

Vol. 16 Nos. 1 & 2 January to December (2021)

Quærens

Journal of Theology and Pastoral Life

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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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Administration

Research, Planning and Development Office

Recoletos School of Theology, Inc.

81 Alondras St. Miranila Homes, Congressional Avenue Ext.

1101 Quezon City, Philippines

(email: quaerens@sscrmn1.edu.ph)

All business and editorial correspondence (e.g. matters concerning manuscripts, books for reviews, advertising and subscriptions) should be addressed to:

Quaerens

Journal of Theology and Pastoral Life

Recoletos School of Theology, Inc.

81 Alondras St. Miranila Homes, Congressional Ave. Ext.

U.P. P.O. Box 206, U.P. Diliman

1101 Quezon City, Philippines

Amor Diffusivus II: **Historical Studies**

**In Commemoration of the 500th Anniversary
of Christianity in the Philippines (1521-2021)**

THEME: “Gifted to Give”

EMMANUEL LUIS A. ROMANILLOS

Vol. 16: Nos. 1 & 2

(2021)

December

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Introduction

Fr. Emilio Edgardo Alba Quilatan, OAR, HED

History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illumines reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life and brings us tidings of the past.

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC)

The Spanish friars and the Jesuits came to the Philippines to work for the evangelization of the Indios. As men of God, they came primarily to spread the Gospel. They not only saved souls for Christ but also took care of the material needs of the natives by introducing new farm tools from Europe and new fruit-bearing plants from Mexico, thus they advanced agriculture in the country. They further set up schools, hospitals and banks to improve the standard of living of the people. They were instrumental in founding towns and cities that were initially Christian settlements known as *reducciones*. They wrote biographies and accounts of historic events, hence they imparted to us great lessons from our rich past. They supervised the construction of churches, *kumbentos*, belfries, watchtowers, forts and bridges, now authentic cultural heritage landmarks. They authored dictionaries and grammar books, thus promoting and preserving our languages and culture. Many friars were dauntless protectors of their flock from abusive Spanish

colonial officials. They even organized the faithful to defend their communities from piratical raids. After 333 years of Spanish rule, the missionaries have contributed a great deal to nation-building and have endowed culturally diverse peoples with a common identity known as Filipino deeply rooted in Christian values, Hispanic culture and native traits.

The Augustinian Recollects, popularly known as Recoletos, arrived in our shores in 1606. They were mostly Spanish friars, who with the Augustinians (1565), Franciscans (1578), Jesuits (1581) and Dominicans (1587), greatly contributed to the evangelization of our country and to nation-building. However, their story was written in Spanish that the majority of the present generation cannot understand because Spanish became an optional subject in university courses, no longer included in Philippine school curricula. As a result, many compatriots are ignorant of the primary sources of Philippine History and Church History recorded by Spanish missionaries. Nevertheless, Filipino historians—religious and lay—translated the primary sources into English and annotated them for English-literate readers. Among those lay Filipino scholars and historians is Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos. Now a retired Full Professor of Italian, Spanish and Latin of the University of the Philippines Diliman and a *Recoleta* at heart, Romanillos has done research works mostly making use of Spanish sources for the first part of this second volume of *Amor Diffusivus*. He further translated the second part consisting of historical essays pertinent to the Recollect history in the Philippines. Except for the article on the Recollects during the 20th century and Blessed José Rada's biography, the essays were originally written by Spanish historians. This publication is therefore a collection of historical works and translations done by the author including their annotations and illustrations, a result of years of work in the academe.

The pages of this anthology inform the readers about the identity and charism of the Recoletos and their myriad contributions to Filipino culture and civilization. In order to accomplish this objective, the book offers iconic Recollect lives and events to them. Moreover, in these pages, the author presents to them a clear picture of a true Augustinian Recollect, a Spanish friar, who is a direct opposite of the Fray Dámaso character depicted in Jose Rizal's *Noli me tangere*. What Rizal and the propagandists had written negatively against the friars was far from the complete picture, from the whole truth. In fact, many Spanish friars served as true pastors of their flock and led holy and exemplary lives. We have friars who are blessed, canonized saints or

candidates to sainthood. Countless were the martyrs of the Faith slain by revolutionists, Moro pirates, unbelievers and religious bigots. Thus, as John Leddy Phelan cautions us: “The spectacular vices of the minority ought not obscure the less dramatic virtues of the majority.”

Finally, this is likewise a reference work wherein readers are made aware of the continuous presence of the Augustinian Recollects in the archipelago whether it is through stone churches, belfries, *kumbentos* or in people whose lives were touched by the heroic pastoral care of the Spanish friars much-maligned in Philippine history books. May the historical essays by Professor Romanillos and by such contributing historians as Manuel Carceller, Ángel Martínez Cuesta, Rene Paglinawan, Pablo Panedas, Licinio Ruiz and José Luis Sáenz Ruiz-Olalde shed light and give luster to the iconic figure of a Spanish friar, an Augustinian Recollect whose role in helping mold the Filipinos as a nation had received accolades from National Artist Nick Joaquin who called them the “Pastors of the Philippine Mission.”

Author's Preface

The second volume of *Amor Diffusivus* commences with my fifteen chapters on the Augustinian Recollect evangelization work in the Philippines since 1606 by the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino and since 1898 by the Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno. They are followed by fourteen chapters done by six Spanish historians and chroniclers, which I translated and annotated. Indeed, the historical studies concretize the *amor diffusivus*, pointed out by Prior General Miguel Miró in the first volume, as the “force [that] 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.” Volume II further shows “the tangible fruits of that love. The main fruit was the Christianization of entire regions in the Philippines. Along with this harvest in the spiritual sphere [are] other fruits in the material sphere which we would classify under the category of human and social promotion.”

The first chapter introduces the reader to the apostolic works of the five major religious orders, part of my Philippine Church History course taught to formands at the Recoletos School of Theology in Quezon City and to teachers of the Philippine Association of Catholic Religious Educators in Bacolod City. The rich Recollect legacy to culture and the arts in our country follows it. Subsequently, I delve into the blood, sweat and tears in the Recollect annals of Mindanao, Bohol, Cavite, Negros Island, Palawan, *Contracosta de Luzón*, i.e., Aurora Province. Some of my historical studies were read at national and local conferences. Due to its highly informative value, included likewise is the history covering four centuries of the Order's presence in the Philippines from the 17th century up to the 19th written by Ángel

Martínez Cuesta. The OAR apostolate of the 20th century was done by Rene Paglinawan in English.

The anthology of translations includes such thorny issues in Philippine Church History as the Dagohoy Revolt, State-sanctioned takeover of Recollect parishes in Mindanao by the Jesuits and cession of three Recollect parishes in northeastern Negros to the diocesan clergy. I reprint the history of San Andrés Parish of Masinloc in Zambales from Bacolod-based *Philippine Social Science Journal* and that of San Nicolas de Tolentino Parish in Talisay City in Negros Occidental from Rome-based *Recollectio*. The unpublished beginnings of two pioneering Recollect schools are narrated: Colegio de Santa Rita and Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos. We can find as well historical studies on Recollect parishes in Cebu by Licinio Ruiz, on Siquijor Island and Caraga Antigua in Mindanao by Ángel Martínez Cuesta.

On the Philippine Revolution's impact on the Order, we have four chapters: the Recollects at the outbreak of the national upheaval in Cavite where thirteen confreres were slain; Revolution in Cebu in 1898; Blessed Jose Rada's own narrative of his imprisonment in 1898 in Negros; and the poignant story about Fray Baldomero Abadía, an innocent victim of revolutionary fury in 1897 at O'Donnell, Capas, Tarlac. Another topic focuses on the entwined events of the Second World War and the Recollect apostolate in Calatrava and San Carlos. The Black Nazarene of Quiapo, a revered devotion introduced by the Recollects in the 17th century and cherished through the centuries by the Filipino nation, was the subject of an article in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, which contained conjectures and blunders in need of refutation and correction.

Stemming from reading these historical studies and recalling the wonders and graces from the Lord, rightly, there is much rejoicing among members of the Augustinian Recollect Family. One great cause for such celebration is the four-century existence of the Augustinian Recollection as a religious congregation, as descendants of the quadricentenary Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino. There is jubilation among Augustinian Recollect communities, and justly so, even as they pray without ceasing and most of all, they give thanks in all circumstances (1 Th 5,16-18). They have survived the crises, upheavals, travails of four hundred years through divine assistance and resilience, even as they look back with thankfulness on the blessings, triumphs and glories past. The Lord has kept them under His loving divine care through the intercession of Our Lady of Consolation,

Saint Joseph, Saints, Martyrs, exemplary consecrated men and women through the centuries. As an anonymous writer says on history: “You will also understand the suffering, joy, and chaos that were necessary for the present day to happen and appreciate all that you are able to benefit today from past efforts.”

I owe a great debt of gratitude to all that contributed to my passion for languages— fundamental historiographic tool—and for history with its importance in understanding today’s challenges and charting the path to future success. First of all, my thanks go to all my teachers in San Carlos, Baguio, UP Diliman, Rome, Marcilla (Navarra) and Santander (Cantabria) in Spain. I further thank the Augustinian Recollect Saint Ezekiel Moreno Province, Saint Nicholas Province, UP College of Arts and Letters, private/state universities and colleges, local government units, national and local historical associations, CBCP Episcopal Commission on Cultural Heritage of the Church, National Historical Commission of the Philippines, Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development that supported my local/foreign travels, study grants, language/history classes, research grants, publication of research works in journals, seminar-workshops, professorial chairs, conference lectures, or printing/launch of books.

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, AOAR	<i>ACTA ORDINIS AUGUSTINIANORUM RECOLLECTORUM</i> , ROME, ITALY
AHPM	<i>ARCHIVO HISTÓRICO PROVINCIAL DE MARCILLA</i> , NAVARRA, SPAIN
ARJC	<i>ARCHIVO RECOLETO «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 ECLESIAÍSTICO DE FILIPINAS</i> , MANILA
BLD.	<i>BLESSED</i>
Bp.	<i>BISHOP</i>
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	EMMA HELEN BLAIR AND JAMES ALEXANDER ROBERTSON, <i>THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, 1493-1898</i> , 55 vv. CLEVELAND 1903-1909.
Br., Bro.	<i>BROTHER</i>
CBCP	<i>CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES</i>
Cf.	<i>CONFER</i> , LATIN FOR COMPARE; CONSULT
CRÓNICAS	<i>CHRONICLES</i> , THE THIRTEEN VOLUMES OF THE <i>HISTORIA GENERAL DE LA ORDEN DE AGUSTINOS RECOLETOS</i> , GENERAL HISTORY OF OAR
DD	<i>DIVINITATIS DOCTOR</i> , DOCTOR OF DIVINITY
ED.	<i>EDITOR</i> , EDITED BY
ET AL.	<i>ET ALII</i> [AND OTHER PERSONS]
ETC.	<i>ET COETERA</i> , <i>ET CÆTERA</i> [AND THE REST]

F.	<i>FOLIO</i> [MANUSCRIPT PAGE]
FR.	<i>FATHER, FRAY</i>
Mo.	<i>MOTHER, AS IN Mo. GENERAL, MOTHER GENERAL</i>
MSC	<i>MISSIONARII SACRATISSIMI CORDIS, MISSIONARIES OF THE SACRED HEART</i>
MSGR.	<i>MONSIGNOR</i>
NHCP	<i>NATIONAL HISTORICAL COMMISSION OF THE PHILIPPINES, MANILA</i>
NHI	<i>NATIONAL HISTORICAL INSTITUTE</i> [FORMER NHCP], MANILA
NO.	<i>NUMBER</i>
OAR	<i>ORDER OF AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECTS, RECOLETOS, RECOLLECTS</i>
OP	<i>ORDER OF PREACHERS, DOMINICANS</i>
OSA	<i>ORDER OF SAINT AUGUSTINE, AUGUSTINIANS, CALCED AUGUSTINIANS</i>
P.	<i>PADRE, FATHER</i>
P.	<i>PAGE</i>
PP.	<i>PAGES</i>
PNA	<i>PHILIPPINE NATIONAL ARCHIVES, MANILA</i>
PSSJ	<i>PHILIPPINE SOCIAL SCIENCE JOURNAL, UNO-R, BACOLOD CITY</i>
POSITIO	<i>BEATIFICATIONIS SEU DECLARATIONIS MARTYRII SERVORUM DEI VICENTII SOLER ET VII SOCIORUM EX ORDINE AUGUSTINIANORUM RECOLLECTORUM POSITIO SUPER MARTYRIO. ROME 1990</i>
PUG	<i>PONTIFICIA UNIVERSITÀ GREGORIANA, PONTIFICAL GREGORIAN UNIVERSITY, ROME, ITALY</i>
R	<i>RURSUS</i> [FRONT PAGE OF MANUSCRIPT FOLIO, E.G., 3R]
REV.	<i>REVEREND</i>
RST	<i>RECOLETOS SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY, MIRA-NILA HOMES, QUEZON CITY</i>
S.	<i>SEQUENS</i> (NEXT PAGE); <i>SS. (SEQUENTES, NEXT PAGES)</i>
SARF	<i>SECULAR AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECT FRATERNITY</i>
SCMCI	<i>SAN CARLOS MILLING COMPANY, INCORPORATED, SAN CARLOS CITY</i>
	<i>SINOPSIS HISTÓRICA – SINOPSIS HISTÓRICA DE LA PROVINCIA DE SAN NICOLÁS DE TOLENTINO DE LAS ISLAS FILIPINAS, 2 vv. MANILA 1925</i>
SJ	<i>SOCIETY OF JESUS, JESUITS</i>
SMA.	<i>SANTÍSIMA, MOST HOLY, SANTÍSIMA TRINIDAD, MOST HOLY TRINITY</i>
St.	<i>SAINT</i>
SVD	<i>SOCIETAS VERBI DIVINI, SOCIETY OF THE DIVINE WORD</i>
TRANS.	<i>TRANSLATOR, TRANSLATED BY</i>
TTM	<i>THE THOMASIAN MEMOIR 1948-1949. SAN CARLOS, NEG. OCC. 1949</i>
UNO-R	<i>UNIVERSITY OF NEGROS OCCIDENTAL-RECOLETOS, BACOLOD CITY</i>
UP	<i>UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES</i>

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USJ-R *UNIVERSITY OF SAN JOSE-RECOLETOS, CEBU CITY*

UST *UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS, MANILA*

v *VERSUS* [BACK PAGE OF MANUSCRIPT FOLIO, AS IN 13v]

VATICAN II *SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, ROME (1962-1965)*

VOL. *VOLUME*

VV. *VOLUMES*

WWII *SECOND WORLD WAR*

The Evangelization Work of Religious Orders in the Philippines during the Spanish Era

Introduction

The members of religious orders were the first evangelizers of the natives of the Philippines. They travelled to the archipelago from the land of their birth in Latin America and Europe, most of them from Spain, to win souls for God. A great number of them—endowed with missionary élan and full of youthful enthusiasm—came to these islands to spread the salvific Gospel of Jesus never to return to their native land. They met their death and were buried in the mission territories of the Philippines, Japan, China, Vietnam, Thailand and the Marianas Islands. If this country has been acclaimed—by Filipino bards and even by patriots and nationalists—and known the world over as the Pearl of the Orient Seas, being the only Christian nation in Asia, accolades of gratitude must be heaped on the evangelization endeavor of the mostly Spanish missionaries of religious congregations. The conquest, pacification, and 333-year rule of the Philippines by Catholic Spain until the end of the 19th century definitely owed much to the work of the missionaries.

Ferdinand Magellan

Hernando de Magallanes (1480-1521), Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese navigator in the service of the Spanish monarchy, with five

ships and two hundred and seventy officers and crew set sail from the port of San Lucar de Barrameda, Sevilla, Spain on 20 September 1519. They were in search of the legendary Spice Islands. With colonialist and expansionistic motives as well as religious intentions, Magellan lifted anchor, headed for the east and continued in the rendezvous with history the East. In 1520, they explored Brazil and Argentina. By November, they commenced their trans-Pacific voyage, passing the Strait of Eleven Thousand Virgins, which in history would later be renamed as Strait of Magellan. With scarcely any provision and potable water, in March 1521, they cast anchor in the Philippines at Homonhon off Samar Island.

The first Holy Mass on Philippine soil was believed to be in Mazaua in Butuan until the first quarter of the 20th century when the shift to Limasawa Island, south of Leyte Island was made. In the wake various panel reports, conferences, archival research works, and even a presidential executive order (E.O. 811) and an enacted law (R.A. 2733), the site of the Easter Sunday Mass was officially declared on 15 July 2020 by the National Historical Commission of the Philippines¹ to have been celebrated at Limasawa Island, South of Leyte Island on 31 March 1521, Easter Sunday.² The contention of some researchers who claimed it took place at Mazaua in Butuan, northern Mindanao, has been categorically rebuffed. According to the Italian chronicler Antonio Pigafetta's account, Magellan's men landed at Limasawa, Leyte. The diocesan priest and chaplain of Magellan's expedition, Father Pedro Valderrama, celebrated the Mass. Pigafetta recorded the said event faithfully for posterity as well as the chronicles of the first circumnavigation of the world. Several officers and crew had written letters and also kept their own chronicles which would be published months or years later.

Humabon, the local chief of Cebu, received baptism a week after docking at the Visayan island and took the name Carlos, in honor of the Spanish monarch. His wife was baptized as well and got the name of Juana after the queen mother. The image of the Santo Niño was given

¹NHCP Resolution No. 2, series 2020: Resolution Adopting the Recommendation of the Mojares Panel on the Site of the 1521 Easter Sunday Mass in the Philippines, in drive.google.com/file/d/1kNQiHP0VhQUIYOr9018TGQepyM2lf9zh/view.

² Rene R. ESCALANTE, *NHCP's Latest Ruling on the 152 Easter Sunday Mass Controversy*, in drive.google.com/filed/1mExTClwb_z7AMjS3Hvpds75WLoKLNnYh/view; *The Mojares Panel Report*, in drive.google.com/file/d/1287Hgn99grWCdH2MaL2defFx6Ssq7QUH/view.

later by Magellan to Humabon. Four decades later, a soldier of Miguel López de Legazpi's expedition named Juan Camus retrieved the holy statue in the ruins of a house.

Magellan met his untimely death at Mactan Island at the hands of the local chief Lapu-Lapu's valiant warriors. A treacherous act put on an on the lives of twenty-nine Spaniards, including Fr. Pedro Valderrama, Captains Duarte Barbosa and Juan Serrano. The surviving captains and finally Juan Sebastián Elcano proceeded with the journey with eighteen men in one ship *Victoria* to Spain to complete the first circumnavigation of the globe on 6 September 1522. More surviving Magellan crew would be released from captivity to reach Spain after three years. Other Spanish explorers and navigators followed Magellan-Elcano's feat in subsequent years.

Adelantado Miguel López de Legazpi

With more than 300 men and four ships, *Adelantado*³ Miguel López de Legazpi left Mexico in November 1564 and arrived in the archipelago in April 1565. His chief navigator was the experienced Fray Andrés de Urdaneta, a former crew member of the Loaysa expedition, who joined the Augustinian Order in Mexico. Legazpi's trusted men did not waste time to explore and search for fresh supplies in the neighboring islands.

Legazpi performed the blood compact ceremony with the chief of Loboc, Bohol, Sikatuna, on board the Spanish flagship to forged the ties with the natives of Bohol. After the blood compact ceremony the Spaniards erected a small hut for the administration of the sacraments. Pastoral attention was focused on the spiritual needs of some 400 members of the armada.⁴ On 27 March 1565, the Mass—doubtless the first ever to be celebrated on Bohol soil—was attended by Legazpi and his men. As it was the season of Lent, the Augustinians spent most of their time exhorting the soldiers and sailors to timely penitential practices and strengthening them for the great task that lay ahead. Augustinian chroniclers reported that the first missionaries took pains in learning the Visayan language for their future apostolic work.

³*Adelantado* was the title or rank given to the person in charge of a maritime expedition, to whom the ownership of lands he discovers or conquer is entrusted.

⁴The historian Gregorio Zaide fixes the number as 380 men mostly Mexican.

Because of the initial language stumbling block, the attempt to “bring the brilliant light of faith” to the people of Bohol was probably on a very limited scale, if ever there were any at all. At that time, the Basque adelantado and his counselors had not yet firmed up their decision to set up a permanent colony in the Philippines. Nor had they decided to establish a permanent base of operations with ample supplies for the huge expedition. They awaited vital information from the reconnaissance trips of his explorers. The food shortage in Bohol apparently discouraged the idea of a permanent settlement there. Therefore, any serious attempt to evangelize the inhabitants could not have been made, if the missionaries were not even sure of staying there permanently. There was no one to maintain the growth and development of Christianity in the island. The Augustinians feared for the natives’ possible apostasy, *i.e.*, their repudiation of Christianity and subsequent return to the old pagan traditions during their prolonged absence.⁵

Legazpi stayed thirty-seven days in Bohol before proceeding to Dapitan in northwestern Mindanao. He was welcomed by its chief Datu Pagbuaya. Then he lifted anchor and went on to Cebu, a populous settlement with over three hundred houses. The Spaniards had by this time firmed up their decision to establish the first Spanish colony in Cebu. Their stay lasted six years. Other adjoining islands had be handed over to Legazpi’s soldiers as encomiendas. In Cebu, the first baptism took place only in 1568 with the conversion of the Cebu leader Tupas’ niece. Legazpi traveled north to Luzon and arrived at Manila in late May 1571. The settlement along Pasig River was later dubbed as *Muy noble y siempre leal ciudad de Manila*. The adelantado passed away on 20 August 1572. Legazpi’s mortal remains were kept in a marble sarcophagus at a chapel of San Agustín Church in Intramuros, Manila.

The Augustinians, pioneers in the evangelization since 1565

Five religious of the Augustinian Order joined the Legazpi expedition in Mexico. The pioneering Augustinian missionaries were the chief navigator and cosmographer Andrés de Urdaneta, Martín de Rada, Diego de Herrera Andrés de Aguirre and Pedro de Gamboa. They were men brimming with the apostolic spirit and endowed with erudition and culture. Urdaneta and Andrés de Aguirre later left Cebu and returned

⁵Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *The Beginnings of Christianity in Bohol (1565-1605)*. Church History Licentiate Thesis, Gregorian University, Rome 1978.

to Mexico to petition more missionaries for the intensive evangelization effort in the new colony in Asia.⁶ In the Legazpi expedition too were two secular priests—Juan de Vivero and Juan de Villanueva.

The Augustinians set up in Cebu, deemed now as the cradle of Christianity in the Far East, the first religious convent in the Philippines. Both convent and church were dedicated to the Santo Niño. It is said that they allowed months, even years, to pass by before the administration of baptisms of the Visayan natives. They had learned much from the Magellanic experience and the apostasy of Cebu's native chief and subjects.

By 1578, the Augustinians had been very active in their evangelization labors. Besides the original territories of Cebu and Panay, they made missionary trips to Cagayan in the north, Laguna and Batangas in southern Luzon. Much later, they were given the provinces of Pampanga, Batangas, Pangasinan, Cagayan and the Ilocos region. More territories and provinces were handed over to them in subsequent centuries. Those parishes which now form the Metro Manila region (Manila, Tondo, Tambobong, Navotas, Novaliches, Parañaque, Pasig, Cainta, Kalookan) were under the Augustinian spiritual jurisdiction.⁷ Then Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, La Union, Abra, Bontoc, Benguet, Antique, Capiz, Iloilo, Cebu and, in the wake of the Jesuit expulsion, the whole Leyte Island. Some of these provinces were later given to the secular clergy and the Franciscans. The Augustinian missions were generally known for their being densely populated and wealthy.

Augustinians of Mexican or creole origin were dispatched to the Philippines in big numbers. This created serious misunderstanding and friction between Mexican and Spanish Augustinians. This led to a notable decline of the regular discipline of the Augustinian Order. At times the Augustinians at the close the 16th century were more numerous than the combined population of missionaries. At the close of the Spanish rule, they had under their spiritual jurisdiction 2,320,667 souls, found in 231 parishes and mission stations of twenty-two provinces.⁸

Thus, one thing was certain: the Augustinians worked so much for the evangelization of the Philippines. One may only have to gaze at the magnificent and sturdy churches and convents that still

⁶ Pedro GALENDE, *The Augustinians in the Philippines, 1565-1898*, in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, 435 (1965) 38.

⁷*Ibid.*, 35.

⁸Pablo FERNANDEZ. *History of the Church in the Philippines, 1521-1898*. (Manila 1981) 21.

remain standing to this day. They constitute undeniable proofs to the hard-working friars who left no stone unturned in building grandiose temples of God Almighty. The mere mention of San Agustín Church in Intramuros, Manila, Taal church in Batangas, and Santo Tomás de Villanueva church of Miag-ao in Iloilo, makes one feel proud of the great and enduring legacy of the illustrious Augustinian Order to the Filipino people.

The Franciscans since 1578

The pioneering mission of the Franciscans of the Order of Friars Minor [OFM] came to the Spanish colony in Asia from Mexico on 2 July 1578.⁹ They had lifted anchor at Spain and set sail for Mexico on 24 June 1577. Governor General Guido de Lavezares had earlier petitioned the Franciscans in 1573. The followers of the stigmatist Italian saint Francis of Assisi were initially accommodated at the Augustinian friary in the walled city of Manila. They constructed not long after their first church and convent and dedicated them to *Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles* [Our Lady of the Angels]. The Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle in the colony was first kept in this Marian church.

The spiritual sons of Saint Francis were soon entrusted with the arrabales of Santa Ana, Paco, Sampaloc and Pandacan. Likewise the pueblos of San Francisco del Monte and San Juan del Monte were further handed over to them. They exercised spiritual jurisdiction over the pueblos in the provinces and islands of Bulacan, Morong, Laguna, Cavite, Batangas, Tayabas [now Quezon], Camarines, Albay, Sorsogon, Marinduque, Burias, Mindoro, Panay and Cebu. They further Christianized the natives in northern Philippines, including La Union, Ilocos Sur and Pangasinan. The hardly inaccessible missions of the Contracosta of Luzon—Binangonan del Lampong [present-day Infanta, Quezon], Palanan in Isabela, as well as Baler and Casiguran [now in Aurora Province] came under ecclesiastical administration. The Jesuit missions in Samar Island were put under their charge in 1768. A number of the pueblos in Leyte was given to the Franciscans in 1843 and 1851.¹⁰

On account of their rigorous observance of the monastic vow of poverty, the Franciscan friars did not own property, especially those landed estates which the other four religious orders owned in various

⁹Apolinar PASTRANA, *The Franciscans and the Evangelization of the Philippines*, in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* 435 (1965) 82.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 85-87.

parts of the Philippines. They administered charitable institutions, especially the historic institution of *Hospital de los Naturales* which was established in 1580 by Fray Juan Clemente. This would be renamed Hospital de San Juan de Dios. The Franciscan lay brother, “despite his difficulty in learning the language of the natives devotedly studied the medicinal value of tropical plants [which he used] in curing diseases of the sick and the poor.”¹¹ It would go down as the first, thus the oldest hospital ever in the Philippines. At the close of the Spanish era in the Philippines, the Franciscans had 1,096,659 souls who lived in one hundred and three towns in fifteen provinces.

The Jesuits: 1581-1768, 1859-1898

Antonio Sedeño, Alonso Sánchez and a brother Nicolás Gallardo were the first members of the Society of Jesus who joined the evangelization effort in the Philippines. Together with the first bishop of Manila Domingo de Salazar, the Jesuits arrived at the colonial capital on 17 September 1581. Sedeño was the first Jesuit in Florida and the first in Mexico. It was in the area between Ermita and Malate where the pioneers lived for a time until they transferred their first house and convent near Puerta Real.

In 1591, they accepted the missions of Antipolo and Taytay in the actual province of Rizal. Pedro Chirino set up a ministry in Tigbauan, Iloilo. Subsequently, Antonio Sedeño founded their central residence and a school in Cebu. From the Visayan capital, they accepted mission stations in Samar, Leyte and Bohol. They also conducted regular missionary sallies to Tanjay in Negros Island. Two or three missionaries usually visited other stations while one stayed in their cabecera of an island. They first gathered the scattered inhabitants and requested them to live in the *población*, populous settlements, where it was easy to teach the catechumens the rudiment of Christian doctrine and basic prayers.

More Jesuit missionaries enabled them to further accept the arrabales of Santa Cruz, Quiapo and San Miguel. The pueblos of Silang, Cavite Viejo [present-day Kawit] and Maragondon. Two Jesuits, Father Juan de Campo and Brother Gaspar Gómez¹² went with the Spanish *conquistador* Esteban Rodríguez de Figueroa went to the land of the

¹¹<http://www.sanjuandedios.org/healthministry.htm>.

¹²William Charles REPETTI, *History of the Society of Jesus in the Philippine Islands* I (Manila 1938) 7, footnote 29.

Moros of the Río Grande to attempt the conquest of the big island through the use of arms. But the Jesuits left Mindanao following the conquistador's death. The *corregidor* and the Spaniards of Butuan once again asked for Jesuits.

The arrival of the two Jesuit missionaries in Butuan in 1596 signaled the beginning of the systematic Christianization of Mindanao, according to Father Miguel Bernad.¹³ Upon the requests made by Spanish *encomenderos* and their approval by the cathedral chapter of Manila *sede vacante* and Governor General Francisco Tello, the Jesuit superior of Cebu had dispatched Father Valerio de Ledesma who reached Butuan in November 1596. Father Manuel Martínez followed his confrere not long after.¹⁴ Their missionary sallies were intermittent and the Jesuits temporarily abandoned the island in 1614.¹⁵ Soon after, in 1859, they retraced their steps to the big island.

In 1624, Governor General Alonso Fajardo split the island of Mindanao into two big divisions. The northeastern and eastern regions across an imaginary line that ran from Punta Sulawan down to Cape San Agustín were assigned to the Recollects.¹⁶ The Jesuits would take charge of that territory southwest along the same imaginary line. In 1628, Governor Juan Niño de Tabora confirmed the division. The Jesuit-Recollect feud lasted for several more decades. It was rekindled and turned more bitterer in the 1859 when the expelled Jesuits returned to the Philippines and get the whole island of Mindanao from the Recollects.

The missionaries went on to evangelize the western and southern portions, establishing the fort and cabecera of Zamboanga. In the next century, they set up a *colegio-residencia* [college residence] from where they extended down to the Sulu archipelago.

In 1768-1769, the Jesuits were expelled from the Philippines as they had been from all the Spanish dominions. Samar and some missions in Leyte went to the Franciscans. Cebu and Panay changed

¹³ Miguel A. BERNAD, *The Great Island. Studies in the Exploration and Evangelization of Mindanao* (Quezon City 2004) 48.

¹⁴ Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino I* (Manila 1925) 168.

¹⁵ Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *The Augustinian Recollects in Mindanao (1622-1919)*, in Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *The Augustinian Recollect History of Mindanao (1622-1919)*, 42-43.

