirements. Shortly afterward, the authorization to open another school was granted.

Colegio de Santa Mónica was opened in Cavite City in 1910. The sisters also managed a residence of female interns and boarders who studied in government schools. They further administered a free school where they taught religious instruction and prepared about seventy-five girls and boys for Holy Communion. The Second World War obliterated the school buildings but not the memory of those three pioneering sisters: namely, Sor Genoveva del Santísimo Sacramento, who was superior of the Beaterio in 1900-1905, Sor Teresita de San José and Sor Eulogia de los Dolores.

### **The name *Beaterio de Santa Rita***

The name Beaterio de San Sebastián was found in every document prior to 1909. After this year, the Recollect superiors in their documents started calling it *Beaterio de Santa Rita*, while maintaining indistinctly the names *Beaterio de San Sebastián*, *Colegio-Beaterio*, or *Colegio de Santa Rita* [St. Rita Academy, Saint Rita College]. Three circumstances brought about the indistinct use of the name:

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.

- A school of that name had been opened at the Beaterio;
- The Recollect vicar provincial Fr. Fernando Hernández on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March gave a book *Libro del Beaterio de Santa Rita* to the sisters, whose purpose was to compile all the official documents, communications and appointment papers;
- The same vicar provincial in the name of the whole Province of Saint Nicholas donated to them and installed an image of the Augustinian Saint Rita of Cascia who was the titular patroness of the chapel.

The prior general Fr. Gerardo Larrondo, in a letter to the archbishop of Manila dated 14 June 1928, called it *Beaterio of the Augustinian Recollect Tertiaries* of Manila. Months later, on 19 September, he called it *Beaterio de Santa Rita* once more. By 1932, two different names were definitely and unmistakably used: Saint Rita College and Mother-house of the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Missionaries of the Philippines.<sup>41</sup>

## Epilogue

The Servant of God Mother Dionisia de Santa María once expressed what they felt to the prior of San Sebastian in the wake of that crucible of contradiction: “If you repudiate and dismiss us now, be assured that afterward you shall receive the two of us, that you shall give the holy habit to us and later on to others as well. They shall be brought by the Virgen del Carmen to give us company. And we are hopeful to acquire this from our Divine Mother who shall grant it to us with great joy and much happiness to be shared by the fathers. Our fate for now is to have patience and to suffer until God and his most holy Mother shall have mercy on us.”<sup>42</sup>

Indeed, Mother Dionisia’s prophetic words became a reality through the ever-present assistance of the Divine Providence and of the Lady of Mount Carmel. The prophecy continues to be fulfilled as hundreds of Filipino women from all walks of life, whose earnest desire is to seek sanctification and serve the Holy Mother Church in a selfless manner, have ceaselessly come to and professed the

<sup>41</sup> José GARCÍA, *En torno al Beaterio de San Sebastián*, 159-160.

<sup>42</sup> BENITO DE SAN PABLO, 176.

evangelical counsels before God Almighty at the revered shrine of the Virgen del Carmen, San Sebastian Church of the Augustinian Recollect religious priests and brothers.

The Augustinian Recollect Sisters today as ever share the common spirituality and legacy of their great Father Saint Augustine that consists of *caritas veritatis*, love for the truth, expressed in withdrawal, contemplation, study of the Scriptures, personal sanctification, and *necessitas caritatis*, demands of charity, when asked by the Holy Mother Church. Like a true daughter of Saint Augustine, the religious sister must know how to renounce her *otium* (leisure), even with good judgment and only if the Church requires her services in her apostolate and service to her people (*negotium*). Thus, the Augustinian Recollect sister engages in various fields of the apostolate, most especially in the age-old educational apostolate that retraces its historical origins to the early native women *mantelatas* or *terciarias* of the Beaterio de San Sebastian.

It is a wonderful blessing from God Almighty and through the ever-present intercession of the Virgen del Carmen and spiritual guidance of Mother Dionisia and Mother Cecilia Rosa Talangpaz to find now in the bosom of what was then Beaterio de San Sebastian—the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters—this venerable centenarian institution named Saint Rita College, raring to go and live on to face the challenges of the coming decades.

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## Fray Agustín de San Pedro known in Philippine History as *El Padre Capitán*

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Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos

Dubbed as *El Padre Capitán* for his heroic exploits of the Moro Wars, Fray Agustín de San Pedro was born in 1599. He epitomizes the 17<sup>th</sup>-century missionary who erected fortress-like temples, forts, palisades and watchtowers to shield his flock from marauding pirates, mostly Moros from Mindanao and Sulu.<sup>1</sup> He was often depicted as a soldier of God welding the cross in one hand and brandishing the sword in the other. He was born to Mario Rodríguez and María Moreyro of Braganza, Portugal. The young Agustín studied at the University of Salamanca. He after afterward entered the Augustinian Recollect convent at Valladolid, making his religious profession as Fray Agustín de San Pedro in 1619.



**The bust of Fray Agustín de San Padre “El Padre Capitán” at Fuerza de San Andrés in Romblon.**

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<sup>1</sup> Other Augustinian Recollect missionaries known for their building of forts and bulwarks, organizing militias, military feats and punitive expeditions against the Moro lairs in southern Philippines from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century are Juan de San Severo, Valero de San Agustín, Pascual Ibáñez and Ramón Zueco. See Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los agustinos Recoletos* (Madrid 1995) 390.

At the Recollect Convent of Portillo in Valladolid, he devoted himself to the study of mathematics and military science to such an extent that his superior who had noticed it commanded him to desist from it for he deemed it unsuited to the religious profession. The biographer commented that such study of military science proved later to be exceedingly useful in his future ministry in the Philippine missions at that wracked by piratical raids.

In July 1622, Fray Agustín joined the sixth Recollect group of thirteen missionaries to the Philippines that included the future Martyr of Japan Blessed Martín de San Nicolás. Their galleon lifted anchor at Cádiz in southern Spain and passed by Mexico. He was ordained to the priesthood in Mexico City. He then proceeded to Manila where he arrived in 1623. He was initially assigned to Butuan in Mindanao, spending in the area many years working for the resettlement of the natives and converting them to the Christian Faith. He resettled them in Christian communities along the banks of Gingood and Jibonga Rivers. Later he descended south to Linao and continued his evangelization tasks and established Christian villages in the vicinity.

Indeed, Fray Agustín's military studies eventually proved extremely useful in defending the missions against Moro ambushes and piratical raids. He trained the Christians to defend themselves and protect their houses, farms and livestock and ward off the raiding parties with great success. Thus, he became known throughout the Philippines as *Padre Capitán*, a name that caused terror among Moros pirates. The pirates dreaded his name especially after the devastating defeat in Lanao and Cagayan where Fray Agustín de San Pedro was parish priest or where his help was needed by confreres and Jesuit missionaries. He evangelized the natives at the banks of Butuan River up to Lake Lanao. His reputed valorous feats were known in Butuan, Cagayan and Tandag. The intrepid missionary built stone forts in Lanao and Cagayan de Misamis [now Cagayan de Oro].



El Padre Capitan at Miranilla Q.C.

Padre Capitán was parish priest of Cagayan de Oro and prior of its religious community for a total of thirteen years (1626-1638), then of Butuan (1638-1641, 1642-1642) and Romblon (1644-1651).



He was elected provincial secretary of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino in Manila in 1651. He passed away in early 1660s and was buried at Saint Joseph parish church of Romblon.

The Recollect chronicler Patricio Marcellán describes one of Padre Capitán's military strategies and defense systems during his pastoral ministry in Cagayan de Misamis, present-day Cagayan de Oro:

Padre Agustín surrounded the town [Cagayan de Misamis] with a strong palisade with its sentry-boxes and watchtowers for sentinels who kept watch at night, by means of which they were kept safe from continual ambushes of the enemy. He trained the natives how to conduct attacks, to shoot, and spy out those who were in ambush, and in the end he carried himself out as their most skillful captain.<sup>2</sup>

The Spanish confrere then vividly narrates the episode of Sultan Kudarat's well-planned attack perpetrated against Cagayan de Oro that eventually led to the feared Moro leader's defeat at the hands of Padre Capitán and his well-trained defenders and courageous reinforcements from Caraga:

The tyrant Cachil Corralat [Sultan Kudarat] was angry that a small village like Cagayan should resist his power, and desired to finish it once and for all. He launched his fleet of more than thirty caracoas manned by the best of his men and equipped with military weapons and supplies. The preparation of the enemy was learned, and the father prior sent to Caraga for more troops. Six soldiers and one hundred natives came. A sudden alarm was sounded to call in those who were distant in their fields. The enemy disembarked more than two thousand Moros were ordered to attack the town; but they found so strong a resistance that they turned back, fleeing in disgrace. All that gave annoyance to Corralat, and he was grieved to his very soul that Padre Capitán should be the one to check his boldness. Therefore, desirous of

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<sup>2</sup> Patricio MARCELLÁN, *La Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de los Agustinos Descalzos de la Congregación de España e Indias* (Manila 1879) 290.

seizing him, Corralat ordered ambushes to be set and took other means to secure this end.<sup>3</sup>

We now recount the narrative of “epic proportions”:

An expedition not unlike that of the *conquistador* Hernán Cortes<sup>4</sup> needed the construction of six huge boats. The materials for them were taken by land to an area in the vicinity of Lake Lanao where they were assembled and equipped with artillery and other weapons with ease. An army of one thousand five hundred Caraga troops was then organized by Padre Capitán. The Maranaos had six thousand armed warriors.

The Maranaos were dispersed by Padre Capitán’s forces. He then had the lake in view and went on to attack the enemy by land and by water and vanquished them. Fifty towns and villages were then put under the obedience of the Spanish monarch through the painstaking efforts of the intrepid Recollect. Governor General Sebastián Hurtado de Corcuera (1587-1660) adjudicated the spiritual administration of the territory to the Jesuits. Padre Capitán could not do anything but to move out of the Lanao area and withdrew to his parish in Butuan.

The story did not end there. Another life-threatening episode took place in March 1662. Padre Capitán was in his parish when he was recalled to Lake Lanao areas and help the embattled Christians. On 9 March 1662, the Jesuit Gregorio Belin wrote a letter to Padre Capitán to beg for his help. Four thousand Moro warriors under Sultan Kudarat, the Maranaos of Butig and other local chiefs had seized three boatloads of Christians and food supplies the night before and slaughtered numerous Spanish troops and Boholano warriors. Then they proceeded to lay siege on Fort Santo Tomas where the Jesuit missionary and his group had sought refuge. The beleaguered Christians had stored rice stocks that could last only a month, even if they consumed one meal a day. A courier slipped through the Moro siege and delivered a letter to Padre Capitán in Butuan. Belin

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 291-292.

<sup>4</sup> The Spanish conquistador was part of the campaign for the conquest of the Aztec Empire in Mexico in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

beseached him not to delay his reinforcements any longer as there lurked the danger of annihilation of Christians in Lanao if he would arrive too late. The Jesuit's letter goes thus:

It is impossible that the heart of your Reverence would allow us who are here in the lake area to perish. For the love of God, for whom you had suffered so much to resettle and subjugate them, please come to our aid with greatest force. [...] I beg your Reverence for the sake of God and His Mother to succor us in everything. If you have two boats with you, then that would be a good thing. At the shore of Bayug there is a fort and Baloooy [present-day Balo-i] is fortified. Do what your Reverence may decide and believe me you will have here a most affectionate friend and son and that your holy prayers may not fail us.<sup>5</sup>

The Jesuit missionary of Zamboanga and historian Francisco Combés in his 1667 *Historia de las Islas de Mindanao, Joló, y sus adyacentes* [History of the Islands of Mindanao, Jolo and their Adjacent Islands] had only good words for the Augustinian Recollect warrior missionary: "Without owing to anything to what a religious is, he fitted what a soldier is in many occasions with so much gallantry, so that his valor had won him fame and thus he is known in the Philippines as *El Padre Capitán*."

Padre Capitán's military exploits and defense structures in Romblon are likewise narrated in detail by Recollect chroniclers. The superiors in Manila were fully aware of the mortal dangers of the pastoral ministry lurking in the 17<sup>th</sup> century at their religious subjects in the provinces. Consequently, the provincial council decided to construct a fort in Romblon from their own coffers. They assigned



**The Fort of San Andres [Fuerza de San Andrés], built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by the Portuguese Recollect friar Agustín de San Pedro on a hill overlooking the capital town of Romblon, whose restoration by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts was done in 2016.**

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<sup>5</sup> Licinio RUIZ. *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas I* (Manila 1925).

Fray Agustín de San Pedro to Romblon as parish priest and to accomplish the project. Thus, two strong and impregnable forts were constructed with three stone bulwarks at the foot of the mountain overlooking the sea and with the mountain behind it. In the same way as he had done in Mindanao, he organized the timorous natives as militiamen, sharing with them his brave spirit and character. He trained them in the art of warfare so they would defend themselves from surprise Moro invasions.

By dint of such demonstration of valor and intrepidity, Romblon was successfully converted into a formidable bastion against surprise attacks and plunder of the pirates. The Province of Saint Nicholas not only financed the construction of forts and bulwarks but also shouldered their maintenance with gunpowder, artillery and bullets, without receiving a single cent from the Royal Treasury. The militiamen were the natives themselves who were organized by the missionaries. The colonial government did not share in defraying their salaries, related expenses or food rations.



**The parish church of Saint Joseph of Romblon constructed by the Augustinian Recollect Fray Agustín de San Pedro, known as El Padre Capitán, parish priest in 1645-1651, became the cathedral church of Romblon Diocese in December 1974.**

The militiamen further fulfilled their civic duty of payment of tributes to government coffers just like other subjects of the monarch in other towns.

In Romblon, the solid stone church as well as the impregnable forts and watchtower at strategic points of the island served as refuge of residents and posed an effective deterrent against Moro raids. Twenty to thirty huge and fast sea crafts loaded with hundreds of warriors who were trained in plunder and slave-trading activities customarily invaded coasts in Negros, Panay, Masbate, Romblon, Mindoro, Palawan, Calamianes and even reached Masinloc in Zambales from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth.

When Fray Agustín was parish priest of Romblon in 1645-1651, they were ordered to bypass the well-defended island and proceeded to defenseless or unwary towns and islands and conducted their surprise raids. On account of the lamented dearth of government protection in their missionary effort, the Recollects had to give up their ministry in the Cuyo and the Calamianes at the height of the Moro piratical raids. Two diocesan priests took over their missions in Cuyo, Taytay and later Busuanga. Promised with government support, the Recollect missionaries retraced their steps in 1680.

The present fortress-like Saint Joseph Cathedral and Fort San Andrés of Romblon as well as the fort in Banton Island indeed pay mute tribute to the commitment to evangelization and to the defense of Christianity by Padre Capitán and his Augustinian Recollect confreres and their parishioners' courage and love of freedom from oppressive piratical incursions.

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## Father Mariano Gutiérrez, OAR (1788-1855): Priest, Scientist and Naturalist

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Manuel Carceller, OAR

The renowned Augustinian Recollect priest, Father Mariano Gutiérrez de los Dolores, gave his soul up to his Maker on 31 August 1855 in the town of Jagna or Hagna in Bohol.<sup>1</sup> This parish had been administered by him without interruption for a long period of thirty years. Although in different provincial chapters he was elected for the positions of procurator general, *prior vocal* of Baclayon, alternate for provincial councilor, vice prior and novice master of Manila, *prior vocal* of Tandag, provincial councilor, he wanted to abandon—to the best of our knowledge—the town entrusted to him, not even to attend the chapters where he had the right of passive and active voice, nor to attend the meetings of the provincial council in the duration of his term as provincial councilor. We can safely conclude that those positions had become merely honorary.



**Mariano Gutiérrez de los Dolores OAR (1788-1855),  
Jagna curate for thirty  
uninterrupted years**

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<sup>1</sup> *Hagna or Jagna*. Both are indistinctly used in this article and by Boholanos even up to these days.

It was in Madrid where he was born into this world in 1788. Having heard deep inside him the voice of Lord who was calling him to the life of perfection, one day he took himself to the Convent of the Recoletos at the Spanish capital, begging to be admitted to it—and effectively he was admitted—in order to wear the holy habit in 1805, making his profession a year after.

He was pursuing his studies for the ecclesiastical career in the old convent of the Recollection in Nava del Rey, when he joined voluntarily in 1813 to travel to the missions in the Philippines. He embarked on the frigate *Palma* at Cadiz on 2 February 1814 which took him to Veracruz, Mexico.

After a sojourn of at least three years at our halfway house in Mexico City—the reason for his prolonged stay in the capital being unbeknownst to us—where he studied Moral Theology and received the priestly ordination. Together with other religious, he headed for Manila where he arrived on 5 March 1817.

Soon after passing his proficiency test in the Visayan language, he was appointed parish priest of Dimiao in Bohol in 1818. In this town, he was totally engrossed in the ministry, when on 6 March 1821, he made a request on account of his ill health to the provincial council asking for his transfer to Jagna, a town which soon to be vacated by the Recollect parish priest who administered it. The council would accede to this request when this parish priest would cease to administer the curacy of Jagna. This religious was Father Blas Muñoz de las Mercedes,<sup>2</sup> who as delegate to the provincial

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<sup>2</sup> Father Blas Muñoz de las Mercedes was a native of Don Benito town in the province of Extremadura, Spain, where he was born in 1769. His religious profession was done in the Recollect convent in Madrid in January 1787. Father Blas joined the 25th Recollect mission of ten other members who reached Manila via Mexico in June 1792. After his ordination to the priesthood in Manila, he was appointed *compañero* at Dapitan in Zamboanga (1794-1800). In 1800 Father Blas was named doctrinero of Jagna where he spent a total of twenty-one years. The construction of the parochial church made of *mampostería* was largely due to his zeal and diligence. Sádaba tells us the church was finished in 1808. The provincial chapters heaped honors upon Father Blas: prior vocal of Dapitan (1803, 1812), vice prior and novice master in Manila (1803) where he resided probably for five months in 1805-1806, vicar provincial of Cebu (1812, 1831), four-time provincial councilor (1815, 1821, 1828, 1834), *presidente* of the Cavite convent (1818, 1825, 1835, 1840). He was recalled by his

chapter which was to take place that same year, since he was concurrently the prior of Cavite, was to leave the parish of Jagna in order to be transferred to Manila for the purpose of attending the chapter. Father Blas was elected provincial councillor and because of that, he did not return to his curacy anymore. It was then that Father Mariano was designated as parish priest of that town, as he had requested, and he received his appointment on 1 October 1821.

Father Gregorio de Santiago Vela, OSA,<sup>3</sup> annotated some biographical data on Father Mariano Gutiérrez and naturally erred in stating his sojourn in Manila, having based his assertion on the appointment papers available to him. He culled from Father Sádaba<sup>4</sup> the following lines on Father Mariano: “He eventually acquired vast erudition in natural history, and it is a pity that we have now lost to posterity some of his research works in this field of human knowledge which earned him a membership in the *Sociedad Económica de Valencia* and in the *Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País* of the Philippines. The inhabitants of Jagna learned from him how to tan the skin of *canang[sic]*,<sup>5</sup> a species of bats big in size, which turned into an industry where those natives earned good profits.”



**Pre-quake parish church of Jagna, Bohol, constructed by Father Blas Muñoz de las Mercedes OAR (1769-1841)**

This erudite and diligent Augustinian bibliographer then goes on:

As luck would have it, all the manuscripts of Father Gutiérrez de los Dolores have not been lost

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Maker on 19 August 1841 at the age of 72 in Puerto of Cavite. See Francisco Sádada, *Catálogo de los religiosos agustinos recoletos de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas desde el año 1606, en que llegó la primera mission hasta nuestros días* (Madrid 1906) 360.

<sup>3</sup> Father Gregorio Santiago de Vela wrote the eight volumes of the *Ensayo de una biblioteca ibero-americana de la Orden de San Agustín*, published either in Madrid or in El Escorial from 1913 to 1931.

<sup>4</sup> Francisco Sádada, *Catálogo*, 390.

<sup>5</sup> kagwang, flying lemur. Its scientific name is *Cynocephalus volans*. I thank Engr. Jes Tirol for identifying the scientific name.

and proof of it is the collection of papers which we shall hereafter list down, all preserved in a volume rather thick with covers made of wood like hard covers, with their corresponding braces, but today they are removed from the codex.”

This same author immediately copies the detailed notes of the papers alluded to, which the reader can read in Appendix IX of the present volume.<sup>6</sup> We can affirm ahead some details about this interesting note which shall convince us to consider Father Mariano Gutiérrez as one of the most distinguished and renowned scientists among the Spanish Recollects in the Philippines.

In one of the pages of very valuable papers, there is a list of the natives of the town who learned various skills and crafts under the expert supervision of our religious, to wit: as carpenters, cabinetmakers, architects, foremen, machinists, silversmiths, shoemakers, leather tanners and bookmakers.

In another page, we find different species of animals whose leather was tanned; dyes of various colours obtained from them; sheepskins, cigar cases and boxes, cartons, ink and sealing wax which were manufactured. And all that was done under his supervision.

This codex likewise declares that “the first sheet of paper made in the Philippine Islands, except in the city of Manila, in the town of San Miguel de Hagna” in 1835.

There also is a “list of the women who were trained teachers and of the number of girls who were taught how to weave bags, mats, blankets, bedspreads, etc.”

We can find numerous lists of trees and plants, cockroaches, rattans, insects, resins; forty-two pages where the colours of pressed leaves or the tree juices are impressed, each with its corresponding label; a list of the mines that existed in the territory of Jagna, of excellent woods, specific gum resins and the names of trees; and other thirty-two pages, many of them double pages, where the trees and plants found in the town with their chief qualities and uses that could be acquired from them.

And here is a curious note that says so much in favour of the illustrious Father Gutiérrez. Among so numerous scientific notes is a

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<sup>6</sup> Manuel Carceller. *Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos*, vol IX. Madrid 1967.

list of the impoverished folks whom he used to help with alms every Friday.

Finally, we can see a series of letters and communications addressed to Father Mariano Gutiérrez and inserted in the [codex], whose receipt he had acknowledged; letters he had received from *Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País de Manila*<sup>7</sup> and even from outside the Philippines.

Through correspondence, we come to know about the sending of rubbers of various kinds, samples of fine wood and minerals, seeds, flowers and fruits, gum resins and leather, bottles with various animals, seashells and snails. Through the same correspondence, we learn that samples and specimens of gum resins which eventually were dispatched to England, Germany and Singapore for analysis. We also find out how the erudite and energetic Recollect began to exploit a coal mine.

And Father De Santiago Vela proceeds with the following



**Erstwhile parish rectory of Jagna,  
built by Augustinian Recollect  
priests in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, now the  
Colegio de la Medalla Milagrosa of  
the Congregation of Augustinian  
Recollect Sisters**

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<sup>7</sup> The *Sociedades Económicas de Amigos del País* (Economic Societies of Friends of the Country) were private associations established in various cities throughout Enlightenment Spain, and to a lesser degree in some of her colonies (the Philippines, Cuba, Chile, and elsewhere). The *Sociedades Económicas* were founded as part of a movement to stimulate the economic and intellectual development of Spain. Many Spaniards recognized that Spain was lagging behind other European states and sought to diffuse and apply the principles of the Enlightenment. A principal promoter of the Societies' foundation was Pedro Rodríguez de Campomanes, a highly influential statesman and one of the most important thinkers in contemporary Spain. Campomanes, on a more practical level, saw that the Societies could stimulate improvements in agriculture, husbandry, industry, the professions and arts. The first was founded in Bergara, Guipúzcoa, in 1765, by the Marquis de Peñaflorida, Xavier María de Munibe e Idiáquez. "Within a few years" the number of Economic Societies in Spain had passed 50, and they were present in all major population centers. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociedad\\_Econ%C3%B3mica\\_de\\_los\\_Amigos\\_del\\_Pa%C3%ADs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociedad_Econ%C3%B3mica_de_los_Amigos_del_Pa%C3%ADs).

explanations after making a detailed reading of the content of the pages:

Aside from these documents, which were sewn at the end of the hefty volume, there are still other documents, among which is a letter from Don Antonio María Blanco—the director of the *Sociedad de Amigos del País de Manila* [Society of Friends of the Country in Manila]—dated 16 July 1851 and wherein he, as he bade him farewell in his departure for Spain, offered his good offices and encouraged him to continue working for the welfare of the Filipinos and of the *Sociedad Económica* [Economic Society] and further informed him that in Manila he had received two boxes—one full of stuffed or preserved animals and another with gamboges.<sup>8</sup> The vice-director Don J. M. Tuason acknowledged receipt of the two boxes on 28 July 1851.

Moreover, there is another letter from Don Ignacio Vidal, a professor of Zoology at the University of Valencia, dated 14 November 1852, wherein he informed Father Mariano about the wish of the Society of Friends of the Country [of Valencia] to send him a complete collection of all the proceedings of the Society, a collection which not having been prepared on time by the secretary he did not know if it could be sent finally to him on board the ship which was to set sail for the Philippines. He urged him to go on working and collecting specimens for the Society of Valencia; he gave instructions how with little effort he could make the collections of butterflies and insects, and with respect to stuffing animals, he expressed great sadness that Father Gutiérrez did not have a trained young assistant who could perfectly perform the job as desired. As regards this matter, Mr. Vidal himself exerted effort to teach a servant of his cousin who was to travel to the Philippines for

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<sup>8</sup> *Gutagamba* in the Spanish original. In English it is also known as *cambogia*. a gum resin from various Asian trees of the genus *Garcinia*, esp. *G. hanburyi*, used as a yellow pigment and as a cathartic.

the purpose of paying Father Gutiérrez a visit and admonished him of the preciseness with which the process would be done so that the stuffed animals would not be ruined during the long voyage. Mr. Vidal earnestly wanted Father Mariano to send to Valencia numerous collections of mammals, birds, reptiles and fish from the Philippines. He alluded likewise to the proceedings of the year 1850 in which, he said, there was a special mention of the parish priest of Hagna on account of the magnificent donation of ten boxes of products from the Philippines he had made to the abovementioned Society. Father Mariano had informed them about the sending of those boxes in his letters dated 11 and 31 of July 1849. In his 6 July 1851 letter, Dr. Vidal informed him that he had received the boxes year before and that the Economic Society of Valencia had kept part of the minerals and some specimens related to zoology, and handed all the rest over to the University of Valencia.

The experts in natural sciences and related studies can judge the worth of the actual work of Father Gutiérrez—Father de Santiago Vela went on to state—by making comparisons naturally with the state of research done in the Philippines in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the indubitable backwardness of the skills and trades of the natives. For him who was a lover of the study of nature which he undertook with enthusiasm upon the discovery of so many secrets it had kept, without taking into account the precedents that could have guided him in his researches and experiments, it must have been the enterprise he was dealing with that required perseverance and will power at all cost,



**Interior of the Recollect Church of Saint Michael Parish Church**

and here lay precisely the merit of Father Gutiérrez's works: limited exclusively to his personal knowledge that increased day by day due to endless experiments and projects, bereft of scientific treatises that might have saved him time and effort and without any assistants other than his parishioners whom he had to instruct beforehand so they might work zealously and knowledgeably in the compliance of what they were ordered to do.

It is truly amazing how he successfully do his researches and discoveries which produced such brilliant results. And undeniable proof of his indefatigable diligence likewise was the school of arts and trades he established at Hagna where he had to be its teacher and headmaster. The promotion that he succeeded in giving to the diligence of the inhabitants by teaching them how to work and availing themselves—for their own use—of those elements which through ignorance they had not exploited beforehand or had not done anything to make them yield great profits for them; in one word, everything that had been sacrificed out of love for his parishioners manifestly showed us that Father Mariano was endowed with uncommon energy and all the praises heaped on his self-denial and perseverance in his studies shall not be an exaggeration.

"I can assure Your Excellency," he told Don Antonio María Blanco in a lengthy letter in 1849, "during the past thirty-three years that I have been administering in this island of Bohol, I have exerted effort with greatest persistence and perseverance to inquire and discover a great abundance of curious objects in zoology, botany and mineralogy, and before I took up residence here, their existence in fact was completely unknown, as it is public knowledge, and I have shown it to the Royal Society of Friends of the Country in these Islands, to which I have the honour to belong." He further said that the light of intelligence was not enough to study the secrets of



nature in the Philippines, but that physical efforts were much more needed to explore and traverse the virgin forests that so much abounded and where “Nature hides the most beautiful and loveliest beings and, more often, in the thickness of the bushes.” “I have done what I could,” he added, “as my gift to the inhabitants of these islands, and I am firmly convinced that my observations in the three kingdoms of Nature and my works in investigating her hidden beings have been the chief cause and reason why my old ailments have been on the rise and were anticipated much ahead of time, nevertheless, it has been of greatest consolation that I have contributed very many uses and, henceforth, they shall experiment much more for being the first in discovering the precise tree, in these islands, which distilled the gutapercha or guta jaban...”

It was only right that Father Mariano—adds the author we are quoting—deservedly attracted the attention to his researches, to which he had dedicated his entire life in that country and in which he had used up his energy. It is a pity that among his papers gathered in the collection we can find only indications about the quantity of work he had done, not leaving behind any treatise that would disclose the methods used in order to acquire very strange objects like what we have referred to in number 4.” This has reference to leather tanning, to the various dyes and to the manufacture of various objects, as can be viewed in the corresponding appendix.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Gutta-percha*, *Caoutchouc* or Indian-rubber. It is greatly useful in the manufacture of waterproof clothing and as very effective insulators in wrapping conductors in electric cables

<sup>10</sup> Sádaba, *Catálogo*, 390; Licinio Ruiz, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas* I (Manila 1925), 727; Gregorio de Santiago Vela, *Ensayo de una biblioteca ibero-americana de la Orden de San Agustín* III (Madrid 1917) 527, 706. See *Nota detallada de los manuscritos del P. Fr. Mariano Gutiérrez de los Dolores, Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* XI (Madrid 1967) 823-830.

To conclude, Father Mariano Gutiérrez de los Dolores is surely one of the most authentic glories of the Augustinian Recollects of the Province of the Philippines.

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# Fray José Celis of Santa Cruz, Manila, the Creole Recollect Friar Who Almost Ignited a Revolution in the Late 1820s

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Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos

## Prologue

In Philippine history books we oftentimes find the Spanish friar as the target of ridicule and tirade by the Propaganda Movement, and much worse, as the target of assassination, incarceration and torture by revolutionary forces at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But this Manila-born Creole friar was very much ahead of his time. Fray José Celis de San Luis Gonzaga of Santa Cruz, Manila, was an Augustinian Recollect friar whose mother-house was in Intramuros, Manila. He was a precursor of revolutionary and nationalist ideals that antedated the Secularization Controversy, the public execution of the secular priests Mariano Gómez, José Burgos and Jacinto Zamora as well as the Propaganda Movement by roughly half a century. The interesting times of Fray José Celis covered the tumultuous period of the Creole Movement that wracked the colonial capital in the 1820s.

Not a single Filipino historian knows this hitherto mysterious case. Solely one Spanish historian, the Rome-based Angel Martínez Cuesta, OAR, devoted some lines for Fray José Celis in a footnote of an article for Fray Diego Cera, the Las Piñas Bamboo Organ maker, although he was certainly cognizant of Fray José's significant place in a niche of our history. The 29- year-old revolutionary friar

was arrested in Mindanao in 1825. After his escape and subsequent recapture in 1829 with subversive materials in his possession and judicial proceedings, Father Celis could have been sentenced to death in the gallows, had it not been for the prudence and foresight of the Spanish governor general.

Did the libertarian struggle of Father Miguel Hidalgo (1753-1811) in Mexico and the Creole Movement for the *Emancipación* in Latin America influence the separatist and nationalist ideas of this precocious friar? What were the grave charges that led to his outright arrest and trial in Manila? Was there a fair and just trial at all? What were his illegal and revolutionary activities that forced the civil and ecclesiastical authorities to incarcerate the friar, secretly board him on a ship and deport him to Seville in Spain where he was under “convent arrest” for a long time? How much influence did Fray José Celis exert on the leading personalities of the Creole movement in Manila? How did the outrage created by Father Celis’ illegal activities affect the Congregation of Augustinian Recollects’ ecclesiastical hierarchy? Why was the Creole friar hastily exiled to Spain by the colonial authorities? What were his unsanctioned activities in Manila, Sevilla and Madrid?

### ***Beca hispanista* from the Spanish Foreign Ministry in 1997**

A *beca hispanista*<sup>1</sup> granted to me by the Foreign Ministry of the Kingdom of Spain enabled me in April to early June 1997 to research in Spanish archives and libraries on various timely topics such as the Siege of Baler, Father Pedro Peláez’s unpublished letters on the Secularization Movement and Francisco Dagohoy’s Revolt. All, indeed, were opportune historical projects that delved into our freedom-loving ancestors and the magnanimity of our national leaders—being done during the Centennials of the Philippine Revolution and Independence. A friend in Manila had earlier convinced me to do some research on the baffling case of Fray José Celis who almost ignited a revolution in late 1820s. I am grateful to him and to the Fundación Fernando Rielo for the professorial chair to continue the research.

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<sup>1</sup> A *beca hispanista*, Hispanist research grant, endowed by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to qualified Filipino researchers to investigate for two months on Filipino-Hispanic topics in libraries, documentation centers and archives in Spain.

### Archival Sources

It was at Sevilla's *Archivo General de Indias* and Madrid's *Archivo Histórico Nacional* where I had acquired the voluminous original manuscripts in Spanish pertinent to that singularly puzzling case of the Creole friar. I was able to obtain—through Father Angel Martínez Cuesta—photocopies of important documents at the Augustinian Recollect historical archives in their convent at Monteagudo, Navarra, Spain, which included baptismal record, profession documents and other pertinent letters. From the Recollect archives in Rome in 1998 again through Father Martínez Cuesta's assistance, I had the good fortune of obtaining photocopies of manuscripts on the trial, arrest and exile of the Creole priest. There were also letters written by Fray José to the monarch requesting his transfer from Sevilla to another convent in the Peninsula. In return, I shared with the Recollect historian my sources from the archives of Sevilla and Madrid.

My professorial chair unravels the mystery that still surrounds Fray José Celis' case and constrains future historiographers to take a second look at the much-hated and reviled "frailocracy" of the past, one of whose members had definitely contributed to changing the course of Philippine history and to hastening the fall of the Spanish regime in the Far East.

### The young boy José

José María Celis y Granadas was born in the *arrabal* [district] of Santa Cruz in Manila on 26 November 1798. His baptismal record kept at the archives in the novitiate of Monteagudo informs us that his full name was José María de Jesús. Years later, he would likewise sign his letters as Fray José María **Celiz**. His parents were Francisco Celis and María Celidonia Granadas, both were Spanish and residents of Paradero.<sup>2</sup> His lone godfather was Don Miguel Ciriaco. Father Baltasar de Banta Cabili baptized the infant child in the parish church of Santa Cruz on 2 December 1798. According to the same

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<sup>2</sup>The Recollect Francisco Sádaba asserts that the correct name is Celedonio. See *Catálogo de los religiosos agustinos recoletos de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas desde el año 1606, en que llegó la primera misión a Manila, hasta nuestros días* (Madrid 1906) 766.

baptismal record, the baby was “eight days old.”<sup>3</sup> We are informed that he had a brother in whose house he had later sojourned after his escape from the jail of San Nicolás convent in the Walled City.

Don Francisco Celis was a “*sargento mayor del Esquadrón de la Cavallería*” [sergeant major of the Cavalry Squadron]. He passed away when the young José was five months short of his fifth year. It must have been a peaceful death because the military officer received the last rites of the Catholic Church. The elder Celis was buried in the parish church of Santa Cruz. The family and the chaplain of the Second Battalion of the Regiment, Father José de Barcelona, a monk of the Order of Saint Jerome, laid him to rest on 13 June 1803.<sup>4</sup>

### Studies for the priesthood

The orphaned Creole aspirant joined the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollects at the now defunct-convent of San Nicolás in Intramuros, Manila, and took the religious appellation of *Fray José Celis de San Luis Gonzaga*.<sup>5</sup>

On 16 February 1821, he made the profession of the religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience after one complete year of novitiate in that big convent named after the patron of the province.

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<sup>3</sup>Father Raymundo Roxas, parish priest of Santa Cruz, Manila, prepared the baptismal certificate to comply with the Recollects’ request for pertinent documents in 1819. Cf. *Certificado del bautismo de José Celis*, ARCHIVO DEL CONVENTO DE MONTEAGUDO, NAVARRA.

<sup>4</sup>Father Raymundo Roxas provided the information culled from the *Libro IV de Entierros* [Book of Burials] of the parish of Santa Cruz. Here we find the surname of the mother *Granadas* which does not appear in the baptismal certificate. The interment certificate was issued by parish priest on 23 May 1814. Cf. *Certificado de Entierro de Dn. Francisco Celis*, ARCHIVO DEL CONVENTO DE MONTEAGUDO, NAVARRA.

<sup>5</sup>His Latin name was “*Frater Josephus a Divo Ludovico Gonzaga*.” He was “*filius legitimus Francis Celis et Maria Celidonia... natus in oppido vulgo Sta. Cruz, Diocesis Manilensis die vigesimo sexto novembris, anno millesimo septingentesimo nonagesimo octavo*.” This folio was kept in the *Libro de Profesiones*, folio 8v of the Recoletos archive in Intramuros, Manila. Blas de las Mercedes, provincial councilor and prior presidente of the Intramuros convent, dispatched a certificate of the folio to the authorities, which is now kept in the ARCHIVO DEL CONVENTO DE MONTEAGUDO, together with the dossier of José Celis.



Popularly known as *Recoletos*, it was likewise a house of studies. In this residence, the aspirants for the Recollect religious lifestyle took up the novitiate year. The profession of the evangelical counsels was made *usque ad mortem* [until death] before Father Mariano de San Miguel in the name of the vicar general of the Augustinian Recollect Congregation.

A theological course of three to four years preceded the ordination to the priesthood that customarily took place at the Manila Cathedral. Thus in 1824, Fray José Celis was ordained as priest in Manila. His first parochial assignment was a parish in the island of Camiguin, located north of the huge island of Mindanao. After his ordination to the priesthood, the young priest was dispatched by the Recollect prior provincial to administer that far-off parish in Camiguin. Francisco Sádaba de la Virgen del Carmen, the author of the 1906 catalogue of Recollect friars, abruptly ended his very short account of three sentences on Fray José Celis, saying that “after some time, there was a need to transfer him to Spain. There was no way of determining the date and the place of his death.”<sup>6</sup>

### Parish priest in Camiguin

On 16 September 1824, he was already called Father José Celis assigned to a parish in Camiguin which fell under the jurisdiction of Misamis. A certain Mariana Varela declared to have received the sum of 1,259 pesos in cash from Father Celis in Camiguin. The money according to Celis was not his, for it belonged to Doña María Favie.

On 12 August 1825, Celis was still a parish priest in Camiguin, as shown by an affidavit he executed at his parish rectory. That affidavit referred to the amount of money received from Doña María Favie who sent it through Don Nicolás Theodoro Placides.

### Charges in 1824-1825

The Creole parish priest in Camiguin was arrested in the second half of 1825. On board a steamer, he was taken to Manila to answer several charges leveled against him, thirty in all.<sup>7</sup> Father

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Extracto de la causa formada contra el p. José Celis*, ARCHIVO

José Celis termed the charges as *chismes* [gossips], baseless hearsay, conjectures, idle talk or just plain rumors. Nevertheless, the Recollect vicar provincial deemed those accusations as very grave “crimes perpetrated by Fray José Celis.” Among the serious charges he was accused of were the following:

1. The accused went to another town without the prelate’s permission; nor did he present himself before the local superior of the town he visited.

2. The accused spent the night outside the convent without the superior’s permission.

3. The accused was not in the convent when somebody was sent to fetch him for the administration of the last rites of the Church to an ailing confrere.

4. The accused was charged with attempting twice to kill another confrere.

5. The accused had not obeyed the lawful order of a judge who ordered him not to leave town.

6. The accused had violated the vow of poverty when he ordered the construction of a boat and school edifices in the town.

7. The accused did not pay the salary of the *sacristanes* [sextons] he ordered to help in the construction.

8. The accused hired women in the weaving room he had in the convent.

9. The accused hardly went to the *visitas* [villages] for confession.

10. The accused preached a few times.

11. The accused at times absented himself from the parish, thus leaving the parishioners without masses.

12. The accused was absent for two weeks from the parish.

13. The accused was regularly occupied with cockfighting and playing of cards.

14. The accused was furious when he lost in these card games.

15. The accused did not pray the Divine Office.

16. The accused carried prohibited weapons.

17. The accused had concubines in his convent.

18. The accused had sired a child in Guindulman, Bohol.

19. The accused was heard to have said being a religious was onerous.

20. The accused was heard to have uttered that he would join the Moros.

Father Celis was eventually found guilty as charged by the Recollect provincial council. Consequently, he was deprived of his priestly functions. He was further slapped with life imprisonment. An appeal for mercy and leniency was filed before the provincial council obviously by Father Celis. So it was decreed that all the friars of San Nicolás convent would give him the *disciplina*: he was to be flogged by every member of the religious community. We are not told how many floggings he received from each confrere. He was then kept in solitary confinement in a prison cell in the convent, although he was free to join his confreres only in community acts.

Nothing significant would be mentioned about his imprisonment at the Recoletos friary from 1825 to 1828. However, from the investigation conducted by the judicial authorities in the wake of his arrest in the early part of 1829, we have a glimpse of the life of Father Celis in his prison cell. An important information was gleaned from the investigation that revealed that Father Celis was permitted to read newspapers in his cell. These papers published in Mexico chronicled the long struggle for independence in the Americas and they reached his hands through a religious confrere who regularly visited his cell. We learned too that Father Celis had fled from the convent on 12 October 1828. Police authorities in Manila were at once requested by the Recollect superior to capture the fugitive Father Celis.

### Events of 1829

The left gloss of a cover letter written on 23 February 1829 by Joaquín de Crame of the Commission of Public Security to the governor and captain general of the Philippines, Don Mariano Ricafort, contained handwritten notes by the latter. The governor general expedited the letter with the attached report and documents about the imprisonment of Fray José Celis, a fugitive from his convent in Intramuros. Ricafort further ordered that those documents taken from the house where he was staying be appended to those

mentioned by Joaquín de Crame. Those documents recovered by Ventura Pereda were to be forwarded at once to Pedro Romero, *ayudante mayor de la Cavallería*,<sup>8</sup> so that summary indictment would be filed with urgency.

In the first attached document dated 22 February 1829, Pedro Romero, secretary of the Commission of Public Security, declared under oath that way back in October 1828 the vicar provincial of Recollect Province had told him to recapture Father José Celis, a fugitive from the Recoletos convent. On 21 February 1829, Celis was rearrested by Manuel Aznar and Antonio Acuña in a house of a native of the *arrabal* of Santa Cruz, Extramuros, Manila. Some papers were taken from a pocket of the jacket the Creole friar was wearing at the time of his capture and were deemed highly subversive in character.

The main document [which I have translated into English] found in his possession declares thus:

Tyrants who in order to satisfy their ambition and greed come to put pressure on us with a [illegible] and pathetic slavery. I see many people in the jails wailing in pain and without any crime at all. We shall forever be destitute and miserable if we carry such a yoke so detestable and onerous. Our adversaries—the Spaniards—are very scared because they aim to possess our land through violence and tyranny. And therefore, let us be supportive of each other! Let us unite ourselves! Let us break the chains of our slavery! What they try chiefly is to fetter us in chain, and so they can take possession of our wealth in all haste and then abandon us mired in misery. Let us strengthen our union with the [illegible] and we shall be happy and free. We profess our sacred mission. And it shall be: Religion, Unity, Independence or Death!

The seditious document alone incited the natives of the colony to rise up in arms against Spain. The mere possession of this *proclama* or *bando* [announcement] was considered a very grave crime of inciting to sedition.

Materials regarded as seditious by colonial authorities were likewise found in his possession at the time of his arrest. It was a *proclama* entitled *Valor Filipino* [Filipino Courage] that says: “*Tu que sufres nefanda tiranía / Muera yo bajo tus ruinas; o Patria mía*” [You who suffer nefarious tyranny / Let me die under your ruins, O my Fatherland].

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<sup>8</sup> Adjutant major of the Cavalry.

Still another proclama declares: “*Contra el Tirano Dominador que posee con violencia este suelo*” [Against the Domineering Tyrant who possesses this land with violence].

### **Celis’ Second Arrest: 21 February 1829**

In a preliminary investigation, Pedro Romero gives us additional information on the recapture of Father Jose Celis.<sup>9</sup> At the time of his arrest, five more seditious papers were also recovered from his possession. A total of eight revolutionary documents were retrieved from the Recollect friar. To assist Romero in the investigation, Joaquín Aguado was assigned on 23 February 1829. Thus, Don Matías de Aznar declared under oath that between five and six in the afternoon of 22 February he together with Lieutenant Antonio Acuña, Silverio de la Cruz and Tomas Pagia took Father José Celis into custody in Santa Cruz, Manila.

The three arresting officers were unanimous in their sworn statement. Celis was in a house of a native named Andrés Sánchez who resided in Dolumbayan, Santa Cruz, Manila. The friar did not resist arrest at all. He was wearing civilian clothes, “*vestido de paisano*.” The police officers had been earlier informed that the friar had been in jail several times in his convent for his bad conduct.

Acuña did not find any other thing except those papers taken from the pockets of his jacket. He declared in a sworn statement that a seditious *proclama* was found. It was addressed to the inhabitants of the Philippines inciting them to “*independencia*,” independence, “*en unión con la América*,” in union with America (emphasis his). Another *proclama* commenced with *Soberano Señor*. The two documents were unsigned.

The proclamas were handed over to the secretary of the Commission on Public Security for safekeeping and further investigation. Following his arrest, Celis was taken into the custody of Father Blas de la Merced of the Recoletos convent.

In the ensuing investigation, the three arresting officers immediately recognized the documents as the same ones retrieved from the jacket of the fugitive Celis.

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<sup>9</sup> ARCHIVO GENERAL DE INDIAS, *Ultramar* 678.

Lieutenant Antonio Acuña, who belonged to the *Batallón veterano Fernando VII* [Ferdinand VII Veteran Battalion] and a member of the arresting team, was then summoned to the preliminary investigation. Lt. Acuña told the prosecutor and the commission members about the papers taken from Celis. He was asked about how Celis acquired the first paper that was “very subversive” and about the friar’s conduct. Lt. Acuña replied he had no idea how Celis obtained the seditious document and why he kept it. He added that probably it was because of his dreadful behavior inside the prison cell of his convent. Lt. Acuña further declared under oath that he heard people say Celis rose up in arms in Bohol and that he was a friend of women.

### **Investigation of Fray José Celis in Recoletos**

On the same day 23 February, the judicial authorities proceeded to Recoletos in Intramuros. Pedro Romero and Joaquín Aguado asked permission from Fray Blas de la Merced permission to ask questions from Father José Celis and to request the accused to execute his sworn affidavit. After the routine questions on name, surname, age, civil status, etc. Celis stated the circumstances of his arrest on 21 February 1829.

The accused additionally told them he had escaped from the Recoletos convent on 12 October 1828, feast of the *Virgen del Pilar*, Our Lady of the Pillar. He initially resided in a house in Murallón de San Fernando, located in Binondo, Manila. He lived at the house of an aged Indio who took good care of him. Celis did not know his name. It could be that fugitive friar did not want to divulge old man’s name, not wanting to incriminate him as a way of returning the favor. Celis then said he moved to the residence of another Indio he knew only as Salvador in order to continue hiding from the authorities.

### **Second investigation of Father Celis**

In the second investigation, a crucifix, a pair of binoculars with casing, and other personal items like clothes were shown to the accused. Celis acknowledged them all as belonging to him. They were the things he had taken out the Recoletos convent when he bolted jail in October 1828. He took his personal items to that house

in Murallón de San Fernando in Binondo where he had initially taken refuge. Once more, Celis stated he did not get the name of the old man who provided him with temporary shelter. At any rate, Celis had no time to know him, as he transferred to another hideout. He later learned on that same night that the police had detained the old man. This piece of information was relayed to him by a young mestizo resident of Binondo named Bernardo.

In that second interrogation, Celis told the investigators there were indeed papers in the telescope bag. He further disclosed that he had copied some documents in his possession from a newspaper published in Vera Cruz, Mexico.<sup>10</sup> He was aware that the *proclama* spoke against the sovereignty of the monarchs, calling them tyrants and greedy people who were only after the wealth of the colony.

Another paper confiscated from Celis contained the public announcement against the Spanish colonial government in the Philippines. He was inquired about the source of subversive papers. He replied that sometime in September 1828, he had acquired them from Fray Fulgencio de San José,<sup>11</sup> a Recollect religious brother who was put in charge of bringing him food ration in his prison cell.<sup>12</sup> When he saw the Mexican newspaper, he asked the confrere to allow him to read it and he copied it in his cell with his own hands before returning the original paper to the brother.<sup>13</sup>

### **Fray Alexandro's Code to decipher letters and messages**

Furthermore, Father José Celis further told the investigating team that he had copied the plan and public announcement by hand sometime in August or September while he was detained in his Recoletos prison. He had a code or *abecedario* [alphabet] in

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<sup>10</sup>ARCHIVO GENERAL DE INDIAS, *folio* 33r.

<sup>11</sup>AGI, *Ultramar*, folio 42r. In this manuscript page, finally the friar who gave the papers from America made his sworn statement and revealed his complete religious appellation: Fray Fulgencio de San José.

<sup>12</sup>The lay brother, whose parents were Manuel Píez and María Calvo, was born in Villaescusa. The province of origin nor the birthdate of Fray Fulgencio are not mentioned in Sádaba's *Catálogo*, 766. Among his confreres he was known as "El Mejicano." He professed the vows on 11 February 1826. In 1849, he was transferred to Cavite. Fray Fulgencio passed away in the convent of Recoletos, Intramuros, on 26 July 1868.

<sup>13</sup>AGI, *Ultramar*, folio 33r.

Spanish forwarded to him by a certain Fray Alexandro Zíalzita who had already died. Using two letters sent by Zíalzita, he was able to break the code. The letters instructed the prisoner how to decipher and understand the letters by means of the code. When Celis escaped from the convent jail, he left behind the letters and the code as well. He was subsequently told that the two letters were torn to pieces and the code book was safeguarded.

### **Why the subversive papers were with Fray Fulgencio?**

Queried on the reasons why Fray Fulgencio de San José carried the subversive materials, Father José Celis exonerated the brother right away, stating he could not believe he could not have any ulterior evil motive. In a sworn statement days later, Fray Fulgencio confirmed what the accused friar had said. He lent the newspapers from America to the jailed priest. These would be returned to him by Celis after two or three days. Fray Fulgencio had in turn borrowed them from a certain Don Ramón Rionda.

Neither did Celis impute any misdeed on Father Zíalzita for the subversive papers of the plan and the *proclama*. Zíalzita had given the code to Celis to entertain him in his prison cell. In one of the letters, Father Celis disclosed that they seized the code book from Father Manuel Cruzido, an American who was detained in the Recoletos convent as insurgent.

Asked why he kept such papers were against public order and welfare of the State, Celis simply said that being in prison he copied those papers only as a mere pastime and nothing else.

### **Don Ventura Pereda**

In October 1828, Don Ventura Pereda, mayor of Manila, headed the team that raided the house in Binondo where Celis had been reportedly staying. Pereda only found the subversive paper directed against the sovereignty of the monarchs. Another material was the *proclama* addressed to the Filipino people “inciting them to independence. The third paper was torn into three pieces and, consequently, it was hardly legible but a plan for something was in the drawing board, from what could be deduced when reconstructed. But Celis had them torn to pieces in order to prove that he had little



appreciation for such papers. He declared that he had no idea about the author of the subversive materials.

### **The investigation on the “Tyrants” *proclama***

Fray José Celis was asked about the author or source of the *proclama* that began with their accusing words: “Tyrants enslaved us in order to satisfy their ambition and greed...” He did not outright pinpoint the author. But he narrated how he got it while en route to Manila in the steamer *Santa Rosa* he had boarded in Cebu City. He was already a prisoner then. In the trip was Don Juan Andrade, a former *alcalde mayor* of Cebu. Celis said he asked Andrade about the latest news from Manila.

Andrade told him about the paper titled *Sobre el indio agraviado* [About the aggrieved Indio], while showing him at the same time the document that began with the word *Tyrants*. That was when the Recollect friar borrowed the two documents from Andrade. In a sworn statement dated 26 February 1829, Don Juan Andrade—already a councilor of Manila at that time—rebuffed everything Celis had declared days before. He categorically denied that he had ever engaged in a conversation with the friar-prisoner during the trip to Manila.

Don Pedro Romero, the special prosecutor in the judicial process against Celis, reminded him why the night before when confronted with the same “Tyrants” document the friar had then responded that the handwriting was not his. During the examination in subsequent days Celis declared that it was his very own handwriting. Celis said he forgot all about it and he thought he had discarded it a long time ago in the house of Don Juan Avilés.

In addition, Celis said that he had given the “Tyrants” announcement to Don Juan Avilés in his residence in the presence of his aunt Doña María Fabie. He had done it without realizing the content of the *proclama* at all. He had asked Avilés to examine the *proclama* and its handwriting. He had left it on his writing-desk before going to church for the prayers. It turned out that he had retrieved the *proclama* from the writing-desk when he visited Avilés in his house again and this was where Celis was eventually rearrested.

The prosecutor learned that several people had harbored the fugitive from justice after fleeing from his convent. He pressured the

friar to name names. But Celis only repeated the name of Bernardo, a mestizo from Binondo. The Recollect would not divulge the names of the other people who had harbored him. He would not incriminate those who had helped him in his hour of need. He had ordered another person to acquire a bed from a certain Capitán Joaquín Arrienda.

### **General Ricafort's decision to condone Fray José's life**

In a letter addressed to the Minister of State in Madrid dated 27 March 1829, Governor General Mariano Ricafort reported that the charges against Fray José Celis de San Luis Gonzaga were indeed punishable by death. But he further explained to the minister why Father Celis should not be meted with the capital punishment:

Of course since the beginning of the judicial process, I foresaw what would the conclusion be if it were to continue. The forgone conclusion was that Father Celis would be found guilty of capital punishment. This Office of the Superior Government would be placed in a very embarrassing situation. Your Excellency is aware of the great consideration and influence enjoyed by all the priests of all religious corporations... for these constitute the bond that unites the simple and ignorant people with the metropolis which they have no idea about.

The execution of a priest in the gallows is one case never seen before in these Islands. And if ever it would happen, it could not but produce one of the two effects: 1) a great scandal even if the laws would justify it, 2) an infringement upon the actual concept wherein the religious priests are held. And it is evident that one or the other would be an equally nefarious thing to commit against the cause of the King and of the Spaniards in the Philippines.

[...] if it would be more convenient to condone the life of a criminal in exchange for avoiding the evil consequences already indicated or to terrify with an exemplary punishment never seen before upon all those who could harbor sinister ideas against the legitimacy of the monarch.<sup>14</sup>

Then Governor General Ricafort ended his letter with a stern warning what would happen if Father José Celis were to escape from his prison in Spain and would find his way back to the colonial capital of the Philippines:

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<sup>14</sup>AGI, *Ultramar* 678, *Letter to the Minister of State*, folio 60.

Judge it as a necessity that he be kept in prison and with the greatest security measures so that he does not bolt jail. Probably he will not stop trying it, if you consider his audacious and clever character, but keep in mind that in case he succeeds in escaping, it is presumed that he would come back to this country where his presence is very harmful on account of the influence which his character and principles would give him among those who aspire for independence.<sup>15</sup>

### **Exile to Sevilla, Spain, in 1829**

In an official communiqué General Ricafort ordered the exile and imprisonment of Fray José Celis, “*reo de Estado*”<sup>16</sup> in far-off Spain. Ricafort’s letter was dated 25<sup>th</sup> February 1829. The friar prisoner was hurriedly dispatched to Spain “*bajo partida de registro*,” under guard, in the steamer *Santa Ana*. An official of the Ministry of Grace and Justice informed the monarch about the message from the captain general of Andalucía who reported the arrival of Fray José Celis in Sevilla. The governor general’s letter was dated 17 July 1829. Ricafort had issued orders for strictest security measures to be implemented on account of the type of criminal offense—crime against the State—Celis had committed so he could not bolt jail. No charges could be sent together with the friar prisoner because they were not ready yet. The testimonies and sworn statements of parties involved were not finished at that time.

It was to be what the Recollect vicar general in Madrid would ordain because the friar prisoner was at his disposal. The captain general of Andalucía had ordered Celis to be incarcerated in the *Convento de Nuestra Señora del Pópulo* of the Augustinian Recollects in Sevilla. The friar prisoner arrived in the Andalusian city in August 1829 and he was at once thrown to the dungeon of the convent.

### **Celis is treated like hot potato**

The prior of Populo Convent wasted no time in appealing to the Augustinian Recollect vicar general in Madrid for the immediate transfer of Fray José Celis to the convent in Monteagudo in the

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, folio 61,

<sup>16</sup> A prisoner guilty of committing a crime against the security of the State.

Kingdom of Navarra in northern Spain. The Sevilla convent, the prior reasoned out, had a measly income and it was very difficult to have one more mouth to feed in the community.

The Recollect superior earnestly asked the Spanish monarch to put Father Celis under the direct jurisdiction of the procurator general/vicar provincial of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino province. The vicar provincial would then transport Celis to their Monteagudo convent. Clearly, Celis had become a hot potato that no religious in his sane mind would be glad to keep nor any religious community would give him shelter. No convent was willing to keep him even under guard. He had become a security problem that pose grave risk for everyone.

The Supreme Council of the Indies meantime decided that Celis be kept under close guard at *Convento de Nuestra Señora del Pópulo*. It reminded the Pópulo prior that the Celis' escape and return to the Philippines "was very dangerous." The order was reiterated because the official charges and verdict were still unavailable. It was already 1831 and Celis was still in prison in the Recollect convent in Sevilla. In December 1831, the prior of Sevilla urged the governor general of the Philippines to dispatch the official summary of arrest, indictment, charges and verdict without further delay.

Finally, after waiting for a long time, the Spanish authorities in Madrid received a letter together with the summary of charges against the sentenced Fray José Celis. It was the new Governor General Pascual Enrile in Manila who dispatched the dossier to Madrid in September 1832, almost four years after the arrest was made and the indictment, trial and verdict were over.

### **Council of the Indies resolves to move Celis out of Sevilla**

On 31 March 1835, Father Pedro Manchado de Santa Rita, vicar provincial of Saint Nicholas de Tolentino Province in Madrid, wrote from Puerto Real, Cádiz a letter to the Spanish Queen Regent. He mentioned the royal resolution of October 1834 which suspended the return trip of Father Celis to the Philippines, according to the decision issued by a section of the Council of the Indies. The vicar general of the Order was further mandated to send the friar prisoner then incarcerated in the Convent of Our Lady of Pópulo in Sevilla to any Recollect convent in the Spanish Peninsula so he could complete

the sentence meted out upon him by the provincial council of Saint Nicholas province in Manila.

The ministry order of November 1834 had further mandated the transfer of Father Celis to the convent of Monteagudo. The ministry order had been decreed in compliance with the Queen Regent María Cristina's resolution which was issued by the Ministry of Grace and Justice and forthwith communicated to Father Pedro Manchado de Santa Rita.

### **Manchado opposes the plan to move Celis to Monteagudo**

The royal order was strongly opposed by the Recollect commissary general/vicar provincial who redacted a lengthy letter. Father Manchado politely reminded the Queen Regent about the main objective of the convent which was "to admit young men, educate them and teach them letters and virtues." He further informed the Queen Regent about the great risk and myriad inconveniencies if Father Celis were to be sent to the formation house in Monteagudo to take up residence there and to finish his prison term. The underlying argument against his sojourn in the seminary and novitiate was that the friar prisoner might corrupt the young and delicate minds of the young theology students and novices with his confirmed revolutionary and separatist ideas.

Father Manchado said any convent of the three Augustinian Recollect provinces in Spain would be similarly very suitable for Celis' incarceration. Father Celis could stay in any religious house of the Recollect congregation, except in that of Monteagudo. In addition, Manchado mentioned that Monteagudo was in the vicinity of the battlefield in the ongoing fratricidal Carlist War that had played havoc on Spain.<sup>17</sup> He strongly argued that Celis' presence

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<sup>17</sup>The First Carlist War commenced after the death of King Ferdinand VII. The Liberals allied themselves with his under-aged daughter Isabella II—deemed heir to the throne by the king's own edict abolishing the Salic law before his demise—and the widow and regent María Cristina and waged war against Don Carlos María Isidro, the king's brother, with whom the traditionalists and regionalists joined forces to see the realization of their absolutist and Catholic aspirations. The dynastic war had erupted in October 1833 four days after Ferdinand was laid to rest and lasted until 1839. England and

would definitely put the convent and its resident friars in a very grave danger.

Additionally, Father Manchado informed the queen regent that an hour and a half after he had left for Puerto Real, Cádiz, in order to send off the 49<sup>th</sup> Recollect mission to the Philippines, Celis suddenly appeared in their Madrid convent looking for him. Manchado was apprised about the situation by a letter written to him by a religious brother. Father Vicar General, who was the superior general of the Recollect Congregation, had ordered the prior of Madrid to take Celis to their convent in Monteagudo as soon as possible. The necessary permit for transfer was forthwith issued to Celis by the vicar general.

Manchado reiterated his vehement opposition to Celis' transfer to the convent of Monteagudo. He said there were only two young priests at that time in Monteagudo who were both incapable of containing Celis' audacity and daring attitude. There were also an old and ailing priest, two religious brothers and a *donado*.<sup>18</sup> He restated the delicate situation due to its nearness to Carlist War battlefield and Celis himself might compromise the entire religious community of the formation house when least expected.

### Political turmoil in Spain

From 1835 onwards, nothing was heard any more about Fray José Celis de San Luis Gonzaga, the friar who almost ignited a revolution in the Spanish colony. Whether he had been sent back to Sevilla and escaped once more from his conventual prison there, nothing could be ascertained. Unfortunately, we have not unearthed

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France recognized the legitimacy of the new queen under the regency of Queen María Cristina. Pope Gregory XVI refused to do so unless Naples, Russia, Sardinia and Austria recognized her. Furthermore, he openly sided with Don Carlos. The furious Liberals vented their ire on the hapless friars and Jesuits whom they killed mercilessly. The year 1834 saw the murder of friars and burning of monasteries and convents. See Francisco MONTALBÁN, *Historia de la Iglesia católica. Edad moderna. 1648-1963* (Madrid 1963) 532-537.

<sup>18</sup>A *donado*, in religious parlance, refers to a layman who enters a convent without profession of vows under its employment to serve the religious community without monetary compensation.

any further source which could shed light on the outcome of Father Manchado's letter to the Spanish queen. Furthermore, we do not know whatever happened to the friar prisoner's appeal to the monarch to proceed to Monteagudo of his own Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino as his conventual residence. Nonetheless, we have ample news of the portentous political climate in which Fray José Celis was living in Spain.

### **Mendizábal's despoliation**

The Liberal Minister of Finance Juan Alvarez Mendizábal (1790-1853) issued the anticlerical laws of *desamortización*, despoliation or confiscation of all church properties belonging to male religious congregations, parishes and cathedral chapters in 1835. Two more decrees enacted by the Spanish *Cortes* or Parliament in March 1836 and in July 1837 abolished almost all the religious communities. Thus over 900 convents together with their architectural gems and fertile lands were confiscated from the religious orders by the Liberal government. The move was aimed at stalling the growing deficit in the State budget. The sale of monastic properties that commenced in 1835 and later included that of the secular clergy in 1842 ended only in 1845.<sup>19</sup> Numerous bishops who opposed the Liberal regime of Spain were forced go into exile. The Recollect Congregation had 388 religious priests and brothers who were expelled from their convents and driven out to the street.<sup>20</sup>

Solely the Franciscan convent of Pastrana, the Augustinian convent of Valladolid, the Dominican convent of Ocaña as well as the Monteagudo convent of the Augustinian Recollects were saved from dissolution by the government. The friars of these convents trained missionaries to be sent to the Philippines where they would be of immense political value and benefit for the continuance of the Spanish sovereignty in the Philippines.

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<sup>19</sup> Roger AUBERT, Johannes BEKMANN, *The Church in the Age of Liberalism* VIII, in Hubert JEDIN [ed.], *History of the Church*, New York 1989, 143-148.

<sup>20</sup> Angel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los agustinos recoletos II* (Madrid 2015) 160.

## Epilogue

As a result of the series of despoliation decrees, thirty-two of the thirty-three Augustinian Recollect convents in Spain were suppressed and lost to the government coffers. Monks and friars were expelled from their monasteries. A great number of them decided to be secularized, to be laicized or become laymen again. True to their priestly and religious call, some Recollect friars sought incardination in the dioceses, while others simply opted to leave the Congregation. Only ten Recollect friars, dubbed *exclaustrados* referring to those taken out of the cloister, from the thirty-two suppressed communities volunteered to travel to the Philippines as missionaries. These friars were expected to play a very important political role in the Spanish colony.

Among the convents and churches closed in the Recollect province of Andalusia was that of Sevilla.<sup>21</sup> In 1843, the Recollect church of Nuestra Señora del Populo was torn down for unknown reasons. Most of the church treasures and artifacts were lost to posterity. Some images were clandestinely taken out for safekeeping in the homes of pious families or in other churches of Sevilla. The convent shortly after became the military barracks of the national artillery.<sup>22</sup> Much later, it was converted into a prison, touted as “one of the best in Spain.” In 1935, the jail was demolished to give way to the construction of a central market of suppliers.

The Recollect conventuals of Nuestra Señora del Pópulo were dislodged into the street in a very hasty manner. Not much of their property was salvaged, like paintings, furniture, books, etc. And nothing was heard any more about the friar-prisoner Father José Celis. Only one possibility could have happened: the Creole priest might have gone back to the layman’s status, leaving the Augustinian Recollect Congregation for good. In various official communications, he had urged his Recollect superiors, both vicar general in Madrid and his vicar provincial in Monteagudo, to lift the suspension of his priestly faculties. His efforts were in all vain. Consequently, there

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<sup>21</sup>Manuel CARCELLER, *Algunas particularidades de varios de los antiguos conventos de las tres provincias desaparecidas y destino que han tenido todos ellos*, in *Historia de la Orden de Recoletos de San Agustín x: 18081836* (Madrid 1962) 748-764.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 761.



exist no records today in the canonical books of the Augustinian Recollect Order that could indicate his last whereabouts or his death.

The ecclesiastical confiscations and secularization decrees of the Spanish Prime Minister Juan Álvarez Mendizábal that ordered the expropriation and privatization of monastic properties in Spain and expulsion of monks and friars from their convents from 1835 to 1837 almost put an end to the existence of the Augustinian Recollect Congregation. Only the convent in Monteagudo was saved from extinction because it trained missionaries very much needed in the colonial Philippines. Hence, the Recollects continued their religious formation and their corporate existence. But the Mendizábal decrees successfully put an end to the separatist ideas of Father José Celis de San Luis Gonzaga, the Creole friar from Santa Cruz, Manila, who almost ignited a revolution in the Philippines in the late 1820s.

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## Fray Diego Cera, OAR (1762-1832): Maker of the World-famous Las Piñas Bamboo Organ

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Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos

The Augustinian Recollect religious who would put Las Piñas on the cultural map of the world saw the light of day on 26 July 1762 at Villa de Graus of Huesca province in the Spanish region of Aragón. Diego Cera's parish belonged to the Diocese of Barbastro. The friar behind the world-famous bamboo organ was born to Joaquín Cera and Francisca



Badia.<sup>1</sup> At age 24, he donned the habit of the Augustinian Recollects at their convent in Barcelona on 29 January 1786 to commence his novitiate year. Recollect Historian Manuel Carceller surmised that, before hearkening to the call to the religious priesthood, Diego had taken up studies for the priesthood as well as in the field of music and pipe organ. He further noted that Fray Diego had worked as organist in the Recollect convents in Spain.<sup>2</sup>

After the mandatory year of novitiate, he professed the three evangelical counsels on 30 January 1787 and chose the religious

<sup>1</sup> Francisco SÁDABA, *Catálogo de los Religiosos Agustinos Recoletos de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas desde el año 1606, en que llegó la primera misión a Manila, hasta nuestros días* (Madrid 1906) 360.

<sup>2</sup> Manuel CARCELLER, *Historia general de la Orden de Recoletos de San Agustín* x (Madrid 1962) 657.

appellation of Fray Diego Cera de la Virgen del Carmen as token of his deep love and devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel as his personal patroness. With the novice master Fray Manuel de San Joaquín present at the rite of religious profession, the prior of the Recollect Convent of Barcelona, Fray Mariano de Santa Bárbara, received Fray Diego's profession of the monastic vows.<sup>3</sup> He was ordained to the sacred order of priesthood at the Recollect convent of Benabarre in the Province of Huesca. In August 1790, he was a conventual of the convent in the Zaragoza where the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar is located. In this convent, the community was visited by the Commissary Provincial Fray Manuel de Jesús María looking for volunteers for the Philippine missions. It was during this visit that Fray Diego expressed his desire to exercise the missionary apostolate in the Philippine. The 28-year-old frair bade goodbye to his confreres in the religious community on 15 October 1790.

Fray Manuel de Jesús María took the group of young missionaries to the port city of Cádiz in southern Spain. Fray Diego was in the 25<sup>th</sup> Recollect missionary expedition to the Philippines which was headed by Vice Commissary Provincial Mauro de San Agustín.<sup>4</sup> He was described by an official government document as a 28-year-old priest who was endowed with an average-sized body, blue eyes, chestnut hair and he did not sport a beard.<sup>5</sup> Their frigate *El Águila* lifted anchor at Cádiz on 3 December 1790 and sailed to the Atlantic Ocean en route to Mexico which they reached after a three-month voyage.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> CARCELLER, *Historia general* x, 657.

<sup>4</sup> Padre Mauro de San Agustín was assigned as parish priest of Maribohoc, Bohol, from 1799 until his death which took place in the town of Baclayon also Bohol, on 16 May 1839.

<sup>5</sup> Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio documental sobre el Padre Diego Cera (1762-1832)*, in *Recollectio* 8 (1985) 288.

<sup>6</sup> Sádaba says in page 359 about two departure dates; the first date—28 November 1790—was provided by the Book of Missions. Sádaba also points to another departure date—7 December 1790—the date from the Registry of the Congregation. The Recollect historian Angel Martínez Cuesta, however, obtained the following information from the *Archivo General de Indias* in Sevilla, Spain, in *Legajo* 1053 of the *Filipinas* Section: the embarkation of thirteen Augustinian Recollects was certified on 3 December 1790. The same document earlier listed the names of the original group of seventeen

After their arrival in Mexico City in February 1791, the friars waited for a year at the Recollect hospice which was their half-way house in the capital city. They left Mexico in February 1792 and reached the port of Manila five months later, in July 1792.<sup>7</sup> The young Recollects took up residence in their San Nicolás Convent, popularly known as Recoletos, Intramuros. This age-old Recollect priory—founded in 1608, damaged several times by earthquakes, destroyed by American bombardment during the Liberation of Manila in February 1945 and totally demolished after World War II—was the mother-house of the Philippine missionary province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino within the walled city of Manila. The Recoletos friary had likewise served as their provincial curia, novitiate, theology house, hospital, and home for the aged. Its conventual church with its magnificent interior housed the original image of *Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno*, the devotion endeared to and revered by millions of Filipino devotees as the Black Nazarene.

### A gift fit for a queen

In 1793, a year following his arrival at the colonial capital of Manila, Fray Diego constructed his first pipe organ in the Philippines.<sup>8</sup> On 29 October 1793, the Augustinian Recollect provincial council in a meeting, convoked solely for the purpose, decided to send it to the Spanish queen in Madrid as gift. The council fathers said the magnificent organ was a “jewel worthy of being presented to our lady, the Queen, because there was no other instrument could come close to it neither in Spain nor in England, as the actual governor general himself had insinuated.”<sup>9</sup>

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Recollect missionaries presented by Fray Manuel de Jesús María on 2 August 1790. See MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio*, 288.

<sup>7</sup> The arrival date was 5 July 1792 according to CARCELLER, *Historia general*, 657, and MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio*, 288, not 5 June 1792, as surmised by SÁDABA, 359.

<sup>8</sup> Agustín DE SANTA TERESA [pseudonym of Fr. Rafael García], *Organista y organero*, in *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas* [BPSN] 43 (1953) 109.

<sup>9</sup> MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio*, 288-289; Agustín DE SANTA TERESA, *Organista y organero*, 109; Casimiro ROYO, *Relación histórica de los religiosos de nuestra provincia que se han distinguido notablemente en las ciencias*, in BPSN 12 (1921) 709.

The prior provincial José de Santa Orosia wrote the accompanying letter to the Spanish monarch: “In the name of this Province [of Discalced Augustinian of the Philippines], we are giving [you] this as token of our great and reverent fondness for your royal person.... I ask your Majesty to deign accept this small gift we hope would be pleasing to you.”<sup>10</sup> In return, the queen without a doubt was so pleased with the Recollect token of gratitude and respect that she in turn gifted Fray Diego with “a beautiful gold chalice, a set of cruets, also made of gold, and a bronze bell, which are preserved with painstaking care and are still in use [1919] in the parish of Las Piñas.”<sup>11</sup>

### **A pipe organ for the Recoletos church at Intramuros**

In 1793-1794, Fray Diego constructed another organ, this time for the Recoletos church of Intramuros.<sup>12</sup> The specific date of its construction cannot be determined. Three Recollect writers—Francisco Sádaba, Miguel Avellaneda, Fabián Otamendi<sup>13</sup>—unanimously affirmed that the musical instrument was finished by Fray Diego in or towards the year 1798.



**The pipe organ made by Fray Diego Cera circa 1798 at the Recoletos Church of Intramuros, Manila, damaged beyond repair by American Occupation troops during the Filipino-American War.**

However, Recollect Historian Ángel Martínez Cuesta has analyzed well the primary sources and is convinced that Fray Diego completed the organ in May 1794 for three strong reasons. First, Martínez Cuesta said the very *Book of Receipts of the San Nicolás Convent* mentioned the expenses incurred in the “construction of the

<sup>10</sup> MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio*, 283.

<sup>11</sup> Gregorio OCHOA, *Historia de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* 9, Zaragoza 1919, 237.

<sup>12</sup> MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio*, 283. Footnote 24 contains the historian’s compelling evidence and arguments.

<sup>13</sup> Fabián OTAMENDI, *El órgano de nuestro convento de Intramuros (Manila)*, in BPSN 15 (1924) 341.

organ.” On 8 May 1794, the prior and the trustees/receivers signed in the folio entry for the expenditures of the 1791-1794 triennium that the amount of 774 pesos was spent for the work of the organ. In the succeeding manuscript folio, the historian continues, there is a mention of the “new organ” as an addition in the convent. But most of all, the first parish assignment of Fray Diego in the curacy of Mabalacat in Pampanga could be understood only, after he had finished the work of the grandiose organ for the mother-house. Indeed, he was dispatched as missionary to Mabalacat on 9 June 1794 after his project for the Recoletos church in Intramuros was done. Less than a year later, on 22 May 1895, he was again assigned to the Recoletos friary.

### Las Piñas Parish

On 17 November 1795, the vicar provincial presented a *terna* or list of three candidates for the position of parish priest of Las Piñas to the governor-general and the archbishop of Manila. One of the three was Diego Cera de la Virgen del Carmen because there was “no other more appropriate a parish priest to administer a newly-created town that lacked everything than him.”<sup>14</sup>

But, what was Las Piñas at the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century? Let us hear what our historian Angel Martínez Cuesta has to say about it:

Las Piñas was a mean little village with hardly any resources of its own and a customary haven of malefactors. It was a mere appendage to the parish of Parañaque until 1755 when the Augustinians ceded it to the archdiocese. As it could not support a canonically-installed parish priest, the curacy was still in the hands of an interim minister. Hence, it was not a parish that would whet extraordinary appetites. Nevertheless, it fell within the sphere of influence of Imus Hacienda and it was very near Manila where, given the deterioration of its convents, the province needed a place to assign some religious who would represent it in the pulpit and defend its interests in the corridors of power in government.

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<sup>14</sup> MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio*, 283.

The Recollects commenced to display interest in Las Piñas in 1765 when they asked for it from the Augustinians. Once more they insisted in their request in 1790 and 1794. But apparently they made no official petitions until September 1795. The government and the archdiocese were pleased to welcome the Recollect formal request.<sup>15</sup>

The formal request for the administration of Las Piñas by the Recollect Congregation was initiated by Prior Provincial Joaquín Encabo de la Virgen de Sopetrán<sup>16</sup> who would be bishop of Cebu in 1803-1818. He was prior provincial for two terms but at the time when the legal courses of action were made, Father Encabo was vicar provincial of Manila and nearby convents. The Augustinian confreres, the ex-provincial pointed out, had handed this impoverished town of three-hundred families over to the archdiocese, but the Recollects felt it necessary to have the curacy of Las Piñas in the vicinity of the colonial capital.<sup>17</sup> The governor-general and the archbishop of Manila acceded at once to the request of the Augustinian Recollects and ceded the newly-established parish to the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino together with its nine scattered *visitas* or villages: Almanza, Pamplona, Pulanglupa, Talon, Zapote, Cut-cut, Fajardo, Manuyo and Ilaya.<sup>18</sup> A month earlier, the new parish of Our Lady of Pillar in Imus, Cavite, where the extensive Augustinian Recollect hacienda was located, had likewise been ceded to their spiritual care.<sup>19</sup>

### Improvements on the old church structures

On 26 December 1795, Fray Diego took possession of Las Piñas whose parish venerated Saint Joseph as its patron saint.<sup>20</sup> It

<sup>15</sup> Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *The Augustinian Recollects: Arrival in the Philippines and Spread of Missionary Activities*, Quezon City 2006, 40-41, and his voluminous *Historia de los Agustinos Recoletos* I, Madrid 1995, 620.

<sup>16</sup> SÁDABA, 312-313.

<sup>17</sup> Miguel AVELLANEDA, *Centenario de la muerte del P. Diego Cera, A.R.*, in BPSN 24 (1933) 234.

<sup>18</sup> Emmanuel Luis ROMANILLOS, *Bishop Ezekiel Moreno. An Augustinian Recollect Saint in the Philippines* (Quezon City 1993) 100.

<sup>19</sup> MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *The Augustinian Recollects: Arrival*, 40.

<sup>20</sup> SÁDABA says it was 1797. The credible testimony from the *Libro*



did not take long for this “intelligent, vigorous and disinterested” Recollect friar to change the countenance of the town. Thus, in the words of the Recollect historian:

At once he won over the trust of the people who in 1797 even placed themselves at his command in order to defend the town against a possible attack by the British. Father Cera re-established peace and order, attracted a good number of families to live in the *población* that grew from 350 families in 1795 to 480 in 1799, built roads, started the construction of a temple made of hewn stone and gave splendor to church worship by organizing an orchestra of violins and other string instruments. Progress such as that in Las Piñas did whet the appetite of the diocesan chapter but at the same time it won over the unwavering support from the governor who adamantly sided with the Recollect administration and in the famous report of 1804 vigorously defended it.<sup>21</sup>

First things first. So, in Las Piñas the new parish priest rebuilt his rectory which was made of light materials, according to the *Libro de Cosas notables de Las Piñas*.<sup>22</sup> The lowly parish rectory was turned into a decent residence for a hard-working and indefatigable *cura párroco*. Next he worked on the existing small church that was likewise made of light materials, probably nipa and bamboo which were locally available in abundance. For a decent worship in the humble house of God, he purchased cloths, jewels, images of saints and other sacred vessels and utensils. The music lover and promoter as well as art enthusiast in Fray Diego urged him to organize a choir

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*de Cosas Notables de Las Piñas* gives us the exact date. See *200 Years of Las Piñas*, (Manila 1962) 22; AVELLANEDA, *Centenario*, 234; MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio*, 297.

<sup>21</sup> Rafael Ma. AGUILAR, “Exposición [...] sobre los curatos de Santa Rosa, Imus, Las Piñas y demás que se hace presente,” 25 noviembre 1804, in W. E. RETANA, *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino 1* (Madrid 1895) 3-22; the whole dossier is found in the *Archivo General de Indias, Ultramar* 682.

<sup>22</sup> MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio*, 297. The Recollect historian summarized Father Diego’s parish works from the *Libro de Cosas notables de Las Piñas* [Book of Noteworthy Events of Las Piñas] which was later published as *200 Years of Las Piñas* by the Historical Conservation Society in 1962.

and a string orchestra of violins and bass, with everything needed “for the embellishment and splendor of church worship.”

### **A new stone church to withstand the elements**

In 1797, the new Spanish parish priest started gathering building materials for the construction of a strong church with three naves. He ordered the construction of warehouses for the building materials and the sawing of lumber. The superiors of Saint Nicholas Province helped their industrious confrere in every way possible. In the coming years, they would defray the construction of the *retablo mayor*, or main altarpiece. In the same year 1797, Fray Diego gifted he parish church with a small pipe organ.

The succeeding year 1798 saw the laying of the foundations for the new *mampostería* [rubblework] parish church of Saint Joseph. Lime and stones were chosen as materials for the strong temple of God that would last for ages, barring natural calamities like earthquakes. In that same year 1798, a violent typhoon wrought havoc on the primitive church. The organ was ruined but Fray Diego himself repaired it. Due to the motivation by the parish priest, the parishioners and even Christians from adjoining communities donated funds and building materials for the ongoing church construction project. From 1810 to 1819, the people rendered the *polos y servicios* or community work earnestly motivated by their parish priest. Fray Diego himself provided food for the workers and accommodated them in comfortable lodgings.



**Saint Joseph Parish Church of Las Piñas City, also known as the Bamboo Organ Church**

In 1813, the old church could no longer be used for worship and they had to double their effort on the stone church project. In 1816, the roofing of the new church was finished. The *retablo* was put in place. The painting of the interior commenced. In 1819, the

façade and main altar were done. The two lateral niches had the images of Our Lady of Consolation and Saint Augustine.

The construction of the stone church of Saint Joseph with three naves finally had drawn to a close when the third pastoral visitation of Las Piñas was conducted by Manila Archbishop Juan Antonio de Zulaybar on 19 October 1819.<sup>23</sup> The succeeding archbishops, especially Archbishop José Seguí in 1831,<sup>24</sup> in their pastoral visitations never failed to express kind words and thanks to the diligent Recollect parish priest, praising him for the promotion of the splendor of divine worship, the cleanness of the divine temple, abundance of sacred vessels and decoration as well as his assiduous preaching of the Word of God and administration of the sacraments.<sup>25</sup> All these were carried out by the hardworking curate in spite of the poor income of the parish.

Earlier, in coordination with the *gobernadorcillo* of Las Piñas, Fray Diego supervised the building of important bridges in the town. The stone bridge in Pulanglupa was finished in 1810. To connect Las Piñas with the adjoining province of Cavite, the stone bridge of Zapote was constructed in 1817. He was likewise very knowledgeable and adept in machines which he made use of for improvements in the neighboring vast Recollect hacienda of Imus in Cavite planted with palay, fruit trees and other crops.

### A Bamboo Organ for Las Piñas

In 1816, Fray Diego and his workers started cutting bamboos for the grandiose project of the Bamboo Organ. Then he buried 950 bamboo canes along sandy shores of Las Piñas for six months.<sup>26</sup> This ingenious process he ably used in order for the bamboos to withstand the ravages of time and avoid the damage caused by *anay* [termites]. In the end, the organ builder utilized 953 tubes, of which 832 were made of bamboo and 121 made of metal.<sup>27</sup> The inventive friar came up with stops that imitated drumming and the nightingale. The chirping of birds could also be imitated. The organist would

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 300.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 301.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Agustín R. DE SANTA TERESA DE JESÚS, *Organista y Organero*, 109-110.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

pour an amount of water onto a special mechanism to produce the chirping sound. That is why the organist should have the water ready whenever the song of birds was called for.

### Minor and major repairs of the Bamboo Organ

After almost five years, Fray Diego finished his Bamboo Organ construction project in 1821, except the organ stops. He continued this work until the following year when the construction was at last finished. Both parish church and rectory were badly hit by the earthquake of 1829. In 1829-1830, Fray Diego had to repair the church and rectory which were both damaged by a strong typhoon that devastated the town in January 1829.<sup>28</sup>



The colonial government donated 2,000 pesos for the important repairs. Another tremor struck in 1863. The storm that destroyed the church roof in 1882 damaged badly the bamboo organ as well. The most important repairs happened in 1973-1975 when the Klais Orgelbau GmbH & Co. KG carried out in Bonn, Germany the meticulous and complete restoration of this great legacy of the Recollect friar.

**The world-famous sui-generis Bamboo Organ, constructed by Fray Diego Cera in 1816-1821, still in use up to these days.**

### Honors galore and demise of Fray Diego Cera

The Recollect friar received pastoral assignments and honors inside and outside Saint Nicholas Province. He was designated by the governor general as chaplain of the *Real Colegio de Santa Potenciana*, a school founded in 1589 and later abolished in 1866, where orphans of Spanish soldiers studied. In the provincial chapters, the capitular fathers elected him as *prior vocal* of Taytay in the Calamianes (1805), Baclayon in Bohol (1815, 1821) and Tandag in Mindanao (1825), all of which were honorary positions which allowed him to attend as delegate to the triennial decision-making

<sup>28</sup> MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio*, 286.

provincial chapters without necessarily residing in those designated convents or parishes.<sup>29</sup>

In 1832, The old friar—almost seventy years old at that time and suffering from an unnamed serious illness—withdrew to the cloistered life of San Sebastian Convent outside the walls of Manila. He resigned from his beloved curacy of Las Piñas on 15 May 1832.<sup>30</sup> About two weeks earlier, he had been appointed *prior presidente* or superior of San Sebastian Convent in the district of Quiapo. On 24 June, Fray Diego Cera de la Virgen del Carmen passed away inside a friar cell in a cloister where a few meters away stood in a niche at the temple of God the age-old, very beautiful and much-revered ivory icon of the Our Lady of Mount Carmel her religious patroness that arrived from Mexico City in 1618 and later enthroned at San Sebastian Church in 1621.

## Conclusion

Let me now quote lengthily a portion of my translation of a 1953 Spanish article penned by Rafael García (1911-1977), editor for over two decades of the *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas* [Bulletin of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino of the Philippines] and concurrently administrator of the Historical Provincial Archive in Marcilla, Navarra. He dubbed the iconic Recollect Fray Diego Cera as *organista y organero*, organist and organ-maker:

Man is what he loves, says Saint Augustine. If man loves mud, he becomes mud; if he loves vice, he gets rotten; if he loves dishonor, he dishonors himself, and if he loves God, he becomes divine. Diego Cera loved God and he offered to Him the most expressive homage of his soul, what was sweetest to him, what was gentlest and most delicate. He knew of the sweetest impressions that religious music of temples causes in souls. He knew that at the sound of organ music Saint Cecilia melted in her love of God and offered her virginal heart to the Lord. He knew of the tears shed by Saint Augustine with the canticles of the Church and he knew as well that

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<sup>29</sup> SÁDABA, 362.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 301.

nothing like music could attract the Filipino people to the temple, and from the temple to God. That was the reason why Fray Diego devoted painstakingly to the construction of organs for churches, organs that made him immortal, organs that, in the words of the American writer George A. Miller, are *sui generis*, the only one of its kind on the face of the earth.”<sup>31</sup>

Endless accolades were heaped upon the Spanish Augustinian Recollect friar and his enduring *sui generis* Bamboo Organ legacy to the Filipino nation long after his demise. Indeed, the classic Greco-Latin adage holds true: *Ars longa vita brevis*, art is long, life is short, which highlights “the long-lasting impact of art over the brevity of life.” In May 1932, in commemoration of the centenary of Fray Diego’s death, an interesting article saw print in the *Philippine Machinery Journal*, as quoted by the Recollect biographer Miguel Avellaneda:

Five scores and ten years ago, Father Diego Cera, a member of the Agustinos Recoletos Friars, finished a task of infinite love and patience—an accomplishment unique in the long chapter of organ-maker’s history and one destined to endure far beyond the fondest expectations of the good man and his willing helpers. In the little church of Las Piñas, Rizal Province, barely a twenty-minute drive from the heart of Manila, he built the first and only Bamboo Organ the world has known: an organ that swelled forth its sacred music for the reverential ears of great-great great grandfathers of today, and for every generation since and which still fills the old church with its sweet and plaintive melody.<sup>32</sup>

Las Piñas remains today a Christian community grateful to Fray Diego and his enduring patrimony of culture and material progress. The greatest legacy, however, bequeathed to Las Piñas City by Fray Diego Cera de la Virgen del Carmen and succeeding Augustinian Recollect confreres, especially Saint Ezekiel Moreno, their holy parish priest in 1876-1879, is their Christian faith. That unwavering faith is being handed down from generation to generation in the progressive Las Pinas City, aptly dubbed “a city with heritage”

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<sup>31</sup> Agustín DE SANTA TERESA, *Organista y organero*, 108.

32 AVELLANEDA, *Centenario*, 233-238.

deservedly proud of its 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hispanic heritage structures: Bamboo Organ, Saint Joseph Parish Church and Pulanglupa Bridge. The abundant fruits of their Christian faith through untiring Augustinian Recollect evangelization have continued to be harvested by their equally able successors, workers and parishioners in the Lord's vineyard.

### **Timeline of Fray Diego Cera, OAR**

26 July 1762	Birth at Villa de Graus (Huesca). His parents are Joaquín Cera and Francisca Badia.
29 January 1786	Novitiate at the Augustinian Recollect convent in Barcelona.
30 January 1787	Simple profession of the monastic vows.
1790	Priestly ordination at the convent of Benabarre (Huesca)
5 July 1792	He arrives in Manila with the 25th Recollect mission.
1793	Fray Diego builds his first pipe organ which the prior provincial Fray José de Santa Orosia and his provincial council sent to the Queen of Spain on 31 October 1793. In return, the Spanish monarch gives Fray Diego her gifts: a gold chalice, a set of gold cruets and a bronze bell.
1793-1794	Fray Diego builds a pipe organ and installs it at San Nicolas Church, also known as Recoletos, in Intramuros, Manila. The pipe organ was used for two centuries until it was irreparably ruined by American Occupation troops in 1898.
9 June 1794	Missionary of Mabalacat in Pampanga.
September 1795	Saint Nicholas Province sends to the governor-general and the archbishop of Manila an official petition to administer Las Piñas, a <i>visita</i> of Parañaque, after informal requests sent to the Augustinians of Parañaque in 1765, 1790 and 1794.
17 November 1795	Fray Diego is included in the list of three candidates as parish priest of Las Piñas, presented by the prior provincial to the governor-general and Manila archbishop.

- 26 December 1795 Fray Diego takes possession of Las Piñas which has nine barrios under its jurisdiction: Almanza, Pamplona, Zapote, Pulanglupa, Talon, Cut-cut, Fajardo, Manuyo, Ilaya.
- 1797 Fray Diego organizes a choir and a string orchestra of violins and basses, with everything needed “for the embellishment and splendor of church worship.”  
The townspeople request the governor-general to name Fray Diego as commander in case of war against the British.
- 20 December 1805 Appointed *prior vocal* of Taytay in the Calamianes.
- 1806 The governor general names Fray Diego as chaplain of the Real Colegio de Santa Potenciana where orphans of Spanish soldiers study.
- 1810 – 1819 Construction of Saint Joseph Parish Church, funded by the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino.
- 1810 Construction of the stone bridge of Pulanglupa finished.
- 1815, 1821 Appointed *prior vocal* of Bacayon in Bohol.
- 1810 Construction of the stone bridge of Zapote finished.
- 1816 Roofing of the new parish church finished.
- 1816 Fray Diego starts cutting bamboos for the Bamboo Organ project. He buries 950 bamboo canes along at the shores of Las Piñas for six months for the bamboos to withstand the ravages of time and damage caused by *anay* and *bokbok*.
- 1816-1821 Construction of the now world-famous Bamboo Organ.
- 1818 Elected provincial councilor.
- 1821 He made notable improvements in the adjoining Recollect Hacienda de Imus, Cavite.
- 1825 Appointed *prior vocal* of Tandag (Surigao).
- January 1829 Strong typhoon damaged both church and kumbento.
- 1831 Manila Archbishop José Seguí in his pastoral visit expresses thanks to Fray Diego, “praising him for the promotion of the splendor of divine worship, the cleanness of the divine temple, abundance of sacred vessels and decoration as



- well as his assiduous preaching of the Word of God and administration of the sacraments.”
- 2 May 1832 Elected *prior presidente* of San Sebastian Convent.
- 15 May 1832 He resigns as parish priest of Las Piñas.
- 24 June 1832 A month short of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, Fr. Diego returns to the Father in Heaven at San Sebastian Convent.

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# Mariano Bernad (1838-1915) and Mateo Bernad (1842-1889): Missionaries in Negros Island and Misamis District<sup>1</sup>

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Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos

## **Life and times of Mariano Bernad de la Virgen del Pilar, OAR<sup>2</sup>**

Mariano Bernad de la Virgen del Pilar was born on 29 September 1838 in Calanda, Teruel, Spain, located about a hundred kilometers south of the City of Zaragoza. He was the eighth child of Manuel Bernad and Fernanda Sanz. On the same day he was baptized at the parish church of Our Lady of Hope by Father Fernando Balaguer. The young infant was named after his maternal grandfather—Mariano.

On 14 January 1857, he professed the monastic vows of chastity, poverty and obedience in the bosom of the Augustinian

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<sup>1</sup> An updated version of the paper read at the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Matteo Ricci SJ (1610-2010), Second Miguel A. Bernad SJ Annual Memorial Lecture, Little Theater, Main Campus, Xavier University [Ateneo de Cagayan], Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines, 25 January 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Pedro FABO, *Biografía del Rvdmo. P. Mariano Bernad* (Monachil 1919); Francisco SÁDABA, *Catálogo de los Religiosos Agustinos de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas desde 1606, en que llegó la primera misión, hasta nuestros días* (Madrid 1906) 510-513; José Javier LIZARRAGA, *Mariano Bernad, último Comisario Apostólico de la Recolección (1901-1908)*, in *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino*, 75-134.

Recollect Congregation, which he was to head forty-four years after. His religious appellation was Mariano Bernad de la Virgen del Pilar. He professed his devotion to Our Lady of the Pillar, patroness of Calanda, whose image was venerated at a chapel near the parish church.

After his theological studies, he was ordained to the sacred order of priesthood on 21 December 1861. In Monteagudo, Navarra, he joined on 17 March 1862 the 53<sup>rd</sup> group of thirteen Recollect missionaries who travelled to the Philippines. Their frigate *Concepción* reached Manila four months later, on 21 July. A little over a month after his arrival in Manila, the superiors assigned Padre Mariano as companion of the Augustinian Recollect missionary in Cuyo on 29 August 1862.

### **Pastoral assignments (1862-1891)**

The vicar forane of Calamianes not long afterward dispatched him to Taytay in December 1862. The bishop of Cebu issued his canonical collation as parish priest of Taytay on 11 September 1863. He learned the Cuyunin dialect to such perfection that he later authored a Cuyunin dictionary. He administered the parish of Taytay for almost four years until January 1866 when he suffered from malignant fevers caused by malaria, which had been since time immemorial a common ailment of Recollect missionaries assigned in Palawan and Calamianes.