¹⁶ Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *The Augustinian Recollects in Mindanao in the 17th Century*, 3.

hands too. The secular clergy got their missions in the Tagalog region. Bohol and Mindanao were handed over to the Augustinian Recollects. In Mindanao, spiritual administration of about 10,000 Christians in Zamboanga, Dapitan [with Ylaya and Dipolog], Iligan [with Initao] and Misamis and the two mission stations of Bayug and Lubungan¹⁷ was handed over to eight Augustinian Recollects.¹⁸

The Society of Jesus was restored in the Spanish dominions through the royal decree of 19 October 1852. Five years later, on 26 November 1857, the Dominican Bishop Romualdo Jimeno of the Diocese of Cebu, requested the assignment of Jesuits to western and southwestern Mindanao. This extremely vast territory consisted of Bislig, Davao, Polloc, Zamboanga province, Basilan and other islands. The Cebu prelate had wanted the Recollects to keep Misamis and Surigao. Indeed, there was enough territory for missionary endeavor for everyone because Mindanao had over one and half million souls that included Christians, Muslims and hinterland pagans.

In April 1859, six Jesuit priests and four brothers with José Fernández Cuevas returned to Manila. In 1862-1883, the Recollects turned over eighteen doctrinas with 88,000 souls to them.¹⁹ The Jesuits went on to establish more mission-parishes in Misamis, Surigao, Davao, Zamboanga, Cotabato and Basilan. In 1896, they had a total number of 213,065 Christians in thirty-six parishes in Mindanao.

The Dominicans: 1581, 1587

Bishop Domingo de Salazar²⁰ (1512-1594) and his secretary Father Cristóbal de Salvatierra were the first Dominicans to come to the Philippines. Born in Labastida, La Rioja, Spain, in 1512, he was appointed bishop of Manila in 1579. Domingo de Salazar left Spain in June 1580 with twenty Dominican missionaries en route to the Asia to

¹⁷Both Misamis [Ozamiz] and Iligan with its visita Initao had 4,000 souls. From Misamis to Dapitan, no parish existed during the Jesuit stewardship. The Recollects created five more parishes in the extensive area with a total Christian population of 51,159. Cf. Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica* I, 238.

¹⁸Repetti added the missions of Bagonbayan, Dumalon, Siocon, Caldera, Cabatangan, Polongbato, Siraguay and Langaran. Cf. REPETTI *History of the Society of Jesus* I, 17.

¹⁹L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 255; Manuel CARCELLER, *Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* XII (Madrid 1974) 434-437.

²⁰*Domingo de Salazar*, in newadvent.org/cathen/13395b.htm.

assist in the its evangelization. But his twelve confreres perished at sea before reaching Mexico. With Father Cristóbal and the three Jesuits, he continued his journey to Manila where he first set foot in 1581 and was installed as the first bishop of Manila, a suffragan diocese of Mexico, in the same year.²¹

In Mexico, Bishop Salazar had earlier dispatched a confrere Father Juan Crisóstomo back to Spain to petition the monarch to send more religious to the Philippines. From Cádiz, Spain, a big group of forty Dominicans set sail for the Asian mission in July 1586. Most of them refused to continue their trans-Pacific journey to the Philippines. Only fifteen Dominicans proceeded with their odyssey traveled to Manila where they landed on 25 July 1587. They founded the Convento de Santo Domingo in Intramuros.²² The Dominican friars then joined the evangelization task: four went to Bataan which then consisted the southern region of Zambales and six journeyed to Pangasinan. Subsequently, they took over or established the town of Binondo, Baybay and the Chinese community of the Parian at the gate of Old Manila. In Bataan, they founded Abucay, Hermosa, Balanga, Orani, Samal and Orion. The people of the present region of Cagayan Valley (which now includes Cagayan, Isabela and Nueva Vizcaya), the western regions of Sierra Madre and the eastern side of the Cordillera witnessed the Dominicans' missionary effort. Babuyan and Batanes Islands proved difficult for the Dominicans owing to the harsh climate of the missions. The turbulent periods caused by the natives—indifferent to the Christian religion—who rose up in arms against the Spanish yoke and engaged in killing and robbery were experienced by the Dominicans in the Cagayan Valley. As Pablo Fernández tells us:

The Cagayan Valley missions were dearly paid for in human life, money and sacrifice, mainly because of the unfavorable climatic conditions and long distances, but likewise due to the heathenish mountain tribes who generally were indifferent to Christianity and committed frequent killings and robberies in the open, forcing the missionaries to seek protection from military escort.²³

The Zambales missions were handed in 1679 by the Augustinian Recollects over to the Dominicans upon orders of Manila Archbishop

²¹ Lucio GUTIÉRREZ, *Historia de la Iglesia en Filipinas*, 58.

²²Pablo FERNÁNDEZ, *History of the Church in the Philippines, 1521-1898*, 23.

²³*Ibid.*, 24.

Felipe Fernández de Pardo, O.P. (†1689). The Recollects got back Zambales in 1712. Eight doctrinas in the Visayas and some pueblos of Cavite and Laguna were put under the Dominicans' spiritual charge in the second half of the 19th century. When the revolution erupted, the Dominicans were constrained to leave the spiritual jurisdiction of 735,379 souls in seventy-three parishes and thirty-six missions in ten provinces.²⁴ They were known for the educational apostolate and missionary expeditions to other countries in Asia.

The Augustinian Recollects up to 1898

On 12 May 1606, the first group of thirteen Augustinian Recollects headed by Father Juan de San Jerónimo debarked at Cebu and were welcomed by the Augustinian Bishop Pedro de Arce. In 1606, they acquired their first convent and church in honor of San Juan Bautista at Bagumbayan, now Luneta. In 1608, they constructed the church and convent dedicated to Saint Nicholas of Tolentino inside the Walled City.

As early as September 1606, they took charge of the mission in Mariveles, situated in the actual province of Bataan. A little later, they extended their mission towards the north, in the actual provinces of Zambales and Pangasinan, where they either founded or restored among others the missions of Bagac (1607), Masinloc (1607) and Bolinao (1609). In 1622, more religious from Spain and those who professed in Manila allowed the superior accede to the requests of the Cebu bishop who was looking for evangelizers for Mindanao, Calamianes and Cuyo. Years later, the Binalbagan mission in Negros (1626), Romblon, Banton and Tablas (1635), Mindoro (1679) Masbate (1687), the Contracosta towns of Baler, Binangonan del Lampon, Casiguran and Palanan (1658-1704) were assigned to them. Angel Martínez Cuesta writes lengthily on the plight of his confreres:

The Augustinian Recollect apostolic field was doubtless the hardest, most hazardous and extremely inhospitable. [...] The Augustinian Recollects got to evangelize the remotest regions. All of them had earlier been somewhat abandoned by the government—so alienated from Manila and with hundreds of kilometers

²⁴Pablo FERNÁNDEZ, *Dominican Apostolate in the Philippines in the Philippines*, in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, January-February 1965, 149ff.

between them, and very exposed to frequent raids by the Moros. None of these regions was included in the distribution of mission territories that King Philip II had implemented in 1594. All of them therefore lacked regular spiritual services. Besides their population was very scarce and more dispersed than in other areas of the archipelago. All these factors contributed greatly to the increasing administrative hardship. In effect, the scattered population posited a great number of missionaries and the small number of Christians was not enough to sustain them because the stipend of the religious depended on the number of the faithful under his supervision.²⁵

In 1682, of all the Recollect ministries, only those of Romblon and Taytay in northern Palawan reached 500 tributes or families. The rest oscillated between 80 and 300 tributes. Thus, their stipends were exceedingly low and with such amounts they must attend to their sustenance and to the needs of their churches, because nothing could be asked of the natives, they could not give anything or anybody else could.

Pablo Fernández recognized this exceptional character of the work done by the Recollects. He has this to say on their endeavors:

To honor these truly self-denying religious, let it be said that it fell to their lot, in general, to minister to the poorer and more hazardous islands, and that they were able, at cost of much sacrifice, to keep them for Christ and for Spain. Their special glory lies in this, that they were able to overcome the sectaries of Islam, with the enthusiastic cooperation of their Filipino faithful and the dedication of their religious who lost their lives in the effort.²⁶

In 1621, the Recollects set up their convent and church at Cebu on a piece of land donated by Bishop Pedro de Arce and the donated hermitage had been dedicated in 1618 to the Immaculate Conception. Another convent in a lot donated by the well-to-do and pious couple—Don Bernardino Maldonado y Castillo and Doña María Enriquez y Céspedes—was established in San Sebastian de Calumpang “as a

²⁵Angel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los Agustinos Recoletos I* (Madrid 1995) 367.

²⁶ Pablo FERNÁNDEZ, *History of the Church*, 26.

house of solace where the 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.”²⁷ This is to become the first shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in the Philippines, whose precious image arrived in 1618, a gift from the Discalced Carmelite nuns of Mexico City.

When the Jesuits were expelled from the colony in 1768, the Recollects accepted Bohol, the Marianas islands, some towns in Cebu as well as the western and northwestern half of Mindanao. Their Negros mission in 1848 proved highly beneficial to the development and progress of the whole island. In the second half of the 19th century, they built fifty-six parishes and mission stations where they constructed their churches, belfries and three future cathedrals (Bacolod, San Carlos and Kabankalan). It had been their lot as well to be given missions incessantly attacked by ruthless Moro pirates who killed scores of defenseless friars. Thus Saint Nicholas Province produced warrior priests as well as builders of forts, watchtowers and bulwarks. When the Spanish-American War broke out, there were in the Philippines around 330 Augustinian Recollects in charge of one million and a half souls. They were spread in four monasteries and 235 towns or visitas in Luzon, Mindanao, Negros, Mindoro, Palawan, Romblon, Bohol and other islands. Eighty percent of the Order’s active members were working in the Philippines at the height of the Revolution.

Other religious orders

The Hospitallier Brothers of Saint John of God [Hermanos Hospitalarios de San Juan de Dios] came to Manila in 1641. The administration of the first hospital in Manila was transferred in mid-1650s to the Brothers of Saint John of God, hence the name *Hospital de San Juan de Dios*.

The Vincentian fathers (Congregation of the Mission) arrived in the Philippines in 1862 and later took over diocesan seminaries. The formation of the native clergy was their main apostolate.²⁸

²⁷ANDRÉS 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* 55 (1965) 142; Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *The Spires of San Sebastian. The story behind the Virgen del Carmen image and the only prefabricated all-steel church in Asia* (Manila 1991) 2.

²⁸Manuel A. GRACIA. *The Congregation of the Mission in the*

The year 1886 witnessed the coming of the Franciscan Capuchin priests (O.F.M. Cap.) in the Philippines. They first took up residence in Intramuros.²⁹

The Benedictine monks (O.S.B.) who arrived at the twilight of the Spanish colonial rule came in 1895. They stayed for a while with the Jesuits in Sta. Ana, Manila, and soon did mission work in the province of Surigao. At the outbreak of the Revolution, they retraced their steps to Manila. The Benedictines monks eventually acquired a house in Quiapo in 1896.³⁰

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²⁹Constantino MOREA, *The Capuchin Fathers in the Philippines*, in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, 435 (1965) 312-314.

³⁰Romualdo V. SANTOS, *Benedictine Monks in the Philippines*, in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, 435 (1965) 315-317.

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Augustinian Recollect Legacy to Arts and Culture

PROLOGUE: The Augustinian Recollect priest of yore¹

An Augustinian Recollect priest assigned to remote parishes and mission stations in the Philippines of the past centuries, even late into the tumultuous 19th century, was fully cognizant that his pastoral work was no easy job. Proficient in the native language of his parish, he was not merely at the forefront of the evangelization task. He was not just a minister of God, who took care of the spiritual and sacramental needs of his flock. He was, first and foremost, a community builder. In many cases, the priest was tasked to set up towns, build roads and bridges, supervise the construction of churches, rectories and parochial schools in those sparsely populated territories, isolated islands or poverty-stricken mission stations. He even constructed markets, cemeteries and stone stairways leading to church edifices on elevated land.

In the early decades of colonization, oftentimes the Recollect priest constructed stone forts, watchtowers, palisades and fortress-like temples to defend his parishioners from Moro surprise raids. Such mission territories were precisely the lot of the Order of Augustinian Recollects in the colonial Philippines. From the Iberian Peninsula through Mexico they came in 1606, the last of the religious orders to evangelize the Spanish colony.

On the whole, Augustinian Recollect missionaries—Italian, Mexican, Portuguese, Spanish *peninsular*, *insular* or creole—were

¹Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *The Augustinian Recollect parish priest of yore*, in *The Recoletos Observer*, vol. 5, no. 1 (January-March 2004) 31-32.

dispatched to far-flung territories in Mindanao, Camiguin, Dinagat, Sorsogon, Siargao, Zambales, Bataan, Calamianes, Palawan, Cuyo, Sibuyan, Tarlac, Siquijor, Negros and Bohol. They further received missions and parishes in islands of Masbate, Romblon, Marinduque, Tablas, Aurora and Mindoro. A big number of them were likewise sent to the Marianas Islands, part of colonial Philippines, or to Japan where four priests and their convert Magdalena of Nagasaki, now patroness of Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity, received the palm of martyrdom. The five heroes of the Faith were raised to the altars of the universal Church for emulation and veneration by the faithful.

Amid arduous and unselfish undertakings, the missionaries “suffered from hunger, thirst, heat, nakedness, privations of all kinds, solitude, illness which had put [them] at death’s door.” An Augustinian Recollect priest—Blessed Vicente Soler (1867-1936)—once wrote a confrere, picturing for us what it meant to be a missionary and parish priest 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 civilized world, cast away in an unknown island, surrounded by all kinds of privations and compelled to live among those poor natives for the sole aim of winning them for God.²

²CONGREGATIO PRO CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Beatificationis seu declarationis martyrii Servorum Dei Vicentii Soler et VII Sociorum ex Ordine Augustinianorum Recollectorum Positio super Martyrio* (Rome 1990) 25, footnote 49.

The missionary priest was an architect, an engineer, a financier and a work supervisor, all professions rolled into one. He supervised the construction of such infrastructure projects as bridges, roads and trails. Of recent memory were the hydraulic projects of Fernando Cuenca (1824-1902) for the development of the sugar industry in Negros and the lucrative business of tanning hides of carabaos, horses, cows, big bats introduced by Mariano Gutiérrez (†1855) in Bohol. How true then was Wenceslao Retana's observation: "In a town where the friar was guardian of the faithful, it frequently happened that in his sermon he would mix lessons on agriculture, industry and trade."

We now quote Augustinian Recollect historian José Luis Sáenz who bears out the cultural endeavors of his confreres in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial period. The erstwhile archivist of the Historical Provincial Archives of Marcilla, Navarra, Spain, further states that besides learning the different native languages of the Philippine archipelago:

[...] the Augustinian Recollect missionaries [...] have contributed with their scientific works to the development of philology, ethnology and historiography of the Islands. Grammars, dictionaries, sermon collections, catechisms, devotionaries, novenas, historical accounts, chronicles and descriptions contribute for our researchers of today precious and indispensable materials.³

Sáenz then goes on to enumerate the myriad achievements and contributions to the sciences and culture in the Philippines, but not without first narrating the pastoral and social activities of the Augustinian Recollect Order in our country, like preaching the Gospel, foundation of towns, defensive actions against the Moro piratical raids, defense of the rights of Filipino natives, the construction and maintenance of over 200 churches, belfries, convents, forts, roads, bridges, and others.

Schools

The Augustinian Recollects, not unlike other religious orders in colonial Philippines, valued the Christian education of the youth

³José Luis SÁENZ, *Actividad pastoral, social y cultural de los agustinos recoletos en Filipinas*, in *Los agustinos recoletos ante la nueva evangelización* (Madrid 1995) 246-306. Our quote is in page 295. The article was earlier published in *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino* [BPSN] 82 (1992) 21-84 and in *Recollectio* 16 (1993) 249-306.

and thus in the past they founded parochial schools. If they could not do the job themselves, they hired catechists to impart to the young minds the fundamental prayers and rudiments of the Christian faith. Catechumens, young and old, were prepared to receive the sacrament of baptism. Parochial schools were later set up for the teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic.

The first formal experience of the Augustinian Recollects in the systematic education of young Filipinos was their administration of the diocesan seminary in Vigan, Ilocos Sur in 1882-1895. The opportunity came when Msgr. Mariano Cuartero (1830-1887), Bishop of Nueva Segovia (1874-1887), invited them to Vigan. The prior provincial Father Juan Cruz Gómez (1835-1912) accepted the administration of the seminary. Toribio Moreno (1857-1896) and Luis Cabello (1858-1926) took charge of the Vigan seminary.⁴ In 1883, Celedonio Mateo (1857-1941) was the seminary rector and stayed in his post until 1895 with a total of eleven friars in the faculty. New subjects were added to the curricular requirements of Philosophy, Dogmatic Theology and Moral Theology, to wit: Catechism, Geography, Sacred History, Grammar, World History, Philippine History and History of Spain.⁵

The rector set up an elementary and high school within the seminary with government approval and official affiliation with the University of Manila. In 1890, the rector in a letter to the provincial expressed the advantages of training Recollects specifically for the teaching profession. He saw in not a few parish priests the enthusiasm, talent and qualifications to become true scientists and research specialists. The student population in the Vigan school was over five hundred in that year.

Despite the fine evaluation of the Recollect seminary teachers made by the new Dominican bishop José Hevia de Campomanes, the decision to pull out the Recollects from Vigan was firmed up in 1895 by the prior provincial Andrés Ferrero in order to set up their own school. Soon enough the government recognition was done in February 1896, and permit was issued to put up a school “under the protection of Saint Joseph, subject to the Royal and Pontifical University of Santo Tomas of this capital.” The prior provincial and his council favored Bacolod as the site of the new high school. Pedro Corro (1864-1934), the first rector, was joined by Francisco Sádaba (1871-1925) and Benito Gabasa

⁴ Manuel CARCELLER, *Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* XII (Madrid 1974) 440-442.

⁵J. L. SÁENZ, 299-300.

(1870-?), former faculty members in Vigan. In June 1896, the school was inaugurated. About a hundred students were enrolled in the first months of the pioneering school. But the first Recollect-owned school did not last long: two years later, it closed its portals owing to the Philippine Revolution and the Spanish-American War.⁶

Today, the Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno of the Order of Augustinian Recollects continues with this avowed task and commitment to the education of the youth. They now own and manage eight schools in the Philippines, two of which are universities: Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos in San Carlos City; Negros Occidental (founded in 1940); San Sebastian College-Recoletos, Manila (1941); University of San Jose-Recoletos (1947), Cebu City; University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos in Bacolod City (acquired in 1962); San Pedro Academy, Valencia, Negros Oriental (1964); San Sebastian College-Recoletos, Cavite City (1966); Colegio San Nicolas de Tolentino-Recoletos [erstwhile UNO-R High School] in Talisay City, Neg. Occ. (1971), San Pedro Academy-Recoletos in Caidiocan, Valencia, Negros Oriental (1984). It is the firm belief of the Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno of the Augustinian Recollect Order and the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters as well that their institutions of learning in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao endeavor to mold the young Filipino people “in the authentic Filipino tradition and value in the hope of instilling in them the knowledge, attitudes and habits that will make them men and women of their time; truly aware of and responsive to the challenges and aspirations of the country.”⁷

Cultural works in churches and convents

The Augustinian Recollects erected a great number of incredibly strong churches—whether made of mampostería, cal y canto, brick, stone or steel—that had withstood the ravages of time. A dozen solid cathedrals in Negros, Bohol, Romblon, Cavite, Palawan and Ilocos Sur are silent witnesses of their Recollect builders’ tremendous tasks and commitment to the continuous evangelization of Filipinos through four centuries and beyond. They ceaselessly embellished those temples

⁶*Ibid.*, 302-303; Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas* II (Manila 1925) 322.

⁷ SECRETARIAT OF EDUCATIONAL APOSTOLATE IN THE PHILIPPINES OF SAINT EZEKIEL MORENO PROVINCE, *Script of the video documentary presented at the 53rd General Chapter of the Order of Augustinian Recollects in Rome, Italy, October-November 2004* (Cebu City 2004) 13.

received from the secular clergy and other religious congregations. Recollect-built churches can compete with the best in the land for their splendor, durability and architectural beauty and the magnificence of their interiors. Consider the school edifices, *casas tribunales*, cemeteries, jails, rectories, organs as well as belfry clocks, some of which still work even today.

Their temples deserve their niche in art history and architecture and in the catalog of great heritage churches of the Philippines. These houses of worship presently constitute our common cultural patrimony. Native Filipinos undoubtedly take pride in such priceless heritage in art and architecture, our strong bond with the glorious Recollect builders whose names are forever etched in the annals of history. They are, to borrow a description by National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), a “fusion of European and Asian architectural motifs.” “Although these churches have remained largely intact for centuries, the ravages of pollution and urban development have taken their toll on these edifices.”

The NCCA, the country’s premiere organization for culture and the arts, tasked with preserving and protecting the Philippines’ cultural heritage, have identified the twenty-six churches in the Philippines as National Cultural Treasures for their cultural significance and distinctive architecture. Five churches built by Augustinian Recollects have made it to the list, and they are to wit:

(a) ***Cathedral of San José*** in Romblon, Romblon. The interior of this church features Baroque-style retablos. 2. ***San Andrés*** in Masinloc, Zambales. The Recollects began construction on this church in the 18th century and completed in the 19th century, and has stood mostly intact until recently, when a strong earthquake inflicted extensive damage to the structure. The choir loft features a distinctively carved polychromed portal.

(b) ***San Isidro Labrador*** in Lazi, Siquijor. Featuring wide wooden floorboards and coral stone walls, this church was built in 1857 and occupies two town blocks.

(c) ***San Agustín de Hipona*** in Bacong, Negros Oriental. Erected in the late 19th century, this church features a finely cut stone work. Its pipe organ also dates back to the 19th century. 5. ***San Juan Bautista*** in Jimenez, Misamis Occidental. Built in the 19th century, this church has retained its original clock metalwork and paintings. A ceiling of painted

canvas installed in 1898 was found to conceal an earlier mural painted directly onto the wooden ceiling.⁸

The most magnificent, widely-known and representative of all Augustinian Recollect churches is the all-steel San Sebastian Basilica inaugurated in 1891. It holds the distinction as the first and only all-steel temple in Asia, the second steel structure in the world after the Eiffel Tower of Paris. There is a smaller steel church in South America. The prefabricated San Sebastian Basilica made it a church *sui generis* this side of the world. In addition, it is a unique showcase of international ingenuity and skills: Filipino painters, financial and human resources, Spanish architect, planners and ships, Belgian contractor and assemblers, French engineer and chandeliers, English engineer and ships, Chinese carpenters and German stained glass windows.⁹

Music

The Augustinian Recollect parish priest—especially one endowed with a fine voice and musical ear—has always been since time immemorial the teacher of church music in seminaries and parishes. As early as 1630, in their convents the friars had to sing the antiphon *Salve Regina*, and from 1660 the Marian practice was extended to the nine principal feasts of the Blessed Mother Mary in the liturgical calendar. Their community prayers in the Divine Office always ended with antiphons honoring Mary: *Nativitas tua*, *Ave Regina Cælorum*, or *Sub tuum præsidium*.¹⁰ Their traditional Marian spirituality and devotion became embedded as well in their pastoral ministry, hence, they contributed a great deal to the traditional fame of the Filipino people as *pueblo amante de María* (people who love Mary).

Augustinian Recollect priests, therefore, taught at one time or another the seminary students in their formative years and the faithful under their jurisdiction several Marian hymns like *Salve Regina* or *Ave maris stella*, the *Ioseph* antiphon, Ambrosian hymn *Te Deum laudamus*, numberless hymns for such parts of the holy Mass as *Kyrie*, *Gloria*,

⁸Information is culled almost *verbatim* from the brochure of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts website and its mobile exhibit.

⁹ Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *The Spires of San Sebastian. The story behind the Virgen del Carmen image and the only prefabricated all-steel church in Asia* (Manila 1991) xii.

¹⁰ Angel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Mary in the Apostolic Tradition of the Order*, in *Bulletin of the Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno* [BPSEM], vol. 3, no. 5, January-June 2002, 75-76.

Credo, *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei*. The Recollects had to impart to them several versions of *Pater Noster*, *Ave Maria* or *Gloria Patri*. For the Sunday Benediction rite, Corpus Christi feast and Communion part, the seminary formator and parish priest had to teach them how to sing countless eucharistic hymns *Pange lingua*, *O salutaris hostia* and *Tantum ergo*. Some Filipino Recollect seminary students and priests had the good fortune of having been taught and having learned the now-popular Gregorian chant.

Domingo Carceller (1894-1967) either composed church music, wrote lyrics or compiled sacred hymns in two books.¹¹ Read the prolific friar's *Colección de cánticos sagrados* in its three editions and find 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 33rd International Eucharistic Congress that took place in February 1937 in Manila. The lyrics were penned by the poet Emeterio Barcelón y Barceló Soriano. The Communion hymn *Venid, venid* can still be heard in parishes where Domingo Carceller was assigned. A century before, a Cuyo missionary Pedro Gibert de Santa Eulalia (1762-1843) authored a Cuyunin hymn-book *Mga himno nga catantaan, Oracion sa pagdayao cay Jesus, Maria et Jose. Paghalad sa Santo Rosario, sanda anang mga excelencias* which saw print only in 1882 in Manila. Its fourth edition appeared in 1955.¹²

Still a theology student in their convent at Marcilla, Navarra, Spain, Celestino Yoldi composed three hymns: *Rosario*, sung in three voices (1884), *Letanía* (1885), in three voices and with organ accompaniment and *Himno* (1886) in three voices and with an orchestra for 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. He further composed several songs for the mass, as well as *Stabat Mater*, *Al Sagrado Corazón de Jesús* and other Marian hymns.¹³

A Negros missionary, Victoriano Tarazona (1865-1922), a friar “with an exquisite for music and acknowledged competence in it,” had

¹¹*Colección de cánticos sagrados* (Manila 1937) 157 pp, size 230 x 160 mm, and the bigger edition *Colección de cánticos sagrados. Acompañamiento de órgano* (Manila 1937) 383 pp, size 310 x 220 mm. The enlarged edition of *Colección de cánticos sagrados* (Manila 1952) has 501 pages and is 285 x 220 mm.

¹² 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) 346.

¹³*Ibid.*, 660-661.

a great number of his compositions destroyed by the revolutionaries in 1898 in Guihulngan, Negros Oriental. 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).¹⁴

Mention must always be made of the world-renowned bamboo organ constructed by Diego Cera (1762-1832) at San José Parish Church in Las Piñas City. He began constructing the organ *sui generis* 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.¹⁵ The bamboo organ is the main attraction of the international music festival held every February. Diego Cera had built two other organs: one was sent in 1793 as a gift to the Queen of Spain and another installed in 1798 at the Recoletos church in Intramuros but this last one was ruined during the American Occupation in 1898.¹⁶ We can suppose that Diego Cera taught music to his parishioners and how to play at least keyboard instruments.

It is a fact the Augustinian Recollect curates acquired pipe organs for music accompaniment in parishes they were assigned, depending naturally on the financial capability of their parochial jurisdiction. Organ accompaniment was indispensable for the solemnity and excellence of Roman Catholic worship. The San Sebastian Basilica pipe organ was purchased from Germany. The church of Baclayon in Bohol got its pipe organ in 1824 through the effort of Blas de la Virgen del Carmen (1772-1838),¹⁷ which was repaired in 1847¹⁸ during the parochial administration of Pedro Rodríguez (1804-1854)¹⁹—or

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 667-668.

¹⁵Manuel CARCELLER, *P. Fray Diego Cera de la Virgen del Carmen*, in *Historia general de la Orden de Recoletos de San Agustín* x (Madrid 1962) 657-663, FRAY AGUSTÍN R. DE SANTA TERESA [pseudonym of Father Rafael García], *Organista y organero*, in BPSN (1953) 108-111.

¹⁶SÁDABA, 362-363.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 377-378.

¹⁸*Libro de cosas notables de Baclayon*, Legajo 67, 1. A manuscript copy of *Cosas notables de Baclayon* is in Legajo 67, No. 1, at the Historical Provincial Archive of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, Order of Augustinian Recollects, at the monastery of Marcilla in Navarre, Spain. Digitized copies of the *Cosas notables* of Bohol towns are available at the Archivo Recoleta in the Bulwagang Recoletos, Mira-Nila Homes, Tandang Sora Avenue, Quezon City.

¹⁹SÁDABA, 766.

also known as Pedro de la Encarnación in some sources. The curate of Maribojoc in Bohol and that of Bacong in Negros Oriental provided their church choirs with pipe organs. A pipe organ was purchased from the Roqués Brothers of Zaragoza, Spain, by the parish priest of Jimenez, Misamis Occidental. San Carlos Cathedral, Talisay City church, both in Negros Occidental, and the church of San Juan de Bolbok in Batangas, acquired their harmonium still usable up to the present. The list of parish churches with a pipe organ or harmonium acquired by Recollect parish priests would be too long to enumerate in this work.

Maecenatism or Patronage of the Arts

A painstaking historical writing on churches and convents under Recollect administration will surely reveal that some friars were avid promoters and patrons of the visual arts. Take for example the three-time prior provincial Antonio Úbeda (1805-1870), parish priest of Bilar (1831-1836), Loay (1837-1843) and Baclayon (1856-1867),²⁰ who commissioned Liberato Gachalian [spelled as *Gatchalian* in other accounts] to paint the *Agony in the Garden* and the *Crowning with Thorns* for Baclayon church. Both icon paintings are presently in the Pagrel Collection of San Agustin Museum in Intramuros, Manila.²¹ The Gachalian paintings of the *Ascension of Our Lord* and *Pentecost* are still found at the vestibule and nave of Baclayon church. It is conjectured that Úbeda had also brought over from Manila the painter dubbed as “The Guanyin Master” who started most probably the school of painting in Bohol. Such icon paintings *Guanyin Nuestra Señora del Rosario altarpiece* and *Urna with cuatro santos* originated from this Boholano school. It is further affirmed by an art historian that the “Recollects inspired a renaissance in church decoration and refurbishing.” Copies of the *Via Crucis* were distributed to several churches in Bohol.²² The church of Baclayon once had four huge paintings of the Doctors of the Church painted likewise by Gachalian. His other extant paintings are now in private collections, so are some icon paintings of the churches of Jagna, Loay and Dausi.

²⁰Javellana erroneously states that Antonio Úbeda was parish priest for three years—from 1856 to 1859 only, instead of eleven years. Cf. René JAVELLANA, *Dating the Santo in Bohol*, in Ramon N. VILLEGAS [ed.], *Tubod. The Heart of Bohol* (Manila 2003) 144.

²¹ Santiago ALBANO PILAR, *The Icon Painting Tradition*, in R. VILLEGAS, 144.

²² *Ibid.*, 142.

Consider the priors of San Sebastian convent, who commissioned sculptors and painters for the steel basilica. The pulpit and the neo-Gothic altars commissioned in September 1890 were ready by early January 1891. The prior Bernardo Muro (1849-1930) paid the sum of 5,985 pesos to Lorenzo Guerrero and Eulogio García for the excellent job. Included in this amount was the total payment for *retablos*, confessional boxes and three Gothic chairs. Don Lorenzo Rocha and his students painted and decorated both the interior and exterior of the new landmark of Manila. Rocha's group received 5,665 pesos as payment.²³

Essay and Poetry

Unbeknownst perhaps to Filipinos have been the literary talents of Recollects. Gregorio Ochoa (1874-1956), Blessed Vicente Soler, Licinio Ruiz (1872-1940), Eladio Aguirre (1889-1950), Aurelio Lacruz (1878-1941) had contributed to dailies and fortnightlies edifying articles, poems and religious verses. For the tricentennial of the enthronement of Our Lady of Mount Carmel at San Sebastian Church (1621-1921), two Recollects penned Marian poems: Gregorio Ochoa's *La Virgen del Carmen de Filipinas* [The Virgin of Carmel of the Philippines], and Carlos Liñán's *Filipinas y La Virgen del Carmen* [The Philippines and the Virgin of Carmel].²⁴ Gregorio Ochoa had his poems *A España*, *A Cervantes*, *A la Inmaculada* and other verses published in local periodicals like *La Estrella de Antipolo*, *Libertas* and *El Mercantil*. Ochoa further honored the first ever native Filipino bishop Msgr. Jorge Barlin with his poetical composition *Filipinas y el P. Barlin* (1906). Blessed Vicente Soler was a regular contributor for such periodicals and he wrote his articles under the pseudonyms of *Taga-Quiaipo*, *Manolito* and *Stock*.²⁵ Aurelio Lacruz wrote for *La Defensa*, *El Comercio*, *El Mercantil* and *Boletín Católico* of Cebu,

²³ROMANILLOS, *The Spires of San Sebastian*, 70.