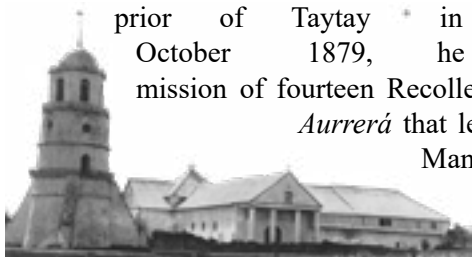
The ailing Bernad was recalled to Manila and boarded a ship to Minuluan [now Talisay City] in Negros Occidental. He was to undergo the hydrotherapeutic treatment and supervision under his Recollect confrere Fernando Cuenca, revered in the whole Negros Island as the father of the sugar industry and inventor of the hydraulic sugar mill. While undergoing hydrotherapy in Talisay, he studied the Visayan language.

After his recovering his health, in December 1866, Padre Mariano was appointed parish priest of Dumaguete. On 16 January 1867, he was named parish priest of Misamis [present-day Ozamiz] by the royal vice-patron in Manila. He left the curacy of Dumaguete in July for Cebu City. In September 1867, he arrived in Misamis.

### Six years in Marcilla, Navarra (1873-1879)

Padre Mariano served the parish of Misamis for almost six years. After the provincial chapter, on 5 May 1873, the full council in Manila elected him vice rector of the theology house of Marcilla in the Spanish province of Navarra. After the mandatory triennium, the full council one again designated him rector of the convent on 8 May 1876. During his term, a new pipe organ was acquired for the conventual church of *Nuestra Señora de la Blanca* for 18,000 *reales*.

Three years later, Padre Mariano was designated by the full council of the Provincial Chapter as prior of Taytay in the Calamianes. On 25 October 1879, he was at the helm of the 74<sup>th</sup> mission of fourteen Recollects on board the steamship *Aurrerá* that left Barcelona and arrived in Manila on 30 November.<sup>3</sup> On 5



**Parish church and belfry of Dumaguete in Negros Oriental where Padre Mariano Bernad de la Virgen del Pilar was parish priest in 1866-1867, 1879-1891 and 1894-1897.**

December 1879, he was appointed parish priest of Dumaguete. On 8 June 1880, the prior provincial named him vicar provincial of Recollect vicariate of the whole Negros Oriental. He

fulfilled his pastoral tasks in Dumaguete for eleven and a half years without any interruption. Its residents, according to the biographer, remembered their good Padre Mariano “with no less affection and gratitude than veneration and respect. Indefatigable in the exercise of his priestly ministry, Padre Mariano by all possible means obtained the greatest welfare and contentment of his Dumaguete parishioners.”<sup>4</sup> Or according to a modern biographer, he “gave abundant proofs of his zeal and generosity.”<sup>5</sup>

Among the honorary positions in Saint Nicholas Province, Padre Mariano was appointed *prior vocal* of Taytay in 1879, then *prior vocal* of Bolinao [then part of Zambales] in 1882 and *prior vocal* of Baclayon in Bohol in 1888. On 25 April 1885, he was elected by

<sup>3</sup> SÁDABA, 611.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 541

<sup>5</sup> LIZARRAGA, 97.

the provincial chapter as one of the four provincial councilors. On 25 June 1888, his superiors in Manila designated him vicar provincial and vicar forane of Negros Oriental.

### **Prior Provincial (1891-1894)**

On 18 April 1891, the provincial chapter elected him prior provincial. In his first circular to his religious confreres in the Philippines and Spain, Padre Mariano expressed his program for the next three years: the compliance of the Rule of Saint Augustine, Constitutions and the statutes enacted by the provincial chapters. "It is my sole thought and my wish," he writes, "that everyone without any exception must adapt our lives to those sacred laws we all profess and whose compliance is to give us true peace." After all, as a prior general once stressed a few years ago in his circular to the whole Order: "The Constitutions are the evangelical program of life and mission of the Order, the stable manifestation of our charism and the concrete expression of our peculiar way of following and imitating Jesus Christ."<sup>6</sup> He further urged the missionaries in the Philippines to strive for the sanctification of the souls entrusted to their vigilance and care.

It was the eve of the revolutionary upheaval that would shake the foundations of the Spanish rule of the Philippines. Padre Mariano's financial measures could be the product of his foresight or they could be plain coincidence or mere chance, but he exerted special effort in safeguarding the patrimony of Saint Nicholas Province. Together with his provincial council, he decided to register the Hacienda of Imus in Cavite and other Philippine landed estates. The prior provincial authorized the commissary provincial in Madrid to put the haciendas on the market or to negotiate whatever kind of contract. He further ordered that the accounts of the Saint Nicholas Province be separated from the Manila procurator general's, by keeping two different accounts.

In June 1892, he approved the plan to expand the convent of Marcilla by constructing the left wing "when the proper time came." When the Recollects were eventually constrained to leave their Philippine curacies on account of the Revolution, the age-old convent was overcrowded and therein many former curates

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<sup>6</sup> Prior General Javier Guerra Ayala, *Protocol no. 1-1/07.9*.

from the Philippines, who had become conventuals, were creating trouble, misunderstanding, blatant insubordination, disobedience to superiors' just orders, factionalism in the community, etc. The expansion project would be delayed for half a century—1940-1944.<sup>7</sup>

During turbulent times, he regularly penned circular letters in which he “promoted renewal and fidelity to the Recollect spirit among the religious.” He obliged them to observe strictly the annual spiritual retreat, as mandated by the Constitutions. His canonical visits were conducted with zeal and dedication, even risking his own life in travelling to far-flung parishes and missions, using primitive means of transport.

To his great consolation, the prefabricated all-steel Basilica of San Sebastian in Quiapo, Manila, was blest by the Dominican Archbishop Bernardino Nozaleda and inaugurated on 15 August 1891 by the Recollect religious with pomp together with the entire populace and the religious orders in Manila.<sup>8</sup>

**General councilor (1897-1899); missionary in Brazil (1899-1901)**

In the heat of the Revolution, Padre Mariano was named general councilor tasked to advise the apostolic commissary in matters affecting the whole Congregation but he did not leave yet for Madrid—with papal permission—until May 1897 because he had to preside over the provincial council of Saint Nicholas Province in April. It was in Madrid where the general curia resided.



**Padre Mariano, a seasoned superior to whom the Order was entrusted in most trying times.**

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<sup>7</sup> José Javier LIZARRAGA, *El Padre Enrique Pérez, último vicario general y primer prior general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos (1918-1914)*, (Rome 1990) 97-98.

<sup>8</sup> Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *The Spires of San Sebastian. The story behind the Virgen del Carmen Image and the only all-steel church in Asia*, Manila 1991. It was founded in 1621 as the first shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in the Philippines. Now a national historical landmark and listed among the UNESCO World Heritage Watchlist as an endangered patrimony, this architectural Recollect legacy to the Filipino people celebrated the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its construction in 2011.

In January 1899, at age 60, Padre Mariano volunteered to head the first ever Augustinian Recollect mission to Brazil. The Philippine Revolution, ironically, widened the missionary horizons of the Congregation. Recollect missions were earlier sent to Colombia and Panamá and more missionaries were dispatched to Trinidad and Venezuela, upon the requests of Latin American bishops.

The pioneering Brazilian group was composed of fourteen religious—nine priests, two brothers, three theology students. They embarked on a steamer in Barcelona, Spain, on 26 January 1899 and reached Rio de Janeiro in Brazil where they disembarked on 17 February.<sup>9</sup>

Padre Mariano was endowed with extraordinary faculties to canonically establish religious houses and organize mission stations. From January 1899 to July 1901, he was able to set up more than twenty houses distributed in the five states of Sao Paulo, Minas-Gerais, Espiritu Santo, Bahía and Pará. His confreres were always admonished to adjust the religious life to their missionary activities. He visited the residences and his religious subjects very often, taking boats and riding horses to reach the mission territories, spending sometimes three months in his missionary trips.

In September 1900, Padre Mariano fell gravely ill and had to be hospitalized for some time. When he recovered his health, again he went about more founding new religious houses, assigning fresh personnel who arrived from Spain, designating superiors and giving orientations to the new missionaries. It was, in short, a “life—laborious, poverty-stricken and simple—motivated by missionary fervor.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Apostolic Commissary, Recollect Congregation (1901-1908)**

The term *apostolic commissary* referred to the Augustinian Recollect religious with the powers of a vicar general, endowed with the extraordinary faculties granted by the Holy See.<sup>11</sup> After the resignation of Fr. Iñigo Narro, the Holy See appointed Father Mariano apostolic commissary, the superior general, on 8 June 1901

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<sup>9</sup> LIZARRAGA, *Mariano Bernad*, 93.

<sup>10</sup> Pedro FABO, *Biografía del Rvdmo. P. Mariano Bernad del Pilar* (Monachil 1919) 39.

<sup>11</sup> LIZARRAGA, *Mariano Bernad*, 95.



to head the Congregation.<sup>12</sup> The nuncio in Brazil immediately relayed to Father Mariano the telegraph sent by Mariano Cardinal Rampolla, cardinal protector of the Recollects, for the newly-appointed apostolic commissary to report to Rome. Father Mariano then bade goodbye to the church authorities and his confreres in Brazil and boarded the ship in Rio de Janeiro on 19 July 1901 and headed for Rome.

In September 1901, three cardinals met with him and gave him the necessary instructions and appropriate counsels for the reform of the Augustinian Recollection. He was to establish a new Recollect province in Spain and convoke a general chapter—the last one was held in 1829. He had a private audience with Pope Leo XIII who was interested about the religious situation in the Philippines and in the Latin American missions. Father Mariano was consoled and encouraged by the Holy Father's words for him.

In the wake of the Philippine Revolution, the Augustinian Recollection was in disarray. It was the worst of times for Father Mariano to take the reins of the Augustinian Recollect Congregation. It was undergoing moments of deep and serious crisis, a crisis "brought about by political, social and religious events of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the three countries where the congregation was established: Spain, Colombia and the Philippines." The Recollects had decades before suffered persecution and expulsion from their ministries during the time of Mendizábal and his *desamortización* policies in 1835-1837. Their properties and houses in Spain, except the convent of Monteagudo, Navarra, were confiscated by the civil authorities and the conventuals were driven out to the streets.

The Candelaria Province of Colombia was on the verge of extinction until the opportune arrival of Saint Ezekiel Moreno in Bogotá, who worked hard for its restoration and revitalization. And at the height of the Philippine Revolution,



**The General Chapter of the Recollect Congregation in July 1908 at San Millán de La Cogolla, La Rioja, Spain, was convoked by Padre Mariano Bernad [fourth from right] who was substituted by the new Vicar General Enrique Pérez [fourth from left].**

<sup>12</sup> 31-34.

a total of thirty-four Augustinian Recollects were slain. Ninety-one friars were incarcerated, victims of vitriolic anti-friar sentiments and violent revolutionary forces in the Philippines. Three hundred Recollects were left without any parish, thus, they were discouraged, disoriented, feeling they were victims of an unjust and undeserved persecution.

The three Spanish convents—San Millán de la Cogolla in La Rioja, Monteagudo and Marcilla—were overcrowded with repatriated religious. Thirty-six novices were expelled from Monteagudo and sent home to accommodate the religious ministers from the Philippines. The Recollects in these convents were perplexed persons who could not admit the undeserved persecution in the Philippines. For them, the only mission land was the Philippines, for which an oath had been sworn by the future missionaries during the religious profession. They had lived isolated in far-flung curacies and remote islands and in small communities and now as fugitives in the land of their birth they could not adapt easily to the rigors of a conventual and communitarian life.

The Constitutions, redacted in 1745, had turned obsolete and had to be adjusted to the new circumstances and to the new needs of the congregation. There was a sense of urgency of convoking the general and provincial chapters. The offices in the meantime had to be filled in by appointments handed over by the apostolic commissary.

### **Six salient accomplishments as Apostolic Commissary**

We can cite the six salient accomplishments of Father Mariano as the superior general of the Recollects, and these are the following:

1. The imposition of religious observance in Spanish convents was his top priority. Father Mariano was a religious observant, hardworking and lover of the Augustinian Recollect traditions. He was likewise eager to implement reforms in the Congregation. He made use of rule and regulations that curbed various abuses and scandals in the communities. He mandated the observance of silence in the cloister, holy celebration of the mass, weekly confession, frequent communion, study, solution of

moral cases, weekly spiritual conferences, etc. He ordered the local superiors to have these rules read in community on a regular basis and urged their total compliance, punishing the transgressors when necessary.<sup>13</sup>

2. The creation of the new Hispano-American Province of Our Lady of the Pillar was approved on 12 October 1907.<sup>14</sup> The new provincial took over in April 1908 and its jurisdiction included the convents in Spain (Berlanga de Duero, Granada, Motril, Lucena, Sigüenza), Brazil, Panamá and Venezuela. A great majority of the members of the new province were former missionaries in the Philippines. In 1908, the province would be renamed *Province of Saint Thomas of Villanova of Andalucía*. Later, new missions opened in Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Chile and were to belong to the new Province of Saint Thomas.

3. Sale of the haciendas. The friar haciendas of the religious orders, deemed as one of the causes of the Philippine Revolution, were sold to the United States of America on 23 December 1903 for seven million dollars. The Recollects received a small portion of the sale: only 1,300,000 dollars. After a protracted negotiation (1904-1912) with the Holy See, the Province of Saint Nicholas acceded to its demand and gave as “offering” to the Vatican for the poor dioceses of the Catholic Church in the Philippines the amount of 1,500,000 liras.”<sup>15</sup>

4. The convocation and subsequent celebration of the General Chapter on 16-27 July 1908 at the Convent of San Millán de La Cogolla, La Rioja. The general chapter signaled the normalcy yearned for because the last general chapter was convened in

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<sup>13</sup> LIZARRAGA, *Padre Mariano Bernad*, 101-102.

<sup>14</sup> LIZARRAGA, *El Padre Enrique Pérez*, 56-67.

<sup>15</sup> LIZARRAGA, *Padre Mariano Bernad*, 117-119. See footnote 134, page 119.

1829.<sup>16</sup> Among its ordinances was the reaffirmation that the Congregation was “apostolic in character in all its manifestations which are education and most of all the missions.”

5. Reform and revision of the Constitutions. A general chapter ordinance likewise moved for the revision of the obsolete Constitutions. He ordered three religious to study the revision of the Augustinian Recollect Constitutions which had to be updated and adjusted to the needs of the changing times and to new Church laws.

6. Resumption of the missions to the Philippines. In the 1897-1906, the missions to the Manila were suspended. The resumption coincided with the third centennial of the arrival of the first Recollects to the archipelago. Some ministries were retrieved by the Recollects. The new Filipino and American bishops, acting upon the urgent request of the parishioners, asked for the return of the Recollect parish priests.

To commemorate the 3<sup>rd</sup> centennial of the first Augustinian Recollect mission in the Philippines, he requested Father Francisco Sádaba, secretary general in 1906-1908, to write and publish the voluminous work *Catálogo de los religiosos agustinos recoletos de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas desde el año 1606, en que llegó la primera misión a Manila, hasta nuestros días* [Catalogue of Augustinian Recollect religious of the Province of Saint Nicholas de Tolentino of the Philippines since 1606 when the first mission arrived in Manila up to the present day], which provides us with valuable information on the lives, writings, accomplishments of the Recollects of Saint Nicholas Province of the Philippine missions as well as those confreres of who remained in Spain.

### **Retirement and demise in Motril, Granada (1908-1915)**

The Recollect convent of Motril in Granada was his last residence. It belonged to the Hispano-American Province of Our

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<sup>16</sup> Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Capítulo general de San Millán de La Cogolla, 1908*, (Lecture delivered on 19 July 2008 at San Millán de La Cogolla La Rioja, Spain), in <http://www.agustinosrecoletos.com/documents/index?page=5>.

Lady of the Pillar, which he had set up and for which had shown much affection. He was the confessor of the Augustinian Recollect contemplative nuns and the Dominican sisters in the teaching apostolate. He spent his day working in the orchard of the convent. His golden jubilee as priest was celebrated on 27 December 1911 with a holy Mass assisted by confreres and diocesan priests. The church was filled to the rafters, a sign of the parishioners' affection and respect for the old missionary. At the age of 76—58 years in religious life and 54 years as priest—Padre Mariano Bernad passed away on 23 May 1915, a victim of cancer of the larynx. The townspeople, church and town officials attended his funeral.

Padre Mariano was known as a man of firmness and tenacity, of prudence, gifted with a character of steel, but he was noble and amiable in his dealings with everyone. He was endowed with perseverance and was never known to have given up on any undertaking despite the odds against it. He was not a man of learning, but rather a practical and enterprising person.<sup>17</sup>

### His writings

Padre Mariano was not a Cervantes, but he has written a wide array of varied works and writings, like a *Cuyunin Dictionary*. Its complete title was *Diccionario que comprende las voces más indispensables para poder entenderse con los naturales de Calamianes* [Dictionary that contains the most indispensable words in order to communicate with the natives of Calamianes], penned when he was a missionary in the Calamianes islands. It was for the convenience of his confreres that could make them be understood effectively by the natives.

Then there was also his *Explanation of the Sacrament of Confession*, written in Cuyunin for use in Taytay, Calmanianes.

*Statutes and Rules of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament* was written for the confraternity he had set up in Dumaguete.

*Rules of the Confraternity of Our Lady of Sorrows* was redacted for the Marian confraternity he established in Misamis.

His two historical works are of immeasurable use for historiographers: namely, *Reseña histórica de Dumaguete (1895)*

<sup>17</sup> LIZARRAGA, *Padre Mariano Bernad*, 126-128. z

[Historical Review of Dumaguete (1895), in manuscript form, 28 folios, in very small handwriting, and *Preliminares*, a diary consisting of 96 pages, which contained the most significant events, activities, trips and foundations from the time he set foot in Brazil in 1899 up to his appointment as commissary general or superior general in 1901.

### **Fray Mateo Bernad, OAR, the intrepid missionary**

Mateo Bernad was born on 21 September 1842.<sup>18</sup> He followed the footsteps of his brother Mariano who entered in 1859 the Recollect novitiate at Monteagudo, Navarra, Spain. He professed the evangelical counsels a year after on 1 July 1860 at the same convent and took the religious appellation as Fray Mateo Bernad de San Miguel. The clipper *Concepción* that conveyed the 56<sup>th</sup> Recollect mission of five religious—including Fray Mateo—reached Manila in April 1865. The dimissory letter for Mateo's ordination to the priesthood of Christ was issued on 12 September 1865.

### **From Romblon to Misamis**

On 13 April 1866, the new priest was dispatched to the parish of Surigao where he devoted his time to the study of the Visayan Cebuano language and assisted in the parochial ministry. On 27 November 1867, he was assigned as parish priest of Odiongan in Romblon. On 24 April 1868, he was named parish priest of Banton, a remote island north of Romblon Province. The Recollect censuses listed him as parish priest of Banton in 1869-1870. In 1871, he was at the helm of the parish ministry of Alubijid in Misamis. In 1871-1872, he was a companion of the parish priest of Misamis [present-day Ozamiz], who at that time was his brother Mariano.

On 27 December 1872, he received the canonical collation as parish priest of Jasaan in Misamis. A biographer says of him: "In Jasaan, he was for almost ten years working with great zeal for the resettlement of the natives who resided in the mountains of Tagoloan, Sumilao and Linabo."

### **Ministry in Amblan, Negros Oriental**

Padre Mateo's last ministry was at the parish of Amblan [now Amlan] in Negros Oriental for which he was named parish priest on

<sup>18</sup> SÁDABA, 523.

12 May 1882 and after a lingering illness he surrendered his soul to his Maker on 3 May 1889 at the age of 48. He was surrounded by his confreres who urged him to commend his spirit to the Lord and His Blessed Mother. He received the last sacraments of Holy Mother Church fervently before he crossed over to the next life.<sup>19</sup>

The Recollect historian Licinio Ruiz refers to Padre Mateo Bernad as “one of our religious who have distinguished themselves in the conversion of the unbelievers. The formation of the settlements in the mountains of Tagoloan, which were later created into towns, was due to Padre Mateo’s zeal during his stay in the curacy of Jasaan.”<sup>20</sup>

### **Evangelization in Jasaan: Conversion of chiefs Abat and Manvino<sup>21</sup>**

In December 1875, two chieftains—Abat of the upland settlement in Linabo and Manvino of Sumilao—went to Padre Mateo. After a year and a half, in June 1877, the two valiant men were , as Padre Mateo called them “heroes of the mountains” received baptism. Abat was baptized as Sebastian and Manvino took the Christian name Miguel. The Recollect missionary narrates to us:

[Abat and Manvino] were the instruments utilized by God in His sublime designs, declared Padre Mateo, in order to take to the heart of Mindanao the sacred light of the Gospel. Indeed, there were true Christians in various areas up to Bogcaon, which was located on the southern part of the island. There were more Christians, however, in Linabo and Sumilao, villages under the religious patronage of Our Lady of the Pillar. In fact the church and the cemetery were already constructed.

On 1 May 1878, the first Mass was celebrated and offered to the Lord and Redeemer; after the sacrifice of the Mass, the Marian hymn *Salve* was chanted;

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<sup>19</sup> SÁDABA, 523.

<sup>20</sup> Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas* I (Manila 1925) 239.

<sup>21</sup> Manuel CARCELLER, *Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* XII (Madrid 1974) 696-701. The historical account of the evangelization by Padre Mateo Bernad is culled from his volume 12 of his *Crónicas*.

all the prayers were sung by the choir members from Jasaan and Tagoloan with their humble orchestra as accompaniment. That very day the cemetery was blest and the blessing was likewise chanted.

All the leaders and residents of the settlement and the settlers of adjoining communities gathered for these religious rites. The Christians and unbelievers stood side by side, but I did not attempt to separate them so that they would view how majestic was our Religion, and so that they could hear the sermons pertinent to these sacred occasions, for as the Latin saying goes *fides ex auditu*, [they believed from what they had heard], as Saint Paul said.

The same thing was generally practiced in Linabo on 7 March 1877. The missionary disclosed that he dedicated the Linabo church to Saint Michael the Archangel so the heavenly protector might defend the interior areas of Mindanao, freeing the new Christians from the attacks of the common adversary, *i.e.*, the Islamic believers, so “they might venerate in spirit and in truth the Mother of God, Our Lady of the Pillar, mother of all the people of Aragon.” Padre Mateo Bernad firmly believed that in the meantime no missionaries were around to give them orders to construct defenses—forts and palisades—, the Christians might receive divine protection.<sup>22</sup>

### **Jose Mandalagigon of Sumilao**

Another tribal leader was converted to the Christian faith through sheer hard work and continuous evangelization by Padre Mateo. The chief’s name was Mandalagigon, an old man respected not only in his settlement but in whole area of Sumilao. He assisted Padre Mateo in all his missionary tasks and trips and more especially with his moral ascendancy over the members of his community and beyond. In the second missionary sally to the mountain fastness of Sumilao, the Mandaligigon finally received the saving waters of baptism on 19 March, feast of Saint Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church. The chief came to be known as Jose Mandalagigon.

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<sup>22</sup> Miguel A. BERNAD, “The History. History of Malaybalay Diocese,” in <https://www.ucanews.com/directory/dioceses/philippines-malaybalay/457>. Accessed 17 August 2010.



**José Parés and Alberto Cuesta, exemplary officials**

During the first expedition to the mountains, the governor of Misamis District Colonel José Parés, his secretary Alberto Cuesta and some policemen joined the Recollect missionary. Col. Parés then appointed the officials of the fifteen settlements. Padre Mateo admired the Spanish authorities for their rare character and dedication, so unmindful of the discomforts caused by the torrid climate which could be fatal to any European, aggravated by the horrible conditions of the trails. So hapless were the plight of the non-Christians that it broke their hearts to watch upland dwellers wallow in penury and misery, forsaken by civilization.

To Padre Mateo's sheer astonishment, these uncommon and exemplary Spanish officials of the lowlands further thought it their sworn duty to God and Spain to gather the lost sheep in the Lord's flock. They painstakingly trudged the trails up to the last confines of Misamis District. They showed up in areas where no Spanish public official had ever stepped before. Padre Mateo was all praises for the two Spaniards.

**More on Linabo, Sumilao and Tagoloan**

The Recollect missionary of Jasaan visited Linabo, Sumilao and their adjoining settlements on a regular basis. The upland communities with their chiefs and leading families always welcomed the visiting *doctrinero* [teacher of the doctrine, minister] with joy. Catechetical instruction was conducted and more natives were baptized by Padre Mateo. It was his personal belief that two *doctrineros* should be posted in Linabo and another two in Sumilao in order to sustain their spiritual gains in those two town centers and their *visitas*. The two missionaries would assist each other in their laborious evangelization tasks.

A great number of residents of another settlement called Tag-malmag likewise sought Christian baptism. But Padre Mateo would hear none of it unless they underwent catechetical instruction. He baptized the children only and urged the adults to first construct their church and cemetery. They gave their word to Padre Mateo to put up the church edifices.

### **Personal observations on Misamis District and its people**

The missionary from Calanda, Teruel, observed that the inhabitants of Misamis District were blest with a peace-loving character, on top of being hardworking. They had a fixed residence and were not wont to till lands aimlessly, like other mountain dwellers in other parts of these islands.

Padre Mateo noted that almost all the communities set up in the great valley formed by the mountain ranges of Cagayan and those of Tagoloan were already self-supporting. They had built their permanent abodes and tilled their farms and fixed plantations where they harvested sufficient palay and corn for their own sustenance. They even had products for export to other villages and towns in the district such as abaca, cacao and coffee whose cultivation was advised by the civil authorities and taught by the missionary.

And praying for more missionaries in Misamis in order to bring out more fruits of the evangelization effort easily, Padre Mateo then exclaimed: “To the God of mercies be the glory for having prepared the souls of these unbelievers, like children of God and redeemed by the Redeemer of the world, who as the Good Shepherd came to this world to save all men, be they gentiles or Jews or barbarians.”

Padre Mateo informed his confreres Patricio Adell and Juan Ruiz about the situation in Misamis District and the urgent need for more missionaries because the harvest was plenty. He wanted them to convey his message to the Prior Provincial Aquilino Bon and to his successor Leandro Arrué, future bishop of Jaro.

In 1880, he continued his evangelization work in Sumilao, Linabo and Tagoloan. He administered a number of baptisms and solemnized six marriages. The roads were gradually improving. More houses were being built. If these would continue, he surmised, and more missionaries were assigned permanently, new missions would definitely be established in the area.

When Prior Provincial Leandro Arrué visited Jasaan in January 1881, he gave an image of the Archangel Michael to Linabo and another of Our Lady of the Pillar to Sumilao as well as two bells, one for the divine temple of each village. The sturdy men of the villages willingly carried on the shoulders the images and bells

to their respective churches. Thus he inculcated on them such great devotion to the Saints and to the Mother of God.

### **Recollect confrere remembers Padre Mateo's work**

The last Recollect parish priest of Jasaan, Nemesio Llorente, conceded that the twin work of evangelization and civilization was the sole endeavour of his predecessor who founded the following barrios and missions in the manner of Christian towns, complete with *casa tribunal* o *municipal*, *kumbento* and church: Sumilao, Bogcaon, Malitbog, Agludajan, Lalabuyoc and Santa Ana. And the Christian population kept on growing. The seeds of Christian faith had been zealously and indefatigably planted by Padre Mateo Bernad de San Miguel.

### **Epilogue**

Padre Mateo Bernad shall go down in the history of northern Mindanao as the missionary of God par excellence, alas, unheralded. And his feats remain unrecorded in the annals of history of Jasaan, Tagoloan, Linabo, Malitbog and other settlements. He almost singlehandedly established villages which soon became towns and population centers.

An indefatigable missionary named Mateo Bernad had sown the seeds of Christian faith. There is no better time than now when local historians who lived in Misamis must heap accolades on this great missionary and do something to perpetuate his memory.

Clearly, it was Padre Mariano Bernad's herculean task of tiding the Augustinian Recollect Congregation over those turbulent times in the aftermath of the Philippine Revolution. Twice the Philippine missions have saved the Augustinian Recollection: first during the period of Juan Alvarez Mendizabal's *desamortización* decrees in 1835-1837 when the Augustinian Recollects lost 32 of their 33 convents in Spain. The only convent left was Monteagudo which was the novitiate and house of formation of missionaries to the Philippines, Japan and later to Latin America, and thus assured its continued existence.

Then came the catastrophic Philippine Revolution of 1896 wherein thirty-four Augustinian Recollect friars were slain, 91 imprisoned and 300 more dispossessed of their parishes and missions. The Recollects returned to Spain where new convents were acquired for their residence. Some friars or had crossed the seas to found missions in Latin America.

Providentially, it was the lot of Mariano Bernad—a seasoned superior and tireless missionary of Negros, Misamis and Brazil, a great religious, a visionary leader—to steer the ship of the Augustinian Recollection through rough waters and stormy weather and dock it at a safe harbor. And he was remarkably successful in his efforts, especially when he headed the first religious mission of friars to Brazil that reached the port city of Santos on 19 February 1899.

It's been more than a century and the Order of Augustinian Recollects celebrated in 2012 the first centennial of the papal bull *Religiosas familias* of Saint Pius X who decreed its full juridical autonomy from the Order of Saint Augustine and elevated it to the status of religious order. The Order of Augustinian Recollects actually found in residences, convents and missions in five continents ironically owed its continued existence or survival amidst the politico-social turmoil to that sole convent of Monteagudo, founded in 1829, the sole survivor of the Mendizábal's despoliation decrees, and to the anti-clerical Philippine Revolution that constrained the friars to establish convents and ministries in Central and South America and thus reaffirmed the apostolic character of the Congregation of Augustinian Recollects.

Today Divine Providence keeps on blessing the Order of Augustinian Recollects with over 1,000 priests, religious brothers and deacons, and ever-increasing vocations to the religious and priestly life, growing number of schools and universities where in the Philippines alone there are over 30,000 students. Several mission territories abound in Brazil, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, Sierra Leone in Africa. As members all of the Augustinian Recollect Family are hundreds of Augustinian Recollect contemplative nuns and missionary sisters, Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters, Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity members and *Juventudes Agustino-Recoletas* [Recollect Augustinian Youth] all over the world.

# **Timeline of Padre Mariano Bernad OAR (1838-1915)**

Date/Place of Birth	29 September 1838 at Calanda, Teruel, Spain
	Parents: Manuel Bernad and Fernanda Sanz
14 January 1957	Profession at Monteagudo, Navarra, Spain
21 December 1861	Ordination as priest at Tarazona, La Rioja
4 April 1862	Departure from Cádiz on board <i>Concepción</i>
21 July 1862	Arrival of Padre Mariano & 12 confreres in Manila
29 August 1862	First pastoral ministry in Cuyo, Calamianes
December 1862	Parish priest of Taytay, Calamianes
11 September 1863	Date of appointment papers as Taytay parish priest
27 January 1866	Malarial attack in Taytay. Sent to Talisay, Negros for hydrotherapy by Fr. Fernando Cuenca
Dec 1866-10 July 1867	Parish Priest of Dumaguete in Negros
July–August 1867	Sojourn at Immaculate Conception Convent in Cebu
September 1867	Parish Priest of Misamis [now Ozamiz City]
May 1873	Vice rector at the Convent in Marcilla, Navarra
May 1876	Rector of the community of the Convent in Marcilla
May 1879	<i>Prior vocal</i> of Taytay, Calamianes
5 December 1879	Parish Priest of Dumaguete
	Vicar Forane & Vicar Provincial of Negros Oriental
May 1882	<i>Prior vocal</i> of Bolinao
25 April 1885	Provincial Councilor of Saint Nicholas Province
May 1888	<i>Prior vocal</i> of Baclayon
18 April 1891	Prior Provincial of Saint Nicholas Province
1894	Parish Priest of Dumaguete
	Vicar Forane & Vicar Provincial of Negros Oriental
May 1897	General Councilor of the Order in Madrid
19 February 1899	As head of the first mission of 13 confreres to Brazil, he landed at the port city of Santos. Founder of the missions of Uberaba, Agua Suja, Nova, Pará, Riberaõ Preto, 18 other missions.
3 June 1901	Pope Leo XIII appoints him Apostolic Commissary
12 October 1901	Start of office as Apostolic Commissary

16-27 July 1908	General Chapter at San Millán de La Cogolla
1908	Residence at Motril, Granada
27 December 1911	Golden Sacerdotal Anniversary
23 May 1915	Demise from cancer of the throat

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## **Padre Mauricio Ferrero (1844-1915): Augustinian Recollect Builder of Bacolod<sup>1</sup>**

Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos

A native of Arnedo, La Rioja, Spain, Mauricio Ferrero was born on 22 September 1844.<sup>2</sup> He professed the three monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience on 30 June 1863 at the convent of the Augustinian Recollect Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino in Monteagudo, Navarra. He chose Our Lady of Vico, patron saint of his hometown Arnedo as his religious patroness.<sup>3</sup> Thus, his Marian



<sup>1</sup> A lecture read before the faculty, staff and students of the University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos, at the President's Hall, Bacolod City on 10 September 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Francisco SÁDABA. *Catálogo de los religiosos agustinos recoletos de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas desde el año 1606, en que llegó la primera misión a Manila, hasta nuestros días* (Madrid 1906) 532-533.

<sup>3</sup> The Romanesque image of Our Lady of Vico in Arnedo, La Rioja, dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century when it was first mentioned in a manuscript. The image was first enshrined in the Monastery of Our Lady of Vico, located three kilometers away from Arnedo, which suffered from the fire of 1766. The image was transferred to the Church of Saint Cosmas and Saint Damian during the repair of the monastery which suffered the fate of the anti-Church *desamortización* [expiation, ecclesiastical confiscation] of 1835-1837. The Marian image was moved to the parish church and thereafter remained until today. Source: Minerva SAENZ RODRÍGUEZ, *La Imagen románica de la Virgen de Vico en Arnedo*, in *Dialnet-LaImagenRomanicaDeLaVirgenDeVicoEnArnedo-555715%20*. Retrieved 29 December 2015.

religious appellation was Fray Mauricio Ferrero de la Virgen de Vico. In the adjoining city of Calahorra, La Rioja, after his theological formation Fray Mauricio received his presbyteral ordination on 19 December 1866. On 23 January 1868, he joined the 59<sup>th</sup> missionary group of seventeen Recollect priests, theology students and three religious brothers. They left the convent of Marcilla, Navarra, where he had finished his theological formation, and headed for the port of Cádiz in southern Spain. The group boarded the frigate *Reina de los Ángeles* at Cádiz on 31 January 1868, which rounded the Cape of Good Hope and finally docked at Manila four and a half months later, on 15 June 1868.

### First pastoral assignments

A month after arrival, on 18 July 1868, Padre Mauricio was assigned to the island-parish of Agutaya, one of the five Augustinian Recollect parishes in the vast Cuyo Archipelago, as *compañero* [companion, assistant] of its parish priest. In September 1868-May 1870, he administered the Immaculate Conception Parish in Culion, another island-curacy in the Calamianes group of islands.

On 2 May 1870, to learn the Visayan Hiligaynon language, Padre Mauricio was sent to the parish of Valladolid along the western coast of Negros. Negros was in a state of spiritual and economic stagnation for several decades. The Spanish Ministry of Colonies and the governor general which directly—both ecclesiastically and civilly—governed Negros Island, in consultation with the Dominican Bishop Romualdo Jimeno of Cebu, firmed up the decision to hand it over to one of the four religious orders in Manila on 27 May 1848. Two days later, the Recollect prior provincial accepted the offer. Governor General Narciso Clavería then decreed on 20 June 1848 the adjudication of the spiritual administration of Negros Island to the Augustinian Recollects.<sup>4</sup>



Fray Mauricio professed his vows at the Convent of Monteagudo, Navarra on 30 June 1863.

<sup>4</sup> Angel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros* (Manila 1980)

### **Parish priest of San Sebastian Parish of Bacolod**

Padre Mauricio was assigned to the vacant San Sebastian Parish of Bacolod in November 1871 and took official possession of the curacy in the Negros capital as parish priest on 23 December 1871. The last parish curate Padre Mariano Avila must have resigned due to health reasons.<sup>5</sup> The eminent Recollect historian of Negros, Ángel Martínez Cuesta, writes in his list of parish priests that the diocesan cleric Padre Juan de Dios was first parish priest of Bacolod and his parochial administration lasted three years: 1754-1757.<sup>6</sup>

Bacolod was founded as a town in 1756.<sup>7</sup> In 1871, the parish of San Sebastian had a population of 8,872, with 1,922½ tributes. It was the third largest town in terms of population in the whole Negros Island, after Dumaguete with 13,782 residents and San Enrique with 13,117. Since 1849, Bacolod continued to be the capital of Negros Island until on 1 January 1890 when the Island was split into two provinces: Negros Occidental with Bacolod as capital and Negros Oriental with the adjoining Siquijor Island, whose capital was Dumaguete.

### **San Sebastian Parish Church in Bacolod**

The crowning glory of Padre Mauricio—doubtless his most lasting legacy to Bacolod and to the whole Negros Island—is the

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171, footnote 4 of page 211. The governor general approved the papers “entrusting the spiritual administration of Negros to the Recollect Order that they may occupy those parishes or missions that may be vacant and those that as time goes on should become vacant. For this purpose they should come to an understanding with the bishop as to the appointment of a parish priest to see which parishes deserve priority.”

<sup>5</sup> Padre Mariano was admitted to the famed hospital in Minuluan [later known as Talisay] which was administered by its parish priest Padre Fernando Cuenca, known far and wide as an expert in hydrotherapeutic treatment. See Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *Bishop Ezekiel Moreno, an Augustinian Recollect Saint among Filipinos* (Quezon City 1993) 67-69.

<sup>6</sup> Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Appendix 3: Diocesan and Augustinian Recollect Parish Priests of San Sebastian Parish in Bacolod (1754-1909)*, in Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *Events in Bacolod, Negros Occidental (1871-1909) in the Parish Chronicle of Fr. Mauricio Ferrero, OAR and other Essays* (Quezon City 2016) 45.

<sup>7</sup> Patricio MARCELLÁN, *Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Agustinos Descalzos de la Congregación de España e Indias* (Manila 1879) 158.

magnificent, solid church, made of finely-cut coral stones from Guimaras.<sup>8</sup> The parish priest commenced the construction of the temple of God in 1876 and the future cathedral was blest and inaugurated on 20 January 1882 by the Dominican Bishop Mariano Cuartero of Jaro.

Padre Mauricio's temple—elegant, grandiose and spacious—turned into the cathedral in 1932 with the erection of the Bacolod Diocese which included the islands of Negros and Siquijor. The temple had a gilded retablo, well-lighted interior and thick solid walls with rose-windows. Two galleries of arches are supported by round pillars. Its two sturdy bell-towers loom over the city park and streets.



**After two months in Agutaya Island, Padre Mauricio was parish priest of the Immaculate Conception Parish in Culion Island in September 1868-May 1870.**

### Calamities and plagues

Bacolod had its share of natural calamities that affected the lives and livelihood of its residents. In 1863, a terrible typhoon destroyed the churches in Murcia, Sum-ag and Vito, Sagay. It wrought serious damage in those of Bacolod, San Carlos and Tayasan.<sup>9</sup> The twin catastrophe—typhoon and earthquake—hit the town simultaneously. In the evening of 4 April 1872, merciless winds and rains spawned by a typhoon devastated the provincial capital and other towns of northern Negros.

Padre Mauricio graphically recorded those horrifying moments in the parochial Book of Noteworthy Events [*Libro de cosas notables*] “From midnight until one in the morning, a strong earthquake struck Bacolod.



**Parishes, towns and barriours in Northern Negros**

<sup>8</sup> Pablo PANEDAS, Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *Cathedral Churches Constructed by Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines* (Quezon City 2012) 6.

<sup>9</sup> Angel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los agustinos recoletos II* (Madrid 2015) 800.

The strong tremors were felt accompanied by earth movements and subterranean noise.

During those hours the winds abruptly ceased and the complete lull lasted about ten minutes. Then the winds and downpour resumed. More than

eighty houses were razed to the ground by the horrendous winds. The church, parish rectory and the municipal building suffered much. Such was the torrential downpour that the interior parts of the three edifices were flooded. Several sugar warehouses fell



A 1923 view of the parish church, kumbento and plaza of Bacolod built and designed by Padre Mauricio Ferrero in the last quarter of the 19th century.

to the ground. The great destruction wrought by the typhoon can be observed in Bacolod and in neighboring towns, especially the houses, crops, harvests, bridges and public roads.”<sup>10</sup> Typhoons in 1876 and 1896 spared Bacolod but they damaged several buildings in southern Negros.<sup>11</sup>

Over a decade after, on 25 April 1883, a most terrible typhoon—the strongest in memory according to the old folks of the place—took place. Devastated by the storm were the northern towns of Negros. Exactly two years later, that is, on 25 April 1885, a typhoon of similar effects, but not as strong as that of 1883, struck the Bacolod. On 2 February 1887, a very strong earthquake and aftershocks also hit Bacolod.

In 1878, the famine in 1878 in the wake of protracted drought and locust plague decimated the population in Bacolod, Saravia, Pontevedra, Valladolid, La Carlota, Isabela and Kabankalan. In Himamaylan alone, 590 perished from hunger that year. In 1888, the last catastrophe on record occurred: a locust plague devastated the farms in Bacolod and in other parts of Negros.

<sup>10</sup> Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *Events in Bacolod*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los agustinos recoletos* II, 800.

**As vicar provincial of southern Negros and vicar forane**

On 7 May 1888, Padre Mauricio was appointed as vicar forane by Fray Leandro Arrué, Augustinian Recollect bishop of Jaro. To the vast ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Diocese of Jaro, a suffragan of the Archdiocese of Manila, belonged Negros, Panay, Romblon, Calamianes, Jolo, parts of Mindanao since its creation on 27 May 1865. Due to the rapid growth of Christian population and consequent foundation of more parishes, the sole Recollect Vicariate of Negros and Siquijor was divided in June 1851 into two: West Coast Vicariate and East Coast Vicariate.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, on 20 June 1885, the vicariate of Northern Negros was created, comprising Silay, Saravia, Cadiz, Escalante, Calatrava, Guihulngan and Tayasan.<sup>13</sup>



**The present Cathedral of San Sebastian in Bacolod, constructed in 1876-1882, a lasting tangible legacy of the Recollect parish priest Mauricio Ferrero.**

The newly-elected Recollect prior provincial Father Fidel de Blas de la Asunción signed on 25 June 1888 the appointment of Padre Mauricio as vicar provincial of Southern Negros which at that time consisted of Talisay, Murcia, Valladolid and all other parishes south of Bacolod.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Manuel CARCELLER, *Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* XII:1867-1891 (Madrid 1974) 222.

<sup>13</sup> MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los agustinos recoletos* II, 804. Padre Angel Belaza de los Dolores was named vicar provincial of the new vicariate named *Cádiz Viejo Vicariate* after the curate's parish. See Manuel CARCELLER, *Historia general* XII, 547. In 1888, it would be *Vicariate of Negros Occidental*, cf. CARCELLER, *Historia general* XIII, 656.

<sup>14</sup> General Chronicler Manuel Carceller states that Padre Mauricio was appointed by Prior Provincial Fidel de Bas as vicar provincial of Negros Occidental on 28 April 1888, as well as other vicars provincial in the Philippines. The *Cosas notables del Provincialato* points out what the new prior provincial says: "... that the parish priests approach the father vicar provincial everytime matters of some gravity may arise, [...] I judged it convenient to condense and redact in an abridged form all the faculties which are granted to such vicar provincial mandated by our holy

Padre Mauricio headed the extensive vicariate composed of Recollect parishes established in the southern and western parts of the Island of Negros. As vicar provincial of that territorial jurisdiction of Negros, he was mandated by the Recollect Constitutions, among his responsibilities, “to monitor the behavior of the parish priests, to foment among them the communitarian spirit, to relay the orders of the superiors, to channel the dossiers.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Construction of the new *kumbento***

Padre Mauricio began the construction of the new *kumbento* of Bacolod in 1891. He finished the *kumbento* in 1894. In the provincial chapter of 1894, the fifty-year-old religious curate of Bacolod was elected prior of the Recollect community of religious priests, brothers and professed students and rector of the theology school at Marcilla, Navarra, Spain.

### **Rector of the Recollect convent and theologate of Marcilla, Navarra**

Obedient to the will of the superiors, as he had vowed to be when he professed the evangelical counsels in 1863, he left his beloved San Sebastian Parish of Bacolod and travelled to far-off Spain for his new assignment. His confrere Padre Florencio Aranda received the parochial reins.

At the end of his 1894-1897 term as rector of Marcilla, Padre Mauricio returned to Bacolod as parish priest. He headed the 98<sup>th</sup> Recollect missionary expedition of eighteen priests and two religious brothers, who boarded the steamer *Isla de Luzón* at Barcelona on 11 September 1897 and reached Manila exactly a month after on 10 October.

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Constitutions and ordinances.” He further wished to increase the vicar provincial’s responsibilities as well as his rights, prerogatives and functions so these may be perfectly known by all the religious of the respective vicariates.” Cf. *Historia general* XII, 656-658.

<sup>15</sup> MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los agustinos recoletos* II, 804.

### **Vigan Seminary (1882-1895); Colegio de San José in Bacolod (1896-1898)**

The Recollects administered the Diocesan Seminary of Vigan, in Ilocos Sur, from 1882 to 1895.<sup>16</sup> Recollect Bishop Mariano Cuartero Sierra requested his confreres to manage the seminary which Prior Provincial Juan Cruz Gómez and his provincial council accepted on 19 June 1882. After his death in 1887, the archbishop of Manila, administrator of Vigan *sede vacante*, and the successor Bishop José Hevia Campomanes in 1890 were satisfied with their performance and management and wanted them to continue in the seminary which had 513 students, among whose 69 interns was Gregorio Aglipay, head of the future schismatic *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* [Philippine Independent Church, or simply Aglipayan Church]. In 1892, it became a secondary school, the only such school in the Ilocos Sur capital. In 1895, however, the apostolic commissary in Madrid who was the Recollect superior general, ordered them to leave the seminary, for “the religious cannot live outside the Order [...] without authorization from Rome.”<sup>17</sup>

In the wake of that Vigan Seminary experience, it was no longer unexpected for the Recollects to foresee the establishment of a formal school. In Bacolod, Colegio de San José would be the Recollects’ first attempt to offer a formal education.<sup>18</sup> This first formal school of the Recollects which opened in 1896 was rather short-lived; it had to close down in the wake of the Philippine Revolution that struck the whole Negros Island on 5 November 1898.

### **Revolution in Negros**

Padre Mauricio was again named vicar provincial of Southern Negros Occidental on 26 March 1898 and vicar forane on 1 April. During the Philippine Revolution in Negros on 5 November 1898, he was confined to the *kumbento* and could not leave town, not unlike his aging confrere Fr. Fernando Cuenca in Talisay. He was later

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<sup>16</sup> Manuel CARCELLER, *Historia general de los agustinos recoletos* XII: 1867-1891 (Madrid 1974) 440-442, 673-674.

<sup>17</sup> *Letter of Fr. Iñigo Narro to Fr. Enrique Pérez, 28 September 1894*, in the ARCHIVES OF THE ORDER OF AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECTS, Caja A65, legajo 5, OAR General Curia, Rome, as cited in MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los agustino recoletos* II, 884.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 885-886.



moved to Himamaylan and joined his imprisoned confreres, who had been arrested in various rectories in Negros, in the provincial jail in Bacolod which he had constructed years before. They boarded *S/S Montserrat* and left for Manila where they arrived on 7 February 1899.

### **Post-Revolutionary situation**

In February 1902, Padre Mauricio was back in Bacolod and stayed in his beloved town until 30 December 1909 when he turned over the parish to his successor and townmate Padre Francisco Vega de la Virgen de Vico. He resigned from his post for health reasons. Padre Mauricio served the parish of the capital of Negros Island and later of Negros Occidental for a total of 33 years, long enough to be rightly deemed as the “Father of Bacolod City” on account of his missionary zeal, evangelization efforts, and various infrastructure projects and tangible legacies that live on till today.

### **Epilogue**

Padre Mauricio’s arrival in 1871 signaled great portents to come in Bacolod. Under his direction, the future cathedral (1882) and the *kumbento* (1894) which turned into the Bishop’s house in 1941 were constructed. The cemetery, mortuary chapel, Puerto San Juan [headquarters of the *Guardia Civil* and the provincial jail], *kumbento* [the old building of La Consolacion College now demolished] were likewise completed during his term. Deservedly, the concrete statues of Fr. Mauricio and Fr. Fernando Cuenca, garbed in their Recollect habit, stand at the entrance of San Sebastian Cathedral, doubtless in recognition of and gratitude to the Recollect priests’ contributions to the whole Negros Island. At age 71, Fr. Mauricio passed away at San Nicolás Convent, Intramuros, Manila on 8 December 1915.

### **Timeline of Padre Mauricio Ferrero, OAR**

Emmanuel Luis Romanillos/Jorr S. Rabacal, OAR

1844	September 22	Birth at Arnedo, La Rioja, Spain.
1863	June 30	Profession of monastics vows at Monteagudo, Navarra.

1866 December	Ordination to the priesthood in Calahorra, La Rioja.
1868 January 31	Departure from Cádiz, Spain, of 59 <sup>th</sup> Augustinian Recollect mission of 20 friars including Fray Mauricio.
1868 June 15	Arrival of the twenty missionaries in Manila.
1868 July	Assistant priest in Agutaya in the Calamianes Islands.
1868 September	Parish priest of Culion in the Calamianes.
1870 May 2	In Valladolid, Negros, he learned Visayan Hiligaynon.
1871 December 23	Parish priest of Bacolod in Negros.
1888 May 7	Vicar forane of Negros.
1888 June 25	Vicar provincial of the Southern Negros Island.
1894 -1897	Prior of the Convent of Marcilla, Navarra, Spain.
1897 November 1	Parish priest of Bacolod for the second time.
1898 March 26	Vicar provincial of Negros Occidental.
1898 November 5-6	The Revolution in Bacolod. Fray Mauricio was placed under convent arrest until 10 November when he was moved to Himamaylan and back to Bacolod in February 1899 to join his confreres who traveled to Manila.
1902 February 28	Parish priest of Bacolod for the third and last time.
1909 December 30	Resignation at age 65 as parish priest.
1915 December 8	Demise at San Nicolás Convent, Intramuros, at age 71.

Sources: Archivo Histórico Provincial de Marcilla, *Cosas notables de Bacolod* (1871-1933) folios 87r-113r; Sádaba (1906) 532; Avellaneda (1938) 389.

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# Life, Works and Pastoral Ministry of Padre Nemesio Llorente (1852-1931)

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Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos

## Formative years

A native of Olite in the Spanish province of Navarra, Nemesio Llorente y Castillo saw the light of day on 19 December 1852.<sup>1</sup> In 1870, he commenced his novitiate at the Augustinian Recollect convent in Monteagudo, Navarra, Spain. A year after novitiate, on 12 October 1871, barely 19 years of age, he became a member of the missionary Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino of the Congregation of Augustinian Recollects by professing the monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The rite of religious profession was held at the conventual church of *Nuestra Señora del Camino*, Our Lady of the Way, patroness of the Recollect convent and of the town of Monteagudo. He embraced the spiritual patronage of Saint Joseph, taking the religious appellation of Fray Nemesio Llorente de San José.




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<sup>1</sup> Francisco SÁDABA. *Catálogo de los Religiosos Agustinos Recoletos de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas desde el año 1606, en que llegó la primera misión a Manila, hasta nuestros días* (Madrid 1906) 594-595.

Like all Augustinian Recollect simple professed religious, Fray Nemesio proceeded to their convent at Marcilla in northern Navarra, and underwent the initial years of his theological formation. Four years afterward, the 69<sup>th</sup> Recollect mission group of eight confreres headed by the veteran missionary Fr. Francisco Gotor,<sup>2</sup> travelled to the port city of Barcelona. The head of the missionary expedition was Fr. Francisco Gotor who exercised his pastoral ministry at Liloan in Cebu in 1846-1867 where he constructed its church and rectory, made of strong materials. The nine Recollect missionaries boarded the steamer that lifted anchor at Barcelona on 6 October 1875. Twice the group changed ships, first at Marseilles, France and then at Singapore. Their steamship had taken the shorter route through the Suez Canal and finally the Augustinian Recollect missionaries reached Manila on 17 November 1875 after forty-one days, a maritime journey that customarily took only a month during the Suez Canal period.

### **Initial pastoral ministry**

After completing his last year of theological formation at San Nicolás Convent in Intramuros, Manila, Fray Nemesio Llorente de San José was ordained to the sacred priesthood on 10 June 1876, four days after the dimissory letter was issued on 6 June. Likewise ordained as priests were his confreres: Fr. Manuel Clemente, Fr. Benito Garayoa, Fr. Dionisio Pueyo and Fr. Valentín Utande. These young priests like Fr. Llorente were subsequently given their initial assignments in various parishes in Bohol, Mindanao and Negros. These parochial assignments were issued after studying the Visayan Cebuano language and passing thereafter the mandatory language proficiency examination customarily conducted by their parish priests who were knowledgeable in the language of the place.

### **First pastoral assignments**

On 26 April 1877, Fr. Nemesio Llorente was assigned by the prior provincial in Manila to the Blessed Trinity Parish of

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<sup>2</sup> Fr. Francisco Gotor was born on 10 October 1819 at Mallén, Zaragoza, Spain. He returned to Manila following his two subsequent assignments: first as vice prior and novice master of Monteagudo and as vice prior of Marcilla. At 68, he died at the Immaculate Conception Convent in Cebu on 8 May 1888. See SÁDABA, 432-433.



Loay in Bohol to study the Visayan Cebuano language. He passed the language proficiency examination conducted in February 1878 by the parish priest Fr. Matías Tormo de los Dolores (1833-1878). This experienced parish priest, who was concurrently Recollect vicar provincial of Southern Bohol, had served for twenty years his Boholano parishioners in Baclayon, Bilar and Loay subsequently.<sup>3</sup> Like almost every Augustinian Recollect missionary in the Philippines, Japan and Marianas Islands, he was never to return to the land of his birth. Fr. Tormo passed away on 9 August 1878 at Loay. The twenty-five-year-old Fr. Llorente at once took over the parish administration from August 1878 to July 1879. He was concurrently vicar forane of Southern Bohol.

In July 1879, Fr. Llorente was sent to Cagayan de Misamis in Mindanao, present-day Cagayan de Oro, as *compañero*<sup>4</sup> of the iconic Recollect parish priest Fr. Ramón Zueco until February 1882. In this same month, he was assigned as parish priest of Saint Augustine Parish of Bacong in Negros Island which he administered for three months. His subsequent parochial assignments were the following: Tolong, actual Santa Catalina (25 July 1882-24 July 1884); Cortes, Bohol (9 months); and Corella, Bohol (19 months).<sup>5</sup>

After his Bohol pastoral ministry, Fr. Llorente was appointed parish priest of Jasaan in Misamis Occidental. He was its last Augustinian Recollect pastor from 26 January to 25 June 1887<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> SÁDABA, 487.

<sup>4</sup> The Spanish *compañero* was the parish priest's companion or associate, akin to the present-day assistant parish priest or parochial vicar.

<sup>5</sup> SÁDABA, 432-433.

<sup>6</sup> Jasaan, according to Fidel de Blas, was the erstwhile mission of Pinagaian founded by the Augustinian Recollects in 1723. The old name was changed to Tagoloan and finally to Jasaan when Fr. José Casals was curate in 1834. See FIDEL DE BLAS, *Labor evangélica de los padres agustinos recoletos en las Islas Filipinas* (Zaragoza 1910) 19. Regrettably, a website identifies Fr. Nemesio Llorente as the **first Spanish Jesuit of Jasaan!** We do not know where the Jasaan researcher obtained such erroneous information. We conjecture that his source could be any parish canonical book, but it is evident that the researcher did not consult such classic Recollect sources as Marcellán, Fidel de Blas or Sádaba's *Catálogo*. See *Immaculate Conception Parish Church of Jasaan*, in [//en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immaculate\\_Conception\\_Parish\\_Church\\_\(Jasaan\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immaculate_Conception_Parish_Church_(Jasaan)). The website of the local government of Jasaan has unfortunately perpetuates the error: [//jasaan.gov.ph/public/index.php?submenu=5&home=Tourist%20Spots](http://jasaan.gov.ph/public/index.php?submenu=5&home=Tourist%20Spots).

when the Recollect-founded parish of Jasaan was ceded to the Society of Jesus. The renowned Jesuit historian, Fr. Pablo Pastells, took over from the Recollects the parochial duties. Fr. Llorente was again named as curate of the neighboring Saint Augustine Parish of Cagayan de Oro where he ministered for five months in 1887.

The superiors soon dispatched Padre Nemesio to Bohol again to serve the parishioners of the Blessed Trinity Parish of Talibon for nine months in 1887-1888. From August 1888 to July 1892, he was assigned as parish priest of Saint Joseph Parish in San Francisco, Camotes Island, which belonged under the jurisdiction of the Diocese and Province of Cebu.

### **At the helm of Blessed Trinity Parish of Talibon**

Padre Nemesio Llorente had earlier served the Boholano faithful in the Blessed Trinity Parish of Talibon, a town with 6,149 parishioners, for nine months in 1887-1888. After his parish ministry of four years at Saint Joseph Parish in San Francisco, Camotes Island, he retraced his steps to Talibon in northern Bohol in December 1892 then with a rapidly growing Catholic population of 7,373. He immediately kept himself busy by finishing the construction of the belfry of Talibon church that was left in its third tier for twelve years. His predecessors José Sánchez, parish priest in 1868-1884, and Pedro Echeverría in 1888-1892, had almost finished the sturdy massive church structure.<sup>7</sup> This parish church would become the cathedral of the Diocese of the Blessed Trinity on 9 January 1986. The Diocese of Talibon had a Roman Catholic population of 705,466 in 2014 and in 2015 it recorded 720,089 Roman Catholics, comprising 92.4% of the total diocesan population of 779,632.

“Hard-working by character and temperament,” the friar parish priest completed the last and fourth tier and the dome-like structure of the belfry. He ordered the demolition of the old rectory that had seen better days. In its place, a new sturdy rectory was then erected near the grandiose church. Fr. Llorente inaugurated the new parochial house in November 1894.<sup>8</sup>

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This blunder was still in both websites on 26 September 2017.

<sup>7</sup> SÁDABA, 523, 503; FIDEL DE BLAS, 37.

<sup>8</sup> ARCHIVO HISTÓRICO PROVINCIAL DE LA PROVINCIA DE SAN NICOLÁS DE TOLENTINO, Marcilla, Navara, Spain. Legajo 66 Bohol, Núm. 3, *Cosas notables del pueblo de Talibón*.

Among Fr. Llorente's other achievements in Talibon were the gilding of the altars and pulpit, the construction of the sacristy and the marble and stone flooring of the parish church. During his five-year term at Talibon parish, the parish likewise acquired seven chandeliers, church bell, statues of the *Santo Entierro*, *Dolorosa*, Holy Family and San Isidro as well as two images of the Blessed Trinity. He organized a musical band and an orchestra of seventeen boys. A concrete sea wall was built during his parochial term.



**Map of Negros Occidental and Oriental with Towns and Parishes. Source: Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los Agustinos Recoletos II* (Madrid 2015) 781.**

The Talibon pastor had his hands busy with other church projects when in 1897 he was informed about his election as procurator general who was tasked to manage the financial affairs of the Augustinian Recollect Congregation in Manila.<sup>9</sup> He then left Talibon and travelled to the colonial capital to reside at San Nicolás Convent in Intramuros which was the Augustinian Recollect provincial curia of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino Province. In 1902, he was succeeded by Fr. Carlos Ortuoste as procurator general. He then fixed his residence at San Sebastian Convent in Manila where he was a conventual until mid-1904.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Recollects' second return to Negros Island**

The first Augustinian Recollect missionaries were assigned to parishes in Negros Island after the royal decree issued in Madrid on 20 June 1848. In the east coast, arrived the first Augustinian Recollect ministers: Fr. Ramón Cabas at the Parish of Saint Andrew

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<sup>9</sup> Avellaneda commits the typographical flaw informing us that Fr. Llorente was elected provincial procurator in **1879**, when in fact it was **1897**. See Miguel AVELLANEDA, *Continuación del padre Sádaba* (Rome 1938) 459.

<sup>10</sup> SÁDABA, 594.

the Apostle in Amlan on 24 August 1848, and five days later, Fr. Agustín Olmedillas at Saint Nicholas of Bari Parish in Siaton.<sup>11</sup>

In the west coast of Negros Island, Fr. Tomás Mezquita was assigned to Himamaylan on 26 October 1848; and Fr. Andrés Cobos to Kabankalan on 28 October. No canonical rights of the secular clergy were infringed when these four vacant parishes in Negros were ceded to the Augustinian Recollects as mandated by the 20 June 1848. Fr. José María Pavón served Himamaylan from 1842 until he was transferred to the new parish of Hinigaran, created in February 1842. Amlan was created into an independent parish from Tanjay while Siaton was excised from Dauin and Kabankalan from Himamaylan.<sup>12</sup>

### **Sibulan, a parish founded in 1838**

Historian Patricio Marcellán writes that the parish of Sibulan was established in 1838 and was put under the religious patronage of the Lisbon-born Franciscan miracle-worker Saint Anthony of Padua, *San Antonio de Padua* in Spanish.<sup>13</sup> The civil town had been founded a year earlier, *i.e.*, 1837.<sup>14</sup> The parish of Sibulan was ceded by the diocesan clergy to the Augustinian Recollects in February 1856<sup>15</sup> after the death of its unnamed diocesan priest.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros* (Manila 1980) 172-173.

<sup>12</sup> Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los Agustinos Recoletos II: El Siglo XVIII* (Madrid 2015) 780.

<sup>13</sup> MARCELLÁN, 143.

<sup>14</sup> *Parroquia de San Antonio, Sibulan, Negros Oriental*, in Jesús SOBEJANO, *Los Agustinos Recoletos. 375 Años en las Islas Filipinas. 1606-1981* (Quezon City 1981) 48.

<sup>15</sup> Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas de la Orden de Agustinos Descalzos II* (Manila 1925) 157, specified the month and year: **February 1856**. Other authors like Fidel de Blas, 44; Sobejano, 48 ; Martínez Cuesta in *History of Negros*, 212, and *Historia de los Agustinos Recoletos II*, 157, all affirm that the Recollects started in Sibulan in 1856 and the first Recollect parish priest was Fr. Tomás Mezquita.

<sup>16</sup> See footnote 7, chapter 9, page 212 in MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros*. Five more parishes in Negros Island were likewise ceded to the Recollects after the demise of their respective parish priests: Tanjay (1866), Bacolod (1871), Silay (1881), Bago (1882) and Ilog (1889). The foremost Negros historian reiterates that Sibulan was put under Recollect jurisdiction

### Sibulan parish priests and construction projects

The first Augustinian Recollect missionary Fr. Tomás Mezquita (1817-1860) arrived at Sibulan in 1856<sup>17</sup> from his previous parish ministry in Amlan.<sup>18</sup> In Sibulan, he found no church edifices at all.<sup>19</sup> Both church and rectory had been reduced to ashes by fire in 1854. Recollect parish priests subsequently took turns in erecting the church, rectory, municipal buildings and other infrastructure.



**Recollect Parishes and Towns  
in southern Negros**

As the pioneering resident missionary, Fr. Mezquita focused on his primary concern and priority: the construction of his dwelling place and parochial offices. This parochial house consisted of typical building materials of his time: foundation posts made of hardwood and walls made of *tabique pampango*.<sup>20</sup> Three years after, in 1859, Fr. Mezquita finished his kumbento.

The construction of the parochial church with three naves was started by his successor Fr. José María Cabañas. It was continued and finished by Fr. Pedro Echevarría. The church edifice was made of sturdy wood posts and its walls are made of *cotta*.<sup>21</sup> Subsequent

only after the diocesan priest had died. See MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los Agustinos Recoletos* II, 784.

<sup>17</sup> O Dennis V. Madrigal follows Fr. Sádaba's *Catálogo* (p. 443), asserting in *Handurawan. Visita Iglesia Negros y Recoletos* (Bacolod City 2006) 69, that the first Recollect Fr. Mezquita arrived at Sibulan in 1857, but he earlier affirmed that the Recollects administered Sibulan in 1856. In 1925, Licinio Ruiz informs us that the Recollects received the parish in February 1856.

<sup>18</sup> The town is Amlan in MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia* II, 780, but it was known also as Ambláng, cf. MARCELLÁN, 144, FIDEL DE BLAS, 44. It is Amblán in the map of MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia* II, 781.

<sup>19</sup> SOBEJANO, 143; RUIZ *Sinopsis histórica* II, 157.

<sup>20</sup> *Tabique pampango*: wall consisting of interlaced pieces of wood and bamboo, with a coating of lime mixed with sand.

<sup>21</sup> Also known as *cota* or *kutà*. It is made of masonry, customarily

parish priests made significant improvements on the edifice. Fr. Pedro Echevarría's successor, Fr. Eugenio Sola, who would become prior general of the Order of Augustinian Recollects in 1918-1920, constructed the *retablo* of the altar. The construction of the church atrium came to an end during the term of Fr. Manuel Clemente, who fenced it with wood and *cotta*. Every hardworking parish priest of Sibulan did not cease in doing projects for the beautification and decoration of the divine temple.<sup>22</sup>



**The old San Antonio de Padua Parish Church and Convent in Sibulan, Negros Oriental. Source: Handurawan. Visita Iglesia Negros y Recoletos (2006) 69.**

Fr Pedro Echevarría, former curate of Dumaguete and Isabela in Negros, supervised as well the construction of school edifices and the municipal building in Sibulan when he was at the helm of its parish in November 1865-August 1888.<sup>23</sup> The bridge of the main road connecting Sibulan to Ayuquitan, present-day San José, was constructed under the direction of Fr. Francisco Gómez who was parish priest in July 1889-August 1893.<sup>24</sup> The building of the bridge of the main road leading to Dumaguete was built under Fr. Manuel Clemente's supervision.<sup>25</sup> The road decks of both bridges were made of hardwood firmly laid on piers or pillars of *mampostería*<sup>26</sup>

### **Post-Revolution Sibulan, Valencia and Amlan**

In 1898, at the end of the Spanish rule, the Augustinian Recollects also gave up the administration of parishes in the Visayas, including those in the Negros Island. There was a prevailing grave concern for confreres among their superiors in Manila. The patriotic

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used as well to enclose the church patio or yard and the cemetery.

<sup>22</sup> RUIZ II, 157.

<sup>23</sup> SÁDABA, 503. The *casa tribunal* accommodates the offices of the *gobernadorcillo*, other local officials and sometimes the pueblo's jail.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 537.

<sup>25</sup> RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica* II, 157.

<sup>26</sup> Rubblework: a mixture of stones, uncut or roughly cut, lime, mortar, plaster, cement, etc., used for masonry and building material.

fervor, its consequent revolutionary upheaval and turbulence had wrought havoc to a greater part in Luzon that resulted in the capture, imprisonment or torture of Augustinian, Dominican and Recollect ministers, and especially in the tragic slaughter of thirteen Recollect priests and religious brothers in Cavite in the early part of September 1896.<sup>27</sup>

As parish priest of Sibulan since 23 May 1894,<sup>28</sup> Fr. Manuel Clemente was forced by the revolutionists to leave the town. Towards the end of August 1898, together with his confreres assigned in Amlan and Bacong, Fr. Clemente took the boat to Iloilo. The three Recollect religious safely journeyed together from the Visayan city to Singapore where they boarded another steamer for Spain and arrived in their homeland in October 1898.<sup>29</sup>

Fr. Carlos Ortuoste, who was the parish priest of Bayawan in southernmost part of Negros Island from 13 January 1896 until 23 July 1898, courageously travelled to Sibulan and took over San Antonio de Padua Parish vacated a month earlier by his predecessor Fr. Manuel Clemente. However, Fr. Ortuoste was at the helm of its parochial administration and performed his ministry as pastor only for a brief time period—from 22 September to 16 November 1898.<sup>30</sup> Fr. Ortuoste left for Manila and in 1902 he succeeded Fr. Llorente as procurator general at Intramuros, Manila.

For six long years—1898-1904—during the revolutionary upheaval in Negros and thereafter, the parishes of Valencia and Sibulan were bereft of permanent Catholic ministers. The lack of priests was observed in various parts of the whole island where oftentimes Aglipayan ministers declaring to be nationalists, identical to Roman Catholic priests in every aspect and deceitfully professing the same Catholic doctrines, occupied parishes at will. A Catholic priest of Dumaguete took pastoral care of the parishioners of Valencia and Sibulan. But his pastoral efforts in Valencia were lamentably occasional and delayed. The diocesan parish priest of Dumaguete conducted sporadic visits as well to the adjacent curacy of Sibulan.

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<sup>27</sup> RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica* II, 154-157.

<sup>28</sup> SÁDABA, 595.

<sup>29</sup> Angel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA. *Historia de los agustinos recoletos I: Desde los orígenes hasta el siglo XIX* (Madrid 1995) 991.

<sup>30</sup> SÁDABA, 687.

### Two Recollects assigned to Valencia and Sibulan

In no time, the parishioners of Sibulan and Valencia presented persistent petition letters to the American bishop of the Diocese of Jaro which then comprised the parishes and missions of the islands of Panay, Negros and Siquijor. They earnestly begged for ministers for their parishes. They likewise dispatched similar letters of petition to the Augustinian Recollect superiors in Manila.

In 1904, the American prelate of Jaro, Bishop Frederick Z. Rooker (1861-1907), conducted personal visits to his Negros parishes. He visited the parish of Sibulan and the whole populace met with him in full force. The town leaders and other influential persons personally handed to him the parishioners' letter of petition.<sup>31</sup> The lay leaders clearly specified that, if it were possible, they would rather have Augustinian Recollect ministers for Sibulan. The parishioners of Sibulan had not forgotten their Recollect parish priests of the past who had endeared themselves to them because of their good material works and improvements for the community, their pastoral care and authentic concern for them.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the lay leaders and parishioners of Sibulan assured Bishop Rooker of their commitment to provide their parish priest with food provisions, personal subsistence and protection.

At the outset, the American prelate told the people that he could not accede to their demands due to the unsafe situation and concomitant perils occasioned by the extensive flames of the Philippine Revolution and its ensuing smoldering embers in the country. He could not risk the lives of the Spanish ministers under his episcopal jurisdiction.

In the end, when everything seemed tranquil, the American bishop of Jaro and the Augustinian Recollect superiors in Manila dispatched towards the end of August 1904 two seasoned ministers Fr. Paulino Jiménez and Fr. Nemesio Llorente. The veteran missionary Fr. Jiménez travelled from Bacolod to the Parish of *Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados*, Our Lady of the Abandoned, of Valencia.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Licinio RUIZ, *Correspondencia de nuestros misioneros de la Islas de Negros, Filipinas*, in *Boletín de la Provincia de san Nicolás de las Islas Filipinas* [BPSN] 6, 56 (1915) 606.

<sup>32</sup> Licinio RUIZ, *Correspondencia de nuestros misioneros*, 606.

<sup>33</sup> It was then known as Nueva Valencia, Luzurriaga, then finally Valencia, cf. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* II, 154-157; Jose Ernil ALMAYO, *Valencia*:



Before the Revolution, Fr. Jiménez exercised his ministry as pastor in Romblon, Azagra (Romblon), Amlan and Dumaguete. His last assignment was the parish of Looc in Romblon where he was arrested by revolutionary troops in July 1898 and finally set free in Manila in March 1900. In February 1904, Fr. Jiménez left San Sebastian Convent and journeyed to Bacolod, provincial capital of Negros Occidental, and worked as assistant of its iconic parish priest Fr. Mauricio Ferrero for some months. It was in this Visayan capital where he received from his superiors his *patente*<sup>34</sup> for Valencia.<sup>35</sup>

Fr. Nemesio Llorente left Manila for Negros and proceeded to the Parish of San Antonio de Padua of Sibulan. The return of the Spanish Recollect ministers to Negros Oriental fanned the smoldering embers of the 1898 Revolution of Negros in the parishes of Valencia, Bais and Amlan that resulted in the burning of the ecclesiastical edifices of their parishes.

Providentially, the burning of parish church and rectory did not take occur in Sibulan on account of the steadfast vigilance and prudence of its new Augustinian Recollect parish priest who was eagerly assisted by its church organizations and the laity.

### **Padre Nemesio Llorente's arrival in 1904**

Padre Nemesio Llorente was the first Augustinian Recollect parish priest to retrace his steps in 1904 to San Antonio de Padua Parish in the wake of the Philippine Revolution in Negros Island in 1898 that expelled almost all the Spanish Recollects from the parishes.<sup>36</sup> The Recollect biographer Francisco Sádaba noted that

*1854 or 1856? That is the Question*, in *The Recoletos Observer*, vol. 5, no. 1 (January –March 2004) 22-26. The date of the name change varies. According to Recollect sources, the foundation date of the town of Valencia was 31 March 1854, excised from the town of Dumaguete by the royal decree issued by the governor general. Bishop Romualdo Jimeno of the Diocese of Cebu which comprised Visayas, Mindanao and the Marianas Islands, created Valencia into a parish through his episcopal decree dated 1 February 1856. Cf. Patricio MARCELLÁN, *Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Agustinos Descalzos de la Congregación de España e Indias* (Manila 1879) 140.

<sup>34</sup> Official credentials and assignment papers.

<sup>35</sup> SÁDABA. 670.

<sup>36</sup> *Handurawan. Visita Iglesia Negros y Recoletos* (Bacolod City 2006) 69, when he claims that Fr. Licinio Ruiz was the first Recollect priest

Padre Nemesio in Sibulan “was welcomed by the residents of this town, where he continues until now [1906] with extraordinary displays of joy.”<sup>37</sup>

It was the collaborative effort of the Recollect parish priest, the town leaders and parishioners that the attempts of revolutionary leaders in the district were frustrated in Sibulan. Thus, the church edifices were preserved from destruction and arsonists’ plot. The prerevolutionary kumbento built in 1859 by Fr. Mezquita and parish church erected by Fr. José María Cabañas and Fr. Pedro Echevarría were so rehabilitated and so much improved that they seemed new constructions.<sup>38</sup> Comfortable smaller rooms for the curates in the rectory were added. “Fr. Nemesio was indefatigable,” writes the historian Licinio Ruiz (1872-1940) in 1925 in the second volume of his *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas de la Orden de Agustinos Descalzos*. He adds the following remarks on Fr. Llorente in a special chapter on the missions of Negros of his history book:



**Parish Church of San Antonio de Padua, Sibulan, Negros Oriental, Diocese of Dumaguete, ceded by the Augustinian Recollects to the Diocesan clergy in 1984.**

I believe that [Fr. Llorente] has not spent a single day in his life without any tasks, that is, without doing anything, without doing any improvement or repair in the church. I can truly declare that due to Fr. Nemesio’s effort, due to his concern, the church of Sibulan is the most complete in all services in the whole province [Negros Oriental].<sup>39</sup>

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to return to this parish in May 1906 after the Revolution. Fr. Llorente was the parish priest of Sibulan, as affirmed by Fr. Licinio Ruiz himself in the memoir of his visits to Negros parishes, cf. RUIZ, *Correspondencia de nuestros misioneros*, 829-839. Fr. Ruiz subsequently served the parishes of Siaton, Zamboanguita, Bacolod and in the curacies of Lazi and Maria in Siquijor Island, cf. AVELLANEDA, 77.

<sup>37</sup> SÁDABA, 594-595.

<sup>38</sup> RUIZ *Sinopsis histórica* II, 158.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

During his first two years at the helm of the parochial administration of Sibulan, Fr. Llorente accomplished very notable works like those in the municipal cemetery. The sacred burial grounds had been in great disrepair in the wake of revolutionary turmoil in the country. He did many more notable repairs in the ruinous rectory which he found hardly livable when he first arrived at the parish in 1904.

The biographer Fr. Francisco Sádaba informs us that in the realization of the needed repairs, Fr. Llorente never failed to count on the wholehearted cooperation of the members of the community of San Antonio Parish of Sibulan. Evidently, the townspeople of Sibulan were well motivated in their community tasks by Fr. Llorente and his Augustinian Recollect predecessors, in the same manner as were motivated those lay people in Recollect curacies and mission stations elsewhere in the Visayan Islands of Cebu, Siquijor, Negros, Camiguin, Bohol and Mindanao. Without any trace of a doubt, further observes Fr. Sádaba, “the faithful of Sibulan were so convinced that the services they rendered to the church would definitely redound to their own benefit in the end.”<sup>40</sup>

### **Recollect chronicler Licinio Ruiz visits Negros**

In August 1906, the Recollect chronicler Fr. Licinio Ruiz<sup>41</sup> visited the parishes in Negros Island, including Bacolod, San Carlos, Sibulan, Valencia, Bayawan, Amlan and Bais after the Philippine Revolution. He first visited Bacolod, the capital of Negros Occidental, and then San Carlos, the last town of the province, where he assisted the hardworking parish priest Fr. Eusebio Valderrama in his pastoral tasks for some weeks in a vast area that extended from Escalante in the north to Tanjay in the south.

Fr. Ruiz heaped praises on the fast-growing town of San Carlos, its leaders and especially the Spanish hacenderos. It was then a progressive municipality, which just two decades ago—having been

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<sup>40</sup> SÁDABA, 595.

<sup>41</sup> In 1925, he would write two volumes of the highly informative *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas de la Orden de Agustinos Descalzos*. Fr. Ruiz was parish priest of Bacolod in 1928-1930. Cf. Emmanuel Luis ROMANILLOS, *Events in Bacolod, Negros Occidental, in the Parish Chronicle (1871-1909) of Fr. Mauricio Ferrero, OAR and other Essays* (Quezon City 2016) 56.

founded in 1895—was a mere *visita* or village of the adjoining town and Recollect parish of Calatrava in the north. The sugar haciendas owned by the Spaniards and some immigrant families were evidently doing great wonders to the rapid growth and development of San Carlos.<sup>42</sup>

### **The parishioners of Sibulan greatly impress Licinio Ruiz**

The visiting chronicler was pleasantly surprised in 1906 when he learned about the religious activities of the Roman Catholic population of Sibulan during the dark years of the Philippine Revolution that wracked the Island of Negros in 1898. The parishioners' spiritual plight suffered immensely because they had no Catholic minister to minister to their sacramental needs and to attend to their religious services. It behooves us then to allow the eyewitness Fr. Licinio Ruiz himself to narrate to us his own personal impressions of the true-blue Catholic believers of Sibulan during the Revolution period:

All the people of Sibulan without exception went to church on Sundays and holy days of obligation in order to fulfill the Church precept. And they prayed together the holy Rosary inside the church and practised all the devotions, as they customarily did in the past. The previous municipal captains,<sup>43</sup> people who were somewhat influential in society, performed identical religious activities in the same manner as did the impoverished and needy classes. During those times of desolation and destruction, all of them took good care of their priceless treasure: the church and the rectory. Both constituted the symbols of their beliefs, and the parishioners viewed them as the repository which safeguarded the history of their greatness, that of their parents and forefathers. They were erected at the cost of the sweat and sacrifices of their ancestors.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> RUIZ, *Correspondencia*, 604.

<sup>43</sup> The capitan municipal was the *gobernadorcillo* of the Spanish rule, and the *presidente municipal* of the American Regime. His post is equivalent to that of the *municipal mayor* of today.

<sup>44</sup> RUIZ, *Correspondencia*, 605.

All of this, concludes Fr. Ruiz, spoke very highly of both the people of Sibulan and their former missionaries who knew too well how to inculcate such religious fervor and cultural values in their souls.

### **Arsonists prowl the Catholic parishes**

Months before, an anti-Catholic plotter or group of plotters had planned arson intention or conspired to set on fire the parochial houses of Valencia and Amlan. The arsonists succeeded in the criminal act of burning the parochial residences of Catholic priests in those towns. The arson incidents remained a mystery but not for long because the laity and ministers themselves could identify the culprit. The Recollects attributed the rectory-burning incidents to the freedom of religion they deemed as product of the “progress” of the period, imported to the Philippines by the new colonial masters of the United States.

Doubtless, anti-friar elements in this area of southeastern Negros conspired to commit arson acts likewise in Sibulan. But their sinister plots resulted to naught, and their “machinations were frustrated in the face of the active vigilance exerted by the parish priest and the zealous residents of Sibulan.”<sup>45</sup>

### **Catholic lay organizations lent a helping hand**

Two lay organizations in Sibulan—the Catholic Center and the Apostleship of Prayer—spearheaded the defense of their church against troublemakers. Padre Nemesio himself had set up the Catholic Center. The Apostleship of Prayer was founded by Señora Pastor, a pious and influential lady from Dumaguete, and Señora Forja Salazar, an aged Sibulan parishioner who was an ardent promoter of the Sacred Heart devotion. This lady was already ninety-one years old, yet she trekked on foot to several towns, enthusiastically spreading the Sacred Heart devotion and establishing the Apostleship of Prayer in those towns. She was an authentic great moving spirit that God had employed to be an effective means to put up or maintain those lay organizations.

The lay organizations wholeheartedly supported Fr. Llorente’s plan to assign sentinels or security guards at night. These

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 606.

were tasked to watch over the church edifices against arson attempts by anti-Catholic conspirators. Arising from the people's approval and vigilance, five or more persons daily stood as guards and exerted effort to carefully watch over the edifices. They did a lot of sacrifice to stay alert and on guard especially at night. Fr. Llorente himself defrayed the expenses of acquiring the extensive barbed wire and enclosing both church and convent edifices. In the end, the arsonist group abandoned their evil schemes.<sup>46</sup>

The Recollect historian Licinio Ruiz had only praises for his confrere whom he assisted in his pastoral ministry in Sibulan for three months in 1906 before proceeding to Valencia, Siaton, Bayawan and Bais. He was tasked in his trips by his superiors to assist his confreres and observe the post-revolutionary situations of those curacies. Later on, he wrote down his impressions in his travelogue:

Kudos to the people of Sibulan! A thousand congratulations for their zeal, for their love for their pastor who strives for them to live in peace because with their hearts in harmony and all of them being together as one and with everything done for God, they are the happiest of all the townspeople I have ever seen. Indeed, the truth is that Fr. Nemesio is an authentic father to them all because he is interested solely in their welfare.<sup>47</sup>

### **Selfless pastor of his flock**

Sibulan was not a wealthy town. Palay was almost their sole means of subsistence. The townspeople practically depended on their rice harvest. The farmers could not sow the seeds if fields were not tilled, if there were no carabaos to till them. There were seasons when residents suffered a lot from dearth or insufficiency of harvest. And many times Fr. Llorente had to shell out from his own measly savings and generously shared such alms with the neediest, the lowliest of townspeople. No wonder everybody in town so deeply loved their selfless Recollect parish priest, short of rendering to him adulation. In brief, the pastor worked hard to assist his flock in every aspect of life.

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 607.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 606-607.

One time Fr. Llorente even planned to acquire a machine or two from Manila in order to process right there in Sibulan the fiber from their local abaca or a similar indigenous plant named *pacol*. This particular project was solely aimed to assist the natives in their weaving livelihood. From a recent trip to Manila, he could not transport the requested machine to Negros, for lack of availability of machine parts arising from a misinterpretation by the manufacturing company of the designs of the machine invented by a friar. But he was able to transport the machines to Sibulan eventually.<sup>48</sup>

“This is what working for the people is all about,” declares Fr. Ruiz. Seldom does the Recollect chronicler heap praises on confreres, so we allow him to go on as he makes concluding remarks on Fr. Llorente:

This [Padre Nemesio Llorente] is the friar who always loved and cared for his people. Not only did he work hard for the moral uplift of his faithful, but also for their material welfare, whether by acquiring for them the means to earn their living or by working hand in hand with them and being the chief instrument in establishing peace among the people, that blessed peace from which every wellbeing springs forth and the greatness of races and nations emanates.<sup>49</sup>

### **Fr. Llorente's last years and demise in Manila**

In 1912, the Spanish missionary ended his term as parish priest of San Antonio de Padua in Sibulan and returned to the colonial capital. In 1914, he was named provincial councilor of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino. Fr. Llorente's new post required him at the provincial curia in San Nicolás Convent in Intramuros.<sup>50</sup>

In 1920, the 68-year-old religious was once more assigned as parish priest of Sibulan where he exercised his priestly ministry until 1924.<sup>51</sup> In 1931, he was appointed provincial councilor in Intramuros, Manila for the second time and resided once more at San Nicolás Convent.

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 607.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> AVELLANEDA, 459.

<sup>51</sup> *Miscelanea filipina*, in BPSN xiv 152 (February 1923) 129.

## Epilogue

On 20 October 1931, Padre Nemesio Llorente de San José was almost 79 years old when he went back to his Father in Heaven after receiving the last sacraments. He was a victim of cancer of the throat.<sup>52</sup> The restless pastor found rest at last in the Kingdom of God. His mortal remains were interred at the conventual cemetery of San Nicolás Convent in the Walled City of Manila.

As conclusion, once again we yield to our oft-quoted reliable source of information who was himself a contemporary witness of the historic events of post-revolutionary Negros and helped his confrere Fr. Llorente in the pastoral ministry at Sibulan. The historian Licinio Ruiz discloses to us the personal traits of the parish priest at the helm of San Antonio de Padua Parish, an encomium he seldom heaps on confreres. Fr Nemesio Llorente, the hardworking Augustinian Recollect pastor of Sibulan, had touched the lives of his beloved parishioners, and now Fr. Ruiz shares the following:

In this Augustinian Recollect religious, I have come to know a person of invaluable qualities: zealous, enterprising, unwaveringly dedicated solely to the moral and material wellbeing of his faithful he sincerely loved, and the people of Sibulan repaid him with their affection. Therefore, they fulfilled exactly the pledge they gave the visiting bishop with respect to the procurement of daily food provision for Fr. Nemesio.<sup>53</sup>

In truth, “*Amor con amor se paga*,” as aptly described by the Spanish adage, love is with love repaid. Yes, love begets love. Love is reciprocal. And if fortunate enough, it might be a debt of gratitude, profoundly embedded in a grateful people’s memory. That memory may be found in a tangible heritage: an iconic church bell with the engraved name of Fray Nemesio Llorente. So long as the church bell is tolled at the belfry, the remembrance is faithfully handed down to the next generation of an appreciative people because that age-old bell had tolled for their ancestors to hearken the call to worship the Lord God together inside His temple devoted to the Franciscan miracle-worker Saint Anthony of Padua.

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<sup>52</sup> AVELLANEDA, 459.

<sup>53</sup> RUIZ, *Correspondencia*, 606.



The unfading memory may also be a traditional, intangible heritage. That priceless heritage is the Christian Faith of the People of God in Sibulan, an intangible legacy to last for generations. Those seeds of Christian Faith were planted by pioneering missionaries of yore, nurtured by the diocesan pastors through the years, by the grateful Christian community of Sibulan and by God's selfless ministers, much like Padre Nemesio Llorente of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino of the Order of Augustinian Recollects.

## APPENDIX 1

### Timeline of Padre Nemesio Llorente, OAR

19 December 1852	Birth at Olite, Navarra, Spain
11 October 1870	Start of novitiate at Monteagudo Navarra
12 October 1871	Profession of monastic vows, Monteagudo
1871-1875	Study of theology at Marcilla, Navarra
6 October 1875	Departure of 9 missionaries at Barcelona
17 November 1875	Arrival of the missionaries in Manila
10 June 1876	Ordination to the Priesthood in Manila
26 April 1877	Studied Visayan Cebuano in Loay, Bohol
February 1878	Passed the language proficiency test
Aug. 1878-July 1879	Parish Priest, Blessed Trinity Parish of Loay
July 1879	Companion of Fr. Ramón Zueco at Saint Augustine Parish, Cagayan de Misamis
February 1882	Parish priest, Saint Augustine Parish of Bacong, Negros Island
25 July 1882	Parish priest, Tolong [Santa Catalina] Negros
July 1884	Parish priest, Cortes, Bohol (nine months)
1885-1886	Parish priest, Corella, Bohol (19 months)
26 Jan-25 June 1887	Last Recollect parish priest, Jasaan, Misamis
1887-1888	Parish priest, Blessed Trinity Parish, Talibon, Bohol
Aug. 1888-July 1892	Parish priest, San Francisco, Camotes, Cebu
December 1892-1897	Parish priest, Blessed Trinity Parish, Talibon

1897-1902	Procurator general, San Nicolás Convent
1902	Conventual at San Sebastian Convent
August 1904-1912	Parish priest, San Antonio de Padua Parish, Sibulan, Negros Oriental
1914	Provincial councilor at San Nicolás Convent
1920-1924	Parish priest of San Antonio de Padua Parish
1931	Provincial councilor at San Nicolás Convent
20 October 1831	Death at San Nicolás Convent, Manila

## APPENDIX 2

### Parish Statistics and Parish Priests of Sibulan, 1856-1935

Year	Tributes	Souls	Baptisms	Weddings	Deaths	Parish Priest or Minister
1857	873	4,149	133	35	44	Fr Tomas Mezquita
1861	1,058	4,129	196	61	111	Fr José Ma. Cabañas
1866	1,050½	4309	144	30	81	Fr Pedro Echevarría
1871	1,240½	4,490	207	25	65	Fr Pedro Echevarría
1877	1,222½	4,817	209	40	96	Fr Pedro Echevarría
1882	1,367½	5,844	278	47	186	Fr Pedro Echevarría
1891	3,197	5,686	195	55	210	Fr. Francisco Gómez
1894	3,282	6,359	263	61	144	Fr Manuel Clemente
1897	3,303	16,446	214	41	202	Fr Manuel Clemente
1935	No data	10,400	385	56	133	Fr. Antonio Armendáriz

**APPENDIX 3**

**Parish Priests and Parochial Vicars of San Antonio de Padua  
Parish, Sibulan, 1904 -1984**

Nemesio Llorente	1904-1912, 1920-1924
Alejandro Osés	1922-1923
Felix Alonso	1924-1928
Antonio Armendáriz	1928-1937
Francisco Frías	August–October 1930
José Cuesta	1930
José García	1932
José Lizárraga	1934-1937
Paulino Jiménez	1937-1941
Julian Arzanegui	June 1941-1948
Jesús González	1948
Alejandro Osés	1948-1949
José Lizárraga	December 1949-1950
Jesús González	1950-1951
Fermín Samanes	1951-1961
Alberto Abaigar	1952
Julian Arzanegui	June 1953-54
Clemente Jubera	1954
Felix Ortubia	1954-1956
Pedro Ko	1958-1959
Máximo López	1961-1971
Eusebio Zabaleta	1962-1970
Melchor Dano	1970-71
Herminio Álvarez	1971-1979
José María Martínez	1971-1979
Enrico Silab	1979-1981
José María Martínez	1981-1984

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## Padre Manuel Gómara, Builder of San Carlos Borromeo Cathedral

The first house of God in San Carlos was made of the usual light materials, *i.e.*, nipa and bamboo. We do not know exactly when and where was it built. But we know for certain that this primitive chapel was destroyed by a strong typhoon in 1863. We have no news if another chapel was erected thereafter. The Spanish Robustiano Echáuz, author of *Apuntes de la Isla de Negros* [Sketches of Negros Island] published in 1894, confirms the fact that the first resident curate of San Carlos, Padre Pedro Chivite, had built a solid but simple church during his term in 1891-1892.

### **A predecessor Leoncio Reta lays the cornerstone**

On 1 June 1925, the young Padre Leoncio U. Reta (1893-1966), future prior provincial of San Nicholas province and prior general of the Augustinian Recollect Order, took over San Carlos parish from Padre Eusebio R. Valderrama. Born to José María Reta and Claudia Unzué, Padre Leoncio saw the light of day on 20 March 1893 at San Martín de Unx, Navarre. He entered the Recollect Order at its priory of Monteagudo and professed his temporal vows in 1909.



After his sacerdotal ordination in April 1916 at Marcilla, he set sail for Manila in September of that year.

The twenty-four-year-old Recollect friar's first pastoral responsibility was San Carlos, for which he received his *patente* as assistant priest on 6 May 1917. Under Padre Francisco E. Echanojáuregui, curate since May 1909, he studied the Cebuano language. On 11 November 1917, Padre Leoncio was named parish curate of Lemery. At this curacy he exercised his ministry until 31 July 1921. On 3 August he took over the parochial reins of what is now known as Old Escalante.<sup>1</sup>

### Blueprint for the future cathedral

The sturdy house of God erected by Padre Pedro Chivite had to give way to the present cathedral. Padre Leoncio Reta began the construction of the future magnificent cathedral, "one of the most beautiful and strongest churches in the Philippines," observed a Recollect chronicler then. It had a hefty budget proposal of P80,000.00. <sup>2</sup>Padre Leoncio, however, could not bring it to completion because in May 1928 he had to leave the parish for a very important foreign assignment. At the provincial chapter of that year, he was elected vice superior of their theology house at Marcilla, Navarre. He left for Spain to join the formation team. In subsequent years, Padre Leoncio would return several times to San Carlos for his canonical visits, first as vicar provincial (1931-1934), then as prior provincial (1934-1938) and later as prior general (1938-1944).

### Calatrava, barrio of San Carlos

Since July 1921, Father Manuel Señorís Gómara de la Virgen del Carmen (1895-1979), who succeeded Padre Leoncio in 1928 at San Carlos, had been parish priest of Lemery. As such, he also

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<sup>1</sup> AVELLANEDA, *Continuación del P. Sádaba or segunda parte del "Catálogo de los religiosos de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos de Filipinas" desde 1906 hasta 1936* (Roma 1938) 70, 574-576; Manuel GÓMARA, *Correspondencia de las misiones y ministerios. De Lémer y (Negros Occidental)*, in BPSN 12 (1921) 586.

<sup>2</sup> Ricardo JARAUTA, *Album de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* (Zaragoza 1931) 52.



served the pastoral needs of Calatrava and Toboso for seven years.<sup>3</sup> When Calatrava regained—after two decades—its municipality status on 1 January 1924, he moved from Barrio Lemery to the newly elevated town that year.

His transfer to Calatrava was primarily aimed to check the prevailing influence of Aglipayanism that struck deep roots there in the turbulent days of the Philippine Revolution. Calatrava had been reduced to a mere barrio of San Carlos on 2 April 1902 after the reorganization of Negros Occidental province that downgraded twelve other less prosperous towns.<sup>4</sup>

### **Manuel S. Gómara, OAR**

Calatrava's loss was San Carlos' great gain when the thirty-three-year-old master church builder Father Manuel S. Gómara was transferred to the very progressive town, fifteen kilometers south. *Padre Manuel*—a name old folks would fondly remember him by—was born at Cascante, Navarre, Spain, on 3 May 1895, the same year San Carlos was founded as parish. In October 1911, joined the Recollect Order at Monteagudo, Navarre. Soon after finishing his philosophical and theological studies in Spain, he was sent to Manila where Archbishop Michael O'Doherty raised him to the dignity of holy priesthood on 20 December 1919. In May 1920, the parishioners of Bacolod welcomed the very young Recollect as assistant priest.

### **Curate of Lemery**

Padre Manuel Gómara received his *patente* as curate of Lemery in early July 1921. But he had to delay his departure until 12 July when he bade good-bye to his parishioners. His parish priest had no companion at the provincial capital. It took Padre Manuel three days to reach San Carlos by sailboat with the usual stopovers along coastal settlements. He did not find Padre Eusebio Valderrama in San Carlos. The parish priest had been invited to Cebu City for the solemn novena in honor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Padre

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<sup>3</sup> AVELLANEDA, 157.

<sup>4</sup> Modesto P. SA-ONAY, *A History of Negros Occidental* (Bacolod City 1994) 145.

Leoncio Reta, outgoing curate of Lemery, was in town possibly in order to temporarily substitute the parish priest.