²⁴Gregorio OCHOA DEL CARMEN, *La Virgen del Carmen de Filipinas*, in BPSN 12 (1921) 1416. An English version *A Poem to the Virgen del Carmen* is the work of this writer and it was published in *The Spires of San Sebastian*, vi-viii. The second poem saw print in BPSN 12 (1921) 3741.

²⁵In 1902-1903, Blessed Vicente Soler wrote lengthy articles like *Nuestra Señora del Carmen*, *Nuestra Señora de Antipolo y los padres agustinos recoletos* and *El taumaturgo de Tolentino* in *La Estrella de Antipolo*. Cf. SÁDABA, 669, and CONGREGATIO PRO CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Beatificationis seu declarationis martyrii Servorum Dei Vicentii Soler et VII Sociorum ex Ordine Augustinianorum Recollectorum Positio super Martyrio*, 26.

apart from composing Latin and Spanish poetry and having his poems published in magazines like *Santa Rita y el Pueblo* and in the bulletin of Saint Nicholas province.²⁶ Besides writing the *Monografía acerca de los batacs, raza autóctona de Palawan* [Monograph on the Batacs, indigenous race of Palawan] as well as on the Iwahig penal colony and the Culión leprosarium, Eladio Aguirre, a native of San Millán de la Cogolla, La Rioja—known in the history of the Spanish language as the place of the *Glosas emilianenses*—contributed about eighty articles in various magazines and newspapers.²⁷

Demography and Population History

For demographic and population studies and statistics in the Philippines, our historians regularly availed themselves of various references, ordinarily termed as *Estado general*. Nicolás Becerra (1780-1840), constructor of the Imus cathedral and convent, wrote and published the *Estado general de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino* in 1820. The compilation of population figures *Estadística de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de los Padres Agustinos Recoletos de Filipinas* was the work of Juan Félix de la Encarnación in 1851.²⁸ Pedro Sanz de la Virgen de la Paz (1837-1888), a parish priest of Himamaylan, had compiled the first edition of *Plan de misiones para la Isla de Negros* with population statistics and a map in 1881 and the second edition of the work in 1883.²⁹ Fidel Moreno (1837-1891) dispatched an eleven-page manuscript of *Descripción geográfica, histórica y estadística del pueblo de Danao, de la provincia de Cebú (Filipinas)* to the Filipino Exposition in Madrid in 1887.³⁰ Mauricio Ferrero, the builder of the cathedral, convent and prison of Bacolod City, wrote and published in Iloilo in 1889 the *Proyecto de misiones en la isla de Negros y ligera reseña de la Isla al hacerse cargo de ella los PP. Recoletos y su estado en la actualidad*.³¹

Fernando Hernández del Pilar (1850-1930) who spent most of his pastoral ministry in Zambales and Pangasinan wrote two important

²⁶Miguel AVELLANEDA, *Continuación del Padre Sádaba, o segunda parte del 'Catálogo de los religiosos de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos'* (1906-1936) (Rome 1938) 71-73.

²⁷AVELLANEDA, 78.

²⁸SÁDABA, 409.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 493.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 505.

³¹*Ibid.*, 533.

works which could well be excellent sources of our history and culture: *Apuntes sobre las Islas Filipinas* [Notes on the Philippine Islands] and *Religión, usos y costumbres, supersticiones, dialecto de los Aetas de Zambales* [Religión, practices and customs, superstitions, dialect of the Aetas of Zambales].³² Miguel Ugarte del Pilar (1850-1898) penned the nineteen-page article *La Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Agustinos Recoletos o Descalzos* which saw print in the *Guía Oficial de Filipinas* (1886).³³

We take very special pride in Fidel de Blas' (1875-1920) magnum opus *Labor evangélica de los padres agustinos recoletos en las Islas Filipinas* [Evangelical work of the Augustinian Recollect fathers in the Philippine Islands], published in Zaragoza in 1910, which contains highly accurate colored maps.³⁴ It is said that during World War II, the Japanese Imperial Army forces took pains in finding copies of the *Labor evangélica* that would greatly aid them in the occupation of the Philippines. Filipino historians and demographers even today never fail to cull important information from the book that printed the statistics (taxpayers, baptisms, weddings, deaths) of parishes and missions in the Philippines during the Spanish regime. Historians have found in the *Labor evangélica* an incredibly rich source for population histories, demographic growths as well as birth rates.³⁵

Fidel de Blas' work further provides us with extremely useful information on the names of provincial and local religious superiors, provincial councilors, parish priests, foundation years of parishes and histories of some priories and missionary regions. He had earlier redacted in 1882 the *Estado general de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Agustinos Descalzos de Filipinas, en su origen, progresos y actualidad, con expresión del número y nomenclatura de sus religiosos y los conventos, casas, colegios, cargos y inisterios*.

Culture in agriculture and cottage industries

It should not have been the concern of an Augustinian Recollect missionary—or any missionary for that matter—to construct bridges

³² *Ibid.*, 572.

³³ *Ibid.*, 612.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 534.

³⁵ Francis A. GEALOGO, *Components of population dynamics in the Philippines during the 19th century*, in *Cuadernos de historia*, núms. 2-3 (Manila 1998) 209-233.

and dams. His divine call urged him to preach God's love and teach the people about salvation and justice. It was not the missionary's business to open roads and streets, his being a spiritual ministry. As ordained minister of Christ, his primordial mission was to spread His Gospel to the four corners of his assigned zone, dispense the sacraments and comfort the needy and the marginalized in society. But the minister had to link inaccessible settlements and towns. He had to visit far-off villages. He had to visit his confreres in far-flung parishes. He had opened farm-to-market roads because his parishioners had to earn their daily sustenance, to survive and to pay tributes as well. Thus, the Recollect missionary was constrained to be an architect, an engineer, a financier and a work supervisor, all professions rolled into one, as earlier mentioned. He supervised the construction of bridges, roads and trails. No, it was not his vocation to undertake those manual labors. But that was what Manuel Plaza (1805-1861) exactly did in Balilihan (Bohol)—opening market roads leading to Loboc, Baclayon and Cortes, besides growing the first bananas, cacao and coconuts in his area..

Consider what Brother Matías Carbonell (1806-1861) did in Imus, Cavite: he constructed in the 19th century that amazingly sturdy bridge named Isabel II that the people of Cavite and motorists still use today. Or the dams in San Nicolas, Pasongcastila, Molino of Bacoar (Cavite) and the cemetery in Imus, all these structures built by Brother Román Caballero (1836-1896). To this, we add the Casundit Dam in the Recollect Hacienda of Imus. "The most solid one ever built in these Islands" was the work of Bro. Lucas de Jesús María (1722-1792). He further drew up the blueprints of the building of the Raw Silk Exchange of San Fernando in Binondo, Manila, for the trade with China. The religious brother finished the last portion of the Puente de España over Pasig River in Manila.³⁶

You should not reproach your parish curate with unsoiled hands if he does no gardening, if he does not plant rice, camote or corn. But that precisely was what Santiago Navarro (1809-1872) did in Catigbian and Bilar, Bohol: to instill love of manual labor, industry and self-reliance among his parishioners. His *basacan* yielded seven cavans of rice annually. And the impoverished folks of his parish partook of his bountiful harvest. Or consider the case of Mariano Gutiérrez de los Dolores, curate of Jagna, Bohol, from 1821 until his death in 1855. It was this Recollect who introduced the residents to the lucrative business of tanning hides of carabaos, horses, cows, flying lemurs called *kagwang*,

³⁶ SÁDABA, 273.

highly valued in European markets, parchment and paper production as well as the manufacture of tints and ink.

And take the case of Fernando Cuenca, “promoter of progress in Negros,” who introduced hydraulic power in the sugar industry. He further applied hydrotherapeutic treatment in his convent-*cum*-hospital in Talisay (Negros Occidental) to ill-stricken poor and rich alike from Negros, Iloilo and Manila, and confreres including Saint Ezekiel Moreno (1848-1906) who suffered from anemia after being stricken with malaria in Palawan. Thus it is no longer strange to read Wenceslao Retana’s observation: “In a town where the friar was guardian of the faithful, it frequently happened that in his sermon he would mix lessons on agriculture, industry and trade.”³⁷

Religious literature

If the Tagalogs had their *Urbana at Feliza*, the Cebuano-speakers of the Visayas and Mindanao also had its counterpart. It was titled *La Teresa*,³⁸ a 104-page novella on Boholano customs that imparted lessons on Christian upbringing, ethical standards and social values. It was penned by Antonio Úbeda³⁹ whose apostolic work in Bohol totaled twenty-six fruitful years. The distinguished religious served as prior provincial for three terms. *La Teresa* was favorite reading in Cebuano-speaking Catholic homes. Its 153-page second edition came out in Cebu. Presently, a Protestant university professor teaches values and values formation to his Boholano students, basing all his lessons upon the Recollect opus. Equally popular in Bohol, Camiguin,

³⁷Jose Ma. CUENCO, *Influencia civilizadora de las órdenes religiosas*, in *Misiones Católicas en el Extremo Oriente* (Manila 1937) p. xx; Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines, Hagiography and History* (Quezon City 2001) 113.

³⁸The complete title is *Diálogo cum pagpolongpolong sa usaca familia cun banay sa maong ginicanan, na nagatudlo sa daghanan nga catungdanan nga uala maila sa daghanang nga bisayang Cristianos. Ug daghanannga mga sala dile madayon pagbuhat, cun dao tutumanon ang mga gitudlo ning librong binuhat sa usa Pareng Agustino Descalzo cun Recoletos*. See SÁDABA, 396.

³⁹SÁDABA, 395-397; Manuel CARCELLER, *Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* xi (Madrid 1967) 150-151; xii, 106-108; ARCHIVO HISTÓRICO PROVINCIAL DE LA PROVINCIA DE SAN NICOLÁS DE TOLENTINO [hereafter AHPM] *Cosas notables de Bilar*, Legajo 66, No. 4, ff. 12-13.

Cebu and Negros Oriental was Father Úbeda's 48-page catechism pamphlet titled *Ang pangadyeon sa mga bisayang cristianos* [Prayers of Christian Bisayans], with an 1852 imprimatur by the Recollect archbishop of Manila José Aranguren (1801-1861). The second edition of the catechism was published in 1895 in Cebu. A prolific author and translator in Cebuano, Ramón Zueco (1828-1889) wrote *Avisos saludables a las doncellas* [Healthy advice to young ladies], Manila 1863 (64 pp), *Avisos muy útiles para las casadas* [Very useful advice to married women], Manila 1873 (48 pp), and *Avisos saludables a los niños* [Healthy advice to young children], Manila 1873 (74 pp).

An essential source for a detailed study of Cebuano customs in the early 19th century is the *Informe acerca de los usos y costumbres de los cebuanos, su religión, educación, industrias a que se dedican, contratos, artes y oficios* [Information on the practices and customs of the Cebuanos, their religion, education, industries, to which they devote themselves, contracts, arts and occupations], (1814), authored by Bishop Joaquín Encabo de la Virgen de Sopetrán (1740-1818) of Cebu.⁴⁰ The manuscript is in *Obispado de Cebú, legajo 69, núm 2*, in the Marcilla Archives.

Catechism and devotional pamphlets

Teaching the basic tenets of Christianity was something that a Recollect religious never failed in the performance of his obligations as a parish priest. For these pastoral tasks, he and his catechists availed themselves of his confreres' works written in at least four languages. In Visayan Cebuano we have Tomás de San Jerónimo's two works: *Explicación de la doctrina cristiana*, Manila 1720, and his *Práctica del catecismo romano y doctrina cristiana*, Manila 1731.⁴¹ Pedro Gibert de Santa Eulalia had three works in Cuyunin: namely, *Lacted nga tocsaan nga casayodan sa pagaradalan sa mga cristianos*, [Brief questions on the truths every Christian must learn], Manila 1871, 32 pp; *Casayoran sa pagaradalan sa mga cristianos* [Explanation of what every Christian must learn], Manila 1871, 88 pp; and *Mga pangaradien nga cristianos ig lacted nga pagturo o casaysayan sa mga pono nga camatuodan, nga taqués maelamang ig tutumanén sa tauo, nga maliag magpacon sa langit* [Christian doctrine and prayers or brief explanations on the

⁴⁰SÁDABA, 316-317.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 103.

chief truths people who wish to go to heaven must know and obey], Manila 1887, 29 pp. A third edition was printed in Manila in 1922. A lone catechism pamphlet in Tagbanua was Cipriano Navarro's (†1887) *Compendio de la Doctrina Cristiana* [Compendium of the Christian Doctrine] (1889). The Zambal language had José Ma. Learte's (†1896) *Catecismo sa sarita zambale a mangapalaman nin dao dasal tan maanter a pamalicas a cunama* [Catechism in Zambal language...] (1873) with 91 pages. Juan de San Antonio (†1663) had *Explicación del catecismo* [Explanation of the Catechism] and *Sermones en lengua calamiana* [Sermons in Calamian language].

Spanish Recollects authored or translated devotionaries and compilations of sermons in various local tongues for their confreres' and parishioners' use. The ascetical opuscula specially honored their town patrons like the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph. Most of their works were printed in Manila. In Visayan Cebuano, we specify five works: Antonio Muro's *Lactud nga devocion sa bulan sa marzo sa pagtahud ug pagdayag sa mahimayaon nga patriarca Señor San Jose* (1881) with 104 pages; Demetrio Navascués' *Usa ca bulan nga hinalad can Maria sa pagdangat sa pagpanghimalic sa mga macasasala* (1887) with 235 pages; Félix Guillén's *Ang Anghel sa calag nga cristianos* (1893) with 497 pages; Fernando Rubio's *Quinabuhi sa mahimayaong nga Patriarca San Jose* (1887) with 253 pages; Víctor Ruiz's *Caponondugan sa silingbahon uyamut nga Casingcasing ni Jesus* (1889) with 740 pages. Ramón Zueco either wrote or translated *Escapulario del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús* (1876) with thirteen pages, *Corona en honor del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús* (1876) with fourteen pages, and *Tesoro del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús* (1881) with 472 pages. Juan Félix de la Encarnación published his Visayan Cebuano *Novena sa ulay uyamut nga pag-panamcon can María Santísima* in 1860 and a novena to the *Virgen del Carmen* in 1862.

Pedro Sanz (1837-1888) wrote two devotional works in Visayan Hiligaynon in honor of Saint Joseph: *Devocion sa pito ca domingo nga guinalahalad sa pagpasidungung sang mga casaquit cag calipay ni S. Jose* (1863) with 71 pages, and *Culto perpetuo cun dayong nga-pagalagad cay Señor San José* (1865) with 70 pages. In Zambal language, Fernando Hernández and Florentino Sainz (1843-1920) co-authored the 248-page *Devocionario sa sarita zambalen binobolinao* (1879). Florentino Sainz had written in 1875 a 95-page *Dasal sa sarita nin zambalen binobolinao*. Another Recollect Jesús Lozano (1901-1972) penned the 542-page *Dalan sa langit*.

Grammars of Filipino languages/dialects

Filipinos are forever indebted to religious philologists for the development and preservation of their languages. In the early days of their evangelization effort, hardworking Recollect authors devoted time to the study of local tongues, redaction of grammar books, and compilation of dictionaries for the use of their fellow curates in the apostolic work. In the process, the authors preserve our languages and dialects, retaining countless names of trees, animals, plants, etc., that would have been long cast to oblivion. Outstanding in Zambal language were Felipe de Santa Ana's (†1748) *Gramática zambal* (569 pp), Rodrigo de San Miguel's (†1626) *Arte y vocabulario de la lengua zambal* and Andrés Romero's (1850-1898) *Gramática zambal*.

In Visayan Cebuano language, spoken by a great number of Filipinos and Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines, we should mention Ramón Zueco's two works: the 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). Félix Guillén (1846-1899) wrote *Gramática bisaya para facilitar el estudio del dialecto bisaya-cebuano* [Bisayan Grammar to facilitate the study of the Cebuano Bisayan Dialect] (1898) with 157 pages. Manuel Vilches (1820-1880) authored the *Gramática bisaya-cebuana* (1877) that had 183 pages. In Cebu City, Pedro Jiménez (1873-1934)—ever alert to changing political times and to the needs of the new dispensation—published in 1904 his timely 140-page *English-Bisaya Grammar in twenty lessons. Abridged from the grammars of the Recoleta Fathers Guillen, Nicolas and Zueco, and translated into English for the use of the American people*.⁴²

The hardworking missionary, prolific writer and future bishop of Sigüenza in Spain, Toribio Minguella (1836-1920), authored *Ensayo de gramática hispano-tagala* (1878) and *Gramática zambale*. He also wrote *Estudio de la escritura filipina con sus caracteres antiguos*. Gerardo Díez (1853-1892) wrote *Abecedario de los tagbanuas, indios aborígenes de la Paragua*. The first ever vocabulary in Calamian was *Vocabulario calamiano-castellano* published in 1789 by Jerónimo de la Virgen de Monserrat (1744-1807).⁴³ The Barcelonese Recollect was a missionary of Taytay almost uninterruptedly from 1770 until 1802. The *Gramática cuyona* was written by Juan Juseu (1819-1868) when he was parish priest of Agutaya.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 717.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 336.

The Marcilla (Navarra, Spain) historical archives now safeguard manuscripts of anonymous Recollect authors on Ilocano, Pampango, Zambal and other Filipino dialects: *Explicación del idioma pampango*, *Gramática hispano-zambal*, *Apuntes sobre el dialecto ilocano* and *Apuntes sobre dialectos filipinos*.⁴⁴ Manuscript number 87 in the Manuscript Section of the Marcilla Archives contains an anonymous work titled *Arte de la lengua cebuana*, while Manuscript no. 89 is the Calced Augustinian Alonso Métrida's *Vocabulario de la lengua visaya-hiligayna-hiraya*.⁴⁵

Dictionaries and lexicographers

Among the Recollects who compiled dictionaries were the following: Blas de San Damián (1720-towards the end of the 18th century), *Diccionario del dialecto de Zambales*⁴⁶; Tomás de San Jerónimo (†1686), *Vocabulario de la lengua cebuana*, still in manuscript. Juan Félix de la Encarnación (1806-1879) authored the unparalleled *Diccionario bisaya-español* in 1851-1852. He further wrote *Diccionario español-bisaya*. Both works were “acclaimed by leading Filipinologists as having no rival in their class.”⁴⁷ José Sánchez (1843-1902) and his confreres cooperated in the augmented third edition of the dictionary in 1885. Andrés Romero also compiled a *Diccionario zambal*.

Manuel Galán compiled a *Diccionario malanao-español* for Mindanaoan curates and parishioners. An unfortunate victim of the revolutionary upheaval in 1898-1899 was the voluminous manuscript of *Diccionario malanao-español* that was submitted to the Asilo de Malabon printing press of the Augustinian friars where it was lost forever to posterity. It was the work of Juan Fernando Ruiz de la Virgen del Perpetuo Socorro (1857-1910) who had worked in Iligan, Cagayan and Oroquieta.⁴⁸

⁴⁴*Sección de Manuscritos*, Manuscrito núm. 6, hereafter APM.

⁴⁵The Augustinian specialist Francisco Encina is the author of the *Arte de la lengua cebuana*, and his confrere Alonso Métrida's complete title is *Vocabulario de la lengua visaya-hiligayna-hiraya*. See Pablo FERNÁNDEZ, *History of the Church in the Philippines, 1521-1898* (Manila 1979) 380-381.

⁴⁶SÁDABA, 245-246.

⁴⁷FERNÁNDEZ, 383.

⁴⁸SÁDABA, 620; AVELLANEDA, 362.

The Teaching of Spanish and Latin

Since the 17th century, Augustinian Recollect provincials had urged the ministers to make the natives learn the language of Cervantes, in obeisance to the governor-general's order. Recollect archivist-historian José Luis Sáenz observed that some friars took it upon themselves to gather a group of young children and impart to them the rudiments of Spanish.⁴⁹ Books, primers, pens and paper were distributed free to the pupils. Not much fruit, however, was evident. Saenz surmises that: "Much was demanded from the minister who had his hands full in the teaching of the Christian faith, the administration of the sacraments, and accomplishing other duties."⁵⁰ It was further noted that in the past centuries there was indeed a very limited number of instructors who possessed a satisfactory knowledge of Spanish.

Yet, Recollect effort in favor of Spanish was not wanting. Toribio Miguella wrote *Método práctico para que los niños y niñas de las provincias tagalas aprendan a hablar castellano* [Practical method for the boys and girls in Tagalog provinces to learn how to speak Castilian]. For the mandated Spanish courses in the 20th century, Recollect schools used the two textbooks *Spanish I (Elementary Spanish)* of Jesús Martínez published in Cebu City in 1960 and in Bacolod City in 1964. His *Spanish II (Elementary Spanish)* was published in Cebu City in 1961.

Deemed as the official language of the Catholic Church, Latin has been since time immemorial part of the curriculum in Recollect minor seminaries. Jesús Solabre (1915-1992) who was assigned in the 1960s in the high school seminary of Santo Tomas de Villanueva-Recoletos in San Carlos City, Negros Occidental, wrote his *Perfacilis methodus discendi Latinam Linguam. Ex variis auctoribus excerpta* [A Very Easy Method of Learning the Latin Language. Excerpts from Various Authors]. The mimeographed textbook used by Recollect seminary students had 105 pages in legal paper size.⁵¹ Solabre likewise authored the second volume which bore the same title for higher Latin courses.

⁴⁹ Jose Luis SÁENZ, *Actividad pastoral, social y cultural de los agustinos recoletos en Filipinas*, 298.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 299.

⁵¹The Solabre textbook was painstakingly encoded by Federico Gregorio OAR; it had been submitted to the Recoletos Communications, Inc., for publication.

Documentary sources for Philippine History and Church History

We cannot deny—although how hard some prejudiced and myopic historians tried to deny—the value of historiography by religious authors. Historical accounts on our pre-Hispanic society owe, to a great extent, to early regular and diocesan priests-historians as well as to European observers and travelers. The history of Hispanic Philippines, for the most part, is indebted to various writers and chroniclers of the religious orders. It is through the windows of history that we learn of our ancestors' great traits and virtues, our heroes' exemplary lives and struggles, our common aspirations and ideals. It is from the knowledge of our glorious past that we learn from our mistakes. It is only then that we can chart our future course and attain our noble aspirations and goals.

Only quite a few to date are aware of the significant immeasurable value of the rich depository of history and information known as Recoletos Provincial Historical Archives. I have read papers presented decades ago in Tagbilaran by a Quezon City university history professor who spoke of almost every possible primary and secondary sources under the sun on the histories of towns in Bohol covering the Spanish colonial period and early American Occupation and where to find them. He spoke endlessly of national archives and libraries, university and parish archives, old newspapers and magazines, fiesta souvenir programs, oral interviews, doctoral and masteral theses, but failed to mention [did they choose to ignore or were they utterly ignorant of?] the *Archivo Histórico Provincial* of Saint Nicholas Province in Marcilla, in the Spanish province of Navarra. Another historian in his 1998 article was not aware of the existence of the partially digitized Archivo Recoleta Fray Juan de la Concepción of the then Vicariate of the Philippines and China, and now Saint Ezekiel Moreno Province in Quezon City. Both archives are the depositories of the Augustinian Recollects whose almost uninterrupted spiritual administration of Bohol Island lasted from 1768 to 1937.⁵²

The *Libros de cosas notables* [books of noteworthy events] of almost all Recollect houses and parishes are indeed great documentary sources. Consulting the *Cosas notables* remarkably helps in putting the

⁵²Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *Documentary Sources of Bohol History*, in *100 Years of the Declaration of Philippine Independence. Seminar-Workshops and Exhibits on Oral and Local History II* (Manila 1998) 51-66; *The Augustinian Recollects in Bohol (1769-1937)*, in *21 Recollectio* (Rome 1998) 83-114.

pieces together to get a clear picture of the town and its events during the Spanish period. Recollect prior provincials either distributed the bound folios to parishes or exhorted their parish priests to assiduously record the important events of the curacies. In Loboc, Bohol, for example, it was then prior provincial José Aranguren, who became archbishop of Manila, in his canonical visit on 2 March 1845 handed the 370-folio *Cosas notables de Loboc* over to Francisco Vásquez.⁵³ Subsequent provincials mandated the parish priest to research on the history of his doctrina and religiously write down the noteworthy occasions or happenings. A glance at the table of contents of the Recoletos archives reveals a great number of future histories just waiting to be written. These primary sources—which are over a hundred—appear in such synonymous terms as *cosas notables*, *apuntes históricos*, *datos para la historia*, *anotaciones*, *reseñas históricas*, *informes* and *breves reseñas*. Most of these accounts were recorded in compliance with the mandates of superiors who possessed an incredible foresight and a fine sense of history. The manuscripts simply await researchers, translators and historians, definitely knowledgeable in Spanish and paleography, to delve into this arsenal of information on our past.

A collection of works of early 17th-century Philippines is *Historia General de las Islas Occidentales a la Asia adyacentes, llamadas Philipinas*, in three volumes, published posthumously in Madrid only in 1882. Another is *Conversión de Filipinas y Japón de los Agustinos Recoletos*, published in 1926 in Granada Spain. Both of them were authored by Rodrigo Aganduru Móríz—also known as Rodrigo de San Miguel (1584-1626),⁵⁴ the founder of San Sebastian convent and illustrious member of the pioneering Recollect mission to the Philippines.

⁵³ The manuscript *Cosas notables de Loboc* is in Legajo 66, No. 4, AHPM.

⁵⁴ Rodrigo Aganduru from Valladolid, Spain, arrived in Manila 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 Holy See's wish to send him as apostolic delegate to Persia where he had earlier spread the Word of God. His brilliant writings on Philippine and Japan missions of the 17th-century, Tagalog and Zambal grammar, cartography, ethnography, medicine and religion, earn him a niche in Philippine Church history. Cf. SÁDABA, 38-42.

Two documents that should shed light on some aspects of the Philippine culture and history in the first half of the 18th century are 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* and José de la Concepción's *Reseña histórica de nuestra Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas, desde su origen hasta el año 1750* (272 pages).⁵⁵ Furthermore, Benito de San Pablo is the most reliable historian of the *Beaterio de San Sebastián*, which is now the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters, and an indispensable biographer of the foundresses Dionisia Mitas and Cecilia Rosa Talangpaz of Calumpit, Bulacan.

Generally, historians consult the very accessible *Blair and Robertson*⁵⁶ collection which contains highly selective accounts of provinces or towns under Augustinian Recollect administration. These translations cover topics pertinent to the Philippines and are culled from the collection titled *Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* [General History of the Order of Augustinian Recollects] or *Crónicas* [Chronicles] in Recollect parlance, now with twelve volumes. The first volume came out in 1664. Volumes I-IV of *Crónicas* with a total of 445 pages cover the period of 1606-1700 are found in *Blair and Robertson*. Therein, too, are included the historical accounts culled from 95 pages of Juan de la Concepción's monumental opus.⁵⁷

A notable and oft-mentioned historian is Juan de la Concepción (1724-1786) who wrote the fourteen volumes of *Historia general de Philipinas*, published posthumously in Manila in 1788-1792. As a Church historian describes the classic work: "It 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."⁵⁸ Among other significant issues in Philippine history, it is from Juan de la Concepción that we could learn almost everything about the undaunted Boholano rebel Francisco Dagohoy.

⁵⁵This was published as a BPSN *separatum*.

⁵⁶Emma Helen BLAIR and James Alexander ROBERTSON, *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*, 55 vols. (Cleveland 1903-1909).

⁵⁷ This information was obtained from the handwritten notes and introductory page in the *Excerpts from the Crónicas*, a work of Father Pablo Panedas who laboriously photocopied, compiled and bound pertinent chapters in the *Blair and Robertson* collection.

⁵⁸ FERNÁNDEZ, 394.

For a long time, history researchers always quoted the 340-page work *Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Agustinos Descalzos de la Congregación de España e Indias* whose author's name did not appear in the book. Published in Manila 1879, the book was later identified by Francisco Sádaba as written by Patricio Marcellán (1834-1889).⁵⁹ Some portions of the Marcellán book were translated and included in the Blair and Robertson collection. Another available source has been Licinio Ruiz's *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas* whose two volumes were printed by the U.S.T. Manila in 1925.

Manuel Carceller (1899-1983) is worthy of admiration for writing the three huge volumes of the series *Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* covering the 19th century: vol. 10 [1808-1836], published in Madrid in 1962 with 809 pages and 10 photographs; vol. 11 [1837-1866], Madrid 1967 with 894 pages and 10 photographs; and vol. 12 [1867-1891] Madrid 1974 with 913 pages and 13 pages of photographs.

History and Historiography Today

In the 20th century, the Recollects continue to write licentiate theses, doctoral dissertations and scholarly articles on the history of their Philippine missions as well as on islands where their confreres had been in centuries past. Take for example the doctoral dissertations presented to the Church History Faculty of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome by José María Echeverría (1916-1993), titled *Orígenes de las misiones de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Agustinos Recoletos en el Extremo Oriente* [Origins of the Missions of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino of the Augustinian Recollects in the Far East] (1942) with 231 pages, or the *History of Negros*, by Ángel Martínez Cuesta with 474 pages, translated from the Spanish and published in 1980.

Take into account the licentiate thesis of René F. Paglinawan, published in the *Recollectio* in 1985, titled as *The Creation of the Apostolic Prefecture of Palawan in the Philippines (1910)*, and the 1997 thesis of Emilio Edgardo A. Quilatan, which bore the title of *A Historical Study on the Augustinian Recollect Hacienda in Imus, Cavite (1666-1903)*. Suffice it to browse through the pages of the provincial bulletins and directories of the Provinces of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino and of Saint Ezekiel Moreno as well as the issues of *Recollectio*, a

⁵⁹ SÁDABA, 526-527.

journal that started in 1978, to find a short list of Recollect historians who have long lists of works on our country's past and Recollect legacy.