After some days of waiting for favorable north winds, the three Recollects set sail northward and arrived at Lemery on 26 July. Padre Manuel took possession of his new curacy on the 29th. The next day Padre Eusebio repaired to San Carlos. That same day Padre Manuel accompanied Padre Leoncio in a banca to his new parochial assignment in Escalante. On his way back, Padre Manuel had to hike all the way to Toboso on 5 August. Now a mere visita, Toboso was also under his spiritual jurisdiction. As there were several unbaptized young children in Toboso, Padre Manuel was constrained to stay for three days. A total of 91 children were welcomed to the Christian world.<sup>5</sup>

### **Lack of churches and rectories**

In a letter to the provincial dated 10 August 1921 and mailed from Lemery, Padre Manuel discloses the sorry state of the churches and rectories of his jurisdiction:

Where am I going to live? I do not know what to say. The church of Toboso is almost wrecked, and there is no convento. And on top of it, the town council maintains that the lot where the church stands is owned by the municipality. In Calatrava, the convento is unfit for human habitation. And there is no church. The municipality claims ownership of the parcels of church land. In this [Lemery] parish there is neither church nor land nor convento which deserves to be called so. Moreover, among his last endeavors, Padre Leoncio had acquired the donation of a parcel of land. And the people seem willing to lend me a helping hand. I will see if I can build a small church and a convento which shall be somewhat more decent than the present one.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, a house of worship and a rectory in this parish were among the early achievements of the young Padre Manuel, about

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<sup>5</sup> GÓMARA, 585-586.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 586.

two years after his priestly ordination. He would do the same for Calatrava and San Carlos in the coming years.

### **Various assignments and legacies**

After seven years in Lemery and Calatrava, the thirty-three-year-old Padre Manuel was assigned to San Carlos in 1928. Here he remained eight years until 1936. And here he returned again as parish priest twice: 1937-1940 and 1949-1951. In 1941, he finished the construction of the Recollect school for boys in San Carlos—Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute. After his appointments in the Order as provincial councilor (1938-1944), as superior of mission, vicar forane and diocesan consultor of Bacolod diocese (1938-1943), or as prior of San Nicolás convent at Intramuros (1944-1946), provincial procurator (1945-1946), he would always retrace his steps to his beloved San Carlos where he had spent thirteen years of his life as parish curate.<sup>7</sup>

The 1950s found him as a school administrator of Colegio de Santo Tomas. In the 1960s, he was the seminary procurator and a confessor of the young seminarians. The well-loved Padre Manuel's last years were spent with the big religious community of Colegio San Agustín in Valladolid, Spain. He was noted for his wittiness, congeniality, dedication to prayer and love for things of the Order. Padre Manuel died of lung cancer on 4 September 1979, the solemn feast of Our Lady of Consolation. He was 84.

Padre Manuel continued the construction of the future cathedral—the Augustinian Recollect Order's enduring legacy to the Catholic Church of San Carlos City. The indefatigable minister was definitely no stranger to church construction projects. With pecuniary support given by the affluent and munificent Menchaca family, he went on to build the actual convento of Calatrava.<sup>8</sup>

The Navarrese missionary—small in stature but a virtual dynamo—commenced the construction of the present church of Calatrava with the able assistance of his equally energetic confrere Padre Facundo C. Valgañón de la Virgen del Carmen (1891-1975). Padre Manuel could not finish the ornate façade of this church because in 1928 he was promoted to the adjoining prosperous parish of San Carlos.

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<sup>7</sup> AVELLANEDA, 157.

### **The future cathedral**

The cherished dream and “ardent desire of the Recollect curates had always been to erect a temple worthy of the people of San Carlos.” In 1925, its population had reached 30,000. Evidently, there was a pressing need for a more spacious church to meet the needs of the growing population.

Archivist-historian Father Rafael M. García (1911-1977), who served as Padre Manuel’s assistant, described it in 1935 as “a modern and elegant church that shall speak highly of our missionaries.” “Tomorrow,” Father García presages, “it shall be another landmark that shall make known our sojourn in this place.”

Indeed, as long as it stands there loftily in the heart of the city, it shall be until the end of time a silent but eloquent witness to the zealous apostolic ministry of the Augustinian Recollect curates at San Carlos parish.<sup>9</sup> It is a endless testimonial to the sincere love and undivided service of the Order’s missionaries for parishioners then, today and for the coming generations.

### **Construction suspended**

The realization of such a gigantic project was not without its concomitant economic problems and hardships. Moreover, the Recollect parish priest in due time weathered all these grave crises in order to successfully erect, according to Father Rafael García, “a temple that shall greatly honor the Church and the Order.”

In 1928, economic constraints forced the suspension of the construction.<sup>8</sup> The concrete groundwork of the new temple had already been laid in place during Padre Leoncio Reta’s pastorate. His successor continued the church project. A few meters of the concrete reinforced lateral walls were erected. But funds unfortunately

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<sup>8</sup> *Interviews with Salvacion Natividad Mondragon vda. de Buya*, 27 August, 6 September 1995, Ermita, Manila. The 84-year-old widow told this writer it was the talk of the town then that many building materials were pilfered by the construction workers themselves. The loss of tools, wood, cement, iron bars and other materials, which was ultimately discovered, caused the delay of the construction. When the church project was resumed, Mrs. Leonor V. Larlar said in a personal interview, Padre Manuel himself had hired a new group of workers headed by Adriano L. Valderrama. Furthermore, he had to strictly check the delivery of materials and the inventory of tools.

fell short. The parish coffers were cash-strapped. After the usual consultations and deliberations, it was unanimously decided to discard the exceedingly expensive blueprint of the church which was originally priced at P80,000.00. Consequently, the imposing dome of the first plan—a typical feature of Romanesque temples, which could have certainly made it at par with the great churches in the Philippines—was scrapped.

### **Parish rectory**

Meanwhile, true to his dynamic nature, Padre Manuel did not remain idle. He went ahead with the plan to put up a sturdy two-story convento.<sup>9</sup> This huge edifice was wholly made of wood. It had concrete foundations, though. Obviously, such a less costly undertaking was finished beforehand and immediately inaugurated. Unfortunately, in 1967, the entire building was gutted by fire caused by the explosion of a kerosene-run refrigerator in the kitchen. The responding firefighters and the heavy downpour failed to snuff out the conflagration that literally turned the whole edifice to ashes in no time. Providentially, parochial registries and hundreds of other vital documents were saved from Padre Manuel's ill-fated rectory.

### **Don Julio to the rescue**

The severe financial crisis that gripped the parish was finally over in 1935. By then, architect Angel Locsin Yulo of Bacolod had approved the new blueprints drawn up by a certain Dr. Cereceda. The innate generosity of the people of San Carlos came into the fore. The needed sum of P12,000.00 was finally raised.

Don Julio Ledesma, who owned the vast Hacienda Fortuna south of the locality, pledged to shoulder all the expenditures that would exceed the projected P12,000.00 target collection. The philanthropic Don Julio eventually contributed the hefty amount of P20,000.00. Carpenters, masons and other construction workers

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<sup>9</sup> Rafael GARCÍA, *Inauguración de la nueva iglesia de San Carlos*, in BPSN 27 (1936) 80.

were pulled out from Hacienda Fortuna and were ably supervised by Adriano L. Valderrama.<sup>10</sup>

### **Landed families extended help**

Padre Manuel counted on the beneficence of the landed gentry of the town and friends of the Recollect priests. These were Don Roberto Llantada, the Menchacas, the Gamboas, the Broces and other families of Spanish descent, who were always there to lend a helping hand whenever their local church needed financial assistance. The lowly but munificent parishioners likewise pitched in and helped with money and whatever they had in the measure of their capacity to give just to see the fulfillment of a dream they had treasured for a long time.

### **Construction resumed**

With the local hacenderos' financial assistance and the parishioners' all-out support, Padre Manuel proceeded with the much-delayed work at an astonishing speed. Construction resumed in May 1935. The pace of the work was frenzied. It was further decided to fix the inauguration date of the new church on 4 November. This was feast day of the patron saint of both parish and town, Cardinal Archbishop Charles Borromeo, fondly invoked as *Señor San Carlos* by parishioners and devotees. The town executives, hacenderos and church authorities then resolved to have the future cathedral solemnly blest during the patronal feast on 4 November 1935.

The old house of divine worship built by Padre Pedro Chivite had earlier been demolished because its salvageable materials were utilized in the construction of the future cathedral. As a result, daily masses were celebrated for several months at the ground floor of the rectory. Baptisms, marriage rituals and funeral rites likewise took place at the convento-*cum*-church. Indeed, the interim house of God was just too small for the pastoral needs of over 60,000 parishioners.

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<sup>10</sup> *Interview with Leonor Valderrama vda. de Larlar*, San Carlos City, 31 October 1995. The 70-year-old Tiyá Leonor disclosed that Padre Manuel oftentimes invited the construction foreman for lunch at the rectory and discussed the progress of the church project. She used to tag along with her father on these occasions.

This was the more urgent reason for the immediate inauguration of the new temple. When the momentous inaugural event came in November, the future cathedral could not be painted, although the construction of the church was finished in the nick of time.

### **Salient features**

The church is fifty-one meters long and twenty-two meters wide. Because its structure is wholly made of concrete, including the choir loft, the old main altar, two lateral ones and their retables, the new place of worship could definitely withstand the elements of nature. Its roof is galvanized iron. Two small perpendicular naves form the arms of a Latin cross which is how it looks from the sky. Three huge front portals and an equally large door on each side provide easy access to the church.

The oversized glass windows on both sides generously let in sunlight and air for a natural lighting and ventilation. The church's red roof and spires and flesh-colored outer walls fairly underscore its elegance and dazzle under the summer sun. Fully in accord with the express wishes of its builder and project manager Padre Manuel S. Gómara, the temple of God manifests a perfect blend of two architectural styles: Gothic and Byzantine.

### **The preparations**

A month before inauguration, Padre Manuel convoked the hacenderos and town leaders to a meeting at the convento. It was agreed that the occasion was to be celebrated with all solemnity "for the satisfaction of the hacenderos who had heeded our call with such distinction."

Several committees were organized. Everyone further agreed that no less than the archbishop of Cebu, Msgr. Gabriel M. Reyes (1892-1952), would be invited to bless and inaugurate the divine temple. Bishop Casimiro M. Lladoc of Bacolod would act as ecclesiastical sponsor. The organizing committee saw to it that the momentous event was the crowning glory of the colossal work that Padre Leoncio had begun and Padre Manuel and his generous collaborators had brought to a happy end. Everyone's enthusiasm

was understandably beyond description. Luster and pomp therefore were to embellish the festive celebration.

### **Archbishop G. Reyes arrives**

A well-attended novena in honor of *Señor San Carlos* set the tone of the religious festivity. A total of fifty-five secular and religious priests, sixty students of San Vicente Ferrer Seminary in Jaro, six seminarians from Cebu and Monsignors Castro and Capalla, vicars general of the dioceses of Bacolod and Jaro, respectively, arrived for the inauguration of the future cathedral.

On 2 November, the Kalibo-born Archbishop Gabriel M. Reyes was fetched from Cebu by a welcome committee led by Msgr. Castro, Msgr. Capalla, Father Joaquín González, OAR, curate of Calatrava, and Don Andrés Menchaca. The next day, hundreds of parishioners trooped to the town port to give a rousing welcome to the guest of honor who debarked at 11:00 a.m. from the Toledo-San Carlos ferry. Lovely *colegialas* of Colegio de Santa Rita and young ladies of the locality offered garlands to the first Filipino archbishop and his entourage. Don Julio Ledesma then invited the famished guests to a sumptuous lunch at his Hacienda Fortuna.

### **Church blessing and inauguration**

The formal blessing was set at 4:00 p.m. No sooner had the church opened its portals when the enthusiastic congregation rushed in to fill it to the rafters in an instant. The blessing went on smoothly. In a most solemn procession, the Blessed Sacrament was transferred to the tabernacle of the new house of worship. Shortly afterward, the guest of honor Archbishop Gabriel M. Reyes addressed the engrossed faithful inside the full-packed church. The Cebu prelate, who would become the first Filipino archbishop of Manila in 1949, expressed his profound gratitude to the local civil and ecclesiastical authorities for inviting him to grace the momentous affair. The archbishop further congratulated the Recollect priests and parishioners of San Carlos everyone for “the beautiful and new temple they had erected for the glory of God.”

Following the blessing rites, paying patrons then proceeded, as nightfall set in, to the adjacent Colegio de Santa Rita for a concert



conducted by Dr. Kilayko. Miss Angeles Gayoso regaled the audience with various arias by Verdi, Mozart, Bellini and others. The evening concert was part of the fund-raising project for the unpainted concrete church.

A history-conscious archivist Father Rafael García describes for posterity the significant events of 4 November 1935:

On the 4th, masses were said on five improvised altars since five in the morning. The mass with the general communion was also celebrated. At 8:00 a.m., the archbishop began the pontifical mass with the assistance of the Vincentian fathers, secular clergy and some of our religious. The Ravello Mass was sung by the Jaro seminarians, with the accompaniment of Doctor Kilayko's orchestra.

Father Marcelo Santafé, vice prior of the convent of Manila, who delivered a sermon—in Spanish and Visayan—replete with religious embellishment and majestic eloquence, spoke to them about the material and the spiritual temples, weaving beautiful reflections on the theme.

A hymn specially composed for the festive occasion by Father Domingo Carceller was sung during the mass. It was chanted anew during the evening procession that took place at 6:00. This was attended by a great multitude.<sup>11</sup>

At the banquet that immediately followed at noon, eminent hacienda administrator Don Roberto Llantada delivered a stirring speech on the great significance of the occasion. Archbishop Reyes, Bishop Lladoc, Cebu Congressman Miguel Cuenco, Father Santiago G. Vilda, OAR, and other civil and church dignitaries took turns in addressing the joyous prandial gathering. They all had high praises for Padre Manuel's latest church-building feat. They further extolled the usual prompt munificence of Don Julio Ledesma and the local hacenderos as well as the San Carlos parishioners' all-out support and generous contributions to the tremendous undertaking.

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<sup>11</sup> Rafael GARCÍA, *Inauguración*, in BPSN 27 (1936) 81-82.

The future provincial archivist-chronicler ends his rather lengthy but highly informative account with a fitting prayer imploring divine blessing for the benefactors of the local church: “May the Lord profusely reward all those who have helped us erect for Him this temple that shall serve for His greatest honor and glory.”

# Bishop Gregorio Espiga: Apostolic Prefect (1953-1955), Apostolic Vicar of Palawan (1955-1987)

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Renier I. Alviola, OAR

## Prologue

In the town of Santo Domingo de la Calzada in La Rioja, Spain, Gregorio Espiga and María Infante bore a child Gregorio, named after the father himself, on 20 September 1912.<sup>1</sup> He entered the Augustinian Recollect minor seminary in Lodosa, Navarra in 1920. In 1928, he commenced his novitiate at the convent of Monteagudo, Navarra where he pronounced his simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience a year after, on 12 September 1929. He began his philosophy likewise at the same Monteagudo convent. Then he went to their convent at San Millán de la Cogolla for his theological studies.

In March 1931, Fray Gregorio Espiga traveled to the United States of America to continue his studies at the Benedictine Abbey of Atchison, Kansas. In August 1932, he moved to the Recollect convent of Ivybridge in Devon, England. He made his solemn profession of the vows on 30 May 1935 in Plymouth, England.<sup>2</sup> He was ordained as priest on 28 July 1935 by Plymouth Bishop John Patrick Barrett

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<sup>1</sup> German CHICOTE, *The Augustinian Recollects in Asia* (Quezon City 1992) 82.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

(1878-1946).<sup>3</sup> On 31 August 1935, he embarked on a steamship in Barcelona and headed for the Philippines. He arrived in Manila in October of the same year. From 1935 to 1937, he resided at San Sebastian Convent in Manila. In 1937, he was assigned as assistant parish priest of San Carlos Borromeo Parish in Negros Occidental. Thereafter, he was parish priest of Brooke's Point in Palawan in 1939. Two years after, he was back in San Carlos as school administrator of Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute which closed its portals in December 1941 at the outbreak of World War II. Thereafter, he administered San Carlos parish, crossing the rivers and climbing the mountains of Negros, regularly visiting guerrilla hideouts, refugee camps, upland dwellers and dispensing the Sacraments to them.<sup>4</sup> Thus he came to be known as *Guerrilla Padre*. For his pastoral efforts during the war, the grateful town council declared him as *Adopted Son of San Carlos* on 9 February 1952. He was rector of San Sebastian College in Manila in 1945-1946. Then he was appointed rector of Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos in 1946-1952. He was elected provincial secretary of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino Province in the provincial chapter in May 1952 and resided in Zaragoza, Spain. However, his triennial office was cut short.

### Apostolic Prefect (1953-1955)

On 4 October 1953, Fray Gregorio Espiga e Infante became the fourth Apostolic Prefect of Palawan upon the resignation of Msgr. Leandro Nieto (1893-1960) due to poor health. At 6:30 in the evening the bells rang and the priests started the procession towards the altar of the church in Puerto Princesa. Leandro Nieto and Espiga, together with the other priests were seated in their designated places: Msgr. Espiga near the altar, facing the people; Msgr. Nieto at the main chair, Msgr. Poledrini, secretary of the Nunciature and the other priests. Poledrini carried



**Bishop Gregorio Espiga  
(1912-1997)**

<sup>3</sup> *Necrologium*, in *Acta Ordinis OAR* 32 (1997) 193.

<sup>4</sup> *Hablan nuestros misioneros*, in *BPSN* 36 (1946) 228-233.

the appointment papers. He read on behalf of the apostolic nuncio the decree of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide in Latin, English and Cuyunin.

Fray Federico Terradillos gave the decree to Msgr. Espiga, to the resigned Msgr. Nieto and to the faithful concerned. Then the priests of the Apostolic Prefecture rendered obedience to Msgr. Espiga. A solemn Mass followed, whose main celebrant was the new apostolic prefect, assisted by Fray José Gurrea, rector of the San Jose Seminary in Puerto Princesa and Fray Alfred Rennix. At the choir students of the Holy Trinity College interpreted the *Cor Jesu Sacratissimum* hymn under the direction of the composer himself Domingo Carceller. At the end of the liturgical services, the priests and the faithful kissed the new prefect's pastoral ring.

### **Calling for a Marian Celebration**

A year after, it was so timely that 1954 marked the first centenary of the proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary—patroness of the cathedral. Apostolic Prefect Msgr. Espiga called his priests, religious sisters and the faithful of the Apostolic Prefecture to join the Universal Church in the celebration of the *Marian Year* declared by Pope Pius XII. To ensure the best celebration of the Marian Year, he urged the following: sermons preached by the Redemptorist priests, promotion of Marian devotions in parishes and Catholic schools, reviving in all mission centers the Association of the Children of Mary, promotion of the Sacraments of Penance, the Holy Eucharist and the First Holy Communion. The Holy year ended with a solemn Mass on 8 December 1955, feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Msgr. Espiga wasted no time after his appointment as the apostolic prefect. He was not even bothered by the difficulties and risks that the vast Prefecture posed. Varied difficulties beset Msgr. Espiga's episcopal duties. But the most challenging plight in the missions in Palawan was the distance between the parishes of the mainland and adjoining islands. All the more, the authentic missionary spirit of Msgr. Espiga came to the fore. As the author of the article tells us: The feverish hour of travel challenged Msgr. Espiga's true missionary spirit in this trip and thereafter he was bedridden for a whole month when he lay low in 1954 on account of

dysentery from his trip to Bugsuk island to visit some forty Catholic families in the interior.<sup>5</sup>

### **Apostolic Vicar (1955-1987)**

On 3 July 1955, Pope Pius XII raised the Prefecture to the rank of Apostolic Vicariate. Through the papal bull *Ad Christi Regnum* (Towards the Reign of Christ), Msgr. Espiga was named the first Apostolic Vicar of Palawan with episcopal character and the titular see of Aphnaeum. Espiga's episcopal ordination was officiated by Cardinal Rufino J. Santos, Archbishop of Manila, assisted by Bishop Manuel Yap of Bacolod, and Bishop Peregrin de la Fuente of Batanes-Babuyan on 10 September 1955 at San Sebastian Basilica in Manila.<sup>6</sup> Cardinal Santos installed him at Puerto Princesa on 18 September 1955.

All were exceedingly happy and the Recollects lifted their praises to God for after three centuries of sacrifices, of evangelization and of apostolic desires finally their labor had been acknowledged and crowned with glory, as their mission territory was elevated to the level of Apostolic Vicariate and its head was raised to the rank of bishop.<sup>7</sup>

### **Episcopal Coat-of-Arms of Bishop Espiga**

The coat-of-arms of Bishop Espiga has four quarters. The first quarter, upper dexter side, is the silver crescent between two long-stemmed white lilies on a blue background represents the Immaculate Conception, patroness of the cathedral; the long-stemmed lilies stand for Saint Joseph, patron saint of the Apostolic Vicariate.

The lower quarter, dexter side, is the steep-cliff islands on a red background representing Palawan with its innumerable isolated islands, where hard work and great zeal were exerted in order to convert its inhabitants into Christianity. The fortress means the chain

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<sup>5</sup> Augusto H. PIEDAD., *Palawan Frontier Land, Presents Grim Struggle for Mission Workers. The Sentinel* (8 January 1955) 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Escudo de armas de Monseñor Gregorio Espiga Infante, Vicario Apostólico de Palawan*, in BPSN 45 (1955) 335.

<sup>7</sup> *El Excmo. y Rvdmo. Mons. Fray Gregorio Espiga e Infante es consagrado Obispo en Manila (Filipinas)*, in BPSN 45 (1955) 328.

of *cotas* or defenses built up by the Augustinian Recollect fathers to defend their faithful against Moro incursions, so frequent in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Swallows are seen flying toward the rocks, representing the edible nests produced by these birds, which are a delicacy in the Orient.<sup>8</sup>

The upper quarter, sinister side, silver in color, is a six-pointed flaming star, iconic symbol of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, patron saint of his religious province. The leather cincture is, according to the holy tradition, a gift given by Our Lady of Consolation to Saint Augustine and Saint Monica. And Our Lady of Consolation is the personal patroness of Msgr. Espiga with his religious appellation during his profession.

His own town and its patron saint are so significant to Bishop Espiga that in his coat-of-arms as Apostolic Vicar of Palawan, he took some parts from the coat-of-arms of his town and add them to his own. The lower quarter, sinister side, is dedicated to his beloved hometown. The evergreen oak with a sickle, the rooster and the hen on a greensward, and silver background, constitute the coat-of-arms of the city of Santo Domingo de la Calzada. Saint Dominic constructed a bridge, a hospital and a road leading to Santiago de Compostela, hence the sickle on the evergreen oak (Saint Dominic used a sickle), which was buried with him when he died, to cut the wood and clear a road. The rooster and the hen remind us of a miracle which took place in order to make manifest the truthfulness of Saint Dominic and the innocence of a certain pilgrim.<sup>9</sup> The pilgrim was falsely accused of stealing a silver cup; hence the coat-of-arms has a silver background. The pilgrim was sentenced to be hanged. His parents appealed to the judge to release their innocent son who was still alive – ever since they had left, a noble man held his feet so that no harm would come to him. But the judge would only believe that their son was still alive if the roasted birds crowed. At that very moment, the hen and rooster jumped out of the pan and started crowing.

At the base, the three ears of wheat with a green background stood for his family name *Espiga* [Spanish for *ear of wheat*], and represented the souls anxiously waiting for the Lord to come. The oblong shape in the center and pervading all other quarters encloses

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<sup>8</sup> *Escudo de armas de Monseñor Gregorio Espiga Infante, Vicario Apostólico de Palawan*, in BPSN 45 (1955) 333.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 334.

a red flaming heart, transfixed by a golden arrow, and a book, all on blue field. This is the coat-of-arms of the Order of the Recollects of Saint Augustine (pre-Vatican II Order of Augustinian Recollects), to which the Apostolic Prefecture and later the Vicariate was entrusted. Bishop Espiga belonged to this Order. The red heart aflame of Saint Augustine of Hippo, Father and Doctor of the Church, wounded by divine love, who said: *Fecisti nos ad Te, Domine, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in Te*: Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless till it rests in Thee.

*Da mihi animas* – give me souls – was the motto of Bishop Espiga who zealously served the Church of Palawan for the next thirty-two years. He was inspired by Saint Augustine who wrote: *Da mihi animas, caetera autem tolle*—give me souls, take away everything else.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Flying Bishop**

Bishop Espiga, the *Guerilla Padre* of San Carlos would thereafter be known as *Palawan's Flying Bishop*. In the *National Catholic News Weekly-Sentinel*, Norberto P. Camacho describes Msgr. Espiga as the *Flying Bishop* because in his desire to reach out to his flock everywhere in the vast Palawan archipelago at all cost in the quickest possible time, “he chartered a private pontoon plane to take him to places which may take days or weeks to reach on foot or by boats. By any way means of transport, he visits his remote missions by plane, by boat, and on foot and if it is really necessary, weather may allow or not, he negotiates lonely trails on foot, on horseback or on native sleds to reach lonely Catholic outposts.”

### **Second Vatican Council father**

On 11 October 1962, Bishop Gregorio Espiga attended the opening session in Rome together with over 2,000 conciliar fathers, including bishops, heads of religious Orders and *periti* (Latin for *experts*). The historic gathering was the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council convoked by Pope John XXIII and continued after his death by his successor Pope Paul VI. Nine Augustinian Recollects were summoned to join the Council, namely: Prior General Angel Almárcegui and the five bishops—Francisco Javier Ochoa, Gregorio

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.



Alonso, Arturo Quintanilla, José Alvarez and Gregorio Espiga. Msgr. Florentino Armas, Apostolic Prefect of Chota, Peru. Fray Jenaro Fernández, a canonist and Council *peritus*, joined the group. Bishop Nicasio Balisa, Apostolic Vicar of Casanare in Colombia, could not come to Rome due to poor health. Bishop Martín Legarra of Bocas del Toro in Panama attended the last two council sessions in 1964-1965. Bishop Espiga was a council father in 1962-1964.

### **Paternal affection for children**

Although he was so busy with pastoral works in Palawan, Bishop Espiga found himself at play with the little ones. He simply appreciated the young children. He approached the children anywhere, rich and poor alike, distributing candies. Bishop Espiga loved children so much so that every time he went to a place he took bags of candies and coins for the children. These made him more popular in the whole Apostolic Vicariate. Parents brought their children closer to the bishop to ask not only for spiritual blessings but also for little things that could make their little ones happy.

In a personal interview in Puerto Princesa City in 2007, Elpidio Macasait, the bishop's assistant in his travels, admitted that he felt so happy to help bring bags of coins and candies to be distributed to children in those distant places they visited. Bishop Espiga usually visited the remote places during the fiesta of its parish. The people of the place knew that when Bishop Espiga visited them he brought with him coins and candies for the children.

### **Vietnamese refugees in Palawan**

The Vietnamese immigrants began arriving in the Philippines after the fall of South Vietnam at the hands of the Communist regime of North Vietnam in 1975. They were called the *Boat People* because they reached Palawan on boats. When they arrived in the country, initially they were not given any attention at all because the government did not know what to do with them. The *Boat People* landed in many places in Palawan and they were all conducted to Puerto Princesa. Fr. Bangcaya describes the refugees: "They really looked dirty, having just left the port and nobody knew what to do. Furthermore, they could not speak any language that Palawenses could understand."

Bishop Espiga was the first to accept the Vietnamese refugees and he took them to his residence. He provided them with food and shelter. They were also assured of his protection inside the bishop's compound. There they washed their clothes and built shanties. The bishop accepted them as human beings as they had fled their own country where they were treated inhumanely.

The local institutions and residents later viewed how the bishop took care of the Boat People and began donating food, clothes, medicines and other supplies for their basic needs. Eventually, the Philippine Government and the United Nations Organization through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) put up a camp in Palawan to process the genuine refugees for resettlement and screen out those unqualified for refugee status. UNHCR helped the Philippines assume its responsibilities under the 1951 Refugee Convention and pursue naturalization and permanent residence as lasting solutions for a number of urban refugees. It provided them with legal advice and financial assistance.

### **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of episcopal consecration**

On 10 August 1980, Pope John Paul II wrote Bishop Espiga a letter to greet him as he was to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his episcopal office. The Holy Father addressed him as a venerable brother and wished him the best wishes and joyous spirit that manifested itself all the more fully on the anniversary through the joy that rightly belonged to him.

A month later, on 10 September 1980, Bishop Espiga celebrated the silver jubilee of his episcopal consecration with a solemn Mass at San Sebastian Basilica in Manila on the feast of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino. The Thanksgiving Mass was presided by the Archbishop of Manila Cardinal Jaime Sin. The Eucharistic Sacrifice was concelebrated by the Palawan clergy and Recollect confreres from all over the Philippines. Pastor Paloma, prior of the Recollect seminary in Baguio City, acted as the master of ceremonies. Bishop Espiga's secretary and vicar general, Federico de la Rosa, delivered a lengthy sermon that highlighted Palawan's glorious past and the Recollect bishop's major contributions to the Apostolic Vicariate of Palawan.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Federico DE LA ROSA, *Palawan's Glorious Past* [Sermon during the Silver Jubilee of the Episcopal Consecration of Most Rev. Gregorio Espiga] Manila 1980.

### Human Frailties

Bishop Espiga was not a perfect human being: he had likewise his share of human frailties and errors and made mistakes, but they were minimal, not recognizable nor discouraging. Fr. Bangcaya observed that the bishop also lacked a bit of organization, like in his schedules. Anybody could arrange appointments with him to the point that there were conflicting schedules. He usually delegated to other people especially to the priests around him. He was not so hands-on about the happenings in the vicariate. His secretary Fr. Federico de la Rosa almost wielded the authority in the vicariate because he was tolerated by Bishop Espiga to do so on several occasions.

Bangcaya added in the interview in 2008: “His liturgy that time was not impressive, not very good. Because again he does not really get involved as a person. Bishop Espiga would just say: ‘Ah yes, you are the parish priest, you do the celebration as you wish,’ or ‘I have here the chancellor, consult him; the secretary who will do it for me’.” In that sense, Bangcaya felt that Bishop Espiga did not do his part well in the liturgy. The Recollect confrere further added that in the liturgy that he was supposed to preside was a moment when he could really enhance the faith of the people.

Fr. Hermenigildo Larang, in a personal interview conducted in 2007 at Bahay Pari, Puerto Princesa City, had a different experience, however. The secular priest had stayed in Agutaya for sixteen years without interruption. He thought that every six years there should be a reshuffle. If there had been any at all, he had not experienced it. But when he was asked by the researcher if he was hurt with the bishop because he was not included in the reshuffle, he replied: “For me, it is fine because the battleground for me is in Agutaya. Why should I look for somewhere else when all are just the same? If I go to other parishes, it is just the same.” Larang explained that “the people demanded that I have to stay.” Maybe the bishop could not compromise the demand of the people of Agutaya, who wished their parish priest to stay longer. Larang was not hurt if he was not transferred to another parish; he was just confused why he was not included in the reshuffle.

Another problem, according to Fr. Larang, was that Bishop Espiga “was so confident, fully confident with his secretary Fr.

[Federico] de la Rosa, everything was done by him and the bishop simply signed it. And sometimes maybe he approved anything without deliberation.” Larang added: “He was manipulated by Fr. De la Rosa who acted more like a bishop than the bishop who allowed himself to be manipulated also.”

Bishop Espiga was not a person who read so much. Fr. Bangcaya noted that he was not that really a wide reader. He read very little. He focused his attention on his apostolic work with the people.

### **Bishop Espiga Resigns**

Fr. Bangcaya discussed how Bishop Espiga left his beloved Palawan. It was in 1987 when the Recollect Vicar Provincial Germán Chicote together with a representative of the nuncio told him that he was sickly and had to submit his resignation letter. At first, he was resistant. The bishop loved Palawan and his flock so much. He loved his work but he was observed to be already very sickly. Furthermore, Bishop Espiga was already 75 years old that year. His mandatory resignation was in consonance with Canon 401 §1 and §2 that mandate the following:

§1. A Diocesan Bishop who has completed his seventy-five years of age is requested to present his resignation from office to the Supreme Pontiff who will make provisions after he examines all the circumstances.

§2. A Diocesan Bishop is earnestly requested to present his resignation from office when he has become less able to fulfill his office due to ill health or another serious reason.

Bishop Espiga resigned on 18 December 1987. Not long before that, Fr. Jesus Gabayan de los Reyes was surprised when the prelate Espiga managed to visit him in his far-flung island parish of Cuyo and stayed with him for three days.

The Apostolic Vicar Emeritus resided in San Sebastian Convent in 1988. Bishop Espiga took ill during his conventual residence and he was confined at the Manila Doctors’ Medical Center along the United Nations Avenue. A parish priest in Palawan, Fr. Joaquin V. Quidong in a personal interview at San Pedro Parish,

Puerto Princesa City in 2007, stated that he had visited him once. Fr. Crisostomo Garnica, a former missionary in Palawan and at that time assigned in San Sebastian College in Manila, was also there during his visit. When Garnica told Bishop Espiga that a priest from Palawan was there to pay him a visit, they were all surprised that the ailing Bishop responded with “Palawan?” and started to gain temporarily some energy.

His parish priest from Agutaya in Palawan, Fr. Larang, once had also visited the bishop at the hospital. He recalled that the prelate could not get up from bed and can hardly recognize the person who visited him. Nevertheless, Bishop Espiga profusely thanked him for the visit. But he did not have enough strength to converse with them for a long period of time.

### **Death and Burial**

After Bishop Espiga resigned as Apostolic Vicar, it took ten long years before he finally returned to the bosom of the Lord. On 15 April 1997, after five protracted years of suffering, being bedridden and comatose, Bishop Espiga finally breathed his last at the hospital and was summoned to the Father in Heaven.<sup>12</sup> The Propaganda Fide Congregation of the Holy See defrayed the Recollect bishop’s medical expenses and hospital bill, according to information relayed by the Recollect Fr. Walthrode B. Conde, erstwhile parish priest of Narra and Roxas in Palawan.

In obeisance to his personal request made while was still alive—to be buried at the side of the altar in the Immaculate Conception Cathedral—the mortal remains of Bishop Espiga were consequently flown back to Puerto Princesa by plane. Fr. Bangcaya informs this researcher that “during his burial, we went to Palawan to accompany his remains.” His coffin arrived by Philippine Airlines jet at the airport of Puerto Princesa City.

In a funeral procession, the prelate’s coffin in a hearse was conducted to the Immaculate Conception Cathedral, the Marian church which he had constructed and was inaugurated in 1961 by Cardinal Rufino Santos, Archbishop of Manila. Along the way, hundreds of parishioners watched the funeral entourage in prayerful silence. We were there, Bangcaya disclosed in the interview, and

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<sup>12</sup> *Necrologium*, in *Acta OAR* (1997) 193

witnessed his interment. “It was a moving, rare, unforgettable sight to behold.” There was a long queue of people accompanying the coffin of their beloved bishop.

Meanwhile, the cathedral church where vigils were held during the wake of the beloved pastor of Palawan was filled with people at any time of the day and night, praying for their beloved shepherd who had endeared himself so much to his flock. Thus, the deceased Augustinian Recollect bishop had become not unlike a celebrity.

The beloved shepherd finally came home to his flock.

### **Timeline of Bishop Gregorio Espiga, OAR**

Renier I. Alviola OAR/Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos

1912	20 September. Birth at Sto. Domingo de la Calzada, La Rioja, Spain.
1920	Recollect minor seminary in Lodosa, Navarra, Spain.
1928	11 September. Start of novitiate in Monteagudo, Navarra, Spain.
1929	12 September. Profession of simple vows in Monteagudo, Navarra. Start of philosophical studies in Monteagudo, Navarra.
1931	March. Start of Theology at the Benedictine Abbey of Atchison, Kansas, USA.
1935	Profession of solemn vows at Ivybridge, Devon, England. 22 July. Ordained as priest in Plymouth, England. October. Conventual at San Sebastian Convent, Manila.
1937	Curate, San Carlos Borromeo Parish, San Carlos, Negros Occidental.
1939	Parish Priest of Saint Joseph Parish, Brooke’s Point in Palawan.
1941	School Administrator, Santo Tomas de

- 1942 Villanueva Institute, San Carlos  
The *Guerrilla Padre* of San Carlos. During World War II, he visited the upland camps of war refugees and guerillas in San Carlos and Calatrava, always risking his life in his pastoral trips.
- 1945 October. First postwar of Rector of San Sebastian College, Manila.  
July. Rector of Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos, San Carlos.  
9 February. Declared *Adopted Son of San Carlos*, Negros Occidental.
- May. The Provincial Chapter elected him Provincial Secretary of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino Province with residence at Zaragoza, Spain. Apostolic Prefect of Palawan.
- 1955 10 September. Consecrated as Bishop of the Apostolic Vicariate of Palawan at San Sebastian Basilica by Archbishop Rufino Santos of Manila, with Bishop Manuel Yap of Bacolod and Bishop Peregrin de la Fuente of Batanes-Babuyan as co-consecrators.  
As the *Flying Bishop*, he hired a seaplane to go to far-off missions.  
Regular attendance at biannual assemblies of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines in Manila and Baguio City.
- 1961 Inauguration of the Immaculate Conception Cathedral, Puerto Princesa City and blessing by Cardinal Rufino Santos.
- 1962, 11 October. Attendance at the opening of the Second Vatican Council in Rome. Council father as well in the 1963 and 1964 sessions.
- 1980, 10 September. Silver Anniversary of his episcopal consecration was celebrated at San Sebastian Basilica and attended by Cardinal Jaime Sin, Recollect confreres, the clergy of Palawan and Manila.
- 1987 -18 December. Mandatory resignation at age seventy-five. Apostolic Vicar Emeritus and retirement at San Sebastian Convent.

1997 - 15 April. Demise at Manila Doctors' Hospital, United Nations Avenue, Manila.  
Burial at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral, Puerto Princesa City.

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## The Foundation of San Sebastian College Manila (1941)<sup>1</sup>

The Order of Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines has never been a complete stranger to the educational apostolate as part of its missionary charism and its obedience to the call of the Mother Church to evangelize our country since time immemorial. During the Spanish *Patronato Real* times, they always established schools for boys and for girls, usually in separate edifices, in their parishes to impart the rudiments of grammar—the three R’s—and, most especially, Christian doctrine.<sup>2</sup>

The fifth chapter of *Modo de administrar* [Manner of Administration], the Recollect parish manual during the colonial years, further mandated the curates to provide the schoolchildren with *cartillas* [paper], pen and ink. To facilitate the teaching and learning process, the Recollects likewise authored textbooks for the study of such languages as Spanish, English, Tagalog, Visayan Cebuano, Latin and local dialects as well as published grammar books and dictionaries in Cuyunin, Agutaynin, Zambal and Visayan Cebuano.

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<sup>1</sup> A lecture during the College Foundation Day, delivered at Diego Cera Auditorium, San Sebastian College-Recoletos, Manila, January 2013 through the initiative of Leader V. Barrot, OAR, Vice President for Academics.

<sup>2</sup> Martín LEGARRA, *Nuestra labor pedagógica en Filipinas (Apuntes)*, in BPSN 49 (December 1959) 35-36; Blas MONTENEGRO, *A Study of the Contributions by the Recollect Fathers to the Education in the Philippines* (MA Education Thesis. Colegio de San Jose-Recoletos). Cebu City 1963.

### First Recollect formal education in the Philippines

An Augustinian Recollect experience in formal education was the administration of the *Seminario Conciliar de Vigan*. In 1882, the Ilocos diocesan seminary was handed over to the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino. Recollect professors included Francisco Sádaba, Vicente Jiménez; Celedonio Mateo managed the seminary for Filipinos who studied for the priesthood. Under Father Toribio Moreno, they established a high school and at one time they had ninety interns and four hundred externs. After thirteen years, in 1895, the superior general in Madrid put an end to their administration of Vigan which in 1899 closed its portals due to the Philippine Revolution.

In 1895, Prior Provincial Andrés Ferrero, future bishop of Jaro, Iloilo, had proposed to the delegates of the Intermediate Provincial Chapter the establishment of a *colegio de segunda enseñanza* in a civil province under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Province of Saint Nicholas.<sup>3</sup> After various consultations especially with Negros parish curates, the decision to set up the Recollect school at Bacolod in Negros Occidental was firmed up. The initial religious community of Colegio de San José was composed of Pedro Corro as rector, Benito Gabasa, Indalecio Ocio, Juan Briones and Tomás Preciado. The school was inaugurated in June 1896 but it survived scarcely two years after. The Philippine Revolution that had spread to Negros Island in November 1898 ended its short-lived existence forever.

### A Recollect school for boys in San Sebastian (1906)

In 1906, a school for boys was opened at the residence of San Sebastian.<sup>4</sup> Its enrolment was low: it had only twenty-one

<sup>3</sup> Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas II* (Manila 1925) 317-322.

<sup>4</sup> Blas Montenegro says it was a secondary school. See MONTENEGRO, 94. In the wake of canonical visitation of Prior Provincial Tomás Roldan to the post-revolutionary Philippines and the Madrid provincial council decision in 1906, the Augustinian Recollect Sisters opened their school for thirty girls in 1907. In 1910, the enrolment rose to 130. Cf. Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *Retracing the Ritarrians Roots: Talangpaz Sisters and Augustinian Recollects of San Sebastian Church* (Lecture delivered at Saint Rita College on 10 October 2007) 23.

students in the first year. A 1910 archival photograph of its young pupils with two Recollect mentors has been preserved in the archives. Taken in front of the iconic San Sebastian Basilica, it shows eighty-nine young boys in grade their school years. It is not known how long the grade school of San Sebastian operated. Still and all, Fr. Blas Montenegro declares: “At any rate, the efforts exerted by the Recollect Fathers towards the implementation of higher education in the Philippines were clearly manifested in the shifting of attitude in favor of the Recollect Missionaries.”<sup>5</sup> The adjoining school for girls of the Recollect Sisters were more successful; it opened its doors in June 1907.

### Significant Provincial Council Decisions (1939-1941)

The idea of a Recollect-administered *colegio de segunda enseñanza* refused to fade away. As early as 1939, there existed a plan to open a formal school with government recognition at their residence of San Sebastian. The Prior Provincial Ricardo Jarauta and the Province of Saint Nicholas Council decided on 19 November 1939 the following:

VII.—After having discussed the convenience of opening a school for young boys, which can be converted into a college in the future, it was agreed upon that in the next school year such school be opened in our residence of San Sebastian in Manila.

Months later, in April 1940, the Provincial Chapter of Saint Nicholas Province met at the now-extinct San Nicolás Convent, popularly known as Recoletos, in Intramuros, Manila. Augustinian Recollects had not buried into oblivion their determination to resume the educational apostolate. Thus, the thirteenth ordinance of the 1940 provincial chapter which revived the Augustinian Recollects’ establishment of educational institutions in the Philippines, declares in no uncertain terms:

In obeisance to the spirit of our holy *Constitutions* nos. 1 and 425, it is the common aspiration of the chapter fathers to set up as soon as possible colleges and schools of primary and higher education in

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<sup>5</sup> MONTENEGRO, 94.

cities or population centers that could offer the most guarantees of success in this apostolate.

The new Prior Provincial Pedro A. García de Galdiano (1897-1969) followed up the thirteenth ordinance of the 1940 chapter with his salutatory circular on 14 April 1940 to all religious confreres of Saint Nicholas Province. Therein the Prior Provincial disclosed the true motives behind the Augustinian Recollect Order's decision to establish Catholic centers of learning:

In Christian towns where people have known the Maker of their souls, [the Province of Saint Nicholas] wants those beliefs to strike deep roots through education by opening schools that—together with the knowledge that constitutes the fountainhead of human science—aim to further deepen the Christian roots of all those who attend their classes. Let us now tread this new path with resolve and enterprising spirit, hoping that—if it is for the greater honor and glory of God—He may bless our efforts and sacrifices.

The provincial council, composed of the Prior Provincial Pedro García de Galdiano, the four councilors—Manuel Gómara, Aurelio Lacruz, Pedro Moreno, Domingo Carceller—and the provincial secretary Martín Legarra met in session at their Intramuros convent on **19 April 1940**. There the provincial council unanimously firmed up their decision to establish two centers of learning. One of the schools was to bear the name *Colegio Fray Luis de León* which was to be set up at the capital city of Caracas in Venezuela.

The other was *Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute* at San Carlos, Negros Occidental, which was not long after changed to Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos. In 1940, the parish priest Tirso Ruana (1892-1941) inaugurated first Recollect school in Negros Island. It was initially named “Boys’ Department” and attached to Colegio de Santa Rita of the Recollect Sisters for all civil effects opened its portals to about fifty-two high school students. The new building was blest in July 1941 and the school was renamed Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute with 153 students. In December 1941, the Second World War closed the new center of learning.<sup>6</sup> In July 1945, the high school reopened after the horrors of the war.

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<sup>6</sup> Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *San Carlos Parish Yesterday*

### Martín Legarra OAR, first chronicler of San Sebastian College

Fr. Martín Legarra, the future Bishop of Bocas del Toro in the Central American country of Panama, informs us about the histories of Recollect educational efforts in our country. These are published in his lengthy article entitled *Nuestra labor pedagógica en Filipinas (Apuntes)*, Our Educational Work in the Philippines (Notes), which saw print in the December 1959 no. 49 issue of the *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas* on pages 35-47. He was rector of Colegio de Santo Tomas- Recoletos when he penned *Nuestra labor pedagógica* and first rector of Colegio de

San Jose-Recoletos in Cebu City (1947-1958). Fr. Legarra is—without any trace of a doubt—the most reliable source in determining the exact date of the foundation of San Sebastian College Manila, its beginnings, the personalities involved in paper



**Colegio de San Sebastian was opened in June 1941 at the ground floor of the Recollect convent beside the iconic all-steel San Sebastian Basilica in the heart of Manila.**

works and negotiations. As secretary provincial—unchanged for seven long years in 1938-1945 stemming from the global armed conflict—of Saint Nicholas Province, he was privy to all the deliberations, decisions and records of provincial council meetings.

From him, we learn that the provincial council ratified on **23 March 1941** at the Intramuros convent its new program of educational expansion, a year after Colegio Fray Luis de León at Caracas and Colegio de Santo Tomas at San Carlos City in Negros Island. Furthermore, he assisted the first rector of *Colegio de San Sebastián* Fr. Constancio Peña in the preparations for the opening of the academic year in June 1941. We now give way to him for more information:

The opinion of Lino Castillejos,<sup>7</sup> a good friend of the Recollects and Director of Private Schools, who expressed his support, was earlier consulted. When the moment came, he ratified it with his signature. The provincial council ordinance of the abovementioned date [23 March 1941] pertinent to our case is as follows:

The Prior Provincial [Pedro García de Galdiano was Prior Provincial, 1940-1946] relayed to the venerable Council the convenience of opening for the coming school year at the residence of San Sebastian in Manila a High School<sup>8</sup> as an extension of Saint Rita College<sup>9</sup> of the *Madres Recoletas*<sup>10</sup> with a basis for this convenience wherein ... the government schools cannot admit the excessive number of students who will have to pass from Grade VI and Grade VII to High School. The venerable Council expressed its conformity and granted its approval for the opening of the proposed High School of San Sebastian in Manila (*Book of Council Acts*).

When the time came, the location that cost little time and money was done. It was an easy and simple task. Advertising was minimal. Very meagre likewise were the resources used for that purpose. Fr. Constancio Peña, *presidente*<sup>11</sup> of the residence, was appointed rector. Fr.

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<sup>7</sup> Lino J. Castillejos became the Undersecretary of Education. He ran for the First Congress of the Commonwealth of the Philippines (1941-1946) and won as representative of the lone district of Isabela, cf. [http://www.ask.com/wiki/1st\\_Congress\\_of\\_the\\_Commonwealth\\_of\\_the\\_Philippines](http://www.ask.com/wiki/1st_Congress_of_the_Commonwealth_of_the_Philippines). Castillejos therefore signed the papers granting the government approval to San Sebastian College when he was Director of Private Schools before the November 1941 elections.