Among these historians and chroniclers of these two centuries, who wrote on varied historical subjects in provincial bulletins, commemorative albums and books are Rafael García (1911-1977) who wrote on Cavite, Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo, San Sebastian convent, Negros parishes, San Carlos cathedral, the martyr of Escalante Víctor Baltanás; José Luis Sáenz Ruiz Olalde,⁶⁰ on the Order's pastoral, social and cultural endeavors, the Philippine Revolution, Moro piratical raids, the construction of San Sebastian basilica, Archbishop José Aranguren, contributions of the Augustinian Recollects to the development of agriculture in the Philippines, Philippine missions in the late 17th-century; José Manuel Bengoa,⁶¹ on Pedro Bengoa Cárcamo, chaplain of the Philippine Revolutionary forces in Negros Oriental, on Governor-General Juan de Alaminos; Pablo Panedas,⁶² on churches and cathedrals, José García de San Lorenzo Mártir (1906-1965), on the Augustinian Recollect Sisters; Pedro Herce, on the Recollects in the Philippines (1565-1965); Martín Legarra (1910-1985), on his Bohol trips, Recollect educational apostolate and evangelization effort and his 300-page typescript of the first ten years of what would be known as University of San Jose-Recoletos in Cebu City; Manuel del Val (1902-1983) on Bohol pioneers and World War II; Samson Silloriquéz, on the islands and towns under Recollect jurisdiction, on the OAR 375th anniversary in the Philippines; José Javier Lizarraga,⁶³ on the Recollect haciendas.

Two vital books which historians and biographers can never dispense with—when writing about Recollect history—are the catalogues by Francisco Sádaba (1871-1925), *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) and Miguel Avellaneda (1892-1936), *Continuación del Padre Sádaba o segunda parte del 'Catálogo de los religiosos de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos'* (1906-1936) (Rome

⁶⁰Jose Luis SÁENZ RUIZ OLALDE, *Los Agustinos Recoletos y la Revolución Hispano-Filipina* (Marcilla 1998).

⁶¹José Manuel BENGOA, *Pedro Bengoa Cárcamo, un fraile en la Revolución Filipina* (Marcilla 1999).

⁶²Pablo PANEDAS, *Iglesias recoletas hoy en Filipinas*, in *Recollectio* 31-32 (2008-2009) 267-348.

⁶³José Javier LIZARRAGA, *Haciendas de Filipinas*, in *El padre Enrique Pérez, último vicario general y primer prior general de la orden de Agustinos Recoletos (1908-1912)*, (Roma 1990) 245-287.

1938). In the first half of the 20th century, these complete biographies of missionaries saw publication. These catalogues that included names of parishes and churches of their jurisdiction were based on their age-old libros de profesiones [book of professions], libros de difuntos [books of the departed], registros de capítulos provinciales [records of provincial chapters], duplicates of patentes [assignment credentials], oraciones o discursos fúnebres [funeral prayers or eulogies] of prominent religious, prelates and bishops, correspondence and estados (censuses). Friar biographers collated data, assignments to various parishes and offices, achievements (like building of churches, rectories, bridges, roads, introduction of abaca, leather tanning, grammar book-writing, devotional pamphlets, etc.) of every religious priest and brother who worked in the Philippines since the early decades of evangelization. The “catalogues of religious” are most indispensable when you seek information on the religious who construed the bridge near Camp Pantaleon Garcia, in Imus, Cavite; the religious who supervised the construction of that mampostería bridge at Las Piñas, Metro Manila, or that fortress-like church at Cuyo in Palawan, or on who, when or how that existing spacious convento in Siquijor Island was erected, or who planted the first bananas, coconuts, cacao to farmers-rebel returnees in Balilihan, Bohol, or how much did a friar prisoner suffer in the hands of revolutionaries, or how long was he fettered by them, or who was kidnapped and ransomed by Moro pirates.

Our author of special mention is Ángel Martínez Cuesta, director of the Rome-based OAR Historical Institute and editor of the yearly *Recollectio* founded in 1978, whose scholarly contribution to Recollect history in the Philippines is beyond compare. Apart from delivering lectures on OAR history in the four corners of the world to religious and laity alike in such international venues as symposia, conferences, renewal courses, seminar-workshops, or spiritual exercises, Martínez Cuesta possesses a long bibliographic list of Filipiniana works. The most important and oft-quoted books include the volumes of *Historia de los Agustinos Recoletos* (Madrid 1995 and 2015), *The Order of Augustinian Recollects. Its Charismatic Evolution* (Manila 1994); *The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines. 375 Years of Continuous Presence* (Manila 1981) and *El Camino del deber* (Madrid 1975), the definitive biography of Bishop Ezekiel Moreno (1848-1906). Another timely article was *La Iglesia y la Revolución Filipina de 1898* [The Church and the Philippine Revolution of 1898] (Rome 1998-1999). The first four of the total of six volumes of Saint Ezekiel’s over three thousand letters and other works came out in 2006.

Major commemorative albums containing historical accounts of communities, churches, parishes as well as rare black-and-white or fine color photographs of friars, churches and convents, and other edifices, have been published the Augustinian Recollects in the 20th century. These were the following: *Album de Agustinos Recoletos* (Zaragoza 1931), authored by Ricardo Jarauta; *Los Agustinos Recoletos. 375 Años en las Islas Filipinas* (Quezon City 1982) edited and published by Jesús Sobejano; *Commemorative Album of the 1988-1991 Triennium. Order of Augustinian Recollects, Vicariate of the Philippines and China* (Quezon City 1991), edited by Emilio P. Jaruda Jr. and published during the term of Vicar Provincial Victor L. Lluch (1935-2004). Worth mentioning too are the four directories and albums, replete with color photographs of friars, convents, universities, colleges and high schools with historical background, of the Vicariate of the Philippines and China (later Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno): *Augustinian Recollects in Asia* (Quezon City 1992), edited by German F. Chicote and during the term of Vicar Provincial Víctor L. Lluch and *Directory of Communities and Religious. Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno* (Quezon City 1999), edited by Regino Bangcaya and Ferdinand Hernando. Added to these are *Keeping the Fire Ablaze* (2009) during Prior Provincial Lauro Larlar's triennium and *Moved by the Spirit* (2019) during Prior Provincial Dionisio Selma's first term, and both were edited by Jose Enril Almayo.

Cataloguing of Archival and Library Filipiniana Collections

Augustinian Recollects today have facilitated the writing of our local and national history by locating, documenting and/or collecting manuscripts found in two vital Spanish archives: the *Archivo Histórico Nacional* [National Archives of History] in Madrid and the *Archivo General de Indias* [General Archives of the Indies] in Seville and have published their catalogues a few years back. What our cataloguers did was visit the archives and worked therein for their research grants, dissertation or any book projects. Angel Martínez Cuesta published in 2002 in Rome his 239-page *Documentos sobre los Agustinos Recoletos de Filipinas en los Archivos General de Indias e Histórico Nacional de Madrid (1789-1898)* [Documents on the Augustinian Recollects of the Philippines in the General Archives of the Indies and National Archives of History of Madrid (1789-1898)]. René Salvania had his research and documentation projects at the Archivo Histórico Nacional [National Archives of History] published in the 1994 and 1995 issues

of *Recollectio*, the Rome-based annual journal of history published by the Institute of History and Spirituality of the Augustinian Recollects.⁶⁴

Most laudable, too, are the joint effort of *Ángel* Martínez Cuesta, Pablo Panedas and José Manuel Bengoa who ever-mindful of the apostolic tradition of the Augustinian Recollect Order which had over 800 European friars in various houses, parishes and missions in our country from 1606-1906, have compiled in 2002 in Rome a 229-page catalogue of *Filipiniana en las bibliotecas agustino-recoletas de Roma y Marcilla (Navarra, España)* [Filipiniana in the Augustinian Recollect Libraries of Rome and Marcilla (Navarre, Spain)]. The three libraries are those of the Convent of Marcilla, the Historical Provincial Archives of Saint Nicholas Province, also in Marcilla, and the General Archives of the Order in Rome. The libraries have great collections of priceless books, souvenir programs, magazines, school annuals, and journals, of the past and present centuries collected, donated or acquired from various sources since the foundation of their convents in Intramuros, Marcilla, Monteagudo and Rome. You can find therein titles in English, Spanish, Latin, Tagalog, Zambal, Cuyunin, Agutaynin, Ilocano, Waray, Cebuano, Hiligaynon and Chamorro.

A big number of the earlier book collections of the Recollects in the Philippines were lost to posterity in the devastation wrought by the Liberation of Manila in February 1945. The remaining few were sent to the provincial archives in Spain for safekeeping. The cataloguing work of *Filipiniana* would not have been possible if there were no archival manuscripts (both original and photocopy), published primary sources, books, souvenir programs, journals and magazines on the Philippines indefatigably collected from all over the world by Toribio Minguella, Francisco Sádaba, Marcelino Simonena (1873-1959), Rafael García, Pablo Panedas, *Ángel* Martínez Cuesta, the past provincials and their secretaries.

Recollect Museums

Three are the museums showcasing the rich Augustinian Recollect culture and heritage in the Philippines. One is the Museo Recoleta in Bulwagang Recoletos, Mira-Nila Homes, Tangdang

⁶⁴René SALVANIA, *Catálogo de los fondos de la serie Ultramar del Archivo Histórico Nacional de Madrid. I. Sección de Fomento: legajos 429-464*, in *Recollectio* 17 (1994) 299-337 and *Sección de Gracia y Justicia: legajos 2.133-2.168*, in *Recollectio* 18 (1995) 269-321.

Sora Avenue, Quezon City; another is the Archives-Museum of the Generalate of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters at Plaza del Carmen, Quiapo, Manila, and the third is the Museo in Marcilla, Spain. The three main depositories of relics and memorabilia naturally have different collections but they all aim at helping visitors understand and appreciate the rich Recollect heritage. The superiors and curators collect objects of importance, care for or preserve them, record information, and display them to the general public for “self-directed learning, education and the advancement of knowledge.”

The Recollect museums display books, photographs, maps, artifacts, religious art, antiques and memorabilia of Augustinian Recollect priests and sisters in the Philippines. They come in form of bells, icons, statues, armchairs, crucifixes, manuscripts, paintings, souvenir programs, commemorative albums, postcards, pamphlets, furniture, chalices, patens, censers, communion plates, tabernacles, vestments, monstrances, *batidores*,⁶⁵ water and wine cruets. Their growing collections are mostly religious objects from religious communities, convents, churches, schools, and generous but mostly anonymous individual priests and sisters.

The Archives-Museum of the Generalate of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters was a direct offshoot of the recommendation of the Historical Commission⁶⁶ appointed in November 1999 by Jaime Cardinal Sin for the beatification process of the two Talangpaz foundresses. With Romualdo Rodrigo, the Order’s postulator general for the causes of saints, the commission members met at the Provincial House of Saint Ezekiel Moreno Province in Quezon City assigned tasks for each member. They further urged then Superior General Mother Ma. Eufemia Lauzon to spearhead the establishment of the museum-archives. Museum objects safeguarded at the general secretariat were

⁶⁵*Batidores* are used to announce solemn religious feasts of the parish. Gunpowder was poured into the metal holes and when pounded up a booming explosion was created.

⁶⁶Headed by Rene F. Paglinawan OAR, the Historical Commission for the beatification of Mother Dionisia Mitas Talangpaz and Mother Cecilia Rosa Talangpaz, was composed of Emilio Edgardo A. Quilatan OAR, Angel Martínez Cuesta OAR, Rene Paglinawan OAR, Luciano PR. Santiago, Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos, assisted by the Augustinian Recollect sisters Eufemia Lauzon, Maxima Pelaez and Ma. Lirio Guillermo. Bishop Teodoro Buhain, episcopal delegate of the Manila archbishop, officially closed the process at San Sebastian Basilica on 22 May 2002. See Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *More Blessings from Heaven*, in *The Recoletos Observer*, vol. 3, no. 2 (April – June 2002) outside backcover.

then deposited in the third-floor room of their generalate which was blest and inaugurated in April 2000.

It was Regino Z. Bangcaya who during his vocation campaigns as national vocation director (1978-1990) collected objects and artifacts for his brainchild project. Then Vicar Provincial German F. Chicote urged him to gather “interesting and curious things for the ‘museum’ we planned to put up in our theologate seminary of Quezon City”. The first collections were housed in December 1985 at the Recoletos Formation Center in Mira-Nila Homes, Quezon City. The museum is now managed by Fr. Hector C. Gonzales.

The year 1994 saw the solemn inauguration of the Bulwagang Recoletos at Mira-Nila Homes, which also houses the Archivo Recoleta, Saint Augustine Library, Museo Recoleta and laboratory. This conservation laboratory is one of the four existent in the Philippines, and is staffed by well-trained technicians, fully equipped with paraphernalia, chemicals and materials for restoration and conservation of metal, paper, ivory, textile materials. The prized treasures of the Mira-Nila Museum are the dark icon of *Nuestra Señora de la Salud*, brought in 1634 by Recollect missionaries,⁶⁷ *Cristo de Casiguran* in eastern Luzon where the missionaries stayed in 1660-1705⁶⁸ and the statue of San Miguel Arcángel.

Worth mentioning, too, is Saint Ezekiel Moreno’s old room at the Recollect convent and novitiate house in Monteagudo, Navarre, Spain, where he spent his last days on earth. One can find the saint’s death bed, side table, *disciplina*, penitential instruments, habits, episcopal vestments, slippers, shoes, pectoral cross, kneeler, cabinets, and other objects used in the saint’s time and well-preserved up to these days. Devotees and pilgrims trek to the tomb of Saint Ezekiel and ask his intercession for special favors from God Almighty.

⁶⁷The chapel which presently houses the shrine of *Nuestra Señora de la Salud*, Our Lady of Health, was built beside Saint Nicholas of Tolentino Parish Church, Barangay Bahay Toro, Quezon City, following the revival of the Marian devotion.

⁶⁸Regino Z. BANGCAYA, *Museo Recoleta*, in Emilio P. JARUDA JR. [ed]. *Commemorative Album of the 1988-1991 Triennium. Order of Augustinian Recollects, Vicariate of the Philippines and China* (Quezon City 1991) 131-132.

Epilogue

The Order of Augustinian Recollects has truly done a great deal during these four hundred years for the Filipino Church, society and culture. But what they did was merely to follow Saint Augustine's teachings on love and service to the Church. Pastoral works, the Passion of Christ Jesus and the shining example set by Saint Paul the Apostle prod the Augustinian Recollect religious to go beyond the narrow limits of the monastery, to go beyond his *caritas veritatis* (the Augustinian concept comprising withdrawal, contemplation, study of the Scriptures and personal sanctification) and to discern clearly the *necessitas caritatis*, that is, demands of charity.

The Mother Church needs every available support in her sublime mission of enlightening children for heaven. The religious would not be good children if they rebuffed her. The religious should 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."⁶⁹

And wherever help was needed or demanded—whether in spiritual, social or cultural endeavors—the Recollect religious like true sons of Saint Augustine should lend a hand. That has been avowed commitment of the Augustinian Recollects all these four centuries. What they had were raw talents and skills but constantly developed and put to good use to the fullness for the service of the People of God in the Philippines. Their cultural and artistic tasks are incomplete, nay, endless, ongoing today as ever, even as the Order of Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines and in Asia moves on towards another four hundred years.

⁶⁹A. MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los Agustinos Recoletos I* (Madrid 1995), 39-40.

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Masinloc, Zambales: Augustinian Recollect Mission (1607-1902)¹

Beginnings of Masinloc Mission

The Zambales of the Spanish colonial years comprised parts of Pangasinan and Bataan. Dominican and Augustinian missionaries initially tried to evangelize its vast regions. The attempts to spread the Gospel of Christ by the pioneering missionaries were rather sporadic and occasional. There was no authentic evangelization program for those regions. In 1591, an Augustinian missionary was slain by the inhabitants.

Not long after, the first religious missionaries abandoned the area, citing the following reasons: “unhealthy clime, the natives’ inordinate attachment to their traditions, and the courage and determination with which they defended such traditions.”²

The fierce and bellicose character of the natives and the rugged terrain did not scare the Augustinian Recollect missionaries at all. Instead, the indomitable people and hostile land stirred up their zeal. The Recollects were pleased to accept the invitation of the *encomendero* Hernando de Avalos. The only friars in 1606 who could speak Tagalog were Fray Miguel Bombau de la Madre de Dios, Fray Pedro Vedoya de San José and Fray Francisco de Santa Mónica, a religious brother. Fray

¹Reprinted from *Philippine Social Science Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2 (July – December 2019) 151-171.

²Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los Agustinos Recoletos* 1, Madrid 1995, 374.

Pedro and Fray Francisco had joined the Augustinian Recollection in Manila. Hence, the three missionaries journeyed to Zambales.

Fray Miguel de la Madre de Dios, Augustinian Recollect protomartyr

The hard work, activity and dedication of the first missionaries were astonishing. Of this, Augustinian Recollect Historian Angel Martínez Cuesta says: “Unmindful neither of the inhospitable terrain, nor of the scarcity of food nor of 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.”³

In early 1607, the Recollect pioneers reached Mariveles [now part of Bataan] and started spreading the Good News of Christ’s saving mission. Fray Miguel de la Madre de Dios⁴ spoke of Christian doctrines when the natives turned hostile and stoned the preacher, wounding him fatally. His was the first Recollect martyr’s blood that would flow profusely through the decades in the missions of Zambales and Bataan. Impelled by apostolic zeal and suffering all kinds of unimaginable deprivations and tribulations, more missionaries followed his footsteps. 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’ young lives. “Just reading the accounts of their ordeal,” says the Recollect historian Licinio Ruiz, “can make the soul shiver, even as they proclaim the greatness of their spirit.”⁵

³ *Ibid.*, 374.

⁴ An Augustinian friar of Zaragoza, Spain, Fray Miguel Bombau de la Madre de Dios later joined the Recollects and their first mission to the Philippines. 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 their convent in Bagumbayan, Manila. Though he did not perish on the spot, Fray Miguel has always been revered as the Order’s protomartyr. Cf. Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines: Hagiography and History* (Quezon City 2001) 120. Cf. Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *Augustinian Recollect Icons*, in *The Recoletos Observer*, April-June 2005, vol. 6, no. 2, 18.

⁵ Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas*. vol. I (Manila 1925) 21.

Fray Rodrigo de San Miguel, Zambales and Bataan missionary

A man of truly great and enterprising spirit, Fray Rodrigo de San Miguel (1584-1626) traveled along the coast of Zambales and of what is actually known as Bataan to bring souls to the Catholic fold.⁶ Fray Rodrigo retraced the steps of the first Recollect missionary to Mariveles where Fray Miguel de la Madre de Dios shed his life for the Christian faith.

Indistinctly known in history books as Fray Rodrigo Aganduru Móriz, the intrepid missionary from Valladolid, Spain, arrived with the first mission in May 1606. Bataan and Zambales—where he founded the towns of Bagac, Morong, Mariveles, Cabcaben and Subic—witnessed his initial apostolic endeavors. As vicar provincial, Fray Rodrigo dispatched 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 Holy See's wish to send him as apostolic delegate to Persia where he had earlier spread the Word of God. His writings on Philippine and Japan missiology, Tagalog and Zambal grammar, cartography, ethnography, medicine and religion, deservedly earn him a niche in Philippine Church history.

Fray Rodrigo de San Miguel set up the town and parish of Subic in 1607. From the account of this daring Recollect missionary, we learn that the people of Subic practiced an animistic religion. It was said they worshipped the spirits in the forests. One day Fray Rodrigo saw a fruit-bearing tree, heavily laden with ripe and yellow fruits. The tree referred to was called *pajo* [mango]. It was believed to cause instant death that would befall anyone who touched the fruits and consumed them. It was furthermore deemed a sacrilege and a great sin just to be in contact with the tree. But Fray Rodrigo with one hand holding the Crucifix, while praying the *Ecce Lignum Crucis*, a Good Friday invocation in the Adoration of the Cross rite. He cut down the *pajo* tree and ate its fruit, even as he preached the saving power of Christ Jesus. Nothing evil happened to Fray Rodrigo, and at once everyone accepted his preaching and received God's Word.⁷ Since time immemorial, Saint James the Apostle has been the patron saint of Subic.

⁶RUÍZ, *Sinopsis* 1, 21; ROMANILLOS, *Augustinian Recollect Icons*, in *The Recoletos Observer*, April-June 2005, vol. 6, no. 2, 17.

⁷Patricio MARCELLÁN, *La Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de los Agustinos Descalzos de la Congregación de España e Indias* (Manila

Fray Andrés del Espíritu Santo, first parish priest of Masinloc

A native of Valladolid, Spain, and member of the pioneering mission, Fray Andrés del Espíritu Santo (1585-1658?)⁸ founded 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 the 11-month journey from Spain by way of Mexico, he reached Manila at the helm of the fifth mission with twenty-three members in 1622 that included the future martyrs—Blessed Melchor de San Agustín and Blessed Vicente de San Antonio. Historians owe it to Fray Andrés del Espíritu Santo for having chronicled the early Augustinian Recollect convents, churches, holy images, missions, brief biographies of religious and missionary arrivals in our country (1605-1645).⁹

From Manila, Fray Andrés del Espíritu Santo traveled to north of Luzon by sea and reached Masinloc in 1607 with Fray Jerónimo de Cristo.¹⁰ Fray Andrés is deemed as the founder of Masinloc and builder of the first church of Almighty God in the new pueblo. The two missionaries spent months in the area, nourishing their frail bodies solely with root crops and vegetables.

In 1609, Fray Andrés and Fray Jerónimo proceeded further north of Zambales and founded the town of San José de Casborran [actual Alaminos City] and Bolinao, both now belonging to the province of Pangasinan. In 1610, they resettled the natives and founded the new towns of Balincaguin [present-day Mabini] and Agno.

1879) 50-51.

⁸Francisco 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) 42-43. Cf. also ROMANILLOS, *Augustinian Recollect Icons*, in *The Recoletos Observer*, vol. 6, no. 3 (July-September 2005) 23-24.

⁹Fray Andrés is the author of *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 Filipinas* [BPSN] 55 (1965) 66-179.

¹⁰Cf. SÁDABA, 36. An Augustinian since 1593, Fray Jerónimo joined the Recollects in Zaragoza, Spain. He was named prior of the first Recollect convent of San Juan de Bagumbayan and vicar provincial in 1608-1609. He was in this last position when he saw the need for missionaries in Zambales. He joined Fray Andrés in Masinloc and got seriously ill. He passed away in 1607 in Bolinao which was then part of Zambales, now under Pangasinan.

Masinloc, center of evangelization

In the course of time, Masinloc would become the center of Augustinian Recollect evangelization for northern Zambales, which stretched from Iba to Anda. Customarily, four or more religious missionaries resided in Masinloc.¹¹ Thus, according to a Recollect chronicler, Masinloc possessed “*la mejor iglesia y el mejor convento*,” the best church and the best convent in the whole province of Zambales.¹² The pueblo continued its purpose as a mission springboard which had commenced at the outset of the evangelization of Zambales in 1607.

Toponym

The toponym of “*Masinloc*”, according to the Recollect Father Vicente Pascual’s 1891 brief account on the history and events of the pueblo, can be traced to “*ma*” [which means, “place teeming with”] and “*sinloc*”, “*una planta que crece hasta metro y medio de tallo delgado y hojas estrechas y largas*.” Translated into English, the phrase means *sinloc* is a “plant that grows up to a meter and a half tall, with a thin stalk and narrow and long leaves.” About a kilometer or two northeast of the present site of Masinloc, continues from Father Vicente Pascual’s historical account, there is a place named “*masinlocan*” or a “place where the *sinloc* plant thrives in abundance.” The people, especially the Ilocanos, presently term the plant *arono*.

Definitely, *sinloc* is not a tree, as conjectured by people nowadays. Unfortunately, there exists an article on Masinloc toponym that conjectures the loss of its meaning: “The name *Masinloc* came from *majinloc*, meaning a place where the *jinloc* grows in abundance. Whether a tree, shrub, vine or what-not, the identity of the *jinloc* seems now lost to us, but there still exists a sitio near the town on the river bank which is called *Cajinlocaqan*, that is full of *jinloc*.”¹³

¹¹Vicente PASCUAL, *Breve reseña histórica de la fundación y vicisitudes por que ha pasado esta parroquia de Masinloc*, Archivo Histórico Provincial de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino, Marcilla, Navarre, Spain, Folder 4, 8v-9r.

¹²*Ibid.*, 8v.

¹³Visit <http://www.zambales.gov.ph>.

Clime and agricultural products

The climate of Masinloc, as reported by an Augustinian Recollect historian, was healthful.¹⁴ The land produced palay in abundance. Medicinal plants further abounded in the area. Potable water was available everywhere. Two rivers named Baliti and Vavandui that flowed from east to west irrigated the vast fertile land. Various kinds of trees grew in the forests and they constituted an endless source of wood for the construction of houses and buildings.

In Masinloc, Fray Andrés del Espíritu Santo built the first house of God which was ordinarily made of light materials. The first church did not last long. The present church was constructed in the 18th-19th centuries by the Augustinian Recollect missionaries. It is the best example of a colonial church complex in the province, although it was heavily hit by a strong earthquake that struck at dawn in December 1999.

Triumphs and Travails of Augustinian Recollect Evangelization

Aetas attack new Christian communities

An indomitable group of Aetas or Negritos opposed the evangelization effort of Fray Andrés del Espíritu Santo and his coadjutor. They sporadically but ferociously attacked the areas that sprawled between Zambales and Pangasinan, playing havoc on the new Christian settlements and farms, killing some converts in the process. These upland dwellers were dreaded because of their appalling horrifying cruelty, beheading Christians and committing all kinds of atrocities acts against them. Government soldiers were dispatched to subdue the pillaging Aetas but the headhunting tribe rushed to their mountain hideouts and vanished in the wilderness.¹⁵

A fort was finally built in Playa Honda to protect the lives and properties of the new Christian converts. Hence, the Aeta attacks were contained and the missionary activity and civilization work of the Recollects were consolidated. Fray Andrés was assigned as chaplain of the fort and missionary of the area. The Recollect pastor further maintained the peace and order between the natives and Spaniards. The military garrison helped maintained the harmony between them. A new

¹⁴ SÁDABA, 51.

¹⁵RUIZ, *Sinopsis*, 23.

town soon surged forth from this community and was called Iba, the present capital of Zambales province.

In 1760, Governor General Manuel de León ordered the construction of a stronger fort and permanent assigned twenty-three soldiers to its garrison.

Blessed Francisco de Jesús

The Spanish Blessed Francisco de Jesús (1590-1632), a native of Villamediana, Palencia, joined the Recollect Congregation in 1615. The Recollect mission which he joined left Cádiz in May 1619 and reached Vera Cruz, Mexico, in August 1619. They proceeded to Acapulco and from there they traveled to Manila where they debarked in August 1620. Two typhoons buffeted their galleon named *San Nicolás*. A fire hit the stern of the ship but the missionaries landed safely in Manila. Father Francisco learned Tagalog in Manila and Cavite.

It was towards the end of September 1620 when Father Francisco de Jesús was assigned to Masinloc.¹⁶ He spent three months in this mission (October-December 1620). He was then sent to Bolinao in the north where he stayed until 22 September 1622.

In early 1623, Fray Andrés del Espíritu Santo as the major superior in the Philippines appointed Fray Francisco as vicar provincial with Fray Vicente de San Antonio in the first Augustinian Recollect mission to Japan. With eight other missionaries, the two Recollects reached Japan in June 1624. They risked their lives and preached the Gospel in Nagasaki and Yokinaura until they were arrested by Japanese authorities in 1629. After years of imprisonment and tortures, they suffered martyrdom on 3 September 1832.¹⁷

Fray Francisco de San José (1632-1668)

Fray Francisco de San José came to the Philippines in 1645.¹⁸ He was elected provincial in 1653 and 1659. As provincial councilor, he was in Masinloc in 1649 when the Moros from Jolo and Borneo organized raiding expeditions against the towns in Luzon where they committed atrocities no end. Six Moro caracoas had landed at the shore of Masinloc. Over six hundred Moro fighters had started disembarking.

¹⁶Manuel CARCELLER, *Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos*, XII, (Madrid 1974) 32.

¹⁷SADABA, 50-54.

¹⁸SADABA, 92-93.

A great majority of the residents—scared out of their wits—had hastily scampered for safety in the in neighboring mountain fastness.

Fray Francisco de San José led the Zambaleños in the brave defense of their town. The people put up a great fight and successfully repelled the Moro invading forces, causing human casualties among them. The survivors fled to an adjacent islet named Pulô San Salvador to fight another day. The next day Father Francisco led a huge number of emboldened Zambaleños who attacked the hideout in the island and finished off the unwary Moros. The dauntless Masinloc fighters eventually captured the caracoas laden with war materiel and proclaimed complete victory over the Moro pirates.

In 1668, Fray Francisco de San José, who was assigned to Romblon as parish priest, successfully repulsed the invading Moro invading forces through artillery fire. At the height of the fierce battle the missionary was seriously wounded and died very shortly after.

Fray Cristóbal de Santa Mónica (?-1693)

Fray Cristóbal de Santa Mónica was prior of Masinloc (1641, 1647, 1654) and Mariveles (1644).¹⁹ As prior provincial in 1656 and 1668, he gave a major impetus for the resettlement of the inhabitants of Zambales province and worked hard for the prosperity of its mission posts and towns. Previously, there were only three strategic residences: Mariveles, Masinloc and Bolinao. Sigayan, present-day Santa Cruz, had been suppressed in 1661. From the three central residences, other towns and barrios were periodically visited by the Recollects who sojourned there for a period of time according to the spiritual needs of the parishioners. In 1647, Fray Cristóbal increased the number of missionaries and mission stations. He set up two more residences: one in Peinaben (Playa Honda or Iba) and another in Bagac. The residence of Bagac was later transferred to Morong.

Four towns were carved out of Masinloc²⁰

The first *visita* of Masinloc to separate and become an independent town and parish was Iba. Spelt as Yba during the Spanish

¹⁹SADABA, 89-90.

²⁰ Vicente PASCUAL, *Breve reseña histórica de la fundación y vicisitudes por que ha pasado esta parroquia de Masinloc*, Archivo Histórico Provincial de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino, Marcilla, Navarra, Spain, Folder 4, 14r.

Regime and known in the past as Peinaben or Playa Honda, Iba was founded in 1611, as recounted by our Recollect chronicler Father Vicente Pascual. But another Recollect historian Father Fide del Blas contends in his book *La Labor evangélica de los padres recoletos en las Islas Filipinas* that Iba was founded only 1681.²¹ The foundation of the future capital of Zambales is attributed to both Father Rodrigo de San Miguel and Father Andrés del Espíritu Santo.

The second oldest *visita* of Sigayán, erstwhile name of actual Santa Cruz, was created as an independent *pueblo* from Masinloc, its town and parish matrix, in 1612. It was Father Alonso de San Agustín who through personal initiative labored to erect the present-day town of Santa Cruz. Our chronicler Father Vicente Pascual recounts a pertinent information on the name of Sigayán. According to the third entry of the *First Book of Baptisms* in the parish archives of Masinloc, a Dominican friar named Fray Bartolomé de Estrada had administered on 8 April 1662 the sacrament of Baptism to three individuals in the barrio of Sigayán, which belonged to the parish of San Andrés of Masinloc. The signature of the Recollect parish priest Father Juan de San Diego who affixed it on 3 June of the same year of 1662 followed that of Fray Bartolomé de Estrada.

The Christian natives of the town matrices of Masinloc and Iba resettled in Palauig which became a new town. Father Fidel de Blas writes that Palauig was founded as a parish in 1873.²²

San Vicente was the old name of Candelaria. As an independent town, Candelaria was separated from its town matrix Masinloc on 21 April 1871. A royal order was issued at the Spanish capital of Madrid in 21 June 1892, declaring the new parish of Candelaria independent from the parish matrix of San Andrés of Masinloc. We do not know the reason why the separation of Candelaria from its parish matrix was again decreed in early 1893.