<sup>8</sup> The phrase is *colegio de segunda enseñanza*, which literally means school of secondary education] which Fr. Martín Legarra himself correctly translated as *High School*.

<sup>9</sup> This was exact the same arrangement made with *Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos* in San Carlos City which likewise started as the “Boys’ Department” in 1940 and it was likewise affiliated to Colegio de Santa Rita of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters, a school founded in 1933 by the pioneering sisters and Augustinian Recollect parish priest Manuel Gómara of San Carlos.

<sup>10</sup> The phrase *Madres Recoletas* refers to the members of future Congregation of Augustinian Recollect Sisters, known in the past as *Beaterio de San Sebastián*, located at Plaza del Carmen across San Sebastian Basilica.

<sup>11</sup> The term *prior presidente* refers at that time to the superior or prior of the religious community of the residence of San Sebastian. It was



Martín Legarra was designated to work together with him. The services of two lay teachers were further hired.<sup>12</sup>

The first academic year of *Colegio de San Sebastián* commenced solely with male students in the first and second year high school. Legarra had disclosed that there was minimal advertising done. Thus, there were only with twenty-one students for its first year of operation. Fr. Clemente Jubera, San Sebastian prior in 1946-1949, wrote in 1947 in the *Libro de cosas notables del convento de San Sebastián, 1888-1987* [Book of Noteworthy Events of San Sebastian Convent, 1888-1987], that the pioneering students of Colegio de San Sebastián occupied the eastern section of ground floor of the old residence. Most probably, they were two remodeled classrooms for the first and second year. The prior also informed that after the armed conflict the reopened with more students because the entire east wing of the ground floor of the residence was occupied by the growing school.<sup>13</sup>

It should be noted that before the Second World War there were a few schools in the Philippines that had thousands of students. The small enrolment was frequently the case. The provincial secretary and chronicler admitted that the initial enrolment of San Sebastian—twenty-one students—was objectively and subjectively considered very small.



**Father Constancio Peña, rector of San Sebastian College (1941, 1947-1952, 1958-1961) with Senator Claro M. Recto, Senator Carlos P. Garcia, and other oratorical contestants on stage in the 1950s.**

Nonetheless, Fr. Constancio Peña and his Recollect confreres still deemed it necessary to continue with the high school project and so it was continued until 8 December of that year 1941, when World War II abruptly stopped its progress. The *force-majeure* constrained the San Sebastian fathers to discontinue school operations and close its portals.

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in use since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>12</sup> Martín LEGARRA, *Nuestra labor pedagógica*, 35-47.

<sup>13</sup> ARCHIVO HISTORICO PROVINCIAL DE LA PROVINCIA DE SAN NICOLÁS DE TOLENTINO, Marcilla, Navarra, Spain, *Sección de Libros*, 127a.

“How long would such a critical situation last?,” the chronicler rhetorically quizzed. The records of a decision firmed up by the Provincial Council on 15 September 1945 provide us with the following reply:

During the Japanese Occupation of the Philippines there was an attempt to reopen the High School (of San Sebastian) and a commission composed of three religious would study the viability of the project with guarantees of success. The report of that commission did not favor the **reopening**. Consequently, it was deemed more prudent to wait for changed of circumstances. When normalcy returned, the venerable provincial council [...] put the project to a secret vote; the result of the unanimous vote of the councilors favored the **reopening** of the High School (*Book of Council Acts*).

Legarra<sup>14</sup> was not certain as to the exact date of the school reopening which he surmised to have taken place towards the end of November 1945. A month before, Espiga arrived in Manila from San Carlos. The *presidente* of the residence by this time was Santiago Vilda who was replaced by Clemente Jubera the following year. Vilda gave his fullest support to the resumption of classes. Gregorio Espiga was pulled out of San Carlos where he had spent the war years and named rector of San Sebastian College in October 1945. He held the office until June 1946 when he retraced his steps to San Carlos and assumed the post of rector of Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos.

In December 1941, the catastrophic global conflict closed the portals of the Recollect high school in Manila, founded and inaugurated earlier in June, as narrated in the chronicles of Manuel Carceller in a 1946 article in the *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás*, of which he was editor.<sup>15</sup> He was later elected general councilor of the Order, prior provincial of Saint Nicholas Province and years after general chronicler and historian. Father Carceller further disclosed that during the Japanese Occupation serious difficulties posed obstacles in the **reopening** of San Sebastian.

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<sup>14</sup> Fr. Martín Legarra penned the article when he was the rector of Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos.

<sup>15</sup> Manuel CARCELLER, *Notas para la historia. De Filipinas*, in *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás*, 36 (1946) 41.

In 1945, the vicar provincial of the Philippines informed by radiogram the Prior Provincial García de Galdiano in Spain that San Sebastian High School had reopened with a good enrolment. Renovations were made in the main wing of the convent in order to accommodate more priests. Their age-old San Nicolás convent and mother-house at Intramuros had been razed to the ground by American shelling during the devastating Liberation of Manila from the Japanese forces in February 1945.

At the helm of the post-war administration was Fr. Gregorio Espiga, who became apostolic prefect of Palawan in 1953 and two years later apostolic vicar until his mandatory retirement in December 1987. Fr. Espiga was assisted by two confreres until he was named rector of Colegio de Santo in San Carlos and replaced by Fr Bernardino Fabregat in July 1946

Fr. Jesús Sobejano, former missionary of Puerto Princesa, Brooke's Point, Coron, Agutaya and Cuyo in Palawan (1951-1970) and author of *Los Agustinos Recoletos. 375 años en Filipinas* in 1981 published during his term as vicar provincial in 1978-1981, declares "with pride that this day [3 December 1945] is the true foundation day of this San Sebastian College with had as its first rector the bishop of Palawan, Msgr. Gregorio I. Espiga."<sup>16</sup> Fr. Sobejano further recounts that the 1945-1946 school year opened with eighty students only on account of the adverse effects of the war.<sup>17</sup> In reality, this was the reopening of Colegio de San Sebastian yearned for by the Province even during the Japanese Occupation of the country.

The provincial chapter was convoked from 13 to 18 May 1946 in Marcilla, Navarra, Spain. The chapter fathers lamented the

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<sup>16</sup> Jesús SOBEJANO, *Los Agustinos Recoletos 375 años en Filipinas* (Quezon City 1981) 62.

<sup>17</sup> In his article on San Sebastian College Manila, Chito Avelino mistranslated the population figure. Or somebody mistranslated it for him. Anyway, he disclosed the recorded population of eighty students—instead of twenty-one as affirmed by Legarra and Constancio Peña—in 1941. He further said two hundred students were enrolled in 1946, although he did not reveal his source. Sobejano simply said intermediate students were admitted in 1946, and a year after the elementary school was opened. Cf. Ramon AVELINO, *San Sebastian College-Recoletos Manila*, in Emilio P. JARUDA [editor], *Commemorative Album of the 1988-1991 Triennium. Order of Augustinian Recollects, Vicariate of the Philippines and China* (Quezon City 1991) 101-102.

huge property losses on account of the Second World War, the untold sufferings of survivors and the brutal massacre of six Recollects in the hands of the Japanese Imperial Army towards the end of World War II. Chapter Act XI announced that it was very pleased to learn about the **reopening** of the centers of learning of San Sebastian of Manila and San Carlos, Negros Occidental.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, the chapter fathers strongly encouraged the creation of new centers of leaning in the Philippines and other countries, especially in convenient locations and with competent personnel. They simply reiterated the wishes of the chapter delegates in the 1940 Provincial Chapter.

At the end of his 1959 historical account of the early years of San Sebastian College, Fr. Martín Legarra lists down for us the names of the school rectors and their terms of office as follows:

Fr. Constancio Peña	1941
Fr. Gregorio Espiga	November 1945 - June 1946
Fr. Bernardino Fabregat	July 1946 - 3 January 1947
Fr. Pedro Zunzarren,	January - 4 August 1947
Fr. Constancio Peña,	August 1947 - 31 May 1952
Fr. Modesto Martínez	May 1952 - 22 May 1955
Fr. Alejandro Remírez	22 May 1955 - 14 May 1958
Fr. Constancio Peña	14 May 1958

### Personal observations and experiences

It is never too late to make some anniversary celebration or to firm up the exact date of the foundation of schools, towns, parishes or of a historic event based on primary sources—archival and newly unearthed— or even to rectify it. I am full of experiences in this regard. In 1999, the Permanent Committee for the Church Cultural Heritage of CBCP invited me to the First National Conference held in Bohol in order to shed light on the controversial claim of Baclayon Church as the oldest church in the Philippines. In 2004, the National Historical Institute (now National Historical Commission of the Philippines) erected the landmark at Loay and settled once and for all the issue on the exact site of the historic Blood Compact in Bohol

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<sup>18</sup> *Actas correspondientes al Capítulo Provincial de mayo 1946 de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino*, in BPSN 36 (1946) 132.

stemming from historical studies which Dr. Jes B. Tirol and I made and read at the round table discussion in Manila in 2003.

Thereafter, the parish priests, town mayors, tourism offices, cultural heritage groups of Panglao, Loon, Jagna, Duero, Maribojoc and Loboc in Bohol asked me to clarify their foundation dates through my lectures at various venues. Subic, San Narciso and Masinloc in Zambales were likewise enlightened on their foundation date issues. In 2005, Saint Rita College in Manila invited me to give some historical insights on their centennial year (1907-2007).

### **Cases in point: two OAR anniversaries**

As we faithfully follow the Augustinian Recollect traditional of fixing foundational dates, among the corroborative precedents for this recommendation is the foundational date or natal day of the Augustinian Recollection—**5 December 1588**. This proposal was staunchly recommended by the Venerable Jenaro Fernández, author of four volumes of *Bullarium Ordinis Augustinianorum Recollectorum*, canon lawyer, historian, *peritus* of the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council, and was thereafter approved by Prior General Eugenio Ayape. Fr. Jenaro wrote in a footnote of the first volume of his *Bullarium* in 1955 that “*dies 5 mensis decembris ut dies natalis Recollectionis Sancti Augustini habendus erit*,” the 5<sup>th</sup> of December shall be considered as the anniversary of the Recollection of Saint Augustine.<sup>19</sup>

Four years later, in 1959, Fr. Eugenio Ayape decreed that every year 5<sup>th</sup> of December must be celebrated as “*dies natalis ordinis [...] en recuerdo del día en que fue promulgada el acta quinta de Toledo*, the anniversary of the Order [...] in remembrance of the day when the Fifth Ordinance of Toledo was promulgated.”<sup>20</sup> It is now perpetually embedded in the OAR Constitutions: “The anniversary of the Recollection is to be celebrated solemnly on December 5<sup>th</sup>.”<sup>21</sup>

It was explained in detail by Angel Martínez Cuesta in a conference in Rome, Italy, on 5 December 2008, the 420<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

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<sup>19</sup> Jenaro FERNANDEZ, *Bullarium Ordinis Augustinianorum Recollectorum* I (Rome 1955) 57.

<sup>20</sup> *Constituciones de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* (Rome 1975) no. 335.

<sup>21</sup> *Constitutions of the Order of Augustinian Recollects* (New Jersey, USA 1988) no. 97; AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECTS, *The Rule. Constitutions. Additional Code* (Rome 2012) chapter IV, no. 97, p. 127 and Appendix 2, p. 401.

The 5<sup>th</sup> ordinance of the 1588 General Chapter of the Augustinian Province of Castile at Toledo breathed life onto the aspirations of many friars, in obedience to the Holy Spirit, for an austere way of life and embodied the Augustinian Recollection movement of the past decades.

In a similar way, the date of the foundation of the Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno was the **28<sup>th</sup> November 1998**, when the thirty-six chapter delegates of the 52<sup>nd</sup> General Chapter at Monachil, Granada, voted unanimously for the establishment of the new Philippine province including the missions of Taiwan and Sierra Leone. The inauguration of the Province of Saint Ezekiel took place at Mira-Nila, Quezon City, on 10 February 1999.

### **19 April 1940 recommended as CST-R Foundation Day**

I had earlier evaluated pertinent data and thereafter suggested that the foundation date of Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos should be **19 April 1940** when the provincial chapter had decreed the opening of two Recollect schools in Caracas and San Carlos. After a hiatus of almost four years due to the global war, the school bounced back with vigor. Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos is now [i.e., 2013] looking forward to its diamond jubilee with gratitude, excitement and prayerful enthusiasm.

In the case of San Sebastian College Manila, the foundation date of what the Augustinian Recollect founders called as *colegio de segunda enseñanza* is the **23<sup>rd</sup> March 1941**. Three months afterwards, in **June 1941**, the San Sebastian High School became a reality when it opened classes for first-year and second-year students.

Similarly, it was the 13<sup>th</sup> ordinance of the 1940 Provincial Chapter that incarnated the common aspiration of the chapter fathers to have centers of education that could offer the greatest guarantees of success in the educational apostolate. It was the same Provincial Council that decreed the establishment of the two schools (*Colegio Fray Luis de León* at Caracas, Venezuela, and *Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute* at San Carlos, Negros Occidental) on **19 April 1940**.

In like manner, on **23 March 1941** the provincial council met again to officially establish a *colegio de segunda enseñanza* or a high school in Manila, which in subsequent years came to be known

as San Sebastian College, an iconic educational center in the heart of the national capital.

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# Cathedrals in the Philippines Constructed by Augustinian Recollects

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Pablo Panedas, OAR  
and Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos

## Introduction

“Every cathedral church [...] constitutes the heart of diocesan life. It is the mother church, the major church where the bishop teaches, celebrates and governs. The cathedral is the liturgical center of the diocese from which the sacramental action of the priests is united with the bishop to assure the pastoral care of the faithful, by invoking the gifts of the Holy Spirit, by living in communion with its goals and by proclaiming the Gospel of charity,” thus writes Abbot Michael John Zielinski, OSB, of the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church.



**Recollect Cathedrals in the Philippines**

The Vatican official further states that cathedrals are not merely places for liturgical celebrations. A cathedral contains the cultural heritage of the local church. And much more, a cathedral is in itself a cultural heritage.

The cathedral constitutes the local center of identification with the Church of Christ Jesus, a living witness of the Tradition of the Church. Here lies the importance of the study of cathedrals, our very own cultural legacies. For 400 years now, at whatever cost, the Order of Augustinian Recollects had built twelve cathedrals and countless parish churches for God Almighty and His People in the Philippines.

This study is a fitting testimonial to those hardworking Recollect bishops and priests who built houses of God in their places of assignment in our country.

### **Metropolitan Cathedral of the Conversion of Saint Paul, Vigan City**

In 1758, the episcopal see of Nueva Segovia was moved from Lallo in Cagayan to Vigan in Ilocos, where there was no decent cathedral to speak of. When Father Juan García Ruiz de San Agustín (1728-1796) was appointed bishop, he at once began to work in 1782—even before his episcopal consecration in January 1786—on the bishop's palace. This edifice alone cost him 14,000 pesos. He shortly after began the construction of the grandiose cathedral. He personally supervised the church project so that his health deteriorated on account of the inhalation of lime and the humid climate. He had to recover his health in Manila and later in the thermal of Laguna springs, but all his treatments were in vain.



**Metropolitan Cathedral of the Conversion of Saint Paul, Vigan City**

After fourteen months, the Recollect prelate resumed his unfinished work in Vigan but his health turned for the worse until

he returned to his Maker on 2 May 1796, four years short of the inauguration of the magnificent cathedral. In 1794, its stone walls had been put up, with the imposing and bright façade up to the cornice fi

nished and the sacristy and baptistry completed. The cathedral, made of lime and cut stone, is 84 meters long, 28 meters wide and 18 meters high from the ground to the apex of the ceiling. The three doors at the Baroque façade lead to the three naves of the divine temple.

In 1951, Nueva Segovia was elevated to archdiocese with Laoag, Bangued, Baguio and Bontoc-Lagawe as suffragans. The Recollect cathedral became the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Conversion of Saint Paul the Apostle.

### **Saint Joseph Cathedral, Alaminos City, Pangasinan**

Alaminos City possessed various names in the past—San José de Sóyang, San José de Casborran, Sarapsap—and underwent location transfers.

Except for a gap of half a century, the Augustinian Recollects stayed at Alaminos since its foundation in 1610 until the tumultuous Philippine Revolution of 1896. A great fire had reduced the town into ashes and it had been thereafter rebuilt and renamed Sarapsap.

The actual name was taken after Governor General Juan de Alaminos who visited it in 1872.



**Saint Joseph Cathedral, Alaminos City**

Among the edifices constructed by the Augustinian Recollects in Pangasinan is the majestic Alaminos cathedral dedicated to Saint Joseph, patrón of the Augustinian Order. Father Manuel Bosquete who was at the helm of San José de Casborran mission from 1838-1849 started the construction of the divine temple.

His successor Father José Tornos, who was proficient in Pangasinense, inaugurated it in 1857. This Recollect minister who took over the parish administration in 1849 remained in Alaminos for

almost thirty years and endowed the church with the best ornaments and sacred vessels. Father Tornos passed away in 1878 and was buried in the future cathedral. On the pavement one can view his tombstone in Spanish.

Father Patricio Marcellán writes in 1879: “The present church and parochial house are made of bricks manufactured in the same town. The first oven for brick-making making was built under the supervisión of Father Manuel Bosquete, the Recollect parish priest of this town, and the edifices are the tallest and most spacious in the province, which draws naturally any visitor’s attention.”



**Interior of Saint Joseph Cathedral: altar and retablo**

The church still attracts attention up to this day, now a cathedral since the erection of Alaminos Diocese in 1985.

Alaminos is not a big city population-wise, with about 75,000 only. But the People of God can boast of the structure of their cathedral—spacious, majestic and well-proportioned—and equally stable belfry made of bricks.

The paletada has covered the bricks of the old cathedral, yet a careful look at the main door jamb or on the window sills reveals the colonial bricks underneath of the divine temple erected by Recollects.

### **Saint Augustine Cathedral, Iba, Zambales**

The first mission field of the Augustinian Recollects in 1607 was Zambales where, in the course of six years, seven missionaries set up twelve new towns. Iba, presently the provincial capital of Zambales, was carved out of Masinloc and created into a town in 1681.



**Saint Augustine Cathedral, Iba, Zambales**

Iba became an episcopal see in 1982 with the Recollect church dedicated to St Augustine as its cathedral. The temple is spacious, durable, symmetrical, and made of coral stones. Three bells of equal size used to hang in the belfry crowning the façade. The statue of the holy bishop of Hippo is placed at the central niche of its façade.

The Augustinian symbol of the pierced heart aflame can be found above the arches of the lateral doors. From the presbyterium the image of Saint Augustine presides over the central nave of the age-old house of God.

### **Our Lady of the Pillar Cathedral, Imus, Cavite**

Imus was officially recognized as a town and parish in 1795. But, by then, the Recollects had been in Imus for a century. In 1695, they purchased an estate in an auction, which along the years



**Our Lady of the Pillar  
Cathedral, Imus, Cavite**

underwent various improvements and expansion, thus becoming increasingly profitable. What Imus Hacienda earned did greatly help defray the enormous expenses of their far-off mission territories in the Calamianes, Romblon, Mindoro and Mindanao. It goes without saying that almost every edifice of significance in Imus, Dasmariñas and Bacoor were fruits of the labors of the Recollect priests and brothers: roads, bridges, school buildings, streets, dams, cemeteries, church and convent.

Imus had two churches in the past. The first edifice was erected, but being of light materials, like nipa and bamboo, it was ruined in 1779. Another church, still of light materials, survived until the first quarter of the 19th century, but it could not resist the tremors of 1882. The third house of God withstood the elements and the ravages of time. The construction was started in 1825 by its parish priest Father Nicolás Becerra—known for his victorious fight against bandits who infested Cavite. What he earned and solicited was all

poured into the construction of the church and its adjoining convent. Over 200 duck eggs were used for the paletada of the church interior.

Despite his zealous efforts and the fact that he stayed in Imus for twelve years, Father Becerra could not finish the job. In fact, the church was not completed until half-a-century later. "The parochial church of modern construction," writes Father Marcellán in 1879, "is wholly made of bricks. It has three naves, worthy of its dignity as provincial capital.

Father Becerra was not able to bring the bell-tower into completion. The roof is made of wood which is attacked by any [termites], but it has been replaced recently." Father Becerra did begin the construction of the bell-tower. The parochial house turned into the bishop's residence and diocesan chancery. The Marian church became the cathedral when Imus Diocese was erected in November 1961.

### **Saint Joseph Cathedral of Romblon, Romblon**

One of the oldest cathedrals in the country, the solid Cathedral of Saint Joseph, the spouse of Mary and foster-father of Jesus, who is long revered as the patron of the Order of Augustinian Recollects. Beside the cathedral is a solid belltower-cum-fortress which was constructed in Romblon by Father Agustín de San Pedro, known as "Padre Capitán" in our history books, who was at the helm of the parish in 1644-1651.



**Saint Joseph Cathedral, Romblon**

The evangelization work of the Augustinian Recollects in Romblon and in other islands and pueblos was endlessly hampered by Moro raids which constrained him and his confreres to construct forts in Romblon town and in strategic hills and islands.

The Romblon cathedral, 20 meters long and 14 meters wide, was remodeled by Father Toribio Sánchez, parish priest in 1867-1881. Other successors covered the roof of the dome and sacristy with galvanized iron and closed the lateral doors. The

church now possesses a magnificent Baroque retablo with Mexican elements. The retablo is adorned by an array of Augustinian saints.

The pipe organ was acquired by Father Eulogio Sáez (1859-1917), parish priest for three terms (June-November 1891, 1893-1897, 1905-1914), who had the church interior painted and windows installed with multi-colored crystals.

### **Saint Sebastian Cathedral, Bacolod City**

In Bacolod, Father Mauricio Ferrero (1863-1916) constructed the parish house, now the bishop's house and chancery. It used to house La Consolacion College, the first Catholic educational institution of Negros Island, in 1919-1937.

Father Ferrero further built the provincial jail, mortuary chapel, streets and the road to Talisay.

His most enduring legacy is the magnificent, solid church, made of finely-cut coral stones from Guimaras Island, besides the firm Christian faith of the People of God in Bacolod City, nurtured by both Recollect religious and diocesan priests for over two hundred years.

The Recollect commenced the construction of the temple of God in 1876 which was blest and inaugurated on 20 January 1882.



**Saint Sebastian Cathedral,  
Bacolod City**



**Fr Mauricio  
Ferrero, OAR**

Father Ferrero's church-elegant, grandiose and spacious—turned into the cathedral with the erection of Bacolod Diocese in 1932, which included the whole Negros and Siquijor.

It has a warm, well-lighted interior and thick solid walls with rose-windows. Two galleries of arches are supported by strong round pillars. Its two sturdy bell-towers loom over the city park. Garbed in the Recollect habit, Father Ferrero's lifesize statue now stands at the

right entrance of the divine temple. And the grateful Bacolod City government rightly named a street after him.

### **Saint Francis Xavier Cathedral, Kabankalan City**

In 1848, Kabankalan had fertile plains and was given a parish priest at once.

In 1905, Father Tiburcio Fernández had to start from the scratch in the wake of the Revolution and he first constructed a lowly chapel. Working in a hostile post-revolutionary milieu, the Augustinian Recollects unrelentingly exerted a lot of effort in in order to regain the people's trust.

It was the young Father Felipe N. Lerena (1900-1967) who constructed the church in honor of Saint Francis Xavier and inaugurated it on 15 December 1935.

The sugar central and the hacenderos gave huge sums of money and construction materials. The expertise of Engineer M. Sales and Manuel Montinola contributed much to the church project.



**Saint Francis Xavier Cathedral,  
Kabankalan City**

The church suffered very serious damages caused by fire in 1987. Not unlike the Phoenix, it rose from its ashes and was renovated in due time. The Recollects had left

Kabankalan in 1950. In March 1987, the Diocese of Kabankalan was created.

The Augustinian Recollect presence for some time continued in the diocese. In June 2001, the prior provincial of the Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno signed a memorandum of agreement with the First Bishop Vicente M. Navarra and again in 2006 with Bishop Patrick A. Buzon, SDB, to help in the formation of diocesan college seminarians at the Little Way College Seminary.



**Saint Charles Borromeo Cathedral, San Carlos City, Negros Occidental**

The construction of the church of St. Charles Borromeo began in 1928 with the parish priest Father Leoncio Reta (1893-1966).

The solid church foundation and a few meters of the walls, all made of concrete, had been finished when the lack of funds constrained him to suspend the project. Old parishioners disclosed to this writer that the contractor ran off with the church funds to Australia.

In May 1935, his successor Father Manuel S. Gómara (1895-1979) continued with the project and sought the financial assistance from the sugar hacenderos of San Carlos. Don Julio Ledesma donated the hefty sum then of 20,000 pesos to finish the church.



**Fr. Leoncio Reta began the future cathedral in 1928**

The frenzied pace began at once. On 4 November 1935, on the the parish and town patronal fiesta, the strong concrete church was inaugurated.



**Cathedral of Saint Charles Borromeo: enduring tangible legacy to San Carlos City, a parish the Augustinian Recollects established in 1895.**

The divine temple is 51 meters long and 22 meters wide with the typical portico typical of a great number of Augustinian Recollect ecclesiastical edifices in the country, including parish houses and seminaries.

The style of the church is a happy marriage of Gothic, Byzantine and Romanesque styles. The huge lateral windows provided fine light and ventilation. The new church followed the blueprints drawn by Dr. Cereceda. It was built under the supervision of Architect Angel Locsin Yulo of Bacolod. During World War II, the concrete church served as refuge of the parishioners at the height of shelling, machinegun fire and bombing.

In January 1976, the Recollects handed over the parish they had founded in 1895 and had nurtured for eight decades to the diocesan clergy. In March 1987, the church of Father Gómara, who further founded Colegio de Santa Rita of the Agustinian Recollect Sisters and constructed the kumbento of San Carlos, became the cathedral of the Diocese of San Carlos.

### **Saint Joseph Cathedral, Tagbilaran City**

Completed by Father Valero Salvo de San Sebastián, parish priest in 1839-1855, the San José de Tagbilaran Church, Bohol has been a cathedral since 8 November 1941 with the creation of Tagbilaran Diocese, suffragan of the Cebu Archdiocese. During the stewardship of the diocesan clergy, the cathedral underwent for a good number of years a series of significant changes—the massive widening of the lateral naves, substantial modifications of façade and lateral walls as well as the construction of the portico. As proof that Recollects had built the church, the Order's seal was put on the arches and cornices.



**Saint Joseph Cathedral,  
Tagbilaran City**

An early Jesuit stone church and convent were gutted by fire in December 1798. Father Lucas Coromina (1833-1875), parish priest in 1870-1875, finished the construction of the convent—present-day bishop's residence, diocesan chancery and parish house—in 1872.



**Interior of Saint Joseph  
Cathedral, Tagbilaran Cathedral**

Father José Sánchez (1843-1902), parish priest in 1884-1888, commenced the construction of the four-tiered stone belfry which his equally diligent confrere Fr. Escolástico Enciso (1858-1898), parish priest in 1888-1894, brought to an end.

### **Most Holy Trinity Cathedral, Talibon, Bohol**

The Diocese of Talibon was erected on 9 January 1986. In the Spanish regime, Talibon was a mission outpost of Inabanga until 1831 when it was separated from its parish matrix.

The people of Talibon and their Recollect curates parish took part in the protracted construction project. In 1852, Father Lorenzo Mayor (1828-1896) laid the solid foundation of the church. In 1862, Father Lorenzo Hernández (1837-1907) erected the temple walls up to three meters high. His successor Father Manuel Jiménez (1835-1893) continued the project in 1864-1868.



Father José Sánchez, whose parish administration lasted sixteen consecutive years (1868-1884), brought the work of the future cathedral to a happy conclusion. His successor Father Francisco Gómez (1843-1913), parish priest in 1884-1889, covered the roof of the church with tiles and constructed the three altars.

During his 1892-1897 parochial administration, Father Nemesio Llorente (1852-1931) finished the massive belfry. A new kumbento was erected in front of the church and was inaugurated in November 1894. Among Llorente's other works were the gilding of the altars and pulpit, the construction of the sacristy and the laying of the marble and stone flooring of the church.



**Fr José Sánchez OAR**

### **Immaculate Conception Cathedral, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan**

In 1622, the Augustinian Recollect missionaries were given the Calamianes and Cuyo groups of islands north of Palawan by the bishop of Cebu. The town and parish of Puerto Princesa, however,

were founded by Saint Ezekiel Moreno (1848-1906) on 4 March 1872. The Augustinian Recollect apostolic prefects—Victoriano Román (1875-1946), Leandro Nieto (1893-1960) and Gregorio



**Immaculate Conception  
Cathedral, Puerto Princesa**

Espiga (1919-1997)—administered Palawan until 1955 when the apostolic vicariate was set up with Bishop Gregorio Espiga was installed as First Vicar Apostolic. He constructed the cathedral and inaugurated it 1961. This tireless Recollect prelate visited the far-flung, inaccessible missions of his vast vicariate and was remembered long for those pastoral visits and special concern for indigent and tribal folks alike.

The old colonial church of Puerto Princesa was destroyed by the Japanese forces during World War II. The new cathedral is 53 meters long, 18 meters wide; the belltowers are 40 meters high and the vault 17 meters. Bronze and silver lamps illuminated the interior. The Via Crucis and other wooden decor were excellently crafted and donated by inmates of the Iwahig Penal Colony. The arches were made of ipil or caoba. The wooden pews were donated by parishioners.

The long 1622-1987 period of Recollect mission work in Palawan now constitutes the glorious annals of history. Bishop Pedro D. Arigo, apostolic vicar of Puerto Princesa, offered the Recollects the chaplaincy of Our Lady of Mount Carmel at Inagawan, Puerto Princesa City.



**Bishop Gregorio Espiga,  
Apostolic Vicar of Palawan**

The Recollects accepted the offer and in December 2005 they retraced their steps to the land where many a religious had his first taste of mission work amid malarial perils and ruthless Moro raids and lost his young life in the process. Confreres built chapels, and convents in their missions and parishes, now living legacies

of their evangelization work. They planted the seeds of Faith and nurtured them with their blood, and sweat. And this great legacy of Faith duoubtless lives on.

### **Saint Augustine Cathedral, Cagayan de Oro City**

Father Agustín de San Pedro and Father Ramón Zueco (1828-1889) helped shape what is now Cagayan de Oro, then known as Cagayan de Misamis, in northern Mindanao.

Father Agustín, parish priest for 13 years, transfered the Christian settlement to its present site. Father Zueco, known for his missionary zeal and erudition, administered it for twenty-eight years (1861-1889). The two Recollect ministers defended the Christian population and even led successful punitive military campaigns against Moro pirates in their southern Mindanao lairs.



**Saint Augustine Cathedral, Cagayan de Oro, 1933-1945**

An early Recollect church was gutted by fire in 1831. The whole Christian populace and Mayor José Corrales contributed a great deal to the new church project with their labor, materials and monetary donations.

Father Simón Loscos (1808-1871), parish priest in 1847-1858, had the solid church blest in March 1848 but it was completely finished only in 1851. Dedicated to Saint Augustine and made of coral stones, the divine temple was in place when the Jesuits arrived in 1905. On the left wing of the church facade the adjoining four-tiered belfry was built; on the right was the spacious kumbento.

A few modifications and improvements were made when in January 1933 it became a cathedral church. Unfortunately, the Recollect cathedral of Father Simon Loscos was forever lost to posterity; it was completely wrecked during World War II bombings.

The American Jesuit Bishop James Hayes constructed the present house of worship in the postwar years. In 1951, the divine temple became the Saint Augustine Metropolitan Cathedral when the Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro was created with all the then existing dioceses of Mindanao as suffragans.

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# Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity

**Collaboration between the Religious and the Laity;  
Charism and Mission Shared with the Laity**

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Emilio L. Larlar, OAR

## Introduction

The OAR Constitutions no. 112 tells us: “Fraternal love also embraces the institutes of nuns and sisters as well as associations of the faithful which, following the Rule of Saint Augustine and the spirit of the Order, dedicate themselves to the contemplative life, commit themselves to various apostolic works, or endeavor to achieve Christian perfection in the way appropriate to their secular state.”<sup>1</sup>

All these institutes and associations, together with the Order of the Augustinian Recollects, constitute the Augustinian Recollect family. Mutual cooperation with all of them must be fostered, and also with the other religious families of Augustinian filiation. No. 114 of the Constitutions says:

The religious are to promote the Augustinian Recollect Secular Fraternity, the members of which, remaining in the world, pursue evangelical perfection according to the charism of the Order, while maintaining their secular identity. By their sharing in their charism, communion with the brothers of the

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<sup>1</sup> AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECTS, *The Rule. Constitutions. Additional Code* (Rome 2012) 135.

Order and with the hierarchy comes into being and develops. They thereby fulfill a common mission within the Church and serve as leaven in the world.<sup>2</sup>

### **Who is a Secular Augustinian Recollect? What is a Third Order?**

Canon Law defines third orders as “associations whose members lead an apostolic life and strive for Christian perfection while living in the world and who share the spirit of some religious institute under the higher direction of that same institute.”<sup>3</sup>

According to *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*<sup>4</sup> which is a main source for this topic, third orders signify in general laymen and lay women who do not necessarily live in community but wear the habit and participate in the good works of some great order. They resemble religious order because they aim at Christian perfection, their rules must be approved by the Holy See; they possess juridical personality; and their stability of life (requirements for admission, novitiate, permanent profession.<sup>5</sup>

At the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century when religious orders begun to be established, many devout lay persons started to seek the guidance of these orders. But this practice was not widespread. Some authorities believe that for lay people to affiliate themselves to religious orders is so spontaneous and natural that there is no need for seeking its origins. But as the Augustinologist Victorino Capanaga says:

To arrive at the understanding of men and things the modern trend is to discover the process of their development. More than the nature of things, what is being asked is their history, namely, the discovery of their origins, development and destiny. We are interested in knowing how they originate, how they evolve, and how they end. And the human mind is frequently stimulated

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 136

<sup>3</sup> *Canon* 303.

<sup>4</sup> *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* XIV (Palatine, Illinois, 1981)

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 93

by it because knowing the beginning, the middle and the end gives us the ability to judge rightly.<sup>6</sup>

Experts agree that it is not an easy task to establish with clarity and certainty the origins of the Third Orders. Nonetheless, many of them are of the opinion that the present day Third Orders are basically innovations or adaptations of the lay reform movements that started in the thirteenth century. During the entire Middle Ages, the Catholic Church was experiencing a loosening of spiritual, moral and religious values: many bishops were more interested in politics than in their pastoral duties; several monks were lazy and greedy, a considerable number of clergy were ignorant and morally corrupt, and a large number of Catholics practiced a legalistic and even superstitious kind of faith.

Many concerned Catholics—coming from all levels of society—who could no longer tolerate such a scandalous situation for long, were seized by a strong urge to initiate reforms. In Germany, the demand for reforms was already felt in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Civil authorities, concretely in the person of Emperor Henry V, took the initiative of bringing about these reforms. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, in France, the agents of reform were monks, particularly those of the Abbey of Cluny, and later the Cistercians. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, it was the laity who tried to bring about the much-needed reform in the Church.

Since our topic is Secular Fraternity, it is obvious that our attention will be focused on the layperson who initiated a reform in the Church. To the uninitiated in the Church History, particularly on the topic of Reformation within the Church, this can sound very strange, because whenever the word *Reformation* is mentioned we immediately think of popes, priests, men and women religious, and clergy. Very rarely do we associate reformation with laymen and laywomen. I have to confess that the result of my study and research in preparing this paper was to me very surprising.

These lay initiators of reform were noblemen of Lombardy, taken prisoners by Emperor Henry V (1081-1125) following a rebellion, to Lower Germany and, after suffering the miseries of exile for some time, “humiliated” themselves before the emperor, by wearing the penitential garb of grey, dedicating themselves wholly to

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<sup>6</sup> Victorino CAPÁNAGA, *Agustín de Hipona, Maestro de la conversión cristiana* (Madrid, 1974) 5.

works of charity and mortification. Because of this humble attitude, they came to be known as *humiliati* commonly rendered into English as penitents. In consideration of this way of life, and, after having received their pledges of loyalty, the King allowed them to return to Lombardy. When they had returned to their own country, they sought the advice of Saint Bernard. In 1134, on Saint Bernard's advice, many of them, with the consent of their wives, withdrew to a monastery in Milan. The fraternity spread very rapidly.<sup>7</sup>

### The Mendicant Orders

The lay reform movement had no definite founders; had no clear program of activities to follow. It is said that not even Saint Bernard succeeded in persuading them to submit to one. All they had was a strong desire to return to the Gospel. Ronald Knox described this evangelical simplicity and values that ran so deeply in the minds and hearts of medieval men and women a "nostalgia for the Sermon on the Mount."

However, with the coming of the mendicant Orders, particularly of the Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites and Augustinians, many *humiliati* started to seek the guidance of these religious Orders. At first, this guidance was limited to simple theological and spiritual direction without any formal bond of unity with the Order.

Here is how the Augustinian Recollect Fr. Angel Martinez Cuesta describes the mendicants' new way of life in the following words:

The mendicants pioneered a new way of being religious. They called themselves brothers (*fratres*). They lived in small houses (*conventus*). They mingled with the people, preached, heard confessions and assisted the secular clergy. They were not attached to a particular house and, in this manner, were available for transfer from one place to another. They lived from their work and from the alms of the faithful, not from the fruits of landed property. They wanted to experience the problems of the people, of the emerging middle class, and they distanced themselves from the feudal world.

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<sup>7</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia VII* (New York 1910).

Above all, they insisted upon preaching the Gospel through a poor and sacrificial life.<sup>8</sup>

### The Dominicans<sup>9</sup>

As early as 1225, there was already a mention of the “Penitents of Saint Dominic.” However, experts are of the opinion that this group did not evolve within the Dominican Order but represented a group of the Order of Penitents of Saint Francis that came under the Dominican influence. At the beginning, the group was not clearly organized and did not have a clear form of life, but later on its members became more and more dependent on the Order. In 1285, the depth and extent of the relationship between the Order and *penitents* were clearly established with the issuance of a specific rule by Muñon de Zamora, the master-general. The rule stipulated that each local chapter be ruled by a Dominican priest and pledge obedience to the Dominican provincials and master-generals. They had to wear habits of black and white with minor variance depending on time and country, and had to participate in the good works of the friars. They were called the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of Saint Dominic. It was not until the 13<sup>th</sup> century that they were called the Third Order of Saint Dominic.<sup>10</sup>

There was another association called *Militia Jesu Christi* (The Militia of Jesus Christ) that was so closely connected with the Dominican Order that there were some who believed that it was directly founded by Saint Dominic de Guzman himself and had proposed it to be the origin of the Dominican Third Order. They supported their proposal with the testimony of Raymond of Capua, who became a Dominican and the encyclical letter of Pope Benedict XV addressed to the Dominican Order in 1920. There are other historical indications that attested to this close tie between the *Militia* and the Dominican Order. In May 18, 1235, Pope Gregory IX issued a Bull entrusting the care of the Militia to Blessed Jordan of Saxony, the second Dominican master-general; and in the same year Pope Gregory IX had officially ordered the members of the Militia to wear

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<sup>8</sup> Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *The Order of Augustinian Recollects, Its Charismatic Evolution* (Manila 1994) 20.

<sup>9</sup> *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* XIV (Palatine, Illinois 1981) 95-96.

<sup>10</sup> MANDONET, “Les règles et le gouvernement de l’ordo de Poenitentia” (Paris, 1902) 207, quoted by *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*.

the Dominican habit of black and white. Another clear indication was that whenever a group of Militia was founded, it was always connected with a Dominican church.

Those who were opposed to the idea that the Militia was the origin of the Dominican Order argued that the real founder of the group was Fulques, Bishop of Toulouse, a close and intimate friend of Saint Dominic, and not Dominic. They also saw bases for dissent in the difference of the objectives between the two: the *Militia* was primarily organized for the defense of the Church and Catholics in areas that were dominated by the heretics; while that of the *Penitents* was ascetical and evangelical. In 1870, with the strong encouragement of Pope Pius IX, the objective of the *Militia* was directed towards the establishment of the Kingdom of God in society.

Because of the very close tie between the *Militia Jesu Christi* and the Order of Saint Dominic, its merger at the close of the 13<sup>th</sup> century with the Order of Penitents of Saint Dominic forming the modern Third Order of Saint Dominic, did not surprise anybody.

The association of lay people affiliated to the Order of Preachers, was approved in 1406 and came to be known as the Third Order of Saint Dominic. The members were called Tertiaries of Saint Dominic. The revised Rule of the Dominican Third Order was approved by Pope Pius XI in 1923.

By the 14th century, both the Third Order and the First Order were in deep decline and seriously in need of reform. Raymond of Capua, who became Master General in 1380, complained that there were no men in the Third Order, that at least in northern Italy, it was simply a group of pious old ladies. These groups were called the *Mantelata*. The Mantelata would receive no young ladies, only widows of mature age. Catherine of Siena, for instance, found it difficult to break into this religious elite. Raymond criticized the *Mantelata*, declaring that while they might have been pious, they were much too exclusive.

### **The Franciscan Third Order<sup>11</sup>**

There are three opinions about the origin of the Secular Third Order of Saint Francis. Some believe that it is a survival of a lay-

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<sup>11</sup> *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* XIV (Palatine, Illinois 1981) 93-95.

fraternity of penitents originally conceived by Saint Francis. Others say that that Saint Francis only lent his name to already existing penitential lay fraternities without any connection with or influence on them. There is still another opinion which claims to be well documented,<sup>12</sup> according to which Saint Francis really established a Third Order and gave it a Rule.

Inspired by the preaching and exemplary lives of Saint Francis and his first disciples, many married men and women wanted to join the First or Second Orders. Because this was incompatible with their state of life, Saint Francis met them half-way by giving them a rule that is animated by the Franciscan spirit. Mariano of Florence (end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century) and the Bull for Faenza, dated December 16, 1221 indicate the year 1221 as the birth of the Franciscan Third Order. The head of the oldest extant rule carries the same date.

Originally, the rule had only 12 chapters a chapter was later added in 1227 at the time of Gregory IX. It had provisions or prescriptions that are being followed today by many rules of many Secular Third Orders: 1) simplicity of dress, 2) practice of fasting and abstinence, 3) praying of canonical office or other form of prayer, 4) confession and communion three times a year, 5) a monthly assembly in a church indicated by the ministers that included religious formation by a religious, 6) dedication to works of mercy, 7) the presence of the whole confraternity at the funeral of a member and pray for the departed, 8) peaceful settlement of dissensions among brothers and sisters or other persons, 8) non admittance of heretics, 9) women were admitted only with the consent of their husbands. 10) election of two new ministers and a treasurer every year, 10) no point of the rule obliged under pain of sin. Besides there were other prescriptions: a) the making of the last will three months after the reception, b) prohibition to carry arms or taking solemn oaths without necessity.

On 17 August 1289, Pope Nicholas IV through the papal bull *Supra montem* solemnly confirmed a longer redaction of the

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<sup>12</sup> Here is a partial list of documents used by those who follow the third group as bases for this opinion: Thomas of Celano, "*Vita prima*", I, 15; Julian of Spire, "*Office of Saint Francis: Third Antiphon at Lauds*"; Gregory IX, Bull, June 7, 1230 (*Bull. Franc.*, I; 65); Saint Bonaventure, "*Leg. Maior*", IV, 6; Bernard of Besse in "*Anal. Franc.*". III, 686.

rule. This has long been considered as the work of Saint Francis. It is substantially the same as the oldest text of 1221, except that the 1289 text has more chapters (20) and very slight changes. This rule remained in vigor until 1883, when Leo XIII, himself a tertiary, through the apostolic constitution *Misericors Dei Filius*, adapting it more to the modern state and needs of the society. Some important changes were: reduction of vocal prayers, fasts and abstinence, the three times a year confession and communion was changed to monthly communion. There were also new points that were of great social and religious importance: a) prohibition of expensive attire, b) frequenting theaters of doubtful character, c) keeping and reading books that were against faith and morals.

The Third Order of Saint Francis may not be the oldest of all Third Orders, but is undoubtedly the best known and most widely distributed and has the greatest influence. Since the adaptation of the rule by Leo XIII, the Franciscan Order has grown and has become more active. It has produced about 75 saints and blessed from all walks of life.

In 1978, its name was changed to Secular Franciscan Order. The Rule of Life of the Secular Franciscan Order was promulgated by Pope Leo XIII in May 30, 1883 and approved and confirmed by Pope Paul VI in June of 1978.

### **Third Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel<sup>13</sup>**

The Lay Carmelites is the name used today for the Third order associated with the Carmelites. It was established in 1476 by a bull of Pope Sixtus IV. It is known for their devotion to Mary under the title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

How did it all start? Just like the other Third Orders that we talk about, the origin of the Lay Carmelites is also shrouded in uncertainties. It is said that as soon as the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel was established in Europe in the 13th century, many lay persons attached themselves closely to it. As early as 1273, there was already a Confraternity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Toulouse; and seven years later, in 1280, there was another in Bologna. But the exact nature of these groups cannot be determined with certainty for lack of supporting documents.

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<sup>13</sup> *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* XIV (Palatine, Illinois 1981) 96.



Later there was a frequent reference to the existence of “trade-guilds” that had the churches of the Order as their centers and the religious as their chaplains. There were the master-bakers, innkeepers and pastry-cooks at Nîmes; the goldsmiths of Avignon. Benefactors of the Order were issued letters of fraternity that included the right to participate in the privileges and good works of the friars.

There were also the so-called *bizzoche* and *mantellatae*, who wore the habit and observed the rule. An example of this was the “M. Phicola nostra Pinzochera” at Florence in 1308. Others lived like recluses in the anchorages attached to Carmelite churches, and made profession.

The canonical institution of the third order dates from the middle of the fifteenth century, when a community of *Beguines*<sup>14</sup> at Guelders sought affiliation to the order, and Blessed John Soreth, General of the Carmelites, obtained a bull (7 October, 1452) granting the superiors of his order the faculties enjoyed by the Hermits of Saint Augustine and the Dominicans of canonically establishing convents of “virgins, widows, beguines and *mantellatae*”. Further legislation took place in 1476 by the bull *Mare magnum privilegiorum*, and under Pope Benedict XIII and his successors.

The rule observed by the tertiaries, whether living in the world or gathered into communities, was originally that of the friars with modifications as required by their status. Theodor Stratus, General of the Calced Carmelites, composed in 1635 a new rule, revised in 1678, which is still observed among the tertiaries of the Calced and the Discalced Carmelites. It prescribes the recitation of the canonical office, or that of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, or, in its place, the *Pater noster* and *Ave Maria* to be said thirty-five times a day, five times in lieu of each of the canonical hours; also half an hour’s meditation every morning and evening; fasting on all Fridays and also on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 14 September

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<sup>14</sup> Adult women who dedicated themselves to the Church and lived in a convent as nuns. They were not bound by permanent vows, in contrast to women who entered convents and professed the vows. They could enter Beguinages having already been married and they could leave the Beguinages to marry. Some women even entered the Beguinages with children. Their piety was centered around the Eucharist and the humanity of Jesus. Their origin is debated, but around the year 1150. groups of women, eventually called Beguines, began living together for the purposes of economic self-sufficiency and for a religious vocation.

till Easter, abstinence during Advent and Lent, and various works of mortification, devotion, and charity. Superiors may in their discretion dispense them from some of these obligations.

Today, it is impossible to estimate even approximately the number of tertiaries living in the world. There are smaller branches of the tertiaries in South America with two houses at Santiago, Chile, in Switzerland with four convents, and in England with one.

The Third Order Secular of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel has been introduced in the United States. There are at present two congregations with 125 members.

### **The Augustinian Third Order**

Although the direct connection of the Augustinian Order which was officially born in 1256 to the first monasteries founded by Saint Augustine cannot be determined with certainty, however, there is no doubt that the Augustinian Order derived its inspiration from the monastic and coenobitic life and example of Saint Augustine and his Rule.

It is clear from the study of the life and teachings of Saint Augustine that he promoted the evangelical spirituality and love for the Church among the lay people. He also shared his intense prayer life and apostolic works with many of the people he came into contact with.

Like the other Orders, the Augustinian Third Order had its origin in the oblates; particularly in women *oblates*. In the course of time, the word *oblade*, eventually came to be understood no longer as an individual who offers his or her possession to a convent, but as a total offering of oneself. This total offering of self was what characterized the Augustinian Third Order at its birth and what made it worthy of many blessings and privileges. The Augustinian Third Order was approved by Pope Boniface IX in 1399. Among the saints of the Third Order we have Blessed Christine of Spoleto and Blessed Helen of Udine.

### **The Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity**

When the Order of Augustinian Recollects came, with its emphasis on a life of prayer and contemplation, on austerity and

recollection and the spread of the Kingdom of Christ in the missions, many lay people were also inspired by its way of life and wanted to be members of the family. They are men and women who by practicing the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, strive to imitate Christ and spread the gospel message by following the Rule of Life, the Rule and teaching of our Father Saint Augustine, binding themselves by formal promises to share in the Augustinian Recollect way of life, being of one mind and one heart, intent upon God. They live under the guidance of an Augustinian Recollect religious.

Like those of other religious Orders, our tertiaries do not live in common nor make public profession of vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, but they aspire for holiness under the guidance and direction of the religious family.

### **The Third Order, Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity in Japan**

One of the most beautiful pages in our history was written in Japan, where, alongside with the Augustinian Recollect Blessed Francisco de Jesús, Blessed Vicente de San Antonio, Blessed Melchor de San Agustín and Blessed Martín de San Nicolás, were lay people, like Saint Magdalena of Nagasaki and a small group, known in Japan as *dojuku* or *doxico*, - term and organization borrowed from Zen Buddhism. This group was composed of courageous lay men and women who were collaborators of the missionaries in the difficult task of spreading the Kingdom of God among the pagans; and who remained faithful and intrepid witnesses to Christ during the very difficult period of trials and persecutions. These lay men and women were for the most part members of Augustinian Recollect Third Order or of the Confraternity of the Cincture.

Among the personalities involved in the golden pages of our history in Japan, the most brilliant is, no doubt Saint Magdalena of Nagasaki. She is a model missionary not only for our Tertiaries, but also for all of priests, nuns and sisters of the entire Augustinian Recollect Family.

I believe that it was God's plan that Magdalena, "a beautiful child with a gentle look and precocious intelligence, who liked to pray and take part in acts of worship," was born at a time when the Church in Japan was undergoing difficult times. In 1613, barely two

years after Magdalena's birth (1611), the Church in Japan was being systematically and ruthlessly persecuted. For fifty years, Japanese authorities employed shrewd means and devised very painful and cruel tortures to force the faithful to renounce their faith. From 1615 to 1622, many martyrs were executed in Nagasaki.

The missionaries, with the exception of forty-two who remained in hiding, were expelled from Japan in 1614. During these difficult and trying times, Saint Magdalena's parents showed themselves as models of Christians of unwavering faith and courageous Christian witnessing, they clandestinely molded their children on Christian faith and life, perhaps unknowingly preparing them for persecution.

Soldiers forced themselves into the house of Magdalena and ordered her parents and elder siblings to renounce their faith. Because they held steadfast to their faith, they were carried away, leaving Magdalena behind. Magdalena was spared maybe because she was in her early teens. The members of her family were among those brave Christians who joyfully accepted martyrdom of Nagasaki in August and September of 1622.

The coming of the first Augustinian Recollects, Fathers Francisco de Jesus and Vicente de san Antonio, from Manila to Nagasaki in October of 1623 turned out to be very providential to Magdalene, who, after the death of her parents and siblings, decided to totally consecrate her life to God. The missionaries' poor and austere life style and their intensely enthusiastic apostolate called the attention of the faithful including that of Magdalena.

The first Augustinian Recollect missionaries in Japan who were also very enthusiastic promoters of the Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity, invited the faithful to consecrate themselves to God by professing the Rule of Life of the Tertiaries. Magdalena was no doubt among the first to wear the habit of tertiary. We are told that she donned the habit of tertiary and professed the vows of obedience and purity when she was barely fourteen in 1625 under the guidance of Blessed Francisco de Jesús.

Once a full-fledged Augustinian Recollect Tertiary, Magdalena soon became a close collaborator and trusted helper of the missionaries. She was not only an ideal catechist but also lived with the Recollect ministers in their convent, served them in their needs and joined them in their prayers.

But because of the constant dangers they were in, they deemed it prudent to part ways: Father Francisco decided to go north of Japan; while Father Vicente and Magdalena opted to remain in Nagasaki. In September of 1628, the persecution of the Christians became so intense that many were forced to take refuge in the mountains and living in caves and keeping themselves alive by eating edible wild herbs and root crops. Even in the mountains, Magdalena did not cease to minister to the needs of her fellow Christians. Because of her good nature and holiness of life she became a confidante to many of them. She exhorted them to remain steadfast in their faith by reminding them of the great reward that awaited those who remained faithful until the end.

On 4 September 1632, two more Augustinian Recollects arrived in Japan. They were Fathers Melchor de San Agustín and Martín de San Nicolás. They immediately found refuge among some Augustinian Recollect tertiaries. Magdalena sought them out, generously offered her services to them and began teaching them Japanese. Under cover of darkness she would bring them to administer sacraments to dying refugees. But Father Melchor and Father Martín, betrayed by the same sailors who took them to Japan, were arrested on November 2, 1632, and burnt by slow fire on 11 December of the same year. They were beatified in Rome on 23 April 1989.

Very rigorous control by the civil authorities made it almost impossible for religious missionaries to enter Japan. Meanwhile, Magdalena, together with other courageous native catechists, secretly continued their apostolate of preaching, baptizing, counseling and strengthening the faith of others in the mountains.

Orphaned by both her biological parents and religious mentors and guardians, Magdalena sought the spiritual guidance of a Dominican, Fray Jacinto Jordán Ansalone, who was assigned in the Philippines before his two-year missionary work in Japan. Magdalena



**Saint Magdalena of  
Nagasaki. Oil painting at  
Saint Ezekiel Seminary,  
Pozos de Santa Ana,  
Costa Rica**

accepted Father Jacinto's invitation to join the Dominican Third Order. But before she could complete her novitiate and professed as a Dominican tertiary, Fray Jacinto was arrested on September 4, 1634 and was cruelly tortured to death.

We can only guess at Magdalena's reason for stepping out of hiding and surrendering to the authorities. Was it the sad situation of many Christians who apostatized when persecution was intensified in 1633? Did it cross her mind that those who had not yet apostatized needed encouragement and courageous example? Whatever the reason was only Magdalena knew. The fact was that she resisted all guiles employed by the authorities to persuade her to renounce her faith. When everything was in vain, Magdalena was subjected to most cruel and humiliating tortures. We are told that even in the midst of sufferings and almost unbearable pains, Magdalena still had the spirit to sing hymns to the Lord. Towards the middle of the month of October of 1634, Magdalena was hung upside down in a pit and was drowned when the pit was filled by a heavy downpour during the night. The executioners burnt her body and scattered her ashes over the sea to prevent the faithful from keeping her relics and venerating them.

After a long process on her martyrdom, which was formally opened in Macao in 1638, Magdalena, together with Dominican priests, lay people, including Lorenzo Ruiz, and other martyrs of Japan, was beatified at Luneta in Manila by Pope John Paul II on 18 February 1981. And the same Pope John Paul II canonized her on 18 October 1987 at Saint Peter's Square in the Vatican City.

### **The Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity in the Philippines**

The Recollects founded the Third Order in Butuan in 1623. By 1650, there was a community of tertiaries in the mission of Bolinao, which was part of the province of Zambales, now Pangasinan. In 1670, a Third Order already existed in Taytay, Palawan and a few years later another in Casiguran, in the present province of Aurora. The history of Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity in the Philippines was not perhaps as brilliant as the chronicles of the tertiaries of Japan. But it had also been splendid in its own right and had produced wonderful fruits of lay Augustinian Recollect Fraternity. We had our share of tertiaries who lived lives of prayer and generously

devoted themselves to fruitful apostolate. Two in particular are worth mentioning: Clara Calima and Isabel, both of Butuan.

### **Clara Calima**

Clara Calima was a beautiful and rich lady. Through the preaching of the Recollects, she was converted from an immoral life. After her baptism, she set aside a large amount of her money for charity, church ornaments and vessels and she freed a good number of her slaves. When her husband died, Clara asked to be allowed to don the habit of the beatas; but the request was not immediately granted until she showed clear signs of perseverance and constancy. Permission granted by the prior provincial, she received the habit from Fray Jacinto de San Fulgencio who was prior of Butuan.

A very rough habit took the place of costly and delicate dress she used to wear. Clara subjected her body to mortification, continuous fasting, eating only vegetables most of the time. She would spend several hours kneeling in front of the altar in prayer and meditation. She joined the recitation of the Divine Office and was allowed to receive Holy Communion three times a week. She frequently performed corporal and spiritual works of mercy, giving food to the hungry, visiting and comforting the sick. She was also frequently seen consoling the dying and exhorting them to be reconciled with God. She died in 1639.

### **Isabel of Butuan<sup>15</sup>**

There is no mention of her family name. She was appointed by the Augustinian Recollect missionaries as their helper or coworker. She was a catechist. Because of her exemplary Christian faith and life and kindly nature, the missionaries would send her as their emissary to places where pagans had a stronghold to convert them to the faith. She established and managed a school where she primarily taught the village girls the rudiments of Christian faith and strongly exhorted them to do away with their many superstitious beliefs. She was a tireless and courageous exponent of God's words and Church's teachings. Many people came to listen to her whenever

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<sup>15</sup> LUIS DE JESÚS, *370th Anniversary (1646-2016) of Isabel of Butuan. Life of a Pioneering Augustinian Recollect Beata or Tertiary in the Philippines* (excerpted from BLAIR AND ROBERTSON 36 (109-138)), in *The Recoletos Observer* vol 18 (January – December 2017) 44-45.

or wherever she spoke because grace and tenderness, and modest conduct accompanied her words.

After the death of her husband, Fray Jacinto de San Fulgencio acceded to her request to be allowed to don the habit of the Third Order. Having received the habit, Isabel responded with a greater dedication to the needs of others by performing corporal and spiritual works of mercy, more contemplative life, and the practice of asceticism in imitation of her model Clara Calima. She died in 1646.

### **Definition and Transmission of Augustinian Recollect Charism**

Although some of our own historians and scholars are of the opinion that the topic on defining our Augustinian Recollect charism and its subsequent transmission does not directly depend on the solution of historical problem of establishing the direct connection between the Augustinian Order which was established by Pope Alexander IV by the Bull *Licet Ecclesiae* in 1256 with the monasteries founded by Saint Augustine in Tagaste and Hippo, however, I strongly believe that knowledge about this historical problem will help us in great measure in understanding better our charism.

The historian-canonist Venerable Jenaro Fernández, backed by abundant historical documents and solid arguments, defends the connection between the Order of Saint Augustine of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century and the foundations made by Saint Augustine.<sup>16</sup> For Father Goñi, there are no arguments that can show with absolute certainty the affirmative side of the question, but he is of the opinion that the weight of the tradition makes the belief in the historical connection reasonable.<sup>17</sup>

Fr. Angel Martínez Cuesta, on the contrary, absolutely denies the continuity. He writes: “The Order of the Hermits of Saint Augustine is neither directly nor indirectly connected with the foundations of the Saint.”<sup>18</sup>

As confirmation of his opinion, Martínez Cuesta adds that the Augustinians of 13<sup>th</sup> Century were not really successful in

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<sup>16</sup> FERNÁNDEZ, 3-34.

<sup>17</sup> Paul GOÑI, 4-5.

<sup>18</sup> ÁNGEL MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *En torno al carisma agustino recoleto*, in *Recollectio* 7 (1984) 27-63



their attempts at making Saint Augustine “the inspirer and guide of their religious life.” Their juridical structure, their spirituality, the governance and activity of the Order were mendicant in nature until the very birth of the Recollection. On the other hand, Martínez Cuesta affirms that Saint Augustine was the object of a special cult, that the Augustinians studied with enthusiasm his writings, and that by the third decade of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, “they started feeling being authentic children of Saint Augustine.”<sup>19</sup> Of course, very long before when they were still living in hermitages, they were following the Rule of Saint Augustine.

Historically, we are linked with the charism of the Order of the Hermits of Saint Augustine, at least by free and joyful choice, with the person of the great Father Saint Augustine. The *Constitutions* expressly and proudly affirm this fact: “The Order of the Augustinian Recollect is rightfully a true heir of the religious family founded by Saint Augustine.”<sup>20</sup>

Not only the members of the Third Order, but all of us, members of the entire Augustinian Recollect Family, should know our corporate identity, that is, our charism, that which distinguishes us from other religious orders or congregations. Love presupposes knowledge; and we cannot remain faithful to the Order if we are ignorant of its charism. Francisco Moriones in the first volume of his book *Espiritualidad Agustino Recoleta*,<sup>21</sup> has written that “because it includes as its most principal parts the person and doctrine of Saint Augustine, our charism is very wide in scope and is not easy to explain.” This has been studied by some of our own Augustinian Recollect scholars.

Venerable Jenaro Fernández had seriously studied the content of the Fifth Definition of the Chapter of Toledo; and his analysis of historical documents, strongly supported by juridical arguments, brought him to the conclusion that the purpose of the Recollection was to satisfy the desire for a greater perfection of some religious and of a stricter way of life, and not the restoration of discipline in the

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>20</sup> *OAR Constitutions*, no. 7

<sup>21</sup> English translation of this volume I is already available, but still unpublished: *The Augustinian Recollect Spirituality*. Unless otherwise stated reference to this volume will be taken from this English version.

Order of Saint Augustine. What must be talked about is recollection, not reform.<sup>22</sup>

Serafín Prado, Spiritual Theology professor at Marcilla, Navarra, Spain has made a profound exposition of the elements that characterize the spirituality of Saint Augustine, the assimilation of this spirituality by the Order of Saint Augustine and the contribution the Augustinian Recollection has made. The Recollection offered a greater intensification in the manner of living the Augustinian values: interiority, austerity, prayer and apostolate. Fr. Prado says that this emphasis created a life style which was sufficient to justify the specific difference between the Augustinian Recollect spirituality and the spiritualities of other Augustinian Orders or religious congregations.

Two other Augustinian Recollect writers affirm and defend that the purpose of the Recollection was to satisfy the desire of some religious to live more strictly the *Rule* of Saint Augustine and the *Constitutions* of the Order. Angel Martínez Cuesta writes: “We, the Augustinian Recollects, were born in December 1588, in the womb of the Augustinian Province of Castile, with the intention of establishing a system of life that is more austere and perfect.”<sup>23</sup>

Paul Goñi favors Jenaro’s thesis, namely, that we are dealing with recollection and not a reform. It was a case of a definition promulgated by a provincial chapter for a specific province. This foundational definition was approved by the prior general for the said province. It was intended only for those religious who freely desired to live in houses that would be “designated and established” within the Province of Castile. If it were a reform of discipline in the strict sense of the word and on the level of Order, the solutions would have originated from the prior general, the general chapter or the Holy See.<sup>24</sup>

The *Constitutions* also specify that the founders desired to live with new norms the way of consecrated life which Saint Augustine established in the Church, illustrated by his doctrine and examples and ordered by his Rule.<sup>25</sup> These new norms are found in the *Forma de vivir de los frailes agustinos descalzos* (The Way of

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<sup>22</sup> FERNÁNDEZ, 98-116

<sup>23</sup> *Resumen histórico de la Orden*, cfr. *Constituciones*, Appendix II, 331

<sup>24</sup> Paul GOÑI, *The Chain of Our History*, 4.

<sup>25</sup> *Const.* # 3

Life of the Discalced Augustinian Friars) ordered by the provincial and councilors of the Province of Castile. The *Forma de vivir* (The Way of Life) was written by Fray Luis de León, approved by the prior provincial and his council in September 1589 and, eight years later, it was confirmed by the Holy See.<sup>26</sup>

Our historians tell us that as a proof of the austerity of life prevalent in the houses of the Recollection not only was a strict observance of the *Rule* and *Constitutions* practiced, but that the *Forma de vivir* was also in force, with its spirit and ordinances that demanded so much sacrifice from the religious who lived in those houses. Historian Martínez Cuesta had written about this *Forma de vivir*: "Its fourteen chapters translate and concretize the desire for greater perfection in an intensification of the religious life. They were first practiced in the convent of Talavera in October of 1589."<sup>27</sup>

Tirso Alesanco elaborates on the theme of contemplation, which is, in Saint Augustine, communitarian and apostolic. Because he is ordained towards God, man is essentially contemplative. Through the process of interiority and transcendence, the intellect and the will of man encounter God, who is the supreme Truth and the supreme Good. The Augustinian concept of man is that he is totally dependent on God in his origin, and is destined toward Him. He is from God and is for God. He unselfishly loves God, without limit. This is the *amor castus* [chaste love] of the Augustinian contemplation.

If we are all united to God by the bond of contemplation, it follows that we all "communicate" in God. The Augustinian contemplation is essentially communitarian. The community needs organization. Another type of love plays its fundamental role in the communitarian aspect of the charism. It is the *amor ordinatus* [ordained love] by which "we use" material things, and we delight in God and in created rational beings. The vow of poverty is the communitarian vow par excellence.

The "chaste love" of the contemplation, besides being a force of unity, is also a force of diffusion, that is, diffusive. Man, according to Saint Augustine, dedicates himself to the service of all. He is available to attend to the needs of the Church. Like Saint Augustine himself, the Recollection knew how to reconcile the holy

<sup>26</sup> MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, 331

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

leisure or inactivity (*otium sanctum*) of the contemplation and the holy activity (business) of the apostolate. Already, she accepted the missions of the Philippines in the year 1605. It is the diffusive love.

Summing up: The “chaste love” of contemplation, the “ordered love” of life in community, and the “diffusive love” of the apostolate are the three essential elements of the Augustinian Recollect charism.

Martínez Cuesta has correctly written that the doctrine on the three loves found in the *Constitutions*, is the best expression of our charism that we have at present, and that every effort to deepen, strengthen and embellish it, must take as a point of departure the foundation established in the *Constitutions*.<sup>28</sup>

This is the plan that we have adopted. In identifying our charism, the *Constitutions* have offered us a system of spirituality that has profound Augustinian roots, and are, therefore, a reflection of the ascetic and monastic doctrine of Saint Augustine and the original purpose of the Recollection.

After the *Mutuae relationes*, the examples of life and heroic actions of our Augustinian Recollect forefathers have “greater specific weight.” Like the *Mutuae relationes*, our *Constitutions* affirm that our charism must be “lived, protected, deepened, and developed” by the members of the Order. The foundational experience has a dynamic character. It is not transmitted to be zealously kept by the institution. It is communicated to each of the members of the institute “to be lived, safeguarded, deepened, and constantly developed by them.”<sup>29</sup>

### **The Relationship between the SARF and OAR Religious**

How does this doctrine about the charism of the Order affect the Augustinian Recollect Secular Fraternity? The members of the Secular Fraternity “have full membership in the Augustinian family and share in its ideal, its graces and its richness.”<sup>30</sup>

Hence, the *Rule of Life* is not less insistent than the *Constitutions* in exhorting the tertiaries that their personal,

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<sup>28</sup> *En torno al carisma agustino recoleto*, in *Recollectio*, Roma, 1984

<sup>29</sup> MR 11.

<sup>30</sup> *Rule of Life*, 4

communitarian and apostolic endeavors be marked with the seal of the charism of Saint Augustine and of the Order.

Here are some examples of some points that both the *Rule of Life* and the *Constitutions* exhort that SARF members should perform:

- To live the Augustinian ideal of union of hearts and minds, in order to make present today in the Church and in the world the spirit of Saint Augustine;
- To live the Gospel in the light of the experience and the spirituality of the Order of the Augustinian Recollects,
- Their vocation should them to search and proclaim God..., according to the charism of the Order, and exert efforts in making the union of souls and hearts in God a reality.
- Saint Augustine must be their guide and model.
- To have an attitude of conversion and interiorization as demanded by the Augustinian Recollect charism.
- To be imbibed with Augustinian transcendent interiorization which is the principle of every piety, the way to contemplation, to community and apostolate,
- They must feel animated by the Augustinian charism in order to make the liturgical, spiritual and missionary life of the parish community alive,
- They must deepen their knowledge of the charism of the Order;
- To study the life and works of Saint Augustine;
- To imbue all their works with the charism of the Order;
- The promise to tend to perfection according to the spirit of the evangelical counsels, according to the *Rule of Life* of the Augustinian Recollect Secular Fraternity and the spirit of the Rule of Saint Augustine.<sup>31</sup>

Our Constitutions no. 114, once again reminds us of the mandate to all religious to promote the Augustinian Recollect Secular Fraternity whose members work for Christian perfection according to

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<sup>31</sup> *Ritual*, 9.

the charism of the Recollection as lay men and women. By means of participating in the same charism, the Secular Augustinian Recollects form and develop bonds of union with the members of the Order as well as with the hierarchy of the universal Church, thus fulfilling a common mission in the Church and serving as a leaven in the world.<sup>32</sup>

The Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity is not merely a lay association. But it disseminates and communicates our OAR spirituality to the world in which they live. We can honestly and correctly say that something would be missing in the spirituality and presence of our Order if SARF did not exist.

The SARF is definitely and clearly secular by nature because it exercises its responsibility in the world and not in the convent or monastery. SARF is definitely of the order because of their essential, not just incidental, relationship with the OAR religious. They should be invited to intensely share in the spirituality and mission of the Order. Our SARF is a distinct but not an independent branch of the Order.

We have always emphasized the sharing of the SARF in our spirituality, but very rarely their responsibility in sharing in the mission of the Order. This new element of sharing in the mission of the Order demands a more serious commitment on the part of Order to the development and formation of the members of the SARF.

The ecclesial and international nature of the SARF requires on the part of the Order a more active role in guiding and developing the formation of the SARF. I strongly believe that in order for SARF to really share in the spirituality or charism and mission of the Order, the Order that should guide the formation. The formation of SARF is the responsibility of the Order, not even of a Province, much less of a particular community.

In the relationship between the OAR religious and SARF members, two extremes should be avoided: On the part of the SARF excessive independence or excessive dependence, and, on the part of the religious the lack of interest or desire to control.

We, as members of the entire Augustinian Recollect Family, the members of the SARF included, have a responsibility to work together, particularly in the area of formation of the members so that

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<sup>32</sup> AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECTS, *The Rule. Constitutions. Additional Code* (Rome 2012) 136.

they may represent to the world in which they live the spirit and mission of the Order. And we, the members of the First Order, have the responsibility of insuring and guiding the development of the adequate formation of the members of our Third Order.

To wind up this paper, we read the following in the *Rule of Life* of the Secular Augustinian Recollects:

The Augustinian Recollect Secular Fraternity receives Christians who, called by the Holy Spirit to the perfection of charity, commit themselves to live the Gospel according to the experience and spirituality of the Order of Augustinian Recollects. Its members have full membership in the Augustinian family and share in its ideal, its graces and its richness. They are sons and daughters of the Augustinian Recollection in fraternal communion of its spiritual goods, and are called to the mission of service to the Church and the world according to their own secular condition.

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# Augustinian Recollect Chroniclers and Historians

## Prologue

Madrid-born thinker George Santayana (1863-1952) penned the well-known quotation: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. In the first stage of life, the mind is frivolous and easily distracted, it misses progress by failing in consecutiveness and persistence. This is the condition of children and barbarians, in which instinct has learned nothing from experience.” And here’s an oft-cited version: “Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” Indeed, it is in the thorough rereading of the past that we discover the blunders and the triumphs of those who preceded us. And from those bygone experiences, we can figure out the current mess we are in or the progress we benefit from. Then we can change things for the better by charting the path that leads us to a bright future. Equipped with some knowledge of past mistakes and shortcomings, we can definitely shun the repetition of errors. Having learnt from the valued records of the feats and what went before us, we too can duplicate their victories. That’s where the value of history lies.

History further “illumines reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life and brings us tidings of antiquity,” says Cicero (106 BC-43 BC). Without history, oral or written, there exists no memory of achievements or triumphs and failures or catastrophes. Such was the well-founded complaint of Augustinian Recollect chronicler Pedro de San Francisco de Asís (†1754): “It has been a very common complaint among historians of the Order about time as the destroyer of all things and of the neglect in leaving advisory news thereof. There is no doubt that for these two reasons the memory

of many valiant deeds of excellent religious, who have filled our Recollect Order in the Philippines with accolades, have extended the Catholic Faith indefatigably at the cost of ineffable hardships and have destroyed the abominable altars of heathen blindness, has been lost.”

The present installment of icons is a tribute of no small measure to those religious whose common trait is their intense affection for the Order of Augustinian Recollects and who have handed down to the next generations myriad accounts of the laudable triumphs—and even travails—of the Augustinian Recollection.

### **Father Andrés de San Nicolás—First Recollect General Chronicler**

This year 2007 marks the 390<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of the first general chronicler of the Order of Augustinian Recollects—Father Andrés de San Nicolás. The pioneering historian was born of noble parents in Santa Fe de Bogotá [other biographers say it was Tunja], Colombia, in 1617. At age 17, he professed the monastic vows and lived at El Desierto de la Candelaria, cradle of the Augustinian Recollection in America. Biographers say he traveled to Spain in 1645 never to return to the land of his birth. The general chapter of 1654 had ordained that the general history or chronicles of the Order be written, nearly half a century after the Augustinian Recollection was born. Father Andrés was named its *cronista general* in 1657. By 1663, he finished writing the book since the ecclesiastical licenses and censorship had already been granted to it. A general chapter shortly after approved its printing.

Some early Augustinian historians had impugned Father Andrés’ *Historia general de los Religiosos Descalzos del Orden de los Ermitaños del gran Padre y Doctor de la Iglesia S. Agustín de la Congregación de España y de las Indias* [General history of the Discalced Religious of the Order of the Hermits of the great Father and Doctor of the Church Saint Augustine of the Congregation of Spain and the Indies] or *Crónicas* [Chronicles] as bereft of historical criticism and bibliographical references, even replete with fiction and fantasy. Such allegations were deftly demolished by fellow Recollect historians. No one, moreover, had ever accused him of dearth of love

for historical truth, much less had one ever doubted his great love for the Augustinian Recollection.

Among his historical works were *Tesoro de Palermo y su monte peregrino. Vida de Santa Rosalía* [Palermo's Treasure and Its Pilgrim Mountain. Life of Saint Rosalia]; *Proventus messis dominicæ fratrum excalceatorum S.P. Augustini Congregationis Hispaniae et Indiarum* [Increase of Lord's Harvest of the Discalced Friars of Holy Father Augustine of the Congregation of Spain and the Indies]; *Historia de la imagen de Nuestra Señora de Copacavana* [History of the Image of Our Lady of Copacavana]; *Funiculus triplex privilegiorum Fratrum discalceatorum S.P. Augustini Congregationum Hispaniae, Italiae et Galliae* [Triple Cord of the Privileges of the Discalced Friars of Holy Father Augustine of the Congregations of Spain, Italy and France] and *Apología de la Descalcez Agustiniiana contra el p. Maestro Carlos Moreau* [Defense of the Augustinian Recollection against Father Master Carlos Moreau]. He likewise authored some ascetico-mystical works and excellent Latin verses. The Colombian chronicler passed away on 20 November 1666 in Madrid, Spain.

### **Father Luis de Jesús**

Author of the second volume of the *Crónicas*, Luis de Jesús was born in Toledo, Spain, in May 1622. At 16, he pronounced his vows at the convent of Madrid of the Recollect Province of Castile. Successively, he became a theology professor in Salamanca, provincial councilor, prior of Valladolid for three terms, prior provincial (1678-1683). After the death of the first general chronicler, Father Luis de Jesús was named to take his place. In his *Crónicas*, published in Madrid in 1681, he wrote only about facts and did not engage much in ascetic reflections. His general history abounds in continual expressions of love for the Recollect Order. Father Luis bewails the pointless dearth of historical sources and the prevailing "neglect of great religious to use the pen and leave news for posterity." At 71, he joined his Maker in June 1693 in Madrid.

### **Father Diego de Santa Teresa**

Diego de Santa Teresa wrote the third volume of the *Crónicas*, covering the 1651-1660 period. A native of Navarra,

Spain, he professed the evangelical counsels at the convent of Portillo in Zaragoza. He was a theology professor whose training and wisdom greatly amazed his students. For twenty-one years he held the position of superior of such convents as Calatayud, Zuera, Borja, Valencia and Zaragoza. Twice he was elected provincial councilor. The 1706 general chapter named him general councilor. A prolific author of at least ten works, Father Diego devoted most of his time to writing. Biographers dubbed him as an erudite and saintly religious. He was the general chronicler from 1704 until his demise which occurred at the Recollect college of Zaragoza in June 1722.

### **Father Pedro de San Francisco de Asís**

Author of the fourth volume of the *Crónicas* which covered the events in 1661-1690, and editor of its third, Pedro de San Francisco de Asís was born in Hija, Teruel, Spain. He arrived in Manila in 1729. He was shortly after sent to the Immaculate Conception convent in Cebu. In 1732, he transferred to Manila. Two years later, the provincial chapter elected him procurator general. In 1737, he was named secretary provincial. But in November of the same year, Father Pedro was sent to their convent in Mexico to be its superior and procurator general. While in Mexico, he wrote in 1739 a chronological account of the travails and persecutions suffered by his confreres in the Calamianes Islands. In 1744, he returned to Spain and was again affiliated to the Province of Aragon. His superiors soon after named him general councilor and chronicler. He passed away in the convent of Alagón in Zaragoza towards 1754.

### **Father Pedro Fabo**

A favorite son of Marcilla, Navarra, Spain, Pedro Fabo was born on 1 July 1873. A Recollect since 1889, he travelled to Tunja, Colombia, in 1895. Ordained as priest in Bogotá, he was subsequently assigned to Arauca in Casanare, Támara, Manare and El Desierto. He was named general councilor and chronicler in 1914. As such, he wrote three voluminous tomes of *Historia general*



*de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos*: vol. 5, published in Madrid in 1918 with 582 pages; vol. 6/1: [1696-1706] Madrid 1919, 463 pages; and vol. 6/2: [1707-1714], Madrid 1927, 514 pages.

The illustrious son of Marcilla likewise penned two volumes of *Historia de la Provincia de la Candelaria* as well as *Historia de Marcilla* and *Historia de Manizales*. He authored short biographies of such prominent Recollects as Father Mariano Bernad, Bishop Toribio Mingueña and Father Santiago Matute.

From Father Fabo's prolific pen came his prize-winning novels: *El Doctor Navascués* [Dr. Navascués] and *Corazón de oro* [Heart of Gold]. Among his other works were three more novels, *Amores y Letras* [Loves and Letters], *Justicia* [Justice] and *Conversión de San Agustín* [Saint Augustine's Conversion]; *Ruiseñores* [Nightingales], a book of poetry and *Pétalos de novela* [Petals of Novel], a collection of short stories. In all, he authored over titles. A member of various Spanish royal academies and several academies of Panamá, Colombia and France, he authored wrote books on literary criticism and ethno-linguistics. Death came for him on 20 September 1933 in Rome, Italy.

### **Father Gregorio Ochoa**

Gregorio Ochoa del Carmen saw the light of day on 12 March 1874 in Pamplona, Navarra. He came to Manila in 1897 and joined the faculty of Colegio de San Jose in Bacolod City till the first formal Recollect school closed down in September 1898. Not long afterward, he returned to Manila to study and finish his Bachelor of Arts at the University of Santo Tomas and then took up Law.

As general chronicler, he wrote three volumes of the *Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos*: vol. 7 [1706-1754], published in Zaragoza in 1924 with 722 pages; vol. 8 [1755-1796], Zaragoza 1929, 640 pages; and vol. 9 [1797-1835], Zaragoza 1929, 509 pages. He further authored the 488-page biography of the Recollect martyrs Blessed Francisco de Jesús and Blessed Vicente de San Antonio. Apart from his passion for history, Father Ochoa possessed exquisite literary talent and



contributed countless poems for publication in Manila periodicals before leaving for Spain in 1907. He was the director of the *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino*. The 82-year-old chronicler returned to his Maker on 14 December 1956 in Marcilla, Navarra.

### Father Manuel Carceller

Manuel Carceller y Galindo de la Sagrada Familia is worthy of great admiration for having written the monumental volumes of the *Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos*. His three tomes covered the very eventful 19<sup>th</sup> century: vol. 10 [1808-1836], published in Madrid in 1962 with 808 pages and ten pages of photographs; vol. 11 [1837-1866], Madrid 1967, with 894 pages and ten pages of photographs; and vol. 12 [1867-1891] Madrid 1974, with 913 pages and thirteen pages of photographs. His general history contained hitherto unpublished sources related to Philippine history.



The general chronicler was born on 3 July 1899 in Forcall, Castellón, Spain. A praiseworthy member of the Recollect Order since 1916, he served either as seminary professor or superior in Spanish houses in the early years of his priestly ministry. He later became prior provincial of Saint Nicholas Province and general chronicler. He regularly contributed articles and biographical notes to such Recollect periodicals as *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino*, *Todos Misioneros* and *Santa Rita y el Pueblo Cristiano*.

At age 84, Father Carceller returned to the Father in heaven on 4 July 1983 in Madrid.

### Father Andrés del Espíritu Santo

A native of Valladolid, Spain, and member of the pioneering mission, Father Andrés del Espíritu Santo (1585-1658?) founded the town of Masinloc in 1607 and the convent of Cavite Puerto in 1616. He was superior of the Recollects in the Philippines for a total of twelve years either as vicar provincial or as prior provincial, deftly

guiding the young province in its decisive years of challenges and new missionary horizons. After an 11-month journey from Spain via Mexico, he returned to Manila at the helm of the 23-member fifth mission to Manila in 1622 that included the future martyrs Blessed Melchor de San Agustín and Blessed Vicente de San Antonio.

Historians owe it to him for having chronicled the early Recollect convents, icons, missionaries and missionary arrivals in our country (1605-1645). On the 4<sup>th</sup> Centennial of Christianization of the Philippines (1565-1965), his chronicles entitled *Relación de la fundación y progresos de esta santa provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino* was published in the 55<sup>th</sup> volume of the *Bulletin of Saint Nicholas Province* in pages 67-179.

### **Father Benito de San Pablo**

A work that shed light on some aspects of 17<sup>th</sup>-century Philippine culture and history is Fr. Benito de San Pablo's (1685-1768) *Tratado de algunas cosas notables pertenecientes a los conventos de ministerios y administración espiritual de la Santa Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Agustinos Recoletos Descalzos de Filipinas*. The friar from Jarandilla, Extremadura, Spain, was likewise a reliable biographer of the Servants of God Mother Dionisia and Cecilia Rosa Talangpaz. Besides being a superior of skilled governance, an exemplary prelate and a perfect religious, he was a prolific writer who published several books on sermons and devotional prayers.

### **Father José de la Concepción**

A native of Cinc-Torres of the Spanish province of Castellón, José de la Concepción was born on 5 January 1702. Two years after his arrival in Manila in 1723, he was ordained as priest and sent to Cavite for his first apostolic ministry. He was subsequently appointed procurator general, parish priest of various Zambales parishes, local prior, provincial chronicler and prior provincial for three triennia.

Besides being a man of sciences and letters, Father José de la Concepción was an exemplary religious and prudent superior. He established the historical archives of Saint Nicholas Province, ordering each religious community to keep the books of necrologies and official correspondence for future researchers. In 1751, he wrote

the *Memorias presentado al Rey Nuestro sobre el origen, progresos y actual estado de la Provincia de San Nicolás* [Historical Account Presented to Our King about the Origin, Progress and Actual State of Saint Nicholas Province]. The valuable work was serialized in *Boletín*



de la *Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino* as *Reseña histórica de la provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filiinas desde su origen hasta el año 1750*. His biographical work entitled *Vida de N.G.P. San Agustín* [Life of Our Great Father Saint Augustine] saw print in 1753. Father José de la Concepción's demise on 11 September 1757 at San Sebastian Convent was deeply mourned by his confreres.

### Father Juan de la Concepción

The fourteen volumes of *Historia general de Philipinas* (Manila 1788-1792) immortalized the name of Father Juan de la Concepción. The celebrated historian was born in Madrid, Spain, on 26 June 1724. His parents were Manuel Romero and Antonia López. Father Juan professed his simple vows in 1740 at the Copacavana Covent in Madrid. A few days after arriving in Manila in 1752, he was appointed preacher and master of the students in San Nicolás Convent in Intramuros. To learn the Zambal tongue, he was dispatched to Iba, Zambales, in 1753. He was named theology professor in San Nicolás Convent in 1756 and shortly after curate of Casborran [now Alaminos in Pangasinan]. He was prior provincial in 1759-1761 and provincial chronicler for twenty-one years. He was subsequently assigned to Bolinao, Manila and Vigan. In Cavite City where he passed away in March 1786.

*Historia general de Philipinas* saw print two years after its author's demise. Father Juan had sided with the views of colonial bishops and governor general in the episcopal visitation controversy against the religious superiors' prevailing adamant rejection. From Governor Simón Anda y Salazar, in February 1775, he had sought, "following his conscience," his canonical collation for the curacy of Balingcaguín in old Zambales [actual Mabini, Pangasinan]. Coming from an ex-provincial, provincial chronicler, retired

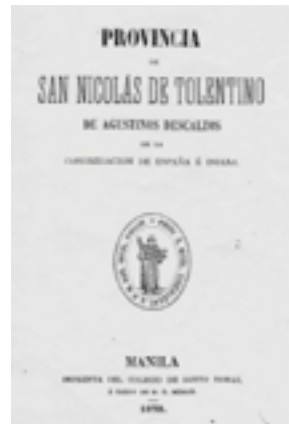


theology professor and synodal examiner of the archdiocese, his request for canonical collation doubtless elicited antagonism from the incumbent superiors and created ill effects on his confreres. Thus when Father Juan's work was finally published no accolades were heaped upon him, albeit he really deserved them. Hundreds of copies of his valuable work were simply stacked in oblivion in San Nicolas convent for years.

*Historia general de Philipinas*, according to a church historian, is a "detailed piece of writing and is perhaps most complete of all the histories that issued from the hands of missionaries up to this time." Adds Wenceslao E. Retana in 1893, "all the bibliographers are of one mind that this is the most important and remarkable work of all historical works of the Philippines ever been written."

### **Father Patricio Marcellán**

For a long time, researchers always quoted the 340-page work *Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Agustinos Descalzos de la Congregación de España e Indias* [Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino of the Discalced Augustinians of the Congregation of Spain and the Indies] whose author's name did not appear in the book. Published in Manila 1879, the book was later identified by the great biographer Father Francisco Sádaba as written by Patricio Marcellán. Some portions of Marcellán's opus were included in the *Blair and Robertson* collection.



Patricio Marcellán de San José, born on 17 March 1834 at Buñuel, Navarra, Spain, became a member of the Recollect Order in 1850 in Monteagudo, Navarra. He joined the first group of Recollect missionaries, who studied theology in Marcilla, Navarra, where a new convent had been founded a year earlier, and arrived in Manila in 1866.

Father Marcellán's early pastorate included Mandaue and Poro (Camotes Islands) in Cebu. In 1870, he was elected official preacher of San Nicolás church at Intramuros, the first to hold such

position. In July 1870, he was named prior of San Sebastian Convent, then parish curate of Ermita, Manila, in 1873, and again as prior of San Sebastian Convent and as provincial chronicler. He was parish priest of Antipolo in 1876-1883 and Maragondon, Cavite, in 1885-1887. He journeyed back to Spain. He was only 55 years old when he passed away on 11 March 1889 in Marcilla.

### Father Pedro Corro

Born on 29 December 1864 in Berceo, La Rioja, the iconic Recollect historian joined the Order in 1882. Pedro Corro arrived in Manila in 1887 and was ordained as priest in Cebu City a year after. The parishes of Liloan, Carmen and Danao in Cebu as well as Maria in Siquijor witnessed his pastoral zeal. He was the first and last rector of Colegio de San José in Bacolod City. He was back in Spain in 1905 and successively resided in the convents of Sigüenza, Granada, Madrid and Monachil, and since 1931 in Brazil. The eighty-year-old chronicler rejoined his Lord and Master in San Paulo, Brazil, on 19 July 1934, after receiving the last Sacraments.

Father Corro wrote or translated into Spanish various novenas, biographies of saints and other books on the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph. As general chronicler, he left behind 2,800 manuscript pages related to OAR history and countless unpublished works.



By the young novices of Casiciaco (Baguio City), Mira-Nila (Quezon City), Monteagudo (Navarra, Spain) and in Recollect novitiates elsewhere in the world, he would be remembered for decades for his 506-page textbook *La Orden de Agustinos Recoletos. Compendio histórico* [The Order of Augustinian Recollects. Historical Compendium] published in 1930 in Monachil, Granada. Aimed to increase the knowledge of all Recollects—especially young religious and formands—about great feats of confreres of yore, the prior general urged everyone to assiduously read and study Corro's textbook.

### **Father Francisco Sádaba**

Francisco Sádaba del Carmen (1871-1925) is the author of the highly acclaimed catalogue of Recollects *Catálogo de los religiosos agustinos recoletos de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas desde el año 1606, en que llegó la primera misión, hasta nuestros días*, published in Madrid in 1906. It was a fitting tribute to the third centenary of the arrival of the Recollects in the Philippines.

An essential research tool, the *Catálogo de los religiosos agustinos recoletos* is an avalanche of valuable data and information, including names of parishes and churches under Recollect jurisdiction. Friar biographers collated data, assignments to various parishes and offices, such myriad feats as construction of churches, rectories, stairways, ramparts, bridges, roads, watchtowers, belfries, markets, leather tanning, grammar book-writing, devotional books, sermon collections, hymnals, lexicographies, histories, etc, of every religious priest and brother who worked in the Philippines up to 1906. You can read, too, about the lives and heroism of those countless Recollect martyrs of Japan.



Father Sádaba from Andosilla, Navarra, Spain, where he was born on 21 August 1867, professed the vows at the convent of Monteagudo, Navarra in 1887. At a young age of 22 he taught philosophy at the same convent where he received the holy order of presbyterate. He further theology at the convent of San Millán de la Cogolla, La Rioja. He then left for Manila in 1892. Assigned to teach at Vigan seminary for three years, he was subsequently sent to Rosario, Batangas. He was secretary provincial in 1895-1902; provincial councilor and chronicler in 1902-1906; secretary general of the Order in 1906-1908 and procurator general in 1908-1910. On 6 August 1925, he died of cancer in Manila where he had returned a year before from Spain.

### **Father Licinio Ruiz**

A native of Mirabeche, Burgos, Spain, Licinio Ruiz de Santa Eulalia saw the light of day on 6 December 1872. Ordained

in Cebu City in 1895, he was assigned as assistant priest of Jimenez in Misamis and later sent to Cagayan de Oro parish. The Revolution forced the exodus of many Recollects to Spain including Father Licinio. In 1906, he returned to Manila and was sent to Negros where he subsequently served the curacies of Bacolod, Sibulan and Siaton. He was designated by the archbishop of Manila as apostolic administrator of Jaro Diocese until 1908 when he was named parish priest of Zamboanguita in Negros Oriental and in 1916, curate of Lazi and Maria in Siquijor.

As provincial chronicler in 1922, Father Licinio reorganized the historical archives in Spain. He was reappointed as chronicler in 1925 and 1931. In 1928-1930, he served Bacolod parish as parish priest and vicar forane. The 68-year-old Father Licinio returned to his Creator on 11 September 1940 in Cebu City.



For writing in 1925 the two volumes of *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas*, Father Licinio's place in Philippine and Recollect history is firmly secured. Described as "an arsenal replete with very interesting historical antecedents and data," the book made effective use of the archival sources of *cosas notables* in writing the histories of the towns and parishes of Negros, Mindanao, Cebu, Bohol, Marianas, Romblon, Mindoro, Zambales, etc. He further wrote articles on citizens of Burgos, Spain, and their role in the evangelization of the Philippines, for which he was deservedly commended by the civil authorities of his home province.

### **Father Fidel de Blas**

Gregorio Fidel de Blas del Carmen was born in Arnedo, La Rioja, Spain, on 25 April 1845. He exercised his pastoral ministry in Antipolo, Mindoro and Cavite. His religious designations included that as prior of San Sebastian, vicar provincial, provincial councilor, prior provincial of Saint Nicholas Province (1888). At age 69, Father Fidel de Blas was raised to the Order's highest post as prior general (1914-1918). His advanced age and continuing ill health, however, constrained him to resign as prior general. On 19 March 1920, he

found eternal repose in Almighty God in Marcilla. A fervent and indefatigable missionary, he was a religious who faithfully observed the Rule and Constitutions, a superior who displayed utmost discretion and prudence in his decisions.

In 1882, Father Fidel published his *Estado General de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino*.

His magnum opus *Labor evangélica de los Padres Agustinos Recoletos en las Islas Filipinas*, published in 1910 in Zaragoza, Spain, contains highly accurate colored maps. It is said that during World War II, the Japanese invaders took pains in finding copies of *Labor evangélica* to help them in

the occupation of the Philippines. Researchers always cull important information from the book that printed the statistics (tribute-payers, baptisms, weddings, deaths) of Recollect parishes and missions during the Spanish era, provincial superiors, local priors, parish priests, etc. It is doubtless a rich source for population histories and demographic growths of Recollect doctrinas.



### **Father José García Martínez**

The significant work to remember José García Martínez de San Lorenzo Mártir by is none other than the 182-page *Un Plantel de Sampaguitas en el Vergel Recoleta Agustiniiano o la Congregación de Agustinas Recoletas Misioneras de Filipinas*. This book is the highly informative biography of the Servants of God Mother Dionisia and Mother Cecilia Rosa Talangpaz and the history of their Congregation of Augustinian Recollect Sisters, saw print in Zaragoza, Spain, in 1955. Another work serialized in the *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino* in 1958-1959 and reprinted in *Recollectio* in 1985, was the definitive history of the defunct San Nicolás church and convent in Intramuros, Manila, popularly known as Recoletos. The magnificent church enshrined the miraculous image of *Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno*, widely revered by Filipino devotees everywhere as the Black Nazarene. Father García composed several hymns and chants.

The historian was born in Ezcaray, La Rioja, Spain on 2 October 1906. A priest since 1929, he served Romblon parish and the curacies of Bacong and Sibulan in Negros Oriental as well as that of San Juan parish in Siquijor. After recovering from an accident in 1932, he was named parish priest of La Castellana in Negros Occidental. Father García returned to Spain and in his beloved hometown he died of cancer on 8 December 1965.



### Father Marcelino Simonena

Olite, Navarra was the birthplace of Marcelino Simonena y Palacios. His birthdate is 2 June 1873. During his Philippine sojourn, he was a missionary of Negros where he ministered to the pastoral needs of the parishes of Talisay, Hinigaran, Carol-an, Kabangkalan. He was a conventual in the Immaculate Conception convent at Cebu City. In November 1898, the revolutionists arrested him in Kabangkalan. He regained his freedom less than three months later and returned to Manila, thence to Spain. He held various high positions in the Order: prior of several houses in the Philippines and Spain, prior provincial in 1919 and general councilor in 1929.

Father Simonena penned the *History of the Recollect convent of Cebu*, included as a separate chapter in Licinio Ruiz's *Sinopsis histórica*. He authored *Manual del novicio agustino recoleto* [Augustinian Recollect Novice's Manual]; *Lo que debe saber un misionero* [What the Missionary Must Know], *La Medicina aplicada por los padres agustinos recoletos en Filipinas* [Medicine applied by the Augustinian Recollect Fathers in the Philippines] and a brief but highly informative biography of Father Fernando Cuenca, founder of Talisay, Negros Occidental and promoter of material progress in Negros Island. Among his unpublished works was the history of Collegio di Sant'Ildefonso, actual



residence of Augustinian Recollect priests who study in Roman universities. He was known for his great diligence, wise governance and intense love for things of the Order. The 86-year-old friar rejoined his Maker on 22 October 1959 at Marcilla.