San Andrés Church

Father Agustín Pérez de la Inmaculada Concepción was tasked by the Recollect prior provincial to write down the remarkable annals in the history of Masinloc in a *Libro de cosas notables*.²³ This could have

²¹Fidel DE BLAS, *Labor evangélica de los padres recoletos en las Islas Filipinas* (Zaragoza 1910) 16.

²²*Ibid.*

²³Vicente PASCUAL, *Breve reseña histórica de la fundación y*

been a very vital document for our investigative effort, had it survived to these days. Unfortunately, what could have constituted an important document for our historical narrative is seemingly lost to posterity.

In the parishes of the Visayas, the Recollect parish curates had ample time to copy manually the original *Cosas notables* of more than twenty parishes under their spiritual jurisdiction. The original manuscripts were left behind in the parochial archives with other canonical books when the Recollect priests were advised to abandon their parishes and leave for Manila in November 1898. The copies of the *Cosas notables* are now kept in the *Archivo Historico Provincial de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino* (Provincial Historical Archive of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino), in Marcilla, Navarra, Spain. Digitized copies of the *Cosas notables* are available to researchers at *Archivo Recoleta Juan de la Concepción OAR* of Bulwagang Recoletos in Quezon City.

It was providential, though, that a diocesan parish priest of Masinloc had the foresight and for future researchers he had the two old baptismal books copied manually.²⁴ The secular priest Father Gabriel José Martínez del Burgo who was parish priest in 1785-1789 saw the lamentable condition of the parochial books whose first baptismal entry was in October 1661. From these books, Father Vicente Pascual was able to reconstruct in 1891 the list of parish priests from 1661 to 1891. Without Father Martínez del Burgo's good sense, the names of the parish curates could have vanished to oblivion forever.

Father Agustín Pérez who authored the *Cosas notables* of Masinloc was at the helm of the parish for a total of sixteen years: 1877-1891, 1895-1898. His successor Father Vicente Pascual, parish priest from 1891-1895 and author of our highly useful *Breve reseña histórica de la fundación y vicisitudes por que ha pasado esta parroquia de Masinloc* (Brief historical account of the foundation and circumstances through which this parish of Masinloc has passed), mentions the existence of Father Agustín's *Libro de Cosas notables de Masinloc* [Noteworthy Events of Masinloc]. He further tells us that Father Agustín had done some extensive research on the history of the stone church of San Andrés, relying mostly on oral tradition. He had interviewed the old folks of the town for his *Cosas notables*.

vicisitudes por que ha pasado esta parroquia de Masinloc, Archivo Histórico Provincial de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino, Marcilla, Navarre, Spain, Legajo 50, Folder 4, 14r.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 11v.

The strong church edifice

According to the *Breve reseña de la fundacion y vicisitudes... de Masinloc* (Brief historical account of the foundation and circumstances ... of Masinloc), the construction of the present church of Masinloc was begun in 1745. As recounted in 1891 in the now-extinct *Libro de cosas notables*, by Father Agustín Pérez, who administered the San Andrés parish for fourteen years, tradition has it that the Augustinian Recollect missionaries constructed the stone church in 1745. We do not have an inkling as to the date the church edifice was finished. The identity of the Recollect parish is not available because the second baptismal book of the parish during the Spanish period ended in February 1726. Blame it on the *anay, bokbok*, typhoon, heavy downpour, earthquake, bad quality of rice paper, or any paper, or simply the wear and tear of the centuries.

But when the diocesan priest *Bachiller* Don Gabriel José Martínez took over the parish administration in January 1785 from the last Recollect parish priest Father Manuel de Jesús y María, the second baptismal book of the March 1726-December 1784 was no longer available. The 58-year silence of the documentary sources is a heavy burden for the researcher or historian.

The unreliable oral history gathered in 1891 further says the stone church was destroyed by a powerful earthquake that leveled it to the ground in 1798 and this year was likewise the year it was finished! Father Vicente Pascual, however, puts this twin assertion in doubt. From his own research no research took place in 1798. There were earthquakes in 1754 and 1766. Which of these two tremors demolished the stone church of Masinloc? We can never tell. But we are assured that no earthquake occurred in 1798.

From a highly reliable source, we learn that the diocesan priest *Bachiller* Don Miguel Gregorio Jiménez was the only parish administrator who worked so much for the restoration of the old church. He took over the parochial management on 12 June 1825. The rest of the parish priests were only on an interim basis and they stayed in Masinloc on an average period of one to two years. There was not enough time to do restoration work on the damaged church.

The doorway to the choir loft is carved and polychromed; it is the most unique feature of the San Andrés Church after the facade.²⁵

²⁵E. L. A. ROMANILLOS, *Augustinian Recollect Icons*, in *The Recoletos Observer*, October-December 2006, vol. 6, no. 4, 27.

Description of the church edifice after the Revolution

Father Agustín Pérez returned to Masinloc in December 1901 and stayed for only four months.²⁶ According to his account, the church edifice remained the same as before during his time. No serious damage had been inflicted on the church of San Andrés by the revolutionaries. They had mercilessly burned down a great number of the best houses and buildings in Masinloc. They inexplicably spared the church and the convent.

Father Agustín Pérez noted that small door of the marble tabernacle had been forced open and destroyed. The stone church had been left on its own for three and a half years. Apparently, no Aglipayan minister took possession of the divine temple during the dearth of Catholic priests. The years of abandon and absence of maintenance had taken a heavy toll on some parts of the church. The wooden floor had some portions already rotten and badly needed immediate replacement. Two windows were broken. Broken too was the pedestal with a cross. A coping of the façade had fallen to the ground. This masonry piece was carried inside the church for safekeeping because it could not be returned to its place in the church façade.

The returning Recollect priest further reported that, among the church vestments and vessels, he found the silver ceremonial cross and the *ciriales* (mounted candle-holders) for religious processions, the silver *incensario* (censer), and the bronze *acetre* (small pail) with its silver *hisopo* (holy water sprinkler). Almost all the *casullas* (chasubles) used before the revolutionary turmoil were still in the cabinets. However, there was but one *alba* (alb, the long white tunic). Only two *manteles* (altar covers), three corporals and some purificators were usable.

Father José Aranguren OAR, Church Builder

The future parish priest of Masinloc and archbishop of Manila, José Aranguren, was born in Barasoain, Navarra, Spain, on 16 February 1801.²⁷ José's parents, Bernardo Aranguren and Nicolasa Leoz, belonged to a well-off and righteous family. He joined the military service and fought with the famous Mantilla Cavalry. He later realized

²⁶AHPN, Agustín PÉREZ. *Relación del viaje del que suscribe a Masinloc (Zambales) y de lo acaecido durante mi permanencia de cuatro años en el mismo pueblo*. Folder 2, 18r.

²⁷SÁDABA, 403-406.

that “his God-given talents and good character” were not for waging war but winning souls for the Almighty. He studied Latin grammar and went to the University of Zaragoza to take up Law.

Before long, he embraced the lifestyle of the Augustinian Recollects. On 7 December 1825, he entered the newly-opened seminary college of Alfaro in La Rioja, the first formation house of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino in Spain since 1621. A year after, on 8 December 1826, he professed the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. After his arrival in the Philippine, he taught theology to young Recollect aspirants in Intramuros. Eager to practice his pastoral ministry, Aranguren was sent to Taguig to learn the rudiments of Tagalog. Capas, Tarlac, was his first apostolic ministry. He moved shortly after to Masinloc as its parish priest in 1836-1843. The new parish priest arrived in Masinloc on 13 April 1836. He then took possession of his curacy on the 20th of the same month. The Cosas notables of the parish further noted that it was on 10 May 1836 when he finally received canonical collation.²⁸

Aranguren was elected by the provincial chapter as prior provincial for the 1843-1846 triennium. However, he had to cut short his term because in 1845 he was appointed to the metropolitan see of Manila by Pope Gregory XVI. During the *sede vacante* of the Diocese of Cebu, Father Aranguren’s name was among the short list of candidates.

A religious of exemplary character and disposition

Archbishop Aranguren was a kind-hearted man, known too for his tact and prudence as well as for spirit of poverty and self-denial. He enjoyed the reputation of a learned man in the Sacred Letters and Canon Law, “endowed with an exemplary way of life and praiseworthy character.”²⁹ He always concerned himself with helping the marginalized sectors of Manila society. Most of all, he was a staunch defender of the rights of the diocesan priests. He fought for the retention of parishes of diocesan priests, which were to be handed over to the religious orders. For the care of ill people in hospitals, the archbishop facilitated the coming of the Sisters of Charity to the Philippines. In 1851, he completely supported the establishment of *Banco Español-*

²⁸SÁDABA, p. 404, affirms it was on 10 March.

²⁹Manuel CARCELLER, *Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* XI, (Madrid 1967) 145.

Filipino, which in due time became the Bank of the Philippine Islands. Archbishop Aranguren died in Manila on 18 April 1861.

The Gauntlet of the Philippine Revolution

The bloody Revolution began in Zambales only in March 1898.³⁰ On account of the dangerous situation in the towns which had risen up in arms against the Spanish Regime, the Recollects left their parishes and traveled to Subic. In May, Father Pablo Calvillo of Castillejos joined Father Buenaventura Iturri of San Marcelino and Father Luis Cabello in their journey to Subic. Subic whose parish priest was served by Father Manuel Jimenez, was at that time considered as the most secure point in the entire province. It was very easy to embark on a boat from Subic to the safe haven of Manila. They would be out of harm's way once they were in Subic. We remember that it was the port of the Spanish Navy or what was left of it after the Battle of Manila Bay against the American warships.

The four Recollects—ever faithful to their priestly vocation and religious commitment—spent one month in Subic doing what was expected of them: preaching and confessing the friendly people of Subic in all peace and tranquility. But the revolutionary storm was fast approaching. Filipino revolutionaries were nearing Olongapo. The Spanish citizens decided to transfer to an islet fronting Subic where they eventually suffered scarcity of food and concomitant hunger. American warships fired against the refugees in the islet without causing anything casualty, but scaring the wits out of them. They were told by disembarking Americans to move to Olongapo where the revolutionaries arrested them. Father Francisco Moreno, the church builder of San Narciso, joined them in captivity.

Via Crucis, a la Recoletana

Another version of the foregoing event says that Fathers Pablo Calvillo, Luis Cabello of Olongapo, Francisco Moreno, Fernando Hernández of Botolan, Agustín Pérez of Masinloc, Valentín Borobia of Palauig, and Hipólito Navascués of Candelaria escaped to the safety

³⁰Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis* II, 405. We faithfully follow the narration of the Recollect side of the Philippine Revolution. The account was culled from the various reports made by the Recollects who had been eyewitnesses of the horrors and humiliations they themselves suffered during those tumultuous times of our history.

of Subic. They ministered to the spiritual needs of the people. On 29 June 1898, the seven Recollects were all arrested by the revolutionary troops of General Gregorio, based in San Antonio. Thereafter, they were dispersed throughout Zambales. Father Francisco Moreno was taken to Iba and was subjected to hard labor. Father Luis Cabello and Father Pablo Calvillo were tied together and taken as prisoners to Castillejos. When the parishioners saw their parish priest, who had served their sacramental needs for twenty-nine years, they welcomed him joyfully and warmly, and gladly offered him food and drinks. This was for sure to the consternation of the revolutionary guards.

In the ensuing weeks and months, they trekked in pairs or in groups to various places under close guard to La Paz, Capas, Tarlac, Pangasinan, Nueva Vizcaya, Ilocos and even Cagayan. The situation of the captives in the territory under General Francisco Makabulos during three months was much better for the religious prisoners. They enjoyed relative freedom: they complied with their religious duties and learned English from a Dominican friar. The harsh and exhaustive pilgrimage was assuaged by the generosity, hospitality and warmth showed by the simple people along the way. Far from the clutches of anti-friar Katipuneros, most of the prisoners regained their freedom in December 1899—after one and a half year of captivity.

Aftermath of the Revolution

Back to Zambales

Father Hipólito Navascués and Father Fernando Hernández, both ex-prisoners of the Katipuneros, returned just the same to Zambales in 1901. They were sent there to assess the religious situation of Zambales and administer the priest-less parishes. Some curacies at that time had fallen into the hands of the ministers and members of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* [Philippine Independent Church or Aglipayan Church]. The Recollect missionary work was not so easy then. There were but six diocesan priests in the whole province. The Roman Catholics were over a hundred thousand before the Revolution and twenty-four Recollects were in Zambales to minister to their spiritual and sacramental needs.

During and after the years of the Revolution, very few Recollect priests and brothers remained in the Philippines. A great number of these missionaries had traveled back to their overcrowded convents of Spain. In the coming years, still more friars went to the old convents

and parishes as well as to newly opened mission territories in Central and South America.

The gauntlet of the Philippine Revolution came to pass. Father Agustín Pérez de la Concepción left the Recoletos convent of Intramuros. He was granted permission by his superiors and he traveled to Masinloc.³¹ It was 3 December 1901. He was with his confrere Father Alejandro Echazarra de la Concepción. The interim archbishop of Manila granted Father Agustín the faculties to take spiritual charge of Masinloc. He was also equipped with faculties to administer the sacraments in Masinloc, including that of holy matrimony, as well as in other Zambales towns still bereft of priests.

On 6 December 1901, upon orders of the American ship captain they were asked to debark at the provincial capital of Iba against their will, although they paid their fare up to the shore of Masinloc. The returning missionaries were promised that from Iba they would be taken to their destination. Their confidence was boosted when an American officer ordered the soldiers to carry their baggage to a hut at the shore for safekeeping. Father Pérez and Father Echazarra then rode a four-wheel carriage and proceeded to the residence of the *presidente municipal*.

A drunk hurled invectives at the priests

Two hours afterward, without permission a drunk entered the compound of the mayor's residence and started yelling at the top of his voice: "We don't want friars! Away with friars!" The owner of the house descended and tried to drive him away and told him to shut up. He stood his ground and told the mayor: "Yes, I will shut up but send away the friars!" The drunk threw up there and then the spirit of the local wine that had wielded influence on him and endowed him with strength and audacity deserted him at once. Sober and in his right wits, the troublemaker withdrew. The two Recollect priests spent the rest of the day and night in peace. The next morning, they heard about a gravely ill woman who badly needed the sacraments of the Holy Mother Church. Undaunted by the few individuals who did not want their presence in Iba, the missionaries hied off to the ailing woman who had sought the consolation of the sacrament of Penance.

³¹AHPN, Agustín PÉREZ, *Relación del viaje del que suscribe a Masinloc (Zambales) y de lo acaecido durante mi permanencia de cuatro años en el mismo pueblo*, Folder 2, 16r-20r.

Town officials of Iba came for a visit

The news of the return of the Recollect priests soon spread like wildfire. A commission of eight or ten people, “the most hostile to the religious,” called on the municipal mayor at 10:00 am. They went up to the house and showed themselves before the mayor and the priests. They said they did not want friars and wanted to know if the Recollects had gone to Iba to exercise their pastoral ministry. The mayor permitted Father Pérez to speak and this priest simply told the unfriendly group that he and Father Echazarra had intended to go up north but they were told to disembark by the ship captain at Iba. As soon as they could acquire a couple of carts, they would proceed to their destination. The mayor told them that the bridge connecting Iba to Palauig was non-existent. Thus the Americans begged off from transporting them to Masinloc. The mayor granted the priests’ request for two carts for their journey.

Off to Palauig

Thus on 7 December, they traveled to Palauig. There the missionaries spent the night in the house of the former church fiscal. The next day was 8 December, a Sunday and feast of the Immaculate Conception. As there were no ornaments or paraphernalia needed for the celebration of the holy mass at Palauig, they decided to leave at dawn for Masinloc where they could celebrate mass with more decency and decorum. They hired a small boat and reached Magalawag Island at midday. The impoverished residents readily prepared lunch for them: cooked rice, fish and eggs. The priests wanted to pay for their meal, but the people adamantly refused to accept their money. They sailed to Masinloc and reached its shore between three and four in the afternoon of 8 December 1901.

Father Agustín Pérez de la Concepción OAR

Born in Marcilla, Navarra, Spain, on 13 October 1849, Father Agustín Pérez de la Inmaculada Concepción joined the Congregation of the Discalced Augustinians when he professed the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience.³² His religious profession was on 29 July 1868. He joined the 64th Recollect mission to Manila where he arrived on 25 May 1897. The dimissory letter for his sacerdotal ordination was issued on 26 October 1872. He traveled to the Visayan

³² SÁDABA, 562-563.

city of Iloilo where he was ordained as priest by the Dominican bishop Mariano Cuartero at the cathedral church of Jaro.

On 17 June 1873, Father Agustín was then dispatched to San Felipe, Zambales, to learn the Zambal language. The historical account written by Father Vicente Pascual informs us that his twenty-seven-year-old confrere was installed as parish priest of Masinloc on 15 May 1877.³³ When Father Agustín ended his first term as parish priest when he was elected prior of their Convent at San Millán de la Cogolla, La Rioja, Spain. Father Vicente then took over his post on 15 March 1891.

At the end of the triennium, the provincial chapter of 1894 elected Father Agustín as prior of their convent and novitiate at Monteagudo, Navarra, Spain. Moreover, he resigned his post shortly after and returned to Manila on 25 July 1895. He was appointed anew as parish priest of Masinloc until his capture by the revolutionaries in 1898. He regained his freedom in December 1899 and resided at San Sebastian Convent in Manila until he left for Spain in October 1905. He resided at the convent of his hometown Marcilla in Navarra, where the Recollect seminarians studied their theology. On 10 January 1915, at age 65, he returned to his Maker after receiving the last sacraments.³⁴

A very friendly welcome at Masinloc

There was not a single soul at the town plaza of Masinloc to welcome Father Agustín Pérez and Father Alejandro Echazarra, for their coming was not expected after all. When some women and young children knew about missionaries' arrival, however, they rushed forth to meet them and kissed their hands with utmost respect. The *presidente municipal* soon at once went to see the two Recollects and greeted them. He then expressed his wish to lodge them at his residence. As they headed for the house of the mayor who had a big family, another friendly resident invited them to stay at his own house with his small family. So the two priests acceded to his request and sojourned temporarily at his residence.

³³Vicente PASCUAL, *Breve reseña histórica de la fundación y vicisitudes por que ha pasado esta parroquia de Masinloc*, Archivo Histórico Provincial de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino, Marcilla, Navarra, Spain, Folder 4, 14r.

³⁴Miguel AVELLANEDA OAR, *Continuación del Padre Sádaba, o segunda parte del 'Catálogo de los religiosos de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos' (1906-1936)* (Rome 1938) 384.

The leaders of the community and other people then came to visit the priests there. The welcome was pleasant, as it was peaceful and no untoward incident took place. From that first visit, the Recollects could not ascertain how the people felt about their Catholic faith nor for its ministers. They could not identify who were hostile to them or not.

Pastoral exhortations

Father Agustín exhorted the welcoming party to forget the bitter past. He told those who have joined the Aglipayan sect to return to the Catholic fold and form only one Christian community. The returning priest promised that his attitude toward them would be beyond reproach as he had been doing during the sixteen years when he was their parish priest. They never had, as they themselves had confessed to the Recollect priest, any complaint against him at all.

The next day 9 December 1901, a Recollect confrere Father Hipólito Navascués who was assigned to the adjoining town of Candelaria arrived at Masinloc. The two compared notes on the status of their spiritual jurisdictions. Father Navascués told him about the parishes in northern Zambales. The good prospects for their continuing evangelization task in these areas must be observed. The Candelaria missionary thus took Father Echazarra with him to Infanta and left Father Agustín alone in Masinloc. Father Echazarra was to assist his confrere Father Fernando Hernández in Infanta.

Father Agustín's initial observations

At Masinloc, Father Agustín asked the *presidente municipal* for a house where he could fix his residence. The town executive told him of a vacant house between his own and that of the detachment commander of the American soldiers. The United States officer wielded command over sixty to seventy men. Most of these soldiers were black Americans.

On 12 December, Father Agustín moved to the nipa hut with a flooring whose wood had not yet been nailed together permanently. The floor was a little over one meter from the ground. A lot of holes dotted the roof. The parish priest agreed to pay three pesos and a half to the owner as his rent for the dilapidated nipa hut. It was one of the best shanties in town! Among them, of course, were houses of the mayor, the councilors and the American military officer. The foreign soldiers

seized the sturdy parochial convent, among other good houses, as their residence.

The Katipunan members had razed to the ground all the stone and wooded houses of the town. Consequently, in those turbulent moments of history, the people evacuated to the outskirts of Masinloc. The returning Spanish priest observed that houses were still being constructed in the outlying barrios. No houses had been built in the town proper. The population was estimated by Father Agustín to be the same as that of 1898: 2,700 residents.

Moral and spiritual plight of the parishioners

The Recollect pastor administered the sacraments when requested by the parishioners. He celebrated the holy mass at the most convenient time for them, even during holy days and festivities. He never ceased to preach the sacrament of penance. Not much fruit was gathered. The people had seen scandals and received bad teachings since the start of the Revolution. These were easily deceived out of their ignorance and indolence, noted Father Agustín in his memoirs. He added that the people in the outlying barrios were receptive of the sacraments.

The missionary suspected that an unseen force had done everything to put obstacles to his evangelization endeavors. Someone was trying to make his sojourn in Masinloc next to impossible. He noted the strange conduct of the *presidente municipal* named Juliano Estella. The town executive was in his fifties, a bit older than the parish priest. The Recollect had not met him until two years before the outbreak of the Revolution. The *presidente municipal* had either fled or was exiled for seventeen years on account of some crime he had committed, according to what Father Agustín had heard. The Katipunan of Masinloc had designated Estella as *presidente municipal*. The victorious American forces reappointed him to the same position.

Mayor Estella had initially nothing personal against the priest. Nevertheless, in one occasion the mayor sent him a letter threatening him with a fine after the solemnization of a marriage. Several times, the mayor attended the weekday masses but failed to go to church for mass on holy days and Sundays. Weddings already announced earlier never took place because of Mayor Estella's stiff opposition. "Young children," the missionary writes in the historical account of his sojourn

at Masinloc, “to whom I ordinarily taught the Christian doctrine before, later on kept themselves away from me.”

Conflict between the mayor and the parish priest

The priest suspected that the provincial officials in Iba had exerted great influence on Mayor Estella. As events would show afterward, the mayor would meddle endlessly in purely church affairs. And he would thus display his dictatorial attitude in the process. This would happen during the Holy Week of 1902. The Recollect minister had announced to his parishioners that there would be no eucharistic celebration in the morning of Good Friday. The mayor issued a public announcement to all and sundry that the people should go to church to pray the Rosary on Holy Thursday and join the religious procession in the evening of Holy Thursday and Good Friday. Further revealing his crass ignorance on Church canons and liturgy, the mayor ordered the priest through the sacristan to celebrate mass in the morning of Good Friday! Father Agustín replied he could not accede to his command.

All told, a procession was held on Holy Thursday on mayor’s order against the parish priest’s wishes. The next day Good Friday, Mother Nature intervened: a heavy downpour impeded the procession. The parishioners instead prayed the Rosary at church and went home afterwards. The Paschal Vigil of Black Saturday took place without any untoward incident.

On Easter Sunday, a pompous and solemn mass was celebrated. Following his thanksgiving prayer, Father Agustín went out of the house of God. Lo and behold, all the members of the town council were waiting for him at the church portal. To his utter bewilderment, the town band was there too playing martial music. The Recollect priest was taken aback. He could not believe what he was seeing. Anyway, he played along. With the town mayor at his left side, he walked towards his humble residence. Such was the traditional practice under the Spanish Regime. But Masinloc was already under American Occupation.

The next Sunday was another story. Mayor Estella had spent a couple of days during the week in the provincial capital of Iba. After mass, Father Agustín as usual headed for the church door. The mayor was there waiting for him. The musical band was not there anymore. About twenty curious onlookers were observing the whole episode from a safe distance. The Recollect was still a few steps from the door when the mayor approached him. He hurled dagger looks at the

Recollect priest and with indescribable gestures told him he had not rendered due respect and honor to his authority. The minister had not sprinkled him with holy water during the *Vidi aquam* rite at the start of the mass. He could not help but smile at such an unexpected and ridiculous complaint. He then replied: "You would have complained just the same if you had been wet by the holy water." He turned furious and cut short the Recollect's reply. The mayor raised his cane and was about to hit the priest but he restrained himself.

The priest asked to listen to his side, for even most notorious criminals were given the chance to speak. The mayor angrily shouted: "I do not permit you to speak. I give orders around here! We do not want friars here!" To this, the Recollect retorted: "So I go. Case closed." He headed for his residence with the mayor tailing behind. He passed by a group of American soldiers, to whom the mayor directed a question in a loud voice: "Don't you think there should be no friars here and this parish priest must leave this place?" The priest could not hear the answer from the Americans. These were the same soldiers who were disappointed with the parish priest who did not permit some scandalous women of ill repute to act as godmothers in baptism.

Father Agustín abandoned Masinloc three days later, on April 9. He firmed up his decision to head north and join other confreres in Infanta. He left at nine in the evening. No parishioner was around to sympathize with him. An American ship fortunately docked at Masinloc and the captain agreed to board the Father Agustín without paying any fare. The ship was headed for Manila and the missionary needed to recover from his stomach ailment. He had been suffering lately from this stomach problem. He reached the capital two days later at 11 in the morning. He moved to San Sebastian convent later in the afternoon.

The road to Palauig

There was no decent road to Palauig to speak of before the Recollect missionary Father Marcial Bellido was installed as parish priest in 1858.³⁵ Travel in the past was done by sea. This diligent Recollect missionary was born in Tarazona, Aragón, Spain on 21 May 1826. He pronounced the monastic vows in 1848. A year after he arrived in Manila in June 1852, Father Marcial was named companion or parochial vicar of Masinloc. He was sent to Iba as parish curate in 1854-1855. After his triennial term as vice prior and novice master of

³⁵SÁDABA, 456-457.

the mother-house of Recoletos in Intramuros, Manila, he was elected as parish priest of Masinloc in 1858.

Father Marcial Bellido had been known to everyone in Masinloc as a hardworking man, endowed with an “unbreakable strength of character” and this he showed when he worked on the construction of the road that would connect Masinloc and the village of Palauig. The road project was deemed inconceivable. It was not considered doable at all. The terrain was, to say the least, horrifying to view. But with the help of the equally hardworking people of Masinloc and Palauig, the road was brought to its happy conclusion long before his parochial administration ended in 1870.

The thirty-four-year-old priest was elected superior of the Recollect formation house of Marcilla, Navarra in 1870. He was appointed prior of Monteagudo, Navarra. In this convent Father Bellido rejoined his Maker on 27 October 1889.

Demography of Masinloc (1749-189)

Our highly informative population statistics on the parish of Masinloc are culled from *Labor evangélica de los padres agustinos recoletos en las Islas Filipinas*, authored Father Fidel de Blas OAR and published by the Order in 1910.³⁶

Year	Tributes	Souls	Baptisms	Weddings	Deaths	Parish priest or Minister
1749	450	1552	58	16	31	Fr. Mamés de San Lamberto
1770	596	2380	47	18	40	Fr. Joaquín del Carmen
1778	646	3015	54	21	36	Fr. Manuel de Jesús
1838	954½	4766	208	74	198	Fr. José Aranguren
1843	1042	5643	236	56	86	Fr. Modesto Sesma
1847	1110½	5711	252	47	118	The same
1851	873	4157	175	49	180	Fr. Juan Engroba
1857	1058	4707	220	50	168	Fr. Gregorio Bueno
1861	1099	4846	226	50	131	Fr. Marcial Bellido
1866	1191	5138	168	46	139	The same
1871	1281½	5588	222	58	207	Fr. Victoriano Vereciano
1877	1647	6541	297	50	122	Fr. Agustín Pérez
1882	1679½	3805	205	68	114	The same
1887	1377	5233	237	56	118	The same

³⁶Fidel DE BLAS, *Labor evangélica de los padres recoletos en las Islas Filipinas* (Zaragoza 1910) 16.

1891	3138	5586	138	26	231	Fr. Vicente Pascual
1894	0786	2590	95	65	61	Fr. Juan Ortiz
1897	3131	6855	203	26	85	Fr. Agustín Pérez

Coat-of-Arms of the Province of St. Nicholas of Tolentino³⁷

The missionary province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, which was established in 1621 by the papal decree *Militantis Ecclesiae*, is presently one of the four Augustinian Recollect provinces. It is the mother province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno Province which was separated from it by the General Chapter on 28 November 1998. The coat-of-arms of Saint Nicholas Province is in the official seal, website, documents, books, stationeries and edifices. It is now in the restored metal pulpit of San Andrés church of Masinloc. The valuable history book *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas*, written by Licinio Ruiz OAR and published in Manila in 1925, displayed that same coat-of-arms on its inside front page.

In the exterior part of the coat-of-arms are the decorative carapace, the two arrows, a cardinal's hat with tassels, all taken from the coat-of-arms of the Order of Augustinian Recollects.

The basic design of the Recollect coat-of-arms consists of a heart afire and pierced by either one or two arrows. This represents their spiritual founder Saint Augustine's burning love for God and fellow men and women.

In the early part of the 20th century, the entire Recollect Order gained renewal and new life from the Province of St. Nicholas and, on account of this, we find the patron Saint Nicholas represented by a lily at the base of the coat of arms which was adopted in 1921.

The four quarters inside are peculiar to Saint Nicholas of Tolentino Province:

(a) The heart pierced by the arrow and the book are both taken from the coat-of-arms of the Order of Augustinian Recollects. The Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino belongs to the Order of Augustinian Recollects.

³⁷Retrieved in 2006 from http://www.agustinosrecoletos.org/nosotros_quienes_en.php.

(b) The belt or cincture makes special reference to Saint Nicholas and his devotion to the Holy Souls of Purgatory, of whom he is now invoked as their patron saint.

(c) The star, the most common symbol of Saint Nicholas whose images in countless churches and chapels in the Philippines contain this brilliant star on his chest, recalls a vision the saintly Augustinian priest had in which a star represented his own life and holiness.

(d) The partridge on a platter is another popular symbol. It refers to a miracle performed by Saint Nicholas who was well-known for his mortification and abstinence from meat. When he was presented with a roasted partridge by his religious superior, the holy priest ordered the bird to fly away. He had been caught in a dilemma: obedience to the superior or eating the roast partridge, thus breaking his vow of abstinence from meat.

Conclusion

To conclude, we quote the Recollect historian Father Licinio Ruiz on the faith of the people of Zambales:

What our Recollect religious achieved was not one of those ostentatious conquests wherein force played an primordial role, wherein the conqueror acquired domination—more or less superficial and ephemeral—over the vanquished. On the contrary, theirs was a work of faith, a work of Our Lord God. Thus it is not strange that Christian faith is so intimate among the simple people of Zambales...³⁸

And this valuable legacy of Christian faith and culture lives on! Perhaps, the most visible and most enduring of the legacies are the age-old edifices constructed in centuries past with the blood, sweat and tears of both parish priests and ancestors of the today's parishioners. And most important is the parish church of San Andrés, where definitely any person can be "enthralled by the sight and existence of the Spanish church" that has lasted through the years, overcoming merciless typhoons and tremors rising, not unlike the legendary Phoenix, from the rubble of earthquakes.

A Lutheran missionary, Don Fahrenbrink, once wrote about his deep feelings, as he beheld the grandiose and age-old divine temples that abound in our country:

³⁸RUIZ, *Sinopsis* 1, 23.

These old churches fascinate me. When standing before them, especially in a remote place, I feel a sense of mystery that is hard to explain. Their enduring grandeur in spite of the centuries, the stories they could tell, the lives that touched their mortar and stone as part of a faith; all this is a certain magic for me.³⁹

Truly, the stone church of San Andrés was a communal labor of love and solidarity. You have to cast that unfounded, fictitious concept of forced labor or slave labor into oblivion. The sturdy church of Masinloc is a visible landmark of the glory that once was Spain in the Philippines. Oh, if these stones could only speak...

This stone church of San Andrés is truly a silent witness to struggles and successes of the people of Masinloc who worked hard for the next generations to remember them as hardworking, generous, upright, God-fearing and God-loving people who against all odds constructed a temple, a house for the Lord that lasted all these decades and that would last for hundred years to come.

Indeed, it is a great feat of the human spirit! A great achievement of the People of God in Masinloc! A silent witness to the Augustinian Recollect missionary zeal!

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The Augustinian Recollects in Cavite Province since 1616¹

Prologue

Why choose Cavite Puerto? Why set up an Augustinian Recollect convent and church in Cavite Puerto where other religious orders had already established their own churches and convents?² In 1681, Augustinian Recollect historian Luis de Jesús revealed in his *Historia general de la Orden de los Agustinos Recoletos* the reasons why:

The convent of Cabite [*sic*] seemed necessary, and they [Recollects] did not deceive themselves, for, although only two *leguas* distant from Manila, it is of considerable consequence for the conversion of souls, as Cabite is a port where men of not a few Asian nations assemble for the sake of its commerce which is remarkable. Hence that place comes to be the largest one in the Philippine Islands after the said metropolis, and all the sailors live there to be near its traffic and trade.³

In 1616, by apostolic and royal authority, the Augustinian Recollects who arrived in the Philippines ten years before, founded their convent and church in Puerto de Cavite and put it under the spiritual

¹Reprinted from *Recollectio* vol. 42 (2019) 105-129.

²Regalado TROTA JOSE, *The Eight Churches of Cavite Puerto (1586-1800)*, in *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 15 (1987) 311-351.

³LUIS DE JESUS, *Early Recollect Missions*, in Emma BLAIR and James ROBERTSON [BR], *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, XXI, 182-183.

patronage of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino.⁴ In 1879, Patricio Marcellán declared the need of the Augustinian Recollects

to have convents of observance in most important population centers in the archipelago to accommodate religious saddled with the tasks of preaching, and at the same time such house might serve as base for the accomplishment of the plan [of preaching the Gospel and administration of the Sacraments. The convent of Cavite [...] an exact place for great trade and multitude of foreigners, so that the friars could do a lot of benefit for needy souls through their virtuous example and indefatigable zeal.⁵

Convent and Church of San Nicolás in Cavite Puerto (1616)

The Cavite convent and church of San Nicolás de Tolentino was a sturdy structure made of *mampostería* [rubblework], equipped with ten individual rooms for conventuals. It had a church suitable for liturgical services. It was a fine convent with a community of friars whose “virtuous example and indefatigable zeal” attracted both merchants and affluent foreigners who entered the Spanish colony.

Cavite’s magnificent port, enriched by Mother Nature and by its proximity to the colonial capital of Manila, made it a haven of refuge and port of entry and exit of all galleons and ships that entered or sailed from the Philippines. Cavite Puerto was the only shipyard in colonial times. The Spanish citizens from the Peninsula comprised the majority in the city’s population, a fact that made it feel superior to other adjoining towns. The construction or the refurbishment of the two Augustinian Recollect convents in Manila—San Juan Bautista de Bagumbayan in what is now Luneta or Rizal Park (1606) and San Nicolás in the Walled City or Intramuros (1608)—had preceded the canonical establishment of the church and convent in the provincial capital of Cavite.

The first superior of the Recollects in the Philippines at first refused the petition of the people of Cavite Puerto for lack of personnel

⁴ Patricio MARCELLÁN, *La Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Agustinos Descalzos de la Congregación de España e Indias* (Manila 1879) 77.

⁵ MARCELLÁN, 77; JOSÉ DE LA CONCEPCIÓN, *Reseña histórica de nuestra Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino desde su origen hasta el año 1750*, in BPSN 152 (1923) 132.

and funds. Due to their persistent demand, however, Fray Juan de San Jerónimo acceded to their request. The residents of Cavite Puerto themselves defrayed the expenses for the construction of the Convent and Church of San Nicolás, whose religious patronage was changed to that of Saint Monica in the twentieth century, were constructed very shortly. There was no parish management for the Recollect pioneers of San Nicolás Convent and Church but still they rendered important religious services and administration of the sacraments to the faithful. They heard confessions and preached the Word of God to them to increase their piety. They further introduced the popular devotions to the Augustinian Saint Rita of Cascia whose novena and feast on May 22 were celebrated with utmost solemnity and multitude of devotees⁶ and to Saint Monica, mother of Saint Augustine of Hippo.⁷ In 1725, they set up the *Cofradía de Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno* [Confraternity of Our Father Jesus of Nazareth, popularly known as the Black Nazarene], whose original image was brought to Manila by the Augustinian Recollects themselves, which had been introduced in 1709 at San Nicolás Church by Don Pascual Bautista and other Caviteño devotees of the Black Nazarene.⁸

The first superior of Cavite Puerto was Fray Andrés del Espíritu Santo, at that time vicar provincial of the Augustinian Recollects in colonial Philippines. He belonged to the first group of Recollect missionaries of 1606. In 1607, Fr. Andrés had founded the mission of Masinloc in Zambales. In 1609, he assisted his confrere Fr. Jerónimo de Cristo in the foundation of another Zambales mission named Bolinao, now part of western Pangasinan. At San Nicolás Convent and Church in Cavite Puerto, there was always a resident Recollect priest proficient in Spanish and Tagalog to preach the Word of God in the two languages to Spanish, mestizo and native residents of the port capital.⁹

During the British invasion and occupation of Manila in the 1760s, the Cavite convent temporarily housed the offices of the prior provincial and his council who had escaped from Intramuros. Both convent and church survived natural calamities until the Spanish-American War of 1898.

⁶ Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas de la Orden de Agustinos Descalzos* I (Manila 1925) 110.

⁷ Angel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los agustinos recoletos. I: Desde los orígenes hasta el siglo XIX* (Madrid 1995) 331.

⁸ MARCELLÁN, 77.

⁹ MARTÍNEZ CUESTA I, 363.

At the inception of the Spanish-American War in 1898, the invading United States warships bombarded Cavite Puerto. The American forces obliterated ecclesiastical structures in the Spanish naval base and rendered thus San Nicolás Church totally useless for divine worship. The Augustinian Recollect priests saw the impossibility of rehabilitating both church and convent completely. In 1910, the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino decided to hand the church and convent over to the female counterparts—the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Missionaries—for their usufruct. The religious sisters then opened a school for children and established soon after a dormitory for young women who took up courses in nearby government schools, while living “isolated from mundane noise.”¹⁰

San Pedro Apóstol Parish of Cavite Puerto (1871)

The Parish of San Pedro Apóstol in Cavite Puerto was under the administration of the diocesan clergy from the 1760s to 1871. The secular clergy had earlier taken over San Pedro Apóstol Parish from the Jesuits who were expelled from the Philippines in 1768. In exchange for the parishes in Mindanao that were ceded to the Society of Jesus, who had returned from exile, the vacant San Pedro Apóstol Parish was ceded by the Archdiocese of Manila to the Augustinian Recollects in 1871.¹¹

The first Recollect parish priest of San Pedro Apóstol Parish was the 25-year-old Fray Casto Nájera (1846-1876) who ministered to 2,422 residents until 11 May 1873 when he resigned and was transferred later to Salinas (Cavite) parish.¹² The iconic Chamorro lexicographer Fray Aniceto Ibáñez, parish priest in the Marianas in 1852-1876, who wrote a Chamorro grammar book and Chamorro-Spanish, Spanish-Chamorro dictionary, was named parish priest of Cavite Puerto in 1878-1882 and again in 1885.¹³ Fray Isidoro Liberal administered the parish

¹⁰ RUIZ I, 111.

¹¹ MARCELLÁN, 79; FIDEL DE BLAS, *Labor evangélica de los padres agustinos recoletos en las Islas Filipinas* (Zaragoza 1910) 41; RUIZ II, 247; Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los agustinos recoletos II: El Siglo XIX* (Madrid 2015) 810.

¹² 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) 534.

¹³ SÁDABA, 457-459, MARCELLÁN, 79.

in 1882-1884.¹⁴ Fray Francisco Castillo managed it from December 1887 to October 1895 and constructed its kumbento.¹⁵

The San Pedro Apóstol church had not withstood the 1863 tremors. Thus masses and liturgical services took place at San Juan de Dios Church and nearby churches.¹⁶ There were 573 tribute-payers, 384 Spaniards and Spanish mestizos in the parish in 1879. In 1897 the population was 1,428 under Fray Fernando Mayandía. On 8 October 1897, he was appointed by the archbishop as vicar forane and ecclesiastical judge of the Cavite North District comprising Cavite Puerto, San Roque, Rosario, San Francisco de Malabón, Cavite Viejo, Bacoar, Imus, Pérez-Dasmariñas, Silang and Amadeo.¹⁷ He sent a letter to the prior provincial in Manila and asked for his approval to proceed with the mandatory oath-taking. Father Mayandía was the last parish priest of the Royal Patronage Regime of San Pedro Apóstol Parish.

Hacienda de San Juan Bautista de Imus (1666-1898)

The landed estate which later came to be known as Hacienda de San Juan Bautista de Imus was acquired by the Augustinian Recollects in the 17th century. In 1782, the provincial council ordained the hacienda funds to defray the expenses incurred in the recruitment and sending of Spanish missionaries to the Philippines, ransom religious captives in the hands of Moro pirates and assist impoverished and isolated convents, missions and parishes.¹⁸ The first tract of land named Santa Cruz but later renamed to San Nicolás was located near Las Piñas. It was donated in 1666 to the Recollects by a tertiary Hipólita de Zárate y Oseguera on the condition that a hundred pesos worth of meat should be given to the Franciscan friars in Manila, who were to celebrate three annual Masses for the repose of her soul.

¹⁴ SÁDABA, 456.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 618.

¹⁶ MARCELLÁN, 79.

¹⁷ ARCHIVO HISTÓRICO PROVINCIAL DE MARCILLA, NAVARRA, ESPAÑA. Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino; Legajo 48, Número 3; Legajo 48: Cavite, Número 6, 096r, *El p. Fernando Mayandía se nombra vicario foráneo (9 octubre 1897)*.

¹⁸ José Luis SÁENZ, *Contribución de los agustinos recoletos en el desarrollo de la agricultura en Filipinas*, in *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino* [BPSN] 94 (2004) 31.

Augustinian Recollect Parishes at the Outbreak of the Revolution

Parishes	Ceded to the Recollects by Secular Clergy	Patron/Patroness
Kawit	1851	St. Mary Magalene
Silang	1853	Lady of Candelaria
Rosario	1869	Virgen del Rosario
Cavite Puerto	1871	Saint Peter
Bacoor	1872	Saint Michael Archangel
Bailen	1874	Saint Joseph
Maragondon	1884	Assumption

Parishes	Year Founded by Recollects	Patron/Patroness
Imus	1795	Our Lady of the Pillar
Carmona	1857	Saint Joseph
Dasmariñas	1867	Immaculate Conception
amadfeo	1884	St. Mary magdalene

Towns / parishes and prominent villages of Cavite Province during the Spanish colonial period in this map found on page 40a of Labor evangélica de los padres agustinos recoletos en las Islas Filipinas, authored by Fr. Fidel de Blas and published in Zaragoza, Spain in 1910.

In due time, more lands where palay of excellent quality and in considerable quantity was extensively cultivated were acquired by Recollect administrators. The *kasamá* or tenants paid the yearly *canon* [fee] to the administrator. Fine amenities like excellent roads, irrigation channels and dams built by the Spanish *hacenderos* [landed estate owners] and which the native *kasamás* availed themselves of.

Saint Ezekiel Moreno was the Hacienda administrator and prior of the Recollect community in 1882-1885.¹⁹ During the cholera

¹⁹ More on Saint Ezekiel in Imus in Emmanuel Luis ROMANILLOS, *Bishop Ezekiel Moreno, Augustinian Recollect Saint among Filipinos* (Quezon City 1993) 153-171.

epidemic that decimated the barrios of the adjoining town of Bacoor where the Recollect Hacienda de San Nicolás, a component of Hacienda de San Juan Bautista de Imus, was located, the holy missionary braved the inclement weather and ungodly hours of the night to minister to the spiritual needs and provide them with the sacramental consolation of the Church among cholera-stricken families.

The Recollect Saint worked for the establishment of a community life in the casa-hacienda. He celebrated masses and preached God's Word at the parish church of *Nuestra Señora del Pilar*, Our Lady of the Pillar, now the Cathedral of the Diocese of Imus,²⁰ during Sundays and holy days.

Brother Matías Carbonell was among the Augustinian Recollect brothers who constructed dams, irrigation channels, bridges, arches and aqueducts in the hacienda. A massive stone bridge which is used even in these days was built over Imus River connecting Bacoor and Imus. It is right across the present-day Camp General Pantaleón García of the Philippine National Police. It had won for Brother Matías a medal from Queen Isabela II of Spain in 1856.

The huge Prinsa Dam in Bacoor was constructed under the supervision of Brother Román Caballero who was slain by Katipuneros together with his six confreres of the Imus parish and *casa-hacienda* on 1 September 1896 in the environs of Imus. On 31 August 1896, Katipunan revolutionaries had laid siege to the estate-house of Imus and eventually captured it the day after.²¹ By the end of the Spanish rule, the whole hacienda had more than 18,400 hectares, comprising the the present cities of Bacoor, Dasmariñas and Imus.

Our Lady of the Pillar Parish of Imus (1795)

The village ruling class and elders of the Augustinian Recollect Hacienda requested the urgent establishment of a parish in Imus. They had incessantly complained about the inaccessibility and the immense distance of the Cavite Viejo parish church which hampered the compliance of their religious obligations. The creation of the independent parish of Our Lady of the Pillar was finally decreed on 3 October 1795

²⁰ The Diocese of Imus was excised from the Archdiocese of Manila and canonically erected on 25 November 1961.

²¹ Emmanuel Luis ROMANILLOS, *The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines. Hagiography and History* (Quezon City 2001) 175.

and it was further adjudicated to the Augustinian Recollects.²² In 1851, the population was 15,744 with 2,888 tribute-payers. There were 2,624 houses of simple construction with well-built and sturdy buildings like the *kumbento*, *casa tribunal* with its jail and the parish church. The main crops were rice, corn, cotton, sugar cane, cacao and coconuts, vegetables, mangoes and other fruits. It was endowed with fine pasture for horses and livestock.²³

After pacifying the area and ridding it of countless *tulisánes*[bandits], the parish priest Fray Nicolás Becerra constructed the *kumbe nto* and church with cut stones, lime and bricks. Parishioners were required by the *cabezas de barangay* [barangay or village chiefs] to donate firewood to be used in “manufacturing bricks and lime.”²⁴ The construction of the future cathedral church took decades to finish. In the third quarter of the 19th century, Fray Andrés Galdeano repaired the church edifice completely. In 1897, the Marian parish had 14,300 inhabitants under Fray Víctor Oscoz’s parish administration.²⁵

The Augustinian Recollect-built stone, lime and brick temple of God Almighty became the Cathedral Church of Our Lady of the Pillar when Imus was created in 1961 into a suffragan diocese of the Archdiocese of Manila. Imus Diocese comprises the civil province of Cavite with an area 1,287 square kilometers. In 2012, the Roman Catholics comprise 2.7 million of Cavite province’s total population 3.5 million. In 2013, the Roman Catholic population was 2,876,939, 80% of the total 3,596,174.

Saint Mary Magdalene Parish of Cavite Viejo [now Kawit]

By virtue of a royal order of 9 March 1849, the Parish of Saint Mary Magdalene in Kawit was ceded to the Recollect Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, together with Silang, Imus and Bacoar.²⁶

²² MARCELLÁN, 82.

²³ Manuel BUZETA, Felipe BRAVO, *Diccionario geográfico-estadístico-histórico de las Islas Filipinas* II (Madrid 1851) 106-107.

²⁴ Isagani R. MEDINA, *Cavite Before the Revolution (1571-1898)* (Quezon City 2002) 69-70.

²⁵ FIDEL DE BLAS, 41.

²⁶ According to FIDEL DE BLAS, 41 and Licinio RUIZ II, 247 the transfer from the secular clergy to the Augustinian Recollects was made in 1847. MARCELLÁN, 83, on the other hand, claimed that such transfer was carried out in 1849 in accordance with the 1849 decree itself. Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los agustinos recoletos* II: *El Siglo XIX*

There was a provision in the decree that no parish would be ceded to the Recollects unless the secular parish priest died, resigned or was transferred to another curacy.

A century before, the Recollect Fay Juan García Ruiz de San Agustín, future Bishop of Nueva Segovia in Vigan, administered the parish which was given to the Recollects in exchange for Cagayan in Misamis. The Casundit Dam which greatly improved the irrigation system of the hacienda was built during his administration.²⁷

The parish priests of Kawit, Fray Toribio Bonel and Fray Fidel de Blas, were friends of the Aguinaldo family. Fray Fidel's life was saved in the nick of time from the wrath of Katipunan members through the help of General Emilio Aguinaldo himself, former *presidente municipal* [municipal mayor] of Kawit. Fray Fidel de Blas was saved by taking a boat provided by Aguinaldo himself to Cavite Puerto. In the heat of the Spanish colonial government's persecution of masons and filibusters, Aguinaldo had been exonerated from the accusation that he was a mason and filibuster and successfully defended by the future prior general of the Augustinian Recollect Order Fray Fidel de Blas.²⁸ Indeed, it was a debt of gratitude on the part of General Aguinaldo, not unlike the old Spanish adage that says: *Amor con amor se paga*, love begets love.²⁹

Saint Michael the Archangel Parish of Bacoor (1872)

Created into a parish in 1752, the Parish of Saint Michael the Archangel was ceded to the Augustinian Recollects only in 1872 after the public execution of its parish priest Mariano Gomes de los Angeles, of GOMBURZA³⁰ fame at Bagumbayan in Manila. Fray Juan Cruz

(Madrid 2015) 810, propounds the year 1851 as the year of cession of Cavite Viejo to the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino.

²⁷ MARCELLÁN, 83-84.

²⁸ Pedro HERCE, *El general Aguinaldo y los recoletos*, in BPSN 60 (1970) 320-324.

²⁹ Emilio Edgardo A. QUILATAN, *Imus and Perez-Dasmariñas: The Towns in the Augustinian Recollect Hacienda of San Juan Bautista de Imus*, in *Selected Papers from Philippine-Spanish Friendship Day Conferences*, 2009 (Manila 2011) 114.

³⁰ The acronym stands for the three diocesan priests Mariano Gomes, José Burgos and Jacinto Zamora who were executed by the *garrote vil* [machine used for strangulation] at Bagumbayan, Manila, after they were accused of conspiracy in the Cavite Mutiny of 1872 and hastily sentenced to death.

Gómez, a close friend of the martyr-priest, was the first Recollect parish priest.³¹ The sturdy and elegant church and *kumbento* had been built by the Spanish secular priests. Repairs were done during Fr. Juan Cruz Gómez's parochial administration.³²

The cholera epidemic 1882-1885 in Bacoor and its villages tolled heavily on the population of the town. Its 1882 population of 13,794 had noticeably dropped to 12,832 in 1887 whereas the population in other towns of Cavite Province noticeably grew.³³

As part of Hacienda of San Nicolás, there was a spacious estate-house made of stone which was destroyed during the Philippine Revolution. Two Recollect brothers of Hacienda de San Nicolás were earlier saved from the carnage during the Revolution because they had withdrawn earlier to Intramuros in Manila. One of the two religious, Recollect Brother Fray Angel Morrás, years later returned in the wake of the revolutionary outburst to investigate the whereabouts and demise of his confreres in Bacoor, Dasmariñas and Imus. The parish church and *kumbento* of Bacoor were occupied by schismatic ministers of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* or Aglipayan Church. As a result, precious canonical records of the parish were lost to posterity.³⁴ In 1897, Fray Mariano Asensio was listed as Recollect parish priest of Bacoor.

Parish of St. Joseph of Bailen (1874) (renamed in 1965 *Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo*)

The Parish of Saint Joseph was handed over to the Augustinian Recollects in 1874 by virtue of the royal decree of 10 September 1861 in exchange for a Recollect parish in Mindanao handed over to the Jesuits.³⁵ It was described in 1879 as located in a mountainous region and somewhat far from the sea. It has been known for its *Kapeng Bailen* [Bailen Coffee]. Known today as Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo town, Bailen is bounded by the adjoining towns of Maragondon, Alfonso, Magallanes

³¹ MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, 810, and MARCELLÁN 86, affirm that Bacoor was handed over to the Recollects in 1872. However, FIDEL DE BLAS, 41 and Licinio RUIZ II, 247, both claim that the transfer was done much earlier in 1871.

³² MARCELLÁN, 86-87.

³³ FIDEL DE BLAS, 41.

³⁴ Emmanuel Luis ROMANILLOS, *The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines. Hagiography and History* (Quezon City 2001) 364.

³⁵ MARCELLÁN, 92; FIDEL DE BLAS, 41; RUIZ II, 247; MARTÍNEZ CUESTA II, 810.

and Indang.³⁶ In 1857, the Augustinian Recollect Archbishop José Aranguren of Manila issued the decree creating the new Parish of Saint Joseph. The villages of Batas and Guyong-guyong were excised from Maragondon and created into the new town and parish of Bailen.

The neighboring towns were connected by roads in very bad condition, which during the rainy season were hardly passable. Its population in 1877 was 3,637 with 931 tribute-payers under the parish administration of Fray Mariano Asensio. Bailen had four Spanish mestizos and eighteen Sangley mestizos among its residents. In 1897, the population rose to 4,424 with an increased number of tribute-payers 2,256.³⁷ Its parish priest Fray Faustino Lizasoain was slain by the revolutionists on 3 September 1896 in Silang. Fray Miguel Galán of Maragondon ministered likewise to the parish of Bailen in 1897 until his arrest by the revolutionaries in 1898.³⁸

Saint Joseph Parish of Carmona (1856)

Carmona was founded by the Augustinian Recollects as an independent parish in 1856.³⁹ It was a former village of Silang named Latag when it was created into a town on 20 February 1857 during the term of Governor General Fernando de Norzagaray. It had productive lands, and its abundant water springs made Carmona a pleasant place to live in. The Recollect historian Patricio Marcellán declared in 1879 that the favorable conditions of Carmona presaged a bright and prosperous future for the new town. Another municipality—General Mariano Alvarez—was carved out of Carmona in 1980.

In 1879, it had a population of 3,101 and 904 tribute-payers. At the close of the Spanish rule, the population had slightly gone up to 3,167 with 1,809 tribute-payers.⁴⁰ Since July 1896, Fray Juan López de San Blas served as the last Recollect parish priest of Carmona⁴¹ and simultaneously administered the neighboring vacant parishes of Silang and Amadeo, whose two Recollect parish priests had been slain by the revolutionaries.

³⁶ MARCELLÁN, 92.

³⁷ FIDEL DE BLAS, 41; MARCELLÁN, 92.

³⁸ FIDEL DE BLAS, 41.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 41; MARCELLÁN, 92; RUIZ II, 247.

⁴⁰ MARCELLÁN, 92.

⁴¹ SÁDABA, 568.

Immaculate Conception Parish of Dasmariñas (1867)

Pérez-Dasmariñas—later known simply as Dasmariñas during the Spanish colonial rule—was established both as a town and as a parish in 1867 by the Augustinian Recollects.⁴² Its vast land jurisdiction, bounded by Silang in the south and by Imus in the north, was carved out from its matrix town of Imus. Part of the houses and residents of Imus was annexed to the new town. These houses were mostly located along the road. The Imus villages of Salitran, Paliparan, Malinta, Salacay and Nancan were adjudicated to Pérez-Dasmariñas. A stone kumbento had been erected in 1867. In 1879, the Immaculate Conception Parish Church likewise made of cut stones was being constructed in a briefest time possible despite with its meager parochial funds.

Rice and sugar were the chief products of Dasmariñas, being a part of the Recollect Hacienda de Imus. Needless to say, the crops generated income for its tenants and residents. By the end of the Spanish regime, the town had its town plaza and schools, besides the kumbento and parish church, both made of bricks and cut stones.

In 1894, the Recollect Fray Toribio Mateo was once again appointed parish priest; his first stint was in 1878-1879.⁴³ Fray Toribio and two religious brothers—Fray Luis Garbayo del Carmen, Fray Julián Umbón—who were in charge of the Recollect estate-house in Salitran, not far from Dasmariñas *población* [town proper], were slain by the revolutionaries on 3 September 1896 in Sampaloc, as they were about to reach the town of Silang.⁴⁴

In 1897, the Immaculate Conception Parish of Perez-Dasmariñas was administered by Fray Victor Oscoz who was the last Recollect parish priest of Imus under the Spanish colonial regime. In Fidel de Blas' highly valuable book *Labor evangélica de los padres agustinos recoletos en la Islas Filipinas*, the population in 1897 was 4,305 with 2,388 tribute-payers, up from 3,785 and 1,124 tribute payers in 1879.⁴⁵

⁴² The year 1867 as the foundation year is propounded by three historians: MARCELLÁN, 88, MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia* II, 810 and Emilio Edgardo A. QUILATAN, *Imus and Perez-Dasmariñas: The Towns in the Augustinian Recollect Hacienda of San Juan Bautista de Imus*, in *Selected Papers from Philippine-Spanish Friendship Day Conferences, 2009* (Manila 2011) 111. Both FIDEL DE BLAS, 41, and RUIZ II, 247 claim that the foundation of the parish of Dasmariñas was in 1866.

⁴³ SÁDABA, 535-536.

⁴⁴ MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia* II, 962.

⁴⁵ FIDEL DE BLAS, 41; MARCELLÁN, 88.

Our Lady of Candelaria Parish of Silang (1855)

Both the town and the parish of Silang were founded in 1585 by the Discalced Franciscan friars who spiritually administered it until 1611.⁴⁶ The original town site was named Silang Viejo where ruins could still be viewed in 1879; it was one-fourth league away from the present site. The Society of Jesus priests administered the Parish of Our Lady of Candelaria in 1611. The secular clergy started to manage the parish in 1768 after the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Philippines. Four parishes in Cavite—Imus, Bacoor, Kawit and Silang—had been ceded to the Augustinian Recollects by virtue of the royal decree dated 9 March 1849.⁴⁷ Silang was given to the Augustinian Recollects by the Archdiocese of Manila in 1855.⁴⁸

Silang was bounded by the towns of Dasmariñas and Indang (Cavite), Santa Rosa (Laguna) and Tanauan (Batangas). In the 19th century, it was famous far and wide for its coffee produce of the best export quality like the mocha which foreigners purchased at lucrative prices. The town profited greatly from the trade of its renowned coffee.

Silang farmers and their families likewise cultivated cinnamon, pepper and flowering plants in their home gardens. Cotton and abaca were farmed for producing yarns or threads in weaving fabrics. The industrious folks also grew quinine known as *dita* as well as *lumbang* trees (Scientific name *Aleuritis moluccana*), from whose seeds oil could be extracted for use as ingredients in making varnish, paint and for lighting use. It was further used for curing wounds and as purgative if consumed in moderate quantities.⁴⁹

Parish of Our Lady of the Rosary of Rosario (1869)

In 1851, Rosario was bounded by Imus, San Roque, San Francisco de Malabon [now General Trias], and Santa Cruz de Malabon [present-day Tanza].⁵⁰ It was located not far from the sea and on a fertile plain, watered by Julan River, which drained into the northern part of the town, and by Abat River drained into the western part. Rosario

⁴⁶ MARCELLÁN, 89.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

⁴⁸ RUIZ II, 247. Both MARCELLÁN, 91, and FIDEL DE BLAS, 41, contend that the Parish of Our Lady of Candelaria of Silang was ceded to the Augustinian Recollects in 1853.

⁴⁹ MARCELLÁN, 90.

⁵⁰ BUZETA-BRAVO II, 415.

had neither mountainous nor forested areas. The inhabitants devoted themselves to agriculture. Their main crops were rice, corn, sugar cane, vegetables and different kinds of fruits, especially mangoes. The women worked on weaving fabrics from cotton and abaca. The vacant Parish of Our Lady of the Rosary was handed over by the Archdiocese of Manila to the Augustinian Recollects in 1869 to compensate for the loss of a parish in Mindanao taken over by the Jesuits.⁵¹

The parish church was made of stone, suited and spacious enough for its population. A church yard rendered it remarkably beautiful. Its proximity to the sea encouraged the townspeople to devote themselves to fishing which was their main source of livelihood. People from towns far from the sea gathered in Rosario to avail themselves of the abundant fish catch. From a population of 6,137 in 1851, it went up to 6,906 in 1879, of whom 2,005 were tribute-payers.⁵² Fray Marciano Landa, the last Augustinian Recollect parish priest of Rosario, reported a big increase of tribute-payers—3,442, but he did not explain the slight decline in population—6,575 souls—in 1897.⁵³

Our Lady of the Assumption Parish of Maragondon (1884)

The Augustinian Recollects administered the Parish of the Assumption of Our Lady in Maragondon, ceded to them in 1884 by the Archdiocese of Manila.⁵⁴ The first Recollect parish priest was Fray Patricio Marcellán who administered it from 1885 to 26 July 1887.⁵⁵

The parish priest of Maragondon, Fray Simeón Marín, was slaughtered by the revolutionaries in Silang on 3 September 1896. In 1887, the tribute-payers were 1871 which increased to 4,164 in 1897.⁵⁶ In August 1895-June 1897, Fray Miguel Galán was parish priest of Corregidor. In June 1897, this 62-year-old Recollect religious was transferred to Maragondon and served it as parish priest until he was arrested by the revolutionaries in July 1898. After months of captivity, Father Galán finally regained his freedom in January 1900 when he travelled to Manila and resided in Intramuros.⁵⁷

⁵¹ MARCELLÁN, 85; FIDEL DE BLAS, 41; RUIZ II, 247.

⁵² MARCELLÁN, 86.

⁵³ FIDEL DE BLAS, 41.

⁵⁴ FIDEL DE BLAS, 41; RUIZ II, 247.

⁵⁵ SÁDABA, 527.

⁵⁶ FIDEL DE BLAS, 41.

⁵⁷ SÁDABA, 482.

Saint Mary Magdalene Parish of Amadeo (1884)

In 1884, the Augustinian Recollects founded the Parish of Saint Mary Magdalene in Amadeo.⁵⁸ The old village of Marilao had earlier been excised from the matrix town of Silang and on 12 July 1872 had become an independent town with its own *gobernadorcillo*.⁵⁹ In 1887, Amadeo had only 807 tribute-payers, but a big increase was recorded when it went up to 2,034 tribute-payers in 1897 and its population was 3,880 souls.⁶⁰

Amadeo's last canonically-installed Recollect parish priest was Fray Agapito Echegoyen who was seized by Andres Bonifacio's men. After seven months of ruthless deprivations and torture, Father Echegoyen was executed by the revolutionaries led by Andres Bonifacio and Mariano Alvarez on 28 February 1897 along the boundary of Naic and Maragondon. Father Echegoyen was the last Augustinian Recollect casualty of the Philippine Revolution in Cavite. Likewise slain with him were three Calced Augustinian friars—Domingo Candenas, Antonio Piernavieja and Matías Rivero.⁶¹ Fray Juan López, Recollect parish priest of Carmona, also administered Saint Mary Magdalene Parish of Amadeo in 1897.