### **Father Miguel Avellaneda**

Father Miguel Avellaneda de la Virgen del Rosario was born on 1 October 1892 at Casalarreina, La Rioja. After his priestly ordination in 1915, he was sent to Venezuela as missionary. In 1920, he became professor of philosophy and theology, and taught the formands in Monteagudo and Marcilla in Spain for thirteen years. He was also put in charge of teaching musical direction and church organ simultaneously. He spent three years as vice prior in Recoletos, Manila (1931-1934), before his assignment to Rome.



Father Avellaneda is more known as the author of the second volume of the catalogue of Recollect religious *Continuación del Padre Sádaba o Segunda parte del "Catálogo de los religiosos de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos" (1906-1936)*. Various historical, biographical and literary works came out from his prolific pen. He also prepared a book of thirty-five sermons in Spanish for various religious feasts and occasions. As proof of his multifaceted talent, Father Avellaneda composed hymns for various religious patronages: *Kalenda de Navidad*; *Joseph*, three voices; *Ave Maria* and *Tantum ergo*.

He composed as well two hymns to Saint Augustine: *Magne Pater* that saw print in the Augustinian Recollect Ritual and *Hymn to Saint Augustine*. His love for the Order is further shown by his musical composition *Hymn to the Augustinian Recollection*. At age 70, he passed away at the Recollect seminary for philosophy formands, located in Fuenterrabía, Guipúzcoa, Spain, on 25 December 1962.

**Father Rafael García**

A native of Fuentes de Ágreda, Soria, Spain, Rafael García Martínez was born on 11 July 1911. Following his secondary education at Lodosa (Navarra), novitiate at Monteagudo, philosophy at San Millán de la Cogolla (La Rioja) and theology at Marcilla, he was ordained in England. In the Philippines, his priestly ministry was exercised in Dumaguete (Negros Oriental), San Carlos, Kabangkalan, Isabela and Sum-ag (Negros Occidental). Among his important posts were that of vicar provincial of the Philippines, and in Spain those of provincial councilor, provincial chronicler and, and for a long time, provincial activist. He served as chaplain of various religious houses and monasteries, especially those of Augustinian Recollect nuns. He was the editor of the mission magazine *Todos Misioneros* in 1955-1961.



The diligent historian authored countless articles on OAR history in several Philippine periodicals, but chiefly in four Recollect publications, to wit, *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino*, *Todos Misioneros*, *La Madre Cristiana* and *Santa Rita y el Pueblo Cristiano*. He wrote extensive historical accounts of Kabangkalan, Isabela, Sum-ag, Guihulngan and La Castellana in Negros as well as those of Antipolo, Palawan and Marianas. His biographical research covered Saint Ezekiel Moreno, Juan de San Nicolás, Benito de San Pablo, Gerardo Díez, Victor Baltanás, Diego Cera, Andrés Ferrero and many others. He published first-hand sources on various events penned by OAR chroniclers.

Father García's research was based upon primary sources in the Recollect archives of Marcilla. Thus, here lie the intrinsic value as well as the deficiencies of his writings. But no one can ever deny his undeniable love for the Order that permeated in his over a hundred articles in *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino* he edited for twenty-five years. The ailing historian passed away on 18 May 1977 in Madrid.



### **Father Ángel Martínez Cuesta**

Father Ángel Martínez Cuesta is no stranger to both Philippine history and OAR history. The eminent historian from Brullés, Burgos, Spain, was ordained as priest in Marcilla in 1961. After a brief stint in Manila (1961-1962), he was sent to Rome to study at the Pontifical Gregorian University which conferred on him a Licentiate and later a Doctorate in Church History *summa cum laude*, which won for him a gold medal. The English translation of his dissertation *Historia de*



*la Isla de Negros, Filipinas, 1565-1898*, was published in Manila in 1980. He is the author of *Historia de los Agustinos Recoletos* (1995). He wrote *El Camino del Deber* (1975), the definitive biography of Saint Ezekiel Moreno, and several biographical booklets and articles on the Saint. In 2006, he edited the first four voluminous collections of Saint Ezekiel's thousands of correspondence.

Father Martínez Cuesta is the general archivist of the Augustinian Recollect Order, who headed for a long time its Historical Institute. He is the editor of the *Recollectio*, a scholarly journal he almost single-handedly edited and published annually since 1978. Based in Rome for over four decades now, he regularly gives lectures on OAR History in international conferences in America, Asia and Europe. He authored articles on Church history and spirituality in encyclopedias and journals in Europe and America.

### **Father José Luis Saenz Ruiz Olalde**

Born in Logroño, La Rioja, Spain in 1941, he entered the novitiate at Monteagudo, Navarra, where he professed the evangelical counsels in 1961. After four years of theology at Marcilla, he was ordained as priest in 1965. He obtained his Licentiate in Church History from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome in 1967. Thereafter, he taught Church History for three decades at Marcilla. Following the death of Father Rafael García, he was named archivist of the historical archives and editor of the *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás* in 1977-1997. He was the music teacher in Marcilla

and musician-organ player at the parish of Santa Rita, Madrid (1997-2000), he composed sacred hymns for various saints and occasions.

Father Saenz's important historical researches and lectures dealt with Saint Ezekiel Moreno, Recollect history in the Philippines, convents in Spain and missions in Latin America. His 1998 book *Los agustinos recoletos y la revolución hispano-filipina* (326 pp) details the Philippine Revolution and its effects on Augustinian Recollect friars and convents.



### **Father José Manuel Bengoa**

A native of San Vicente de la Sonsierra, La Rioja, Spain, he was born on 8 April 1948. He professed his monastic vows at Monteagudo and received the sacred order of priesthood at Marcilla in 1971. He took up further studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University where he finished his Licentiate in Theology in 1973. He taught Dogmatic Theology and Spirituality in Marcilla in 1973-1988. As vicar provincial and provincial councilor, he resided at the provincial curia in 1991-1997 and returned to Marcilla to take over as provincial archivist (1997-2010) and editor of *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás* (1997- up to the present. Since 1997, he resides at Marcilla. In 1998-2009, he was the general chronicler of the Order. He was named prior of Marcilla.



In 1998, Father Bengoa published his very interesting work *Un fraile riojano en la revolución filipina: Pedro Bengoa Cárcamo OAR* (238 pp), about his friar ancestor who served as a chaplain of the Filipino revolutionary forces under General Diego de la Viña in Negros Oriental province.

**Father José Javier Lizarraga**

Born in Tirapu, Navarra, Spain, on 20 April 1952, he professed his vows at Monteagudo and received the sacred order of priesthood in 1976 at Marcilla. He obtained his Licentiate in Church History from the Gregorian University *magna cum laude* in 1979 and his Doctorate in Church History in 1993. He was vice prior of the community in Marcilla and prior of Collegio Sant'Ildefonso in Via Sistina, Rome. He was for a long time Church History professor at Marcilla. He served as parish priest of the adjoining curacy of Caparroso, of whose history and church art he published a book. He was named general chronicler of the Order in 1986-1992, and again in 2009 up to the present.



Father Lizarraga's monumental work (686 pp) is *El Padre Enrique Pérez, ultimo vicario general y primer prior general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos (1908-1914)*, published in 1990. His articles can be read in the *Recollectio* and *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás*. In 2008, he delivered a lecture on the first general chapter to Recollect bishops and provincial superiors at Convent of San Millán de la Cogolla, La Rioja.

**Father Emilio Edgardo A. Quilatan**

Born in Manila on 11 September 1964. He studied college at Casiciaco Recoletos Seminary, Baguio City. After novitiate, he professed the vows in 1986 and went on finish his theology in 1991 at Recoletos Formation Center (RFC), Quezon City. A priest since 1992, he obtained his Licentiate in Church History in 1997 and his Doctorate in Church History in 2008—both *magna cum laude*— from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. His doctoral dissertation was *The Friar Hacienda Controversy in the Philippines at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - Facts and Fiction : the Case of the Augustinian Recollect "Hacienda de San Juan Bautista" in Imus, Cavite (1896-1906)*. He authored historical articles in the *OAR Fourth Centennial*



*1588-1988 album, The Recoletos Observer and Recollect Update.* A Church History professor and Dean of Studies at the Recoletos School of Theology, he is also RFC vice prior and formator. He is presently the archive administrator of *Archivo Recoleta* at Bulwagang Recoletos.

As chair of the History Committee of Recoletos 400, Father Emil jointly organized the national conference of Recoletos History, Culture and Legacy, held San Sebastian College, Manila, in 2004. He gives conferences on OAR history and Archivo Recoleta at national conferences, for novices and formands in *mes de preparación* for the solemn profession.

### **Father Rene F. Paglinawan**

He was born in Cebu City on 8 September 1956. After his college and novitiate at Casiciaco Recoletos Seminary, he finished his theology at Marcilla where he was ordained as priest in 1982. He obtained his Licentiate in Church History *magna cum laude* from the Gregorian University in 1984 with a thesis on the Apostolic Vicariate of Palawan. He was local prior/dean of studies/Church History professor at Recoletos School of Theology. He was vicar provincial, 1994-1997 (Quezon City); provincial councilor, 1997-1998 (Madrid) and general councilor, 1998-2004 (Rome), missionary, 2004-2005 (Sierra Leone, Africa), prior of San Sebastian Convent (2008-2009).



Father Rene is often invited to talk on OAR history in the Philippines and Saint Ezekiel Moreno at international symposia, renewal courses and formation houses. He translated the lives of Augustinian saints into English. He was dean of the Institute of Philosophy and Religious Studies at San Sebastian College, Manila. He is provincial secretary and archivist of Saint Ezekiel Moreno Province and head of its Commission on Recoletos Heritage, History and Culture. His articles appeared in the *Recollectio*, *Bulletin of Saint Ezekiel Moreno Province*, *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás*, *Recoletos Observer* and San Sebastian College-Recoletos Manila website.

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## The OAR Apostolate in the Philippines

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Emilio Edgardo A. Quilatan, OAR

The Augustinian Recollection was born in the Chapter of Toledo of the Augustinian Province of Castile, Spain, on 5 December 1588. The reform movement was intended to be strictly contemplative and communitarian in its lifestyle. This was defined by the fifth act of the Provincial Chapter of Toledo: “We determine that in our province three or more monasteries of men and as many of women be designated or established... in which a stricter way of life may be practiced....” Fray Luis de León wrote the first Constitution of the Recollection, the *Forma de vivir* [Way of Life]. Its fourteen chapters clearly expressed the desire for greater perfection and intensification of contemplative and communitarian life with emphasis on asceticism. The provincial definitorium approved the *Forma de vivir* on 20 September 1589.

The Augustinian Recollection spread throughout Spain and the Philippines. It became an autonomous province on 11 February 1602. On 5 June 1621, the Augustinian Recollection was elevated to a rank of Congregation with its Vicar General still under the Prior General of the Augustinians in Rome. In Madrid, the first General Chapter of the new Congregation elected Jerónimo de la Resurrección as the first Vicar General on 20 November 1621. Four Recollect provinces, including the missionary Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino in the Philippines, were organized on 23 November 1621. The Augustinian reform movement in Colombia joined the Spanish Augustinian Recollection in 1666. Finally, Pope Pius X granted full

juridical autonomy to the Augustinian Recollects by elevating them to the rank of religious order on 16 September 1912 by virtue of the papal brief *Religiosas Familias*.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Augustinian Recollects and the Apostolate**

Our Recollect historian Ángel Martínez Cuesta tells us that: “The apostolate occupied a significant position in all communities. It was less intense in Spain than in the Philippines and Colombia but it always maintained a high level.”<sup>2</sup> The Augustinian Recollects had no parishes in Spain but the chapels or churches of their monasteries were open to the faithful for the celebration of Holy Mass. With a big number of friars who were priests they extended assistance to nearby parishes in hearing confessions, preaching Advent and Lenten retreats, visiting the sick and assisting the dying. They gave spiritual and moral talks to members of their confraternities and facilitated catechetical instruction to the people.<sup>3</sup> The “modus vivendi” of the Augustinian Recollect friars in Spain before the 1835-1837 *Desamortización*<sup>4</sup> was strictly contemplative and communitarian.

### **The Apostolate in the Philippines**

In 1605, the second Augustinian Recollect provincial chapter unanimously approved the opening of its doors to the missionary apostolate in the Philippines. The first batch of Augustinian Recollects, comprising ten priests and four brothers, were sent. Only thirteen arrived safely in the Philippines in 1606. Many more confreres followed in their footsteps and contributed to the work of evangelization and progress of Filipinos. Their zeal for winning souls to Christ was manifested well to the point that majority of the Augustinian Recollect friars spent their youthful life and energy to

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<sup>1</sup>OAR Constitutions (2012), *Appendix II: A Brief History of the Order*, 401-405.

<sup>2</sup> Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *The Order of Augustinian Recollects: Its Charismatic Evolution* (Manila 1994) 38.

<sup>3</sup> Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *The Order of Augustinian Recollects: Its Charismatic Evolution*, 38-39.

<sup>4</sup> Government edicts were issued mandating the expropriation of religious convents and properties and consequently the expulsion of monks and friars from their monasteries.

the spread of the Gospel. There were many who shed their blood for their flock.

The lifestyle of the Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines was strictly missionary, without neglecting contemplation and community life. In fact, common life was first organized before they could immerse themselves in mission work. Important Recollect communities were established in Luzon and the Visayas and became bastions of spiritual and communitarian life of the friars in the archipelago. These Recollect communities were, to wit: San Juan de Bagumbayan (founded 1606), San Nicolas in Intramuros (1609), Cavite (1616), San Sebastian (1621) and Cebu (1621). On 31 August 1622, all Recollect communities and mission centers in the Philippines were canonically established as a religious province under the patronage of San Nicolás de Tolentino.

The different mission areas assigned to the Augustinian Recollects were characterized by the following: (1) They were remote and poor areas to evangelize; (2) The mission areas were almost bereft of colonial government concern and assistance; (3) The settlements which later became *doctrinas* were isolated from each other; and (4) The Recollect mission centers were often highly exposed to frequent Moro incursions. These difficulties did not prevent the Recollects from successfully and painstakingly transforming the mission areas assigned to them to prosperous towns and parishes. The methods applied by the Recollect missionaries varied but their good results were not wanting:

Their activity was astonishing. At the beginning they followed an itinerant plan: they would follow the rivers upstream, enter through the mountains and try to assemble the natives into small village. [...] The catechesis was simple. It consisted basically of the repetition of some prayers and of the fundamental truths of Christianity. [...] The strong hierarchical order of indigenous society obliged them to pay attention especially to leaders. Next came the children, who had always been a good approach to the hearts of the parents; to win them over, use was made of catechesis, school and singing.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *The Order of Augustinian Recollects: Its Charismatic Evolution*, 54.

By the eighteenth century, the mortality rate of missionaries was enormous. The price for propagating and maintaining the Christian faith among the natives in poorer and hazardous parts of the archipelago was their own lives. Many missionaries died before they reached the age of forty-five, very few reached the age of sixty. The causes of mortality were due to shipwrecks, diseases and violent deaths at the hands of the Moros.<sup>6</sup> In spite of the obstacles they faced, the Recollect missionaries continued their pastoral endeavors. As a result, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the parish and missionary works of the Recollects reached out to 1,249,399 souls in 203 towns of 20 provinces in the Philippines.<sup>7</sup>

### **Augustinian Recollect Builders of Towns**

Most areas assigned to the Recollect missionaries were poor. However, here are some illustrious Recollect ministers who eventually transformed their missions into prosperous towns and parishes:

#### **Diego Cera de la Virgen del Carmen (1762-1832)**

In 1762, Las Piñas became a town separated from Parañaque. In 1775, the town was declared a parish but without a parish priest. Las Piñas was too poor to support a resident parish priest since it was a town of local farmers and fishermen. The Augustinian Recollects received Las Piñas from the Archdiocese of Manila in 1795 together with its nine scattered barrios. Diego Cera took his post as its first parish priest and remained there for about thirty-seven years. He improved the farming, fishing, and salt industries of the town. He was responsible for the building of its rectory and the stone church where he constructed the world-famous Bamboo Organ.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *The Order of Augustinian Recollects: Its Charismatic Evolution*, 55.

<sup>7</sup> Pablo FERNÁNDEZ, *History of the Church in the Philippines, 1521-1898* (San Juan 1988) 26.

<sup>8</sup> Francisco SÁDABA, *Catálogo de los Religiosos Agustinos Recoletos de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas* (Madrid 1906) 362-363; Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *Bishop Ezekiel Moreno: An Augustinian Recollect Saint Among Filipinos* (Quezon City 1993) 99-100.

**Fernando Cuenca de San José (1824-1902)**

He was canonically installed as parish priest of Minuluan (now Talisay City) in Negros Occidental in 1850 and he stayed as minister until his demise in 1902. His extensive parish enabled him to promote the spiritual and material progress of the people of Negros. He was an explorer and evangelizer. Cuenca was known also as road builder, physician by promoting hydrotherapy, agriculturist and inventor of the hydraulic press for crushing sugar canes. Thus, he contributed much to the improvement of the sugar industry in Negros.<sup>9</sup>

**Mauricio Ferrero de la Virgen de Vico (1844-1915)**

He was parish priest of Bacolod, Negros Occidental (1871-1894, 1897-1899, 1902-1909). He was builder of Bacolod because he prepared its town plan. He was responsible for the construction of the present San Sebastian Cathedral, rectory, town plaza, mortuary chapel and cemetery and Puerto San Juan which was the Spanish military headquarters and provincial jail.<sup>10</sup>

**Celestino Yoldi de la Concepción (1863-1935)**

He was the fourth parish priest of San Juan de Bolbok, Batangas (1892-1898, 1916-1921, 1925-1928).<sup>11</sup> In 1886, the town of San Juan was transferred inland that was seven kilometers from the original settlement that was prone to flooding. The new settlement was still being developed when Yoldi took over the parish in 1892. He planned the roads leading to the town, finished building the parish church, rectory, and took care of his parishioners' spiritual and material needs, thus the faithful of San Juan called their "Favorite Father."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Francisco SÁDABA, 447-448; Marcelino SIMONENA, *Father Fernando of St. Joseph, Augustinian Recollect* (Bacolod City 1974).

<sup>10</sup>Francisco SÁDABA, 532-533; Miguel Avellaneda, *Continuación del P. Sádaba o Catalogo de los Religiosos de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos (1906-1936)*, 389; Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *Events in Bacolod, Negros Occidental in the Parish Chronicle (1871-1909) of Fr. Mauricio Ferrero, OAR and Other Essays* (Quezon City 2016), 1-27.

<sup>11</sup>SÁDABA, 659-661; AVELLANEDA, 481.

<sup>12</sup>AVELLANEDA, 481.

In the mission areas where Moros' attacks were frequent, the Recollects responded by building forts and watchtowers. Most of the forts and watchtowers were built at strategic points in Palawan, Cuyo, Mindanao, Romblon, Cebu, Banton, Masbate and Mindoro. The Recollect missionaries organized militias against Muslim attacks, notable among whom was Agustín de San Pedro (1599-c. 1660), better known in Philippine history as *El Padre Capitán*.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Dangers of “Pastoral Activism”**

In the nineteenth century, the pastoral and missionary works of the Recollects in the Philippines expanded and they overstretched the human resources of the Province of San Nicolás de Tolentino. The dangers of the so-called “pastoral activism” were present among the Recollect missionaries. They were manifested when the religious assigned in isolated mission areas and remote parishes lived in isolation. Community life, observance of the monastic vows and common life according to the tradition of the Augustinian Recollection were not faithfully observed. The image of a Recollect as a solitary parish priest became the classic image of the missionary in this period.

The Augustinian Recollect superiors attempted to correct these deficiencies by means of the provincial visitation, the reports at the beginning of each year, and the vigilance of their vicar provincial. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they introduced the resolution of moral cases and the annual spiritual retreat in common. They also attempted to fight the danger of loneliness and isolation by bringing the parishes together and encouraging communication and common practices among the friars, especially, during town fiestas, confessions, celebration of birthdays and feasts of Marian invocations and Augustinian saints. However, the problem of this so-called “pastoral activism” continued to plague the Congregation and it worsened when the Philippine Revolution erupted in 1896. The Augustinian Recollects took the events positively where many saw new opportunities in times of crisis.

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<sup>13</sup>Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *The Order of Augustinian Recollects: Its Charismatic Evolution*, 54.

### **The Province of San Nicolás de Tolentino in the Early Twentieth Century**

The Province of San Nicolás de Tolentino suffered during the political tumults of the Philippine Revolution (1896-1898), the Filipino-American War (1899-1903), and the Aglipayan Schism (1902). Numerous friars suffered at the hands of the Filipino revolutionaries. Many were incarcerated and died in prison while others were slain. Those who sought refuge in Intramuros were disheartened and returned to Spain. Others took the occasion as a new challenge for the Recollect province.

Between 1896 and 1903, San Nicolás Province and the whole Congregation were in crisis. Almost suddenly, San Nicolás Province found itself in a desperate situation with hundreds of religious cramped in convents without work and without places to employ them and without means to attend to their needs. It was urgently necessary to find a solution at whatever price. This was the first concern of the superiors and the most adventurous friars. Ten days after the entrance of the Americans in Manila on 13 August 1898, the first group of seven Recollects left Manila under the direction of Patricio Adell. They opened new mission stations in Panama and Venezuela. Not much later, in 1899, Mariano Bernad and 13 Recollects disembarked from the Brazilian port of Santos. They were the pioneering Recollect missionaries in Brazil. By 1902, the Augustinian Recollects from the Province of San Nicolás de Tolentino in the Philippines were operating in South America and the Caribbean were 69: 36 in Brazil, 25 in Venezuela, four in Panama, two in Trinidad, and two in Tumaco.

The *Patronato Real* ended when Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States of America on 10 December 1898 at the Treaty of Paris. For the first time, the Philippine Church came under the direct supervision of the Holy See. It took almost a decade for the political situation to normalize in the Philippines. Under the new regime, the separation of church and state was maintained. This new setting helped the Philippine Church to recover fast from the damages it suffered in the previous years of political turmoil. Pope Leo XIII issued the apostolic constitution *Quae mari sinico* in 1903 to reorganize and renew the Philippine Church. In 1907, the Provincial Council of Manila was convened under the presidency of Archbishop Ambrogio Agius, the Apostolic Delegate in the Philippines. The

Provincial Council of Manila studied the apostolic constitution for its application under the new order. Then the proposals of the Provincial Council were forwarded to the Holy See for approval. By 1910, as a result, the Holy See created new ecclesiastical districts in the Philippines,<sup>14</sup> more selected Filipino priests were elevated to the episcopacy, seminaries were reopened, and the Spanish friars were generally requested and welcomed back by their parishioners.

For the Augustinian Recollects the first quarter of the twentieth century was a time of reflection and reorganization. In 1908, the General Chapter took place at San Millán de la Cogolla, La Rioja, Spain. The last general chapter was held in 1829 but the turbulent political situation in Spain prevented the convocation of succeeding general chapters. As a result,

The normal course of authority was disrupted; in place of the Vicar General who had governed the Recollects since they became a congregation within the Augustinian Order in 1621, an Apostolic Commissary was named *ad nutum Sanctae Sedis*; for 54 years, a succession of four apostolic commissaries led the Congregation.<sup>15</sup>

The Augustinian Recollects who gathered at their monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla was a stop for them in the journey, allowing the Recollects to view the horizon and chart their direction with surer criteria. “It was a serious first attempt to give stability and order to what has so far been achieved and to give juridical sanction to an emerging way of life, directing it in the normal legal, administrative and charismatic channel.”<sup>16</sup>

The General Chapter was held in 16-26 July 1908. It was presided by the papal nuncio in Madrid Archbishop Antonio Vico. Moreover, there were 21 capitulars: 4 from the general curia, five

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<sup>14</sup>In 1910, four dioceses were erected, namely, Tuguegarao, Lipa, Calbayog and Zamboanga, and the Apostolic Prefecture of Palawan under the Augustinian Recollects was also established.

<sup>15</sup> Rene F. PAGLINAWAN, “Talk on the General Chapter of 1908,” delivered on 19 October 2012.

<sup>16</sup>Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Capítulo General de San Millán de la Cogolla, 1908*, Conference delivered on 19 July 2008 at San Millán de la Cogolla, La Rioja, in *Boletín de la Provincia de San José*, 62-63 (Madrid 2010) 159.



each from the three provinces, plus the procurator general and the secretary general. The most visible outputs of the chapter were the following: firstly, 28 determinations on various aspects of the Augustinian Recollect Congregation's life; secondly, election of a new vicar general Enrique Pérez de la Sagrada Familia along with four councilors; and thirdly, the affirmation that the present purpose of the Congregation is "the apostolic life in all its manifestations." The chapter also aimed to strengthen the corporate identity of the Congregation by revitalizing its missionary tradition and its Augustinian character, by improving the academic and spiritual formation of its religious, and by recovering the life that had been interrupted, among other things, by the action of the anti-clerical Spanish and Colombian governments. Finally, one of the chapter's determinations was to obtain once and for all full juridical autonomy from the Augustinians.<sup>17</sup>

The apostolic character of the Augustinian Recollects was clearly delineated in General Chapter determinations numbers sixteen and twenty-eight:

The missionaries were given more importance and were granted a vote in the chapter (det. 16); religious, by the vow of obedience, could be sent to any type of missions. Finally, the chapter declared that, "the present purpose of our Congregation is the *apostolic life in all its manifestations, such as education, and above all, the missions*; and to such purpose it has to channel all its available resources" (det. 28).<sup>18</sup>

The results of the general chapter in San Millán de la Cogolla were fruitful. The Augustinian Recollect historian José Javier Lizarraga described the sentiments of the confreres:

In this way, the Holy Father generously conceded to the capitulars of San Millán who had written to him of their desire to remain in their Recollect identity all their lives: 'As we have been, so we will be always. We say no to the union wanted by our older brothers; we want the Augustinian

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<sup>17</sup>Rene F. PAGLINAWAN, OAR, "Talk on the General Chapter of 1908."

<sup>18</sup>See Rene F. PAGLINAWAN, OAR, "Talk on the General Chapter of 1908."

Recollection, of such eminent stature in the Church,  
to live forever.’<sup>19</sup>

The identity of the Augustinian Recollects was defined by the determinations of the General Chapter of San Millán de la Cogolla as contemplative as taken from the spirit of the primitive Augustinian Recollection and apostolic expressed in education and mission (det. 28). Later, on 16 September 1912, through the papal brief *Religiosas Familias*, Pope Pius X gave the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollects of Spain and the Indies full autonomy and was added in the roster of the religious Orders in the Church. Finally, that same year, with the approval of the OAR Constitutions, the charism of the Augustinian Recollects was defined and approved by the Holy See.

## Conclusion

Contemplation and community life according to the OAR Constitutions are not in contradiction to the apostolate: “Contemplative love as well as uniting hearts and souls in community, is itself diffusive and apostolic.”<sup>20</sup> The soul of the apostolate is prayer. It is through prayer that the Augustinian Recollect friar gains strength in order to live communitarian life as lived and taught by St. Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo. This is the first apostolate of the religious. The love and service that the religious gives to the community is thus the steppingstones towards the apostolate outside the cloisters.

### The OAR Constitutions further teach us:

The contemplative and communitarian religious is a generous and effective apostle because he carries that love within himself, the essence of which is to give and to communicate, and the natural impulse of which is to spread itself out among our fellowmen in order to claim possession of everyone for God and for Christ. The religious, as a consequence of that diffusive love, acts and labors so that everyone may love God

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<sup>19</sup> See Rene F. PAGLINAWAN, OAR, “Talk on the General Chapter of 1908.”

<sup>20</sup> *OAR Constitutions*, no. 23.

with the brethren, and he is always prepared to serve the Kingdom, following the Gospel, and according to the charism of the Order. 'Communion, therefore, itself becomes the mission.'<sup>21</sup>

The OAR Constitutions serve as the mirror for every friar that makes him reflect and examine himself on how deep and passionate we are living our Augustinian Recollect charism. Our community is both "contemplative and active, in such a way that both aspects are harmoniously integrated, for both contemplation and action have their place in the Church as vital signs of the same love."<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the Augustinian saints, Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas of Villanova and Saint Ezekiel Moreno are concrete icons who are lovers of community life, contemplation and action. All of us are called to sanctity as they were in this life. Only a saint can live up to the demands of our charism. Sanctity is a gift from God to all baptized. God declared to His chosen people: "Be holy for I, the Lord your God, am holy!" (Lev. 19, 2). Such gift could only be sustained by the giver who is God Himself. That is why saints are men and women of prayer. Through prayer, we allow the Holy Spirit within us to connect us to God and by prayer God grants us the strength to meet the challenges of life and the docility to accept what God may send us in order to purify us. In the end we will find out that only God can make us happy and contented and His love continuously sustains us in every trial that we face in our religious community and our apostolate in the Church.

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<sup>21</sup> *OAR Constitutions*, no. 23.

<sup>22</sup> *OAR Constitutions*, no. 24.



## Glossary of Terms

- alcalde mayor - chief executive of a political province, provincial governor.
- arrabal - district in Spanish Manila.
- Audiencia - the highest advisory body in Spanish Philippines whose members were the governor-general/ vice-royal patron, provincials of the religious orders, and other officials.
- Augustinian Recollect—also known as Agustino Descalzo, Recolecto, Discalced Augustinian, Recollect, Recollet.
- Bachiller en artes—Bachelor of Arts, a degree in secondary education.
- barangayanes - big native rowboats that transported troops.
- beatas - pious women.
- beaterio - residence of the beatas.
- brother - non-clerical member of a religious order.
- cabecera - the population center of a town where a municipal building, parish church and kumbento; town with several barrios; capital town of the province.
- cal y canto - another term for mampostería.
- canonical collation—official appointment given by a local ordinary to a religious as a parish priest of a curacy or curacy. He cannot be removed from his post by his prior provincial unless a provincial chapter assigns him to position in the Order, as prior provincial, commissary or any high office in the province.
- casa tribunal - the edifice housing the offices of the gobernador-

- cillo and officials, and sometimes the jail. Also simply known as tribunal.
- chapter - triennial assembly of superiors and delegates from the entire province to take up major decisions affecting the religious life, the province's or order's state, financial and other matters.
- cofradía de la Correa—Confraternity of the Cinch, traditionally set up by the Augustinian Recollects in their doctrines to promote devotion to the Blessed Mother Mary under the invocation of Our Lady of Consolation.
- commissary general—see procurador general
- companion - compañero, in Spanish. In Spanish times, it refers to the assistant parish priest, curate, the equivalent of present-day parochial vicar. Assigned to a parish or doctrina chiefly to learn the rudiments of the language of the place in view of his future parish ministry in the mission station, island or region where that language was spoken.
- convent - monastery or residence of a community of religious priests or lay brothers.
- convento - local term for rectory or residence of the curate. Also kumbento.
- corregidor - royal representative.
- cosas notables - a book in a parish or convent where the remarkable events of the parish or convent were recorded in a chronological manner.
- creole - Spaniard born in the Philippines. Also called insular.
- Crónica - Chronicles. It refers to the *Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* or similar title of the Order's general history now in its twelfth volume.
- curacy - the ecclesiastical territory under the supervision of a pastor (parish priest).
- desamortización - dispossession of ecclesiastical property in Spain

- from 1835 to 1845 and subsequent sale of the same in order to forestall the deficit of the State budget.
- diocese - ecclesiastical territory of several parishes under the jurisdiction of a local ordinary, the bishop.
- diocesan clergy - priests working in a diocese and whose local ordinary is the bishop.
- disciplina - self-flogging, ascetical practice customarily done by religious; whip made of cotton used for such practice.
- doctrina - curacy served by a regular or religious priest with canonical collation; a town of Indios recently converted when it is not yet set up as a curacy or it has not acquired the status as a parish.
- doctrinero - teacher of catechism; missionary in charge of a doctrina.
- donado - a man who lives in conventual quarters and works for a religious community in Spain and receives regular salary. He does not profess the religious vows.
- ecónomo - priest assigned to a parish by the prelate to do the parochial work on account of the vacancy, sickness or absence of the proprietary parish priest.
- encomendero - person granted an encomienda, a royal grant of jurisdiction to a Spanish official who administers a portion of the conquered or reduced population and collects tribute.
- escribiente - clerk, secretary.
- Forma de vivir - Spanish for *Way of Life*. The constitutions of the Augustinian Recollects, which were authored by Fray Luis de León and implemented in the first reformed convents in Spain.
- friar - member of any religious order, any mendicant orders: Augustinians, Augustinian Recollects, Dominicans and Franciscans.
- gobernadorcillo - chief executive of a town during the Spanish regime.

- harigue - post or column to support an edifice, its ceiling or roof.
- indio - indigenous native of Malay origin.
- insular - Spaniard in the colonial Philippines.
- kumbento - local term for convento, rectory.
- kutá - fort, rampart, citadel, fortification.
- legajo - dossier, file, box or bundle of manuscripts or folders of manuscripts usually of a certain year, topic or subject, kept in the archives.
- mampostería - rubblework.
- mantelatas - mantled women or beatas.
- misiones vivas - mission stations.
- Modo de administrar—*Mode of Administration*, the manual used by Augustinian Recollect priests in the management of a doctrina or parish during the Spanish regime.
- orden tercera - third order.
- patente - official appointment papers of a religious priest or brother.
- parish - basic Christian territory composed of visitas or chapels, entrusted to a canonically collated pastor, assisted by his vicars or *compañeros*.
- peninsular - Spaniard born in the Iberian peninsula.
- población - population center.
- polos y servicios - corvée labor, community service.
- presidente municipal—chief executive or mayor of a town during the early years of the American regime.
- principales - members of the principalía composed of the incumbent and former gobernadorcillos and cabezas de barangay.
- prior - superior of a community of religious brothers and priests. He sees to it that everyone fulfills his duties.
- prior general - the highest authority of a religious congregation or order.



- prior provincial - religious superior of a province who governs the province with ordinary power either by himself or with his Council.
- prior vocal - chiefly honorary position of a prior of a parish with right of representation at a provincial chapter.
- proclama - proclamation, public announcement.
- procurador general --In the early decades of Recollect evangelization, the procurator's task in Madrid was chiefly to gather confreres for Manila from the various convents of the Order, to accompany the volunteer missionaries to Seville and to board them on ships for their journey to Manila. Also known as commissary general.
- province - in ecclesiastical parlance, a group of religious convents occupying a definite territory, headed by the superior provincial.
- provincial - see prior provincial.
- retablo - altar-piece, reredos.
- Rosario de la Aurora—dawn Rosary. A Marian practice in a Philippine parish wherein parishioners at dawn went around principal streets of the town as they recite the holy Rosary.
- sacristán - sexton, sacristan.
- secretario de cámara y de gobierno—secretary of the archbishop.
- sede vacante - episcopal see that is vacant due to the demise or resignation of its local ordinary.
- tabique pampango—partition, divider or wall of an edifice of laced bamboo with lime and sand on both sides.
- terna - list of three priests made by a religious superior or presented as candidates for the post of parish priests to the colonial authorities who select their appointee from one of the three.
- terciarias - member of the Third Order of Augustinian Recollects.
- triennium - three-year term of a local prior, vicar provincial or prior provincial.

- tulisanes - bandits.
- vara - linear measurement equivalent to 28 feet.
- vicar provincial - the superior of a vicariate. Or, he takes the reigns of the province in the absence of the prior provincial.
- vicariate - group of religious houses or kumbentos under the jurisdiction of a vicar provincial.
- visita - barrio or village forming an integral part of the cabecera, parish or town, without a resident priest. A chapel is built therein for cultural purposes.
- visitation - a visit made by the bishop to the parishes of his diocese or by the prior provincial to his religious subordinates and houses in order to confirm their priestly and religious life, to check violations thereof and inspect the canonical books.

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# Index

## A

- America 22, 28, 35, 38, 60, 61, 64,  
83, 102, 104, 122, 130, 201,  
217, 228, 233, 302, 305, 307,  
382, 389, 391, 392, 562, 577,  
578, 591  
Andrés de San Nicolás 61, 64, 67,  
68, 69, 89, 183, 331, 562,  
581, 582  
Andrés Fernández 47, 48

## B

- Baguio City 92, 110, 300, 301, 570,  
579, 605, 606  
Barcelona 36, 45, 123, 176, 199,  
228, 232, 271, 384  
Bataan 79, 82, 110, 201, 223, 224,  
227, 278  
Bishop Andrés Ferrero 108, 296  
Bishop Joaquín Encabo 106, 293  
Bishop Juan García Ruiz de San  
Agustín 23, 105, 281, 284,  
288, 289, 292  
Bishop Leandro Arrué 107, 295  
Bishop Leandro Arrué of Jaro 295  
Bishop Mariano Cuartero 106, 287  
Blessed Vicente Soler in Manila  
198  
Bohol 19, 108, 115, 116, 117, 131,  
132, 138, 139, 140, 144, 152,  
197, 296, 387, 390, 530, 531,  
572

- Brother Lucas de Jesús María 118  
Brother Matías Carbonnell 113  
Brother Román Caballero 117

## C

- Cagayan de Misamis 533  
Cagayan de Oro City 22, 139, 533  
Cebu 9, 23, 58, 66, 67, 68, 69, 82,  
95, 96, 97, 106, 107, 110,  
112, 115, 121, 132, 138, 145,  
146, 147, 197, 201, 255, 263,  
293, 295, 301, 313, 393, 481,  
487, 488, 489, 530, 531, 564,  
569, 570, 572, 574, 580, 587,  
590  
Chile 38  
China. 13, 85, 149, 252, 254, 255,  
256, 262, 263, 265, 266, 274,  
275, 305, 310, 311, 313, 316,  
534  
Colombia 9, 38, 60, 301, 302, 306,  
562, 564, 565, 585, 586

## D

- Doña María Enríquez de Céspedes  
119, 124

## F

- Father Agustín de San Pedro 110,  
526, 533  
Father Andrés del Espíritu Santo  
64, 67, 93, 566

Father Ángel Martínez Cuesta 69,  
217, 577  
 Father Anselmo Ruiz 211  
 Father Benito de San Pablo 118, 567  
 Father Diego Cera 111  
 Father Diego de Santa Teresa 331,  
563  
 Father Emilio Edgardo A. Quilatan  
579  
 Father Felipe N. Lerená 528  
 Father Fernando Cuenca 574, 581  
 Father Fidel de Blas 229, 572  
 Father Francisco Javier Ochoa y 308  
 Father Francisco Sádaba 66, 257,  
569, 571  
 Father Gregorio Ochoa 565  
 Father José de la Concepción 567,  
568  
 Father José García Martínez 573  
 Father José Javier Lizarraga 579  
 Father José Luis Saenz Ruiz Olalde  
577  
 Father José Manuel Bengoa 578  
 Father Juan de la Concepción 120,  
278, 568  
 Father Juan de San Jerónimo 58, 62,  
63, 67, 68, 112  
 Father Juan de San Severo 113  
 Father Juan Félix de la Encarnación  
119  
 Father Licinio Ruiz 69  
 Father Manuel Carceller 566  
 Father Marcelino Simonena 574  
 Father Mariano Gazpio 251, 252,  
253, 255, 258, 263, 265, 266,  
270, 271  
 Father Mariano Gutiérrez 112  
 Father Miguel Avellaneda 124, 575  
 Father Miguel de la Madre de Dios  
58, 112  
 Father Pascual Ibáñez 114  
 Father Patricio Marcellán 120, 524,  
569  
 Father Pedro Corro 570

Father Pedro de San Francisco de  
Asís 564  
 Father Pedro Fabo 564  
 Father Rafael García 484, 489, 576,  
577  
 Father Ramón Zueco 117, 533  
 Father René F. Paglinawan 580  
 Father Rodrigo de San Miguel 58,  
60, 89, 110  
 Father Valero de San Agustín 114  
 Father Víctor Baltanás 113  
 France, 33, 565  
 Fray Andrés del Espíritu 58, 74, 75,  
87, 115, 127  
 Fray Luis de León 47  
 Fray Miguel García Serrano OSA  
75  
 Fr. Benito de San Pablo 78, 118,  
567  
 Fr. Gregorio Alarcón 82  
 Fr. Jorge Carcavilla 141  
 Fr. Juan de San Jerónimo 83  
 Fr. Nemesio Llorente 138  
 Fr. Toribio Minguela 107

## G

Girolamo Seripando 31, 33, 46  
 Gregorio de Ayala 36

## H

Hong Kong 201, 208, 265, 272

## I

Iloilo 107, 111, 146, 306  
 Italy 9, 17, 25, 33, 54, 144, 153, 154,  
165, 167, 218, 257, 563, 565,  
605

## J

Japan 13, 22, 23, 38, 78, 82, 90, 91,  
103, 110, 171, 172, 173, 174,  
175, 176, 177, 178, 180, 181,  
182, 184, 185, 187, 188, 189,



190, 191, 257, 571  
 Jerónimo Román 37  
 Jolo 114  
 Juan de Guevara 37, 42, 52

## L

Las Piñas 22, 107, 111, 140, 151, 231,  
 306, 307, 381, 588  
 López de Solís 38, 39

## M

Madrid 14, 19, 25, 27, 35, 45, 46, 49,  
 52, 54, 58, 67, 71, 78, 85, 86,  
 88, 98, 126, 131, 146, 149, 150,  
 151, 186, 193, 199, 209, 216,  
 219, 220, 221, 226, 235, 236,  
 265, 276, 278, 286, 289, 293,  
 301, 302, 303, 306, 307, 309,  
 314, 315, 316, 320, 321, 324,  
 329, 330, 332, 333, 382, 383,  
 394, 395, 396, 398, 399, 400,  
 401, 402, 534, 535, 561, 563,  
 565, 566, 568, 570, 571, 576,  
 578, 580, 582, 583, 585, 588,  
 592, 601, 604, 605  
 Magdalena of Nagasaki 18, 22, 23,  
 103, 171, 177  
 Manila 9, 15, 19, 22, 25, 26, 38, 57,  
 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 73,  
 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 82,  
 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90,  
 93, 95, 96, 98, 99, 103, 105,  
 106, 108, 109, 110, 112, 113,  
 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121,  
 122, 123, 124, 125, 127, 130,  
 133, 134, 136, 139, 145, 147,  
 148, 149, 150, 151, 172, 173,  
 174, 175, 176, 177, 187, 188,  
 197, 198, 199, 200, 202, 203,  
 206, 209, 210, 213, 214, 215,  
 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 223,  
 224, 226, 227, 228, 229, 231,  
 232, 236, 253, 255, 256, 263,

269, 271, 272, 274, 276, 278,  
 279, 280, 282, 285, 286, 287,  
 289, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295,  
 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301,  
 302, 303, 305, 306, 307, 308,  
 309, 310, 311, 313, 314, 315,  
 316, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385,  
 387, 388, 389, 390, 392, 393,  
 396, 397, 401, 402, 480, 481,  
 488, 489, 522, 534, 535, 564,  
 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570,  
 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 577,  
 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 586,  
 588, 591, 592, 597, 601, 604,  
 606

Manuel S. Gómara OAR 481  
 Martín de Rada 38  
 Michael John Zielinski, OSB 521  
 Mindanao. 19, 111, 114, 202, 285,  
 385, 525, 533  
 Msgr. Leandro Nieto 109, 300  
 Msgr. Victoriano Román 109, 298

## N

Netherlands 172  
 North Africa 30

## P

Padre Leoncio U. Reta 479  
 Palawan 8, 11, 82, 108, 109, 110,  
 138, 146, 152, 231, 297, 298,  
 299, 300, 303, 304, 306, 531,  
 532, 535, 536, 576, 580, 590,  
 592  
 Pangasinan. 80  
 Pedro de Rojas 37, 43, 44, 49, 51,  
 53, 126  
 Pedro de Rojas' 53  
 Pedro Marcelo 278, 279, 280  
 Pedro Suárez 43, 52  
 Philippines. 15, 20, 28, 34, 58, 62,  
 67, 71, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83,  
 84, 85, 88, 90, 99, 112, 116,

120, 122, 127, 130, 146, 148,  
150, 174, 198, 199, 202, 214,  
217, 223, 224, 235, 236, 269,  
285, 289, 307, 391, 394, 399,  
401, 522, 534, 535, 571, 573,  
585, 586, 588, 591, 598, 600,  
605

Pope Gregory XV 126, 145

Pope Leo XIII 107, 108, 208, 209,  
295, 296, 306, 308, 591

Pope Pius IX 103, 106, 180, 291, 294

Portugal 33, 34, 35, 50, 111, 172, 182,  
184, 189

## Q

Quezon City 2, 22, 25, 34, 71, 81, 85,  
91, 93, 94, 98, 99, 129, 130,  
148, 149, 150, 151, 194, 202,  
203, 208, 213, 219, 220, 224,  
235, 236, 263, 275, 289, 301,  
303, 315, 316, 534, 535, 570,  
579, 580, 583, 588, 589, 605,  
606

Quiapo 76, 88, 119, 139, 214, 216,  
227

## R

Romblon 111, 115, 134, 197, 203,  
204, 205, 206, 211, 300, 525,  
526, 572, 574, 590

Rome 15, 17, 25, 26, 31, 36, 43, 52,  
71, 82, 103, 104, 124, 144, 149,  
177, 194, 195, 197, 216, 217,  
218, 219, 242, 262, 265, 272,  
276, 301, 302, 310, 314, 315,  
316, 320, 381, 383, 534, 535,  
565, 575, 577, 579, 580, 582,  
585, 603, 604, 605

## S

Saint Alonso de Orozco 35, 44, 53,  
132, 319, 322, 324, 325

Saint Augustine 21, 23, 26, 27, 28,  
29, 30, 31, 37, 51, 94, 103,  
123, 125, 126, 127, 135, 139,  
141, 144, 145, 155, 156, 157,  
158, 161, 164, 165, 185, 186,  
189, 190, 191, 251, 295, 330,  
524, 525, 533, 562, 565, 568,  
575, 595, 603

Saint Benedict 41

Saint Francis of Assisi 210

Saint Francis Xavier Cathedral,  
Kabankalan City 137, 528

Saint Thomas of Villanova 33, 34,  
122, 215, 218, 233, 595

San Sebastian Church 9, 73, 76, 77,  
81, 89, 115, 129, 152, 215,  
535

South America 22, 38, 130, 217,  
302, 591

Spain 9, 19, 22, 25, 28, 33, 34, 40,  
42, 43, 44, 45, 53, 61, 64, 68,  
70, 78, 80, 81, 82, 83, 90, 91,  
92, 93, 104, 105, 106, 107,  
108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 114,  
115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120,  
121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126,  
132, 133, 141, 144, 145, 147,  
148, 172, 173, 174, 182, 184,  
189, 197, 201, 202, 209, 216,  
217, 220, 221, 224, 228, 231,  
232, 233, 251, 262, 266, 271,  
272, 277, 278, 285, 286, 291,  
292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297,  
298, 299, 300, 301, 306, 307,  
308, 310, 311, 313, 317, 318,  
323, 330, 382, 383, 385, 388,  
394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399,  
400, 401, 402, 480, 481, 483,  
562, 563, 564, 566, 567, 568,

569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574,  
575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 585,  
586, 591, 592, 594, 598, 599,  
603, 605, 606

Sulu 117

## T

Tadeo Guidelli 33, 37, 43, 46

Tagbilaran City 134, 530

## U

USA 108, 297, 301, 308

## V

Vatican City 10, 197, 230, 235, 316

Vigan City 136, 143, 277, 522

## Z

Zambales 11, 19, 80, 82, 105, 106,  
110, 113, 115, 123, 135, 141,  
152, 197, 203, 223, 224, 225,  
226, 227, 229, 232, 291, 294,  
524, 567, 568, 572

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