Post-Revolution Recollect Convent and Church of San Nicolás

San Nicolás Church and Convent of the Augustinian Recollects at Recoletos Street in Cavite City were initially constructed by the generous and wealthy residents. They played an important role in the city, but the Recollects had no parish administration, no official pastoral ministry. Yet since 1616 they attended to the spiritual needs of the

⁵⁸ FIDEL DE BLAS, 41; RUIZ II, 247.

⁵⁹ MARCELLÁN, 89. According to Isagani R. MEDINA, *Cavite before the Revolution (1571-1898)* (Quezon City 2002) 256, the village was named Masilao.

⁶⁰ FIDEL DE BLAS, 41.

⁶¹ José Manuel BENGOA, *Fecha del asesinato del p. Agapito Echegoyen*, in BPSN 89 (1999) 25-33; Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA II, 963; *La Iglesia y la Revolución Filipina*, in *Archivo de la Historia de la Iglesia* 7 (1998) 133; 122; Pablo FERNÁNDEZ, *History of the Church in the Philippines (1521-1898)* (Manila 1979) 122. Fernández cites his source: Telesforo CANSECO, *Historia de la insurrección filipina en Cavite*, mss. ARCHIVO PROVINCIAL DE SANTÍSIMO ROSARIO, ORDEN DE PREDICADORES, QUEZON CITY, 68-70, 77, 86. SÁDABA, 563, claims that Fr. Echegoyen died in April 1897.

residents, both natives and Spanish. They assiduously promoted pious devotions like that to the Black Nazarene and to Saint Rita of Cascia. Chosen religious, like ex-provincials, former provincial councilors, were assigned there because of the quality of church-goers like those belonging to the *principalía* [ruling class] or well-off social status. After some important repairs, both edifices were kept in excellent condition until 1898.⁶²

The American squadron mercilessly shelled Cavite Puerto in 1898. The Recollect Church of San Nicolas was destroyed and rendered useless for divine worship. Solely the belfry was left standing—even up to the present-day. The convent suffered only minor damages but it was impossible for the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino to repair and rehabilitate the church. Eventually, the Recollect priests opted to leave the ruined convent.

Colegio de Santa Mónica of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters (1910)

The Augustinian Recollect fathers ceded their San Nicolás Convent over to their female counterparts for their usufruct as well as for the cleaning and upkeep of the iconic convent. The Augustinian Recollect Sisters soon put up there a grade school after the approval of the parish priest and Mother Presentación de San José, the first superior general of the Congregation.⁶³ On 10 May 1910, Colegio de Santa Mónica was officially inaugurated. The pioneering religious community was composed of the local superior Sor Genoveva del Santísimo Sacramento, Sor Teresita de San José and Sor Eulogia de los Dolores.⁶⁴ Colegio de Santa Mónica was the first house of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters outside of Manila.

In 1912, the Augustinian Recollect school accepted young women who resided as interns or boarders and studied in a government-run college. The young ladies attended special Spanish classes. A new member, Sor Consuelo de San Agustín, joined the community and imparted painting lessons until 1924.

⁶² Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas I* (Manila 1925) 109-111.

⁶³ RUIZ I, 111.

⁶⁴ Ma. Lirio L. GUILLERMO, *The Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect (A.R.) Sisters since 1725* (Manila 2012) 21.

Came the Second World War and the Japanese planes bombarded the Cádiz of the Philippines, destroying buildings, both Spanish and American structures. Colegio de Santa Mónica of the Recollect Sisters was not spared; the centuries-old edifice was totally damaged. The convent belfry again survived the ruthless Japanese bombardment. The Augustinian Recollect Sisters firmed up their decision to abandon the ruined Colegio de Santa Mónica.⁶⁵

San Pedro Apóstol Parish of Cavite Puerto (1871)

The Parish of San Pedro Apóstol in Cavite Puerto was under the administration of the diocesan clergy before its transfer to the Augustinian Recollects. In exchange for the parishes in Mindanao that were ceded to the Society of Jesus, the San Pedro Apóstol Parish was handed over to the Augustinian Recollects in 1871. Its first Recollect parish was the twenty-five-year-old Fray Casto Nájera (1846-1876) and its population then was 2,422. The San Pedro Apóstol parish church had been ruined by the tremors of 1863. Thus masses and other liturgical functions were celebrated in adjoining churches.⁶⁶ There were about four hundred Spaniards and Spanish mestizos in the parish in 1879; in 1897 the population dropped to 1,428 under the last curate of the Spanish Regime Fray Fernando Mayandía. It was in 1921 when San Pedro Apóstol was given back to the Recollects who then constructed the kumbento. Fray Ruperto de Blas, who had been parish priest of Kawit, Puerto Princesa (Palawan) and Naujan (Mindoro), was assigned to Cavite Puerto in 1922.⁶⁷

On 6 February 1922, Prior General Fray Gregorio Segura and Prior Provincial Fray Marcelino Simonena with their corresponding secretaries visited Cavite Puerto. They took the ship in Manila and crossed Manila Bay en route to Cavite and visited Cavite Puerto Parish in the morning. They proceeded to Colegio de Santa Mónica of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters who dedicated themselves to the moral, spiritual and academic instruction of young girls. The students and faculty members of Colegio de Santa Mónica regaled the two visiting Recollect prelates with a cultural presentation.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

⁶⁶ MARCELLÁN, 79.

⁶⁷ SÁDABA, 638; Miguel AVELLANEDA, *Continuación del P. Sádaba* (Rome 1938) 161.

⁶⁸ *Reedificación de la Iglesia de San Roque, Cavite*, in BPSN 13 (1922) 274.

A little over two months before, Archbishop Michael O'Doherty of Manila had entrusted the Augustinian Recollect Order with the spiritual administration of the parish of San Pedro Apóstol in Cavite. The new parish priest was Fr. Javier Sesma who had come from the parish assignment in Lucban in Mindoro. He administered the curacy from July 1912 until he was transferred on 23 September 1921⁶⁹ to Cavite Puerto. This Recollect parish priest managed the pastoral ministry of three towns of Cavite Puerto, San Roque and Caridad which had been combined into one municipality.

In that 1922 visit of Cavite City, the Recollect provincial Father Simonena with the prior general's approval donated some lumber of excellent quality and other building materials for the rapid reconstruction of the Church of San Roque and Shrine of *Nuestra Señora de la Soledad de Porta Vaga*. There was a strong demand to build at once the parish church of San Roque which had been razed to the ground by the great conflagration of 1920. A great part of the town was likewise reduced to ashes. The two superiors returned to Manila that same evening, after seeing the cooperation of the townspeople in the reconstruction project of San Roque Church.

Parish Priest Fray Javier Sesma likewise received cash donation from the well-to-do benefactress Doña Gavina Raquel Santos who contributed much to the purchase of building materials, hiring and paying the construction workers. She showed much proof of her deep piety and authentic Catholic feelings.⁷⁰ She was at once emulated by well-off Spanish and Filipino families of San Roque and adjoining towns. These families were always ready to cooperate in every charitable work pertinent to God and His ministers.⁷¹

Fray Pedro Lerena received the Cavite Puerto Parish of San Pedro Apóstol from Fray Javier Sesma in May 1928. The Recollect priest celebrated Masses in Latin and dispensed other sacraments with their Latin formulas for many years before the liturgical reforms of the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council. After the liturgical reforms of the 1960s, Father Lerena and his assistant priests celebrated Masses in Tagalog, Spanish and English. He disseminated and perpetuated the traditional Porta Vaga hymns *¡O Purísima Flor!* composed by

⁶⁹ AVELLANEDA, 162.

⁷⁰ *Reedificación de la Iglesia de San Roque, Cavite*, in BPSN 13 (1922) 275.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

his Recollect confrere and musician Domingo Carceller and *Reina de Cavite* of Julián Felipe and Tomás de Andrade, SJ.

World War II destroyed the parish church and kumbento of San Pedro Apóstol in Cavite Puerto. Years later, Lerena asked for the exlaustration from the Order of Augustinian Recollects and was incardinated to the Archdiocese of Manila⁷² in order to remain as diocesan priest and serve his cherished parish and shrine of *Nuestra Señora de la Soledad de Porta Vaga*.

Cavite Puerto Parish was ceded by Father Benito Aldaz to Father Pedro Lerena on 22 April 1938.⁷³ Fray Benito would go down in history as the last Recollect parish priest of Cavite Puerto, the last Recollect parish priest in Cavite Province. Msgr. Pedro Lerena he passed away on 25 May 1972. He was buried at the near the entrance of the Catholic cemetery.⁷⁴ His mortal remains have since been transferred to the Shrine of *Nuestra Señora de Porta Vaga*.

The Servant of God Fray Mariano Gazpio (1899-1989) spent the first two years of his priestly ministry at San Pedro Apóstol parish in 1922-1924.⁷⁵ He had studied three years of theology in Marcilla, Navarra, Spain, and arrived in Manila in 1921 to finish it in San Nicolás convent in Intramuros. He was ordained as priest in Manila on 23 December 1922. His *cantamisa* [first sung Mass of a newly ordained priest] was celebrated at San Pedro Apóstol Parish Church on 25 December 1922. He volunteered as a missionary to China from March 1924 until January 1952 when the Communist rulers expelled all foreign missionaries to leave China. Father Gazpio was thereafter assigned as prior or master of novices in Monteagudo and vice prior and later confessor in the theology house in Marcilla where he died in the odor of sanctity. After the initial diocesan phase in Spain, the beatification cause is now with the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in the Vatican City in the wake of the diocesan process which closed in 2004

⁷² The Diocese of Imus was erected on 25 November 1961.

⁷³ ARCHIVO HISTÓRICO PROVINCIAL DE LA PROVINCIA DE SAN NICOLÁS DE TOLENTINO OAR, LEGAJO 48, Núm. 5: *Entrega de la Parroquia de San Pedro de Cavite Puerto al presbítero D. Pedro Lerena* (1938).

⁷⁴ Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *Chabacano Studies. Essays on Cavite's Chabacano Language and Literature* (Imus Cavite 2006) 173-174; AVELLANEDA, 147.

⁷⁵ The life and ministry of the missionary of China and Servant of God Mariano Gazpio can be found in the book *Un camino de fidelidad. Mariano Gazpio, agustino recoleto*, penned by José Javier Lizarraga OAR (Madrid 2017).

Saint Joseph College of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters

Msgr. Pedro Lerena, parish priest of Cavite, allowed the Congregation of Augustinian Recollects Sisters to establish a school in his parish in the wake of the destruction of Colegio de Santa Monica during World War II. Sor Celina Magcauas and Sor Caridad Salazar were sent by Mother Rosario Rosales, superior general of the Congregation in Manila, to Cavite City to look for a suitable place for the planned school. They found a “little house” and their new school named Saint Joseph College was opened in 1945-1946.⁷⁶

Msgr. Pedro Lerena and San Sebastian College-Recoletos

A Spanish missionary who left behind brilliant and unforgettable legacy in Cavite City was, without any trace of a doubt, Msgr. Pedro Lerena. He lived and worked in Cavite City for over forty years. He was born in Berceo in the Spanish province of La Rioja in 1901. He joined the Recollect Order in June 1918 in Monteagudo, Navarra, and was ordained as priest in June 1925. Fray Pedro was a prolific poet whose verses—mostly with Marian theme—filled the pages of the *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino*, published in Marcilla, Navarra. After his ordination, he travelled to the Philippines and worked as missionary in Calapan and later in Naujan in Mindoro Island. He transferred to the Parish of San Pedro Apóstol in Cavite Puerto in June 1929. He repaired the parish church of San Pedro Apóstol.⁷⁷

After the destruction of San Pedro Apóstol Church in Cavite Puerto, Father Lerena was put in charge of what would become the parish of San Roque, the old Shrine of Porta Vaga.⁷⁸ He had saved the framed age-old image of *Nuestra Señora de la Soledad de Porta Vaga*, Our Lady of Solitude of Porta Vaga, patroness of Cavite City, by depositing the precious icon in the vault of the Philippine National Bank during World War II.

On the eve of the transfer of San Roque Parish to the diocesan clergy, as stated earlier, Father Lerena sought exlaustration from the

⁷⁶ GUILLERMO, 114.

⁷⁷ 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) 147.

⁷⁸ Virgilio SÁENZ MENDOZA, *A Tribute to a Pastor: Msgr. Pedro Lerena y Lerena*, in *Souvenir Program of the 1995 Cavite City Fiesta, Ciudad de Cavite 1995*, no pagination.

Augustinian Recollect Order. In 1938, as diocesan priest, he received the parish from Fray Benito Aldaz, the last Recollect parish priest of San Roque. Thereafter, he continued serving the parishioners of Cavite Puerto for over three decades, and after its destruction in World War II in San Roque Parish until his demise in 1972.⁷⁹

Msgr. Pedro Lerena had always dreamed of erecting an educational institution school and managed by the Augustinian Recollect Order in Cavite City. He had earlier give permission to the Recollect Sisters to establish Saint Joseph College after the Second World War. To make his ardent wish a reality, Msgr. Lerena gave a very generous donation to the Augustinian Recollects of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino. The former Recollect priest's donation consisted of shares he had purchased from San Miguel Brewery, now known as San Miguel Corporation.⁸⁰ The donation was approximately the same amount invested by the Province of Saint Nicholas in the future San Sebastian Junior College Recoletos, inaugurated in the 1966-1967 school year. Msgr. Lerena lived to see his dream come true; he passed away in 1972. This Augustinian Recollect institution is a living and perpetual testimony of Msgr. Lerena's deep sense of belonging, sincere gratitude and affection for the Augustinian Recollection.

San Sebastian College-Recoletos de Cavite (1966)

The story of the Augustinian Recollects of Cavite Province did not end at the close of the 19th century when all the parishes (1898-1910) were lost after the Spanish Royal Patronage Regime or when San Pedro Apóstol Parish in Cavite Puerto, handed by the Archdiocese of Manila to them in 1921, reverted once more to the archdiocese in 1938.

After the second hiatus of twenty-eight years (1938-1966) without the presence of Augustinian Recollect priests and brothers in Cavite City, the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino founded San Sebastian Junior College-Recoletos, now San Sebastian College Recoletos de Cavite, in 1966. The exact date of the canonical establishment of the new Recollect community was 5 April 1966. The official canonical papers were approved and signed by Prior General

⁷⁹ Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *Chabacano Studies. Essays on Cavite's Chabacano Language and Literature* (Imus City 2006) 173-174.

⁸⁰ Simeón ASENSIO, *La Procuración general en Manila*, in Jesús SOBEJANO, *Los Agustinos Recoletos. 375 Años en las Islas Filipinas. 1606-1981* (Quezon City 1981) 28.

Father Angel Almárcegui and attested to by Secretary General Father Diego Izurzu at the general curia in Rome, Italy.⁸¹

The Beginnings of San Sebastian College Recoletos de Cavite

An in-depth feasibility study had been made by the Vicariate of the Philippines and China long before the final decision in establishing an Augustinian Recollect educational institution in Cavite City was firmed up in 1965. Two strong factors prevailed in considering the foundation of a Recollect school. First was the mutual bond deeply rooted in history—since 1616—between Cavite City and the Augustinian Recollect Order. Then there was the ever-growing need for a learning institution that would offer such services and apostolate to Cavite City and its adjoining towns. It was a fact that there were sufficient elementary and secondary schools, both public and private, but none to complete the Caviteños' tertiary education. Parents were constrained to send their children to colleges and universities in Manila and consequently to defray the rising and burdensome costs of tuition, boarding school fees and daily transportation.⁸²

The kind and generous Saulog family that owned a terminal of buses plying the Manila-Cavite route at the crossroads sold the original lot of 1,250 square meters to the Recolects. The total land area was 2,996 sq.m., according the chronicler of the beginnings of the Recollect school.⁸³ The school chapel was originally dedicated to Saint Nicholas of Tolentino. The construction project then proceeded at full speed and the new school was blest on 24 April 1966 by Bishop Artemio G. Casas of Imus in the presence of church and government officials as well as over forty Recollect priests and brothers from other parts of Luzon and the Visayas.

The first academic year 1966-1967 opened with 281 high school and college students. Four years later, the school year 1970-1971 saw the increase of its student population to 1,129 during the term of Germán Chicote as college rector. He had followed the former rectors Fermín Fernández, Alfonso Díaz and Miguel Navarro.

⁸¹ *Erección canónica de la Casa de Cavite*, in BPSN, 56 (1966) 116.

⁸² *Colegio de San Sebastián, Cavite City*, in SOBEJANO, 72.

⁸³ Pedro María CIORDIA, *Fundación en Cavite*, in BPSN, 56 (1966)

The Golden Jubilee in 2016 and beyond

San Sebastian College Recoletos de Cavite celebrated in 2016 the Golden Jubilee of its foundation. After fifty years, the student population increased to 2,783, in the first semester of 2015-2016, covering Grade School, High School, College, Graduate School.⁸⁴ The foundation of the Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity [known before as *tertiaries*] was initiated in May 1968 by the local prior/college president Father Alfonso Díaz who invited Caviteños to a series of meetings.⁸⁵ In 1966, the SARF had 53 members, of whom were sixteen active members and thirty-seven inactive due to old age, illness and emigration to other countries.

It behooves then for this Augustinian Recollect learning institution to perpetuate the memory and the missionary efforts of those pioneering hardworking priests and brothers of yore, as envisioned by its founders in Cavite Puerto. The Augustinian Recollect school administrators now continue the evangelization tasks, bringing economic progress to the fast-growing province and, most importantly, imparting quality Catholic education to the young generations in Cavite City and its adjoining towns.

There, the enduring intangible patrimony of Faith and Christian education lives on. It must live on, this time through the molding of minds and hearts of young Caviteños for them to continue treading the path of the Christian Faith, as did their ancestors whose lives were touched by exemplary Recollects—Saint Ezekiel Moreno and Servant of God Mariano Gazpio—with the equally zealous efforts of the Filipino Augustinian Recollect priests and religious brothers, Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity members and the SSC-R faculty, staff, alumni and students.

The evangelization task and educational apostolate are being carried out as well with the willing collaboration and assistance of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters in their communities in Tagaytay City, Trece Martires City, Tanza and Cavite City. Added to this should be

⁸⁴ Julius M. MARCOS, *Local Prior's Report, Recoletos de Cavite*, in *Bulletin of the Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno*, vol. 7, No. 24 (January-December 2016), 445.

⁸⁵ Regino Z. BANGCAYA, *The Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity*, in Emilio P. JARUDA [ed.], *Commemorative Album for the 1988-1991 Triennium. Vicariate of the Philippines and China. Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino. Order of Augustinian Recollects* (Quezon City 1991) 137.

the cooperation given by the Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity members in San Sebastian College-Recoletos in Cavite City because they share the Augustinian Recollect charism and mission to go on spreading God's Word to the People of God.

As the official school website says: "San Sebastian College-Recoletos, as a Catholic educational institution and an integral part of the Augustinian Recollect apostolate, has been committed to the total formation of man, imbued with knowledge, attitudes, and habits that will make learners truly men of their time, who are able to relate all human values and culture to the concept of salvation and eternal happiness."⁸⁶ Indeed, the evangelization undertaking lies today in the hands of the members of the Augustinian Recollect Family to continue to fulfil the sacred mission of carrying the torch of the history, culture and heritage of Christian Faith to future generations of Caviteños, a mission commenced in 1616 by the pioneers in Cavite Puerto.

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⁸⁶ "History of SSC-R de Cavite," <http://sscr.edu/history.html>.

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The Augustinian Recollects in Mindanao (1622-1919)

The beginnings of Christianity in Mindanao

As introduction to the missionary work of the Augustinian Recollects in Mindanao in the first decades of evangelization, let us hear what Father Toribio Minguella, future bishop of Puerto Rico and later Sigüenza, Spain, wrote about it in his 1885 work *Conquista espiritual de Mindanao por los agustinos Recoletos* [Spiritual Conquest of Mindanao by the Augustinian Recollects]: “The spiritual conquest of that territory, a laborious and bloody conquest, because the Mindanaoans and the inhabitants of Jolo archipelago were of fierce warlike character and many of them were zealous believers of Islam and have opposed with steadfast refusal to accept the Gospel and, consequently, [Christian] civilization.”¹

Licinio Ruiz, in the first volume of his *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino* (1925), has a rather poetic description of Mindanao and the Augustinian Recollect mission work: “...that land, the theater of great accomplishments, drenched with the blood of countless martyrs, the most precious feat of our history, civilized and Christianized at the cost of great sacrifices of our confreres, may we offer a tribute to all that legion of heroes, martyrs of the faith and civilization...”²

The Augustinian Bishop Pedro de Arce of Cebu—in accordance with the wishes of Governor General Alonso Fajardo—entrusted the

¹Toribio MINGUELLA, *Conquista espiritual de Mindanao por los agustinos recoletos* (Valladolid 1885) 1.

²Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* I (Manila 1925) 168.

spiritual conquest of the huge island of Mindanao to the Recollects in March 1621. The pioneering missionaries commenced their zealous evangelization work in 1622.

We recall that Mindanao was visited by some missionaries in the past. The Augustinian Father Diego del Rosario, a native of Montemayor, Portugal, debarked at La Caldera near Zamboanga and for nine years untiringly worked all by himself for the conversion of Mindanao, half Muslim and half-pagan. "Through divine favor," writes the Jesuit Father Francisco Combés, "Father Diego successfully converted a great number of indomitable barbarians through fervent preaching, penance and daily prayers."³

The Jesuits, Augustinians and secular clergy took turns in bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to the natives of Mindanao between 1596 and 1612.⁴ The Spanish *conquistador* Esteban Rodríguez de Figueroa went to the land of the Moros of the Río Grande to attempt the conquest of the big island through the use of arms. He was with two Jesuits, Father Juan de Campo and Brother Gaspar Gómez.⁵ The Jesuits left Mindanao following the death of Esteban Rodríguez de Figueroa. The *corregidor* and the Spaniards of Butuan once again asked for Jesuits.

The arrival of the two Jesuit missionaries in Butuan in 1596 signaled the beginning of the systematic Christianization of Mindanao, according to Father Miguel Bernad.⁶ Upon the requests of Spanish *encomenderos* and their approval by the cathedral chapter of Manila *sede vacante* and Governor General Francisco Tello, the Jesuit superior of Cebu had dispatched Father Valerio de Ledesma who reached Butuan in November 1596. Father Manuel Martínez followed his confrere not long after.⁷ Their mission was intermittent and they abandoned the island in 1614.

Father Pedro Xaraba and another Augustinian missionary tried again to gain foothold in Mindanao in 1599.⁸ Their efforts were of no

³Francisco COMBÉS, *Historia de Mindanao y Joló* (Madrid 1667) 59.

⁴Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *The Augustinian Recollects. Arrival in the Philippines and Spread of Missionary Activity* (Quezon City 2006) 16.

⁵William Charles REPETTI, *History of the Society of Jesus in the Philippine Islands I* (Manila 1938) 7, footnote 29.

⁶Miguel A. BERNAD, *The Great Island. Studies in the Exploration and Evangelization of Mindanao* (Quezon City 2004) 48.

⁷L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis I*, 168.

⁸José María ECHEVERRÍA, *Orígenes de las misiones de la Provincia de S. Nicolás de Tolentino de Agustinos Recoletos en el Extremo Oriente* (Madrid 1953) 91.

avail. They retraced their steps to Cebu, convinced that only a just war could pave the way to an effective preaching. The people of Mindanao, he believed, were of “supreme ferocity.” Accompanied by an armada from Cebu, the Jesuits returned to Butuan, Cagayan and Camiguin where they converted three hundred people to Christianity. They again abandoned the ministries of Mindanao, citing as reason their dearth of personnel which forbade them to continue their evangelization effort in the big island. They also had to take spiritual charge of Leyte, Bohol and Samar as well as their school in Cebu City. The secular priests then took over their missions. They, too, withdrew to Cebu because the mission of Mindanao could not give what was necessary for their sustenance and survival.⁹

Father Alonso de San Bernardo, a Recollect missionary in Bayug, Siargao and Linao, recalled and acknowledged all the efforts of the past evangelizers. But the attempts were so isolated, discontinuous, and too sporadic to be effective. There was a lack of steadfastness and a clear and concrete program of action. Father Alonso spoke of sterile effort of the Jesuits during the year when they stayed at the fort of Tampacan. Not for that, however, one can discount those initial evangelization efforts. Without the predecessors’ hardships, the Augustinian Recollects’ activity could hardly turn out so fruitful. The southern part of Mindanao, however, had not been visited by any missionary.¹⁰

In 1622, the Augustinian Recollect congregation considerably widened its missionary horizon. The reinforcements that were recruited by Father Rodrigo de San Miguel arrived from Spain in 1618. Added to these were vocations to the novitiate in Manila that made the opening of new mission fields possible. Towards the end of 1620, their superiors approached the bishop of Cebu requesting for new *doctrinas*. Bishop Pedro de Arce very gladly acceded to their petition. On 1 March 1621, he entrusted to the Recollects the whole northeastern portion of Mindanao, from Butuan to Cateel and Caraga, as well as the islands of Dinagat and Siargao. Father Rodrigo then designated two Recollects to establish a convent in Cebu which would later serve as base of mission expeditions to Mindanao. In 1622, the Recollect missionaries left Manila en route to

⁹DIEGO DE SANTA TERESA, *Historia general de de Religiosos Descalzos del Orden de los Ermitaños del Gran Padre y Doctor de la Iglesia San Agustín de la Congregación de España y de las Indias* III: 1651-1660 (Barcelona 1743) 297.

¹⁰Á. MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *The Augustinian Recollects*, 16.

the huge island. They passed by Cebu where Bishop Pedro de Arce gave them his blessing and words of encouragement.¹¹

There were eight Augustinian Recollect missionaries assigned for the evangelization of Mindanao between 1622 and 1623. According to the Recollect chronicler Father Diego de Santa Teresa, Father Juan de San Nicolás and Father Jacinto de San Fulgencio were the first missionaries to arrive in 1622. They worked in Caraga and in the extensive area near Butuan River.¹² We know only the names of the two other missionaries: Miguel de Santa María, Juan de la Madre de Dios.¹³ These two religious and four others reached Mindanao in the latter part of 1623. A Recollect missionary was put in charge of the fort of Tandag, which was constructed by Juan de Vega in order to put a stop to the raids by the Moros in the eastern coast of Mindanao.

While the soldiers were busy protecting the new converts and ministers, the Recollects traveled to the hinterlands in search of souls for God. The initially suspicious natives were little by little won over to the Christian faith and civilization when they viewed the “goodness and meekness” of the Recollect missionaries who carried nothing but the breviary and crucifix. What the evangelizers did first was to convince and convert the *principales*—leaders and influential families—of the settlements by employing “all possible means of sweetness and tenderness to win over their will.”¹⁴ The missionaries of all the religious orders had used this tried-and-tested strategy in the evangelization of the Philippines.

On 6 February 1624, the governor general Alonso Fajardo split the island of Mindanao into two big divisions. The northeastern and eastern regions across an imaginary line that ran from Punta Sulauan down to Cape San Agustín were adjudicated to the Recollects. The Jesuits would take charge of that territory southwest along the same imaginary line. On 12 July 1628, his successor Juan Niño de Tabora confirmed the division. However, the misunderstandings and feuds between the two orders lasted for several more years, partially favored by a certain volubility of the bishop of Cebu. In 1637, acceding to the governor general’s decision, the Cebu prelate declared his 3 March 1625 decree null and void in favor of the Recollects. Two months later,

¹¹Echeverría, 93.

¹²Diego de Santa Teresa, 287.

¹³Echeverría, 96.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 97.

in May 1639 in another partial change of opinion, the bishop again handed the ministry of Bayug over to the Recollects.

And the Recollect missionaries continued their strenuous task of establishing and developing the communities of converts to the Christian faith. Furthermore, they fervently defended their gains at all costs from Caraga rebels and Moro attackers. They zealously worked for Almighty God's glory in their assigned portion of the vineyard of the Lord.

Moro raids and Recollect responses

"The history of the Augustinian Recollect missions in the Philippines, since the beginning, has undergone the trial by blood and fire," declares the Recollect Church historian Fr. José Luis Sáenz.¹⁵ Indeed, the Recollect missions in the Visayas, Mindanao, Palawan, Calamianes, Cuyo, Mindoro, Tablas, Romblon, even in far-off Zambales and Bataan, had passed through and survived with Almighty God's ever-present assistance the Moro pirates' kidnap for ransom, robbery, rape, captivity, carnage, subsequent slavery or sale in slave markets, plunder, destruction, in short, "scorched-earth" policy. In the words of another Augustinian Recollect chronicler, these piratical raids left the province [of Calamianes and Palawan] "without churches, without population centers, without images, without sacred vessels, without Christians and without ministers."¹⁶ Added to this was the apparent government neglect of far-flung missions and ministers who were left to fend for themselves in the defense of their Christian communities.

The "killing spree" of Spanish missionaries at the hands of Moro invaders was very true in Mindanao. Father Minguella reports that in a span of eighteen years (1623-1641) the Moros martyred six Recollect ministers.¹⁷ Four more would be added to the growing list in the next ten years. See the following table:

¹⁵Jose Luis SAENZ authored *Invasiones de los moros filipinos en los ministerios agustinos recoletos a mediados del siglo XVIII: sus repercusiones en la vida social y religiosa de las misiones*, in *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino*, 75 (1985) 10-33. The quotation is on page 11.

¹⁶Quoted from Father José de la Concepción's manuscript kept at the provincial historical archive in Marcilla, Navarra, Spain, as cited by SÁENZ, 11.

¹⁷MINGUELLA, 5.

Religious killed in the 17 th century			
Name	Year	Place	Manner of death
Juan de la Madre de Dios	1623	Mindanao	Lanced
Juan de San Nicolás	1624	Mindanao	Cast to the sea
Jacinto de Jesús María	1631	Mindanao	Stabbed to death
Juan de Santo Tomás	1631	Mindanao	Lanced
Alonso de San José	1631	Mindanao	Beheaded
Pedro de San Antonio	1631	Mindanao	Lanced
Alonso de San Agustín	1637	Palawan*	Stabbed to death
Juan de San Antonio	1640	Jolo	In prison
Agustín de Santa María	1651	Mindanao	Lanced

* Fr. Alonso de San Agustín died in prison in Mindanao.

Sources: *Introducción*, in *Estado general de la Orden 1936* (Madrid 1936); 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); Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los Agustinos Recoletos I*, 383.

The undeclared Moro war against Recollect mission lands of eastern and northern Mindanao commenced in November 1752. Attacked “with so much furor and ferocity, devoid of all types of succor, isolated from the national government’s attention and practically in the vicinity of the Moro homeland,” Caraga was the main target of the hostilities and brutality committed against the Christian converts. Both church and convent of Caraga were reduced to ashes. Siargao and its five visitas disappeared from the face of the earth. The district of Tandag lost two pueblos. The *cabecera* and five *visitas* of Butuan were annihilated. Nothing was left of all these places mentioned but “the memory that they had existed” once upon a time.¹⁸ Decades later, the Recollects had to rebuild the pueblos from the rubble in various parts of Mindanao and start all over again their town-founding activities.

A few missionaries were able to escape to the mountain fastness, like Father Andrés de la Santísima Trinidad who hid with the parishioners of Higaquit in the adjoining upland. After days of hunger and deprivations, he was captured and taken to a place near Lake Lanao. Captive for eight months, Father Andrés was eventually released in exchange for twenty slaves and payment of 400 pesos as ransom by

¹⁸SÁENZ, 13.

the prior provincial. Father José de la Virgen del Niño Perdido, prior of Siargao, was not as fortunate as his confrere. He was seized by the Moros in Numancia in 1753 and his lifeless body was chopped into pieces.¹⁹

The litany of Augustinian Recollect victims of Moro raids in the 18th century all over the Philippines is rather long.²⁰ We can mention the sad fate of three religious: Father Rodrigo de los Dolores of Tandag declared a *desaparecido*; Father Antonio del Santo Cristo also of Tandag, taken hostage, a few days after died a natural death in 1755; Father Andrés de Jesús María, prior of their Calapan residence in Mindoro Island, kidnapped and taken to Jolo where he passed away after untold sufferings in 1754.²¹

The Recollect provincial could not remain deaf and insensitive to the plight of his subjects and the faithful. With the government assistance, the costly punitive expeditions were soon organized. Some were rather unsuccessful, as the Moros continued their piratical raids with impunity well into the 19th century and farther north of the archipelago. But then there were also successes. We recall the great feats of *El Padre Capitán* of Butuan and Cagayan, Father Ramón Zueco of Cagayan, Father Miguel de la Concepción, Father Carlos de Jesús in Caraga, Father Bernardino de la Concepción, Father Benito de San José, curate of Cateel, Father Marcelino Ortega in Camiguin, Father Valero de San Agustín in Caraga, Father Esteban de San José in Bislig and Father Pascual Ibáñez of Zamboanga.²²

The Moro pirates became bolder through the years. A piratical attack by six hundred Moros even reached as far as Masinloc in Zambales in 1649. Providentially, the Recollect curate Father Francisco de San José bravely defended his town. He successfully drove the Moro raiding party to a nearby islet fronting Masinloc. The next day the missionary led a well-armed punitive raid, finished off the survivors and seized their provisions as war booty.²³

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁰ Angel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los Agustinos Recoletos* I, 537.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

²² The historian includes in his textbook, which was used by Augustinian Recollect novices of the convent of Monteagudo, Navarra, Spain, and of Casiciaco Recoletos in the early 1970s, a chapter titled *Nuestros Guerreros* [Our Warriors]. For details of dauntless Recollects' feats and expeditions, see Pedro CORRO, *La Orden de Agustinos Recoletos. Compendio histórico* (Monachil, Granada 1930) 373-384.

²³ *Ibid.*, 378-379.

Another solution for the Moro onslaughts was the construction of bulwarks, forts and watchtowers which was in full swing in mid-18th century. In the now-extinct old town of Catarman, where Moros stopped over for replenishments of supplies, a stone fort was erected. In Caraga, an English merchant provided arms and ammunitions for its defense in exchange for cinnamon and other spices which abounded in the area. In Siargao, Cagayan, Butuan and other pueblos, forts with ramparts were constructed. All these defense structures in strategic locations soon proved effective resistance after all.

The Spanish and Portuguese religious of the Province of Saint Nicholas were not all war freaks. They also had diplomats in their midst. There were three parish priests of Iligan who were endowed with great tact and diplomacy. Saint Nicholas Province had Father Francisco Jiménez de San Fermín, parish priest in 1864-1880, who attended the feasts and weddings of the Muslim brethren and enjoyed their music and festive atmosphere when invited by the *datus* and sultans.²⁴ Father Clemente Ballesteros, at the helm of Iligan in 1880-1885, would willingly act as an impartial arbiter of disagreements and small fights. This was his customary practice until the anti-Christian movement began. Some Muslim natives confessed to him that there were outside influences that urged them to attack Christian settlements.

The valuable services of Father Juan Fernando Ruiz de la Virgen del Socorro²⁵ as interpreter and intermediary were most useful when the Spanish governor general commissioned the politico-military governor of Misamis Don Luis Huertas to visit pay a courtesy visit to the sultans of Lanao in 1886. The Recollect priest treated the Muslim leaders to imported drinks and cigars. His tactful move definitely prevailed over their initial mistrust and suspicions. It had been years since the Spanish colonial authorities had made similar steps. Father Ruiz had lived in Iligan in 1882-1883 and 1885-1892. Subsequently, he was designated missionary of María Cristina and Initao in 1892-1897. He therefore knew what kind of people he was dealing with.

Yet when critical times called for the defense and protection of his flock in Iligan, Father Juan Fernando Ruiz was not one to shy away

²⁴ L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 287.

²⁵ The Recollect biographer Father Francisco Sádaba writes that Father Juan Ruiz had authored a voluminous *Diccionario malanao-español* approved for publication by the Augustinian-owned Asilo de Malabón printing press in April 1898. The Revolution came, the Filipino-American War ensued and the printing press as well as the dictionary manuscript turned to ashes. Cf. SÁDABA, 620.

from his obligation. He begged off from joining the punitive expedition against the Moros of southern Lanao who in September 1890 had treacherously attacked Manticao, a visita of his parish of Iligan. He said he was alone in his parochial duties and kept his hands busy in the hospitals caring for the ill and wounded troops. Yet he drew a map of the region of southern Lanao which indicated the weak and strong points of the Maranao defenses, which was later used by the troops of the punitive raid.

The polemics of 1859²⁶

The secularization controversy was the perennial dispute on the control and division of parishes in colonial Philippines. The conflict boiled down to the animosities between the Spanish friars and the Filipino secular clergy. But we have to take into account the roots of the bitter fratricidal conflict within the Church. In 1768, Archbishop Basilio Sancho de Santas Justa y Rufina implemented the decree of expulsion of the members of the Society of Jesus from the Spanish colony. The secular clergy and the Augustinian Recollect friars who supervised the eastern Mindanao missions and parishes took over the doctrinas that the Jesuits abandoned in the Mindanao as well as those in Visayas and Cavite. Not enough secular priests could occupy the vacant curacies. A seminary was established for the crash formation of the secular clergy who turned out to be incompetent men of the cloth, of deficient moral character and who conducted scandalous lives. The archbishop himself had to denounce these secular priests.

In January 1769, the last two Jesuits in Mindanao packed up their things upon receipt of the royal decree of expulsion issued by Charles III. They soon left Zamboanga and were put on board a ship that conveyed them out of the Philippines. Three months earlier, on 5 October 1768, the six members of the Society of Jesus in Iligan had received notice of the same expulsion decree. The eight Jesuits supervised the spiritual administration of about 10,000 Christians in Zamboanga, Dapitan [with Ylaya and Dipolog], Iligan [with Initao] and

²⁶This part on the jurisdictional conflict between Jesuits and Recollects is culled from the unpublished professorial lecture of Prof. Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos, titled *Father Pedro Pelaez's Unpublished Letters on the Secularization Controversy* and read at the Pulungan Claro M. Recto, Bulwagang Rizal, University of the Philippines-Diliman, Quezon City, in 2002.

Misamis and the two mission stations of Bayug and Lubungan.²⁷ The Jesuit missions were handed over to eight Augustinian Recollects.²⁸

In 1768, Saint Nicholas province had eight missionaries assigned to extensively far-flung separated northern and northeastern *doctrinas*: Camiguin, Cagayan, Butuan, Surigao, Tandag and Bislig, on top of their several mission stations. In all, they had spiritual jurisdiction of over 14,000 souls before accepting the Jesuit missions.

Almost a century later, the Society of Jesus was restored in the Spanish dominions through the royal decree of 19 October 1852. Five years later, on 26 November 1857, the Dominican Bishop Romualdo Jimeno of the Diocese of Cebu, whose extensive episcopal jurisdiction at that time comprised the entire Visayas, Mindanao, Sulu and Marianas Islands, sent a memorial to the Queen of Spain Isabel II asking for members of the Society of Jesus. He wanted the Jesuits in the southern and southeastern territories of Mindanao.²⁹ The extremely vast territory consisted of Bislig, Davao, Polloc, Zamboanga province, Basilan and other islands. Indeed, there was enough territory for missionary endeavor for everyone because Mindanao had over one and half million souls that included Christians, Muslims and hinterland pagans.

On 30 July 1859, the eve of the feast of the Jesuit founder Saint Ignatius of Loyola's feast, the Spanish monarch issued the royal decree.³⁰ The reigning Queen Isabel II ordered that the spiritual administration of the whole Mindanao and its component islands be ceded to the Society of Jesus. The objective was to set up bases from which the Jesuits were to evangelize the non-Christian peoples in the interior. Parish-grabbing in colonial times Philippines was not exactly never new and uncommon. In the process, old controversies were rekindled. New wounds were reopened. In the light of the very delicate situation of the country, the royal order was evidently ill-advised.

²⁷Both Misamis [Ozamiz] and Iligan with its visita Initao had 4,000 souls. From Misamis to Dapitan, no parish existed during the Jesuit stewardship. The Recollects went on to create five more parishes in that extensive land area with a total Christian population of 51,159. Cf. L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 238.

²⁸ Father Repetti added to the list the missions of Bagonbayan, Dumalon, Siocon, Cabatangan, La Caldera, Polongbato, Siraguay and Langaran. Cf. W. C. REPETTI I, 17.

²⁹ L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 255; Manuel CARCELLER, *Historia general de la Orden de agustinos recoletos* XI (Madrid 1965) 439.

³⁰ Here is the Jesuit John Schumacher's flawed assertion that the royal decree expelling the Recollects from Mindanao was issued in **1861**. See Milagros C. GUERRERO, John N. SCHUMACHER, *Kasaysayan. The Story of the Filipino People*, vol. 5: *Reform and Revolution* (Manila 1998) 12.

Article XIII of the pro-Jesuit royal order decree provided that “when the mission of the Society of Jesus shall have been sent to Mindanao, it shall take charge of the spiritual administration, [and] the existing curacies shall be taken over by with its personnel when there are personnel available and in the manner most convenient to them.”³¹ The 30 July 1859 decree brazenly dispossessed the Congregation of Augustinian Recollects of all its parishes and *visitas* in Mindanao, both the old doctrinas and those created after the Jesuit expulsion: “... not only the new missions [which] [founded by Recollects after 1768] would be under their [Jesuits’] supervision, but also the older towns along the coast held by the Recoletos, which would serve as bases from which the missions into the interior of the island would work.”³²

On 10 September 1861, feast of the Augustinian Saint Nicholas of Tolentino who had been patron of Philippine Recollects since time immemorial and after whom the missionary province was named, the Queen of Spain issued the highly controversial pro-Recollect royal decree from the royal palace at San Ildefonso. Queen Isabela II’s order and the War and Overseas Ministry’s subsequent directive no. 324 [dated 1 November 1861] were conveyed by Governor General José Lémery to the Recollect prior provincial on 6 February 1862. The contentious royal decree is as follows:

In order to resolve any doubt which might occur with respect to the compliance of Article XIII of the 30 July 1859 decree relative to the reestablishment of the government in the island of Mindanao, in which it prescribed that the actual parish priests be replaced by the missionaries of the Society of Jesus, the queen has thought it proper to state that the foundation and subsequent development of the active missions in said island correspond exclusively to these missionaries and the same [missionaries] must take charge of the administration of the curacies and doctrinas already reduced by the Augustinian Recollect religious as these parishes become vacant through the death or transferal of those who are in charge of them with canonical collation or under the title of economo. And Her Majesty, wishing to grant some indemnification at the

³¹L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 255; M. CARCELLER, *Historia general* XI, 439.

³²John N. SCHUMACHERS, *Father Jose Burgos, a Documentary History* (Quezon City 1999) 14. See also Pablo PASTELLS, *sr, Misión de la Compañía de Jesús de Filipinas en el siglo XIX* I (Barcelona 1916) 22-23.

same time and to give a proof of the appreciation with which she looks at the distinguished services rendered by the above-mentioned Augustinians, has seen fit to grant to the province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino the administration of parishes of the province of Cavite, and others served by the native clergy, according as they become vacant in the manner cited with respect to those in Mindanao which are under the charge of the mentioned Recollect missionaries.³³

The pro-Recollect decree was met with stiff opposition by the Spanish secular priest Pedro Peláez, then vicar capitular of the cathedral chapter in the Archdiocese of Manila *sede vacante*. He wrote two memorials (18 December 1861, 10 March 1862) to the governor general and the Spanish monarch. He brilliantly defended the rights and prerogatives of the archbishop and the interests of the secular Filipino clergy. But the two memorials were of no avail. After Father Peláez's untimely death in the rubble of the Manila cathedral in the wake of the tremors of June 1863, Father Jose A. Burgos took up the cudgels in behalf of the Filipino secular clergy. The royal decree had been implemented by colonial government in 1862.

In Mindanao, the Augustinian Recollect missionaries were taken aback, bewildered and dismayed because their parishes and missions—especially those they themselves had founded at the start of the evangelization period in the 17th century—were taken away from them when “they were doing more and better in the conversion of the heathens and in the formation of new pueblos.” And there was no prior consultation, no due process at all. Nevertheless, the cession of Recollect parishes to the Society of Jesus was done in a very peaceful and tranquil manner.

Below is the list of towns/parishes³⁴ with the year in which the Recollects handed them over to the Society of Jesus. Included, too, is the Christian population of the towns.

Ttown	Year of Cession	Population
1. Tetuan	1862	2,715

³³ L. RUIZ., *Sinopsis* I, 264-265; M. CARCELLER, *Historia general* XI, 568; SCHUMACHER, *Father Jose P. Burgos*, 214-217.

³⁴ L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 255; Manuel CARCELLER, *Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* XII (Madrid 1974) 434-437.

2. Isabela	1862	3783.
3. Zamboanga	1865	11,477
4. Polloc	1865	382
5. Davao	1868	1,064
6. Dapitan	1870	2,040
8. Surigao	1871	5,480
9. Higaquit	1872	4,643
10. Bislig	1873	7,606
11. Mainit	1875	3,341
12. Butuan	1875	5,569
13. Bunawan	1875	1,807
14. Balingasag	1877	8,762
15. Dinagat	1878	3,618
16. Cantilan	1879	9,676
17. Salvador	1879	4,989
18. Jasaan	1882	5,849
19. Numancia	1883	3,365
TOTAL		88,613

Another problem arose eventually. For over two decades, the Society of Jesus had not fully and quickly complied with the 1859 royal decree. The Recollect prior provincial had already written letters (September 1880, January 1882, October 1882, December 1882) to the governor general—copies furnished to the Jesuit superior—urgently requesting the continued transfer of the parishes. Recollect missionaries in remote parishes were isolated from their confreres. Their provincial found it rather grueling and perilous to conduct his canonical visitation to those far-off subjects and curacies.

In 1883, twenty-years after the pro-Jesuit royal order was issued, twelve curacies still remained in Recollect hands through no fault of their own. Numancia and Cabuntog were handed over to the Jesuits in July and August 1883, respectively. Lianga and Tandag were to change hands only in July 1884. In exchange, the Recollects were given an equal number of parishes, as expected: Lubang in Mindoro Island, San Juan de Bocboc/Bolbok in Batangas, and the two Cavite

parishes of Maragondon and Magallanes which all belonged to the Archdiocese of Manila.³⁵

Thereafter, nothing remarkable happened. Moreover, on 14 July 1887, Father Toribio Minguella, vicar provincial and commissary general in Madrid, addressed a memorial to the Spanish Overseas Minister, “asking for a very small portion of that huge territory to be reserved for us.”³⁶ Mindanao, “the land spiritually conquered by our ancestors,” Minguella continues, “and sustained by us at the cost of blood and sacrifices, is the most brilliant page of our history.” He acknowledged that every indemnification in the Manila archdiocese for a Mindanao curacy had brought deep resentment among the native clergy. The future Recollect bishop argued that the archbishop of Manila should set aside a curacy to compensate the meritorious services rendered by his deserving native clergy.³⁷ Thus, he sought the suspension of the 10 September 1861 royal decree. Prior to this letter, Father Minguella had authored a highly informative pamphlet *Conquista espiritual de Mindanao por los agustinos recoletos*, published at Valladolid, Spain, in 1885.

The Recollect provincial in Manila could do no less but to endorse Minguella’s petition. Pablo Pastells, the Jesuit superior in Mindanao, refuted Minguella’s arguments, saying that Mindanao was much earlier Christianized by St. Francis Xavier, the first missionary of the island “according to the bull of canonization, and it was systematically evangelized in 1596 by Father Valerio de Ledesma and confreres who “watered that blessed land with their sweat and even with their blood.”³⁸

On 9 September 1887, however, a decree from the Overseas Ministry declared the suspension of the 1861 royal order. It put an end to the indemnifications of vacant parishes in Manila and their cession to the Recollects. It further mandated that the vacated curacies in the District of Misamis “be provided with ministers of the Order of the Recollects of Saint Augustine.”³⁹

³⁵ Manuel CARCELLER XII, 437.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 566.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 567.

³⁸ L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 267.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 275-276.

Creation/development of towns/parishes in Northern Mindanao

Misamis Occidental

Misamis [now Ozamiz]

Misamis began as a Spanish garrison and fort which guarded the Christian inhabitants of Daisog, later called Manella [present-day Lopez Jaena town].⁴⁰ After the Jesuit expulsion, the Recollects took over the doctrina in 1769. Father Francisco Jiménez de San Fermín, parish priest for two decades, evangelized the extensive coastal area up to Baliangao. Father Constancio Asensio constructed the church of three naves, made of finest wood and *tabique pampango*. The convent—one of the best in the district—is the work of Father Pascual Bermejo. Several times expeditionary officers, troops, engineers and guests from Manila and Cebu stayed at the convent for many days. In 1880, Father Bermejo formed and armed a contingent of defenders of Misamis Christians against Moro invading forces. The parish priests could easily recruit hundreds of volunteers in Misamis and were able to bring the war into the heart of Moro country down south.

Oroquieta

A former impoverished visita of Jiménez then named Layauan, the town and parish of Oroquieta became independent from its matrix in 1886. The parochial jurisdiction was then entrusted to the first and last parish priest Father Tomás Casado who worked tirelessly to establish in Oroquieta a model *pueblo* and parish in the district.⁴¹ The Recollect parish curate likewise attended to the spiritual needs of the people of Langaran, now Plaridel town. In Oroquieta, Father Casado constructed a provisional church, two solid school edifices for boys and girls, a big cemetery, a sturdy bridge, a spacious public market, a beautiful *kumbento* and a strong *casa tribunal*. By November 1898 when Father Casado was ordered by the prior provincial to leave Oroquieta, the population had gone up to 12,200 from about five hundred souls in 1887.

Langaran [now Plaridel]

Created into a parish in 1886 from two *pueblos*, Daisog or Manella and Baliangao. Its first parish curate was the Recollect

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 289-291; Patricio MARCELLÁN, *Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Agustinos Descalzos de la Congregación de España e Indias* (Manila 1879) 297-298.

⁴¹ L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis I*, 306-308.

Father Buenaventura Marrodán whose primary concern was the spiritual wellbeing of his parishioners.⁴² He promoted the devotion of the perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and organized a confraternity of Saint Joseph. He prepared countless adults for their baptism. He then arranged for the construction of a very strong *kumbento* with molave as *harigues*. Next, he erected a provisional church edifice made of tabique pampango. When the locust plague devastated the pueblo's rice plantation, Father Marrodán urged the planting of camote and root crops. He was succeeded by Father Celestino Ballesteros who began the construction of the stone church which was interrupted by the Revolution in 1898. Earlier, he was able to finish a school edifice for boys, made of strong materials, and a *casa tribunal*, made of carefully chosen wood.

Aloran

An erstwhile visita of Jimenez, the town of Aloran became an independent parish in 1894 with Father José Abad as parish priest.⁴³ It had a population of 4,438. Father Francisco Jiménez de San Fermín had known the existence of this settlement as early as 1854 and visited the place regularly. A small church and two schools for boys and girls were built upon his advice. The succeeding curates of Jimenez parish worked for the construction of the very strong *kumbento* which was finished by Father Abad. This Recollect missionary further preached the Gospel to the Subanons in the hinterlands and baptized a great number of them. In 1897-1898, the molave logs needed for the church edifice were cut down in the forests of Tangub, thirteen to fourteen leagues away, and 115 men were hired to take one sole molave log from the mountain to the coastline of Tangub. Father Abad supervised the construction of bridges and the roads were built in 1896-1897.

Loculan [present-day Clarin].

A visita of Misamis until 1893, when Loculan was created into a curacy to attend to the spiritual needs of the parishioners. It already had a chapel in 1838. Father Gervasio Margallón was its parish priest from 1893 until November 1898.⁴⁴ A decent *kumbento* and provisional church were erected in spite the little cooperation he got from the principalía. Because of the difficulty of communication, Father Margallón exerted

⁴² *Ibid.*, 309-311.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 302-306.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 294-295.

every effort to construct a very strong bridge against all odds. According to the talk of the town, the finished bridge withstood the weight of 300 carabaos that crossed it at one time. He directed the opening of the streets in the town and construction of edifices. He reconstructed the church edifice, replacing the rotten columns and foundations with molave.

Tudela

Father Antonio Olleta, a native of Tudela, Navarre, Spain, and parish priest of Misamis in 1863-1865, founded the visita of Tudela.⁴⁵ Father Gervasio Margallón worked indefatigably for the material and spiritual improvement of the visita of Tudela since 1893.⁴⁶ There was a big community of Subanons under the jurisdiction of Loculan. A great number of people from Bohol migrated to this pueblo and increased the population by leaps and bounds so that in 1893 a parish was at last created. In 1895, the Recollect Father Cipriano Chocarro was assigned to Tudela. The first priority project of both Margallón and Chocarro was the construction of a road that led to the sea and another to both Loculan and Jimenez. Rain or shine, in sickness and in health, they finally finished the road which the people used to transport huge quantities of abaca. Another project was a beautiful public fountain whose water source was a natural spring. A provisional church with three retablos was erected.

Jimenez

Founded as a visita of Misamis during the parochial administration of Father Francisco Jiménez de San Fermín, the parish of Palilan became an independent parish only in 1859.⁴⁷ Father Roque Azcona was its first parish priest and served the curacy until 1883.⁴⁸ To honor the memory of the tireless Recollect missionary and founder who evangelized the eastern coast from Misamis to Baliangao, Palilan was deservedly renamed Jimenez. There at the churchyard the statue of the Recollect missionary was erected. The new pueblo had five visitas then: namely, Aloran, Finis [renamed San Vicente], Layauan [now Oroquieta], Manella and Langaran [present-day Plaridel]. At the outset, Jimenez only had 3,000 souls. By 1882, the population grew to 20,822.

⁴⁵SÁDABA, 497.

⁴⁶ L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 295-296.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 238 ; MARCELLÁN, 298-299.

⁴⁸SÁDABA, 464; L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 297-302.

Layauan and Langaran had to be separated to form new independent parishes in 1886. Aloran followed suit in 1894. In 1897, Jimenez had 7,988 inhabitants.

The old Jimenez town used to be near a river but a great deluge flooded the town once. The disaster caused the destruction of houses and disappearance of countless domestic animals, but providentially no human casualties were reported. The parish priest and the town principalía decided to move the town to its present site which at that time was but a jungle. In 1862, Father Roque Azcona commenced the construction of the magnificent church with three naves and a portico. The Recollect church was made of *mampostería* [*cal y canto*, rubblework, cut stone and lime] and it had beams of choice wood. The church was placed under the spiritual patronage of Saint John the Baptist. Father Azcona also constructed the casa tribunal and a school edifice of *tabique pampango* divided into two rooms, one for girls and another for boys. A *cal y canto* cemetery was built in two months. He further supervised the construction of two irrigation channels and a dike made of *mampostería*. In 1882, the Spanish governor of the Misamis district commissioned the building of bridges and roads, especially the main road that linked Jimenez to Baliangao in the north and Loculan in the south, a distance of fourteen leagues. Most of all, he promoted the plantation of abaca, palay, corn, coconuts, coffee and cacao.⁴⁹

During the term of the successor Father José Abad, the choir loft, *retablo* in the main altar, the pavement, ceiling with paintings were finished. Molave replaced the anay-infested middle columns of the church interior. This was the most expensive construction project during Father Abad's term.⁵⁰

The very solid bell-tower was built by Father Constancio Asensio with a clock metalwork mounted in 1896. A magnificent church organ was ordered from *Casa Roqués y Compañía* in Zaragoza, Spain, and installed in 1894. Father Asensio commissioned the painters Julio Sanz Cruzado of Bilbao, Spain, and his nephew Ybarguen to paint the whole church interior in early 1898. Julio Sanz Cruzado was later killed by the revolutionaries of the district.

⁴⁹ L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis I*, 298.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* See also Orlando V. ABINION, *Conservation of Church Painting: St. John the Baptist Church, Jimenez, Misamis Occidental*, in *The Recoletos Observer*, vol 7., no. 1 (January-March 2006) 27.

Recollect parish priests Gervasio Magallón and José Abad left a lasting legacy in Jimenez: they organized a musical band and church choir, which in due time became, indisputably, the best in the province. For the Moro Wars, the people of Jimenez built big boats to ferry troops and provisions to the Spanish camps in Tangub, Dalanaacan and Maranding. This could not have been possible without the complete trust laid by the Christian population of Jimenez on their Recollect parish priests.

Misamis Oriental

Cagayan de Oro

A Recollect mission since 1622 up to the end of the Spanish regime, Cagayan de Misamis, as it was formerly called, was served through the centuries by dauntless missionaries like Father Agustín de San Pedro, Simón Loscos, Ramón Zueco. The first temple of God in Cagayan was burned down in 1831. Father Francisco Villas prepared the blueprints for the next church with a hefty budget of 15,000 pesos. The provincial governor contributed the measly sum of 400 pesos to the church project. Father Simón Loscos took over the post in May 1845 and two months after he began the project of the future cathedral of Cagayan de Oro. His amiable character and good will won the eager support of the principales and the common people. Father Loscos blest the still unfinished church in solemn rites on 5 March 1848, and three years later put the church construction to its happy conclusion. The whole Christian community, headed by Don José Corrales, wholeheartedly cooperated with Recollect missionary's church project.

The *kutá* in Cagayan was built in the 1730s. It served as a sure refuge of defense of the Christian residents in unnumbered occasions. Father Juan Alegre de los Dolores, a noteworthy parish priest of Cagayan (1788-1806), scoured the uplands of Cagayan to preach the Gospel to the natives.⁵¹ Apparently, he led further a military expedition against the followers of Mamilano who lived in the mountains of Cagayan in 1800, for which Governor General Rafael Ma. Aguilar commended him.⁵²

In the Recollect annals of the history of Mindanao, the name and memory of Father Ramón Zueco promptly stood out. As parish administrator of Cagayan for twenty-eight consecutive years (1861-1889), he made missionary sallies to the mountains of Tagoloan and visited the outlying settlements of Linabo and Sumilao. He did

⁵¹ SÁDABA, 339.

⁵²L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 282.

everything for the moral and material welfare of the settlers there. During the military campaign against Jolo of 1876 headed by General Malcampo, Father Zueco showed up in Zamboanga with his 450 Visayan troops all set to bring the war right in the home and hideout of the Moros. Some 450 more volunteers from the Recollect-administered parishes of Mindanao were placed on reserve at Cagayan, at his beck and call when necessary.⁵³

Alubijid

Founded in 1866, Alubijid had Father Julián Bujo as its first parish priest. The new parish was placed under the religious patronage of the Holy Cross.⁵⁴ The *pueblos* of El Salvador and Hulogan were once under its parochial jurisdiction.⁵⁵ In the 1860s, a smallpox epidemic decimated the population of Alubijid. Over 400 children perished from the viral plague. It had two populous visitas, Pangauan and Altubo. In El Salvador town, the three retablos of the church were finished in 1896 and a fiesta was celebrated by the faithful in gratitude and tribute to Our Lady of Snows.

Iponan

A former visita of Cagayan, Iponan [indistinctly named Hiponan] was separated as a parish from its matrix on 1 April 1853, according to our oft-cited Licinio Ruiz.⁵⁶ In Marcellán's historical account, the patron saint of the new parish was Saint William.⁵⁷ But Fidel de Blas, another Recollect historian, future prior provincial and prior general, affirmed that Iponan was created as a parish in 1850.⁵⁸ Father Isidro Hernández was probably its second parish priest (1851-1859).⁵⁹ His successor Father Benito Tutor was at the helm of the curacy from 1859 to 1882, and again from 1884 until the Revolution in 1898.⁶⁰

⁵³SÁDABA, 467-468.

⁵⁴ Father Marcellán informs us that Alubijid was separated from its matrix Iligan on 18 November 1865 as an independent parish in compliance with the royal decree dated 5 July 1865. Cf. MARCELLÁN, 295-296.

⁵⁵L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 285-286.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 283-284.

⁵⁷ MARCELLÁN, 294.

⁵⁸ Fidel DE BLAS, *Labor evangélica de los Padres Agustinos Recoletos en las Islas Filipinas* (Zaragoza 1910) 19.

⁵⁹SÁDABA, 448.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 471.

Iponan had two visitas, Pigtao and Opol. The three Recollect priests who served the parish exerted singular effort to construct the church edifices, “convenient and decent for the divine worship as well as for the parish priests’ quarters.” The church of Iponan, though not one of the best in the region, was a sturdy edifice and had attracted the attention of everyone for its svelte structure and cleanliness. The kumbento, built at Father Tutor’s personal expenses, was “a veritable palace” not so much for its elegant decoration and great dimensions as for the paintings brought from Rome, Italy.

The curacy suffered the same lot as Cagayan and other Christian communities in the district. And like their neighbors, Iponan men stood their ground and defended their families and property from sudden Moro raids. When Father Ramón Zueco led a punitive expedition to the Moros of Jolo in 1876, the Christian community of Iponan unhesitatingly dispatched a contingent of valiant warriors.

From a small town of 3,315 souls in 1851, Iponan had doubled its population to 6,602 on the eve of the Revolution.

Iligan

The new parish of Iligan placed under the patronage of Saint Michael the Archangel was separated from Misamis in 1836.⁶¹ The actual town of Iligan, according existing Recollect records, is somewhat modern. It was probably the Recollect minister of Misamis who was constrained to transfer the old pueblo of Iligan towards the interior and present location because the sea had eaten up part of its former site. This relocation took place circa 1780. A new strong church was erected and an enclosure or *kutá*, made of stone, sand, lime and molave was built for the defense of the Christian populace. A military detachment of eighteen soldiers under a Spanish officer was stationed in the fort.⁶² In 1633, the Recollect Father Agustín de San Pedro, *El Padre Capitán*, proposed to gain foothold in Iligan, whether for defense purposes or base of operations for attacks against Moro pirates when necessary, especially when a fort had just been built in Maraue [now Marawi].⁶³

⁶¹MARCELLÁN, 296-297.

⁶²*Ibid.*

⁶³Tradition has it that *el Padre Capitán* himself had ordered the cutting of stones of which the *kuta* of Marawi was made. He had personally supervised the carrying the stones on the shoulders to the construction site. Cf. L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 288-289.

The plan was disapproved by the powers-that-be at that time and at once shelved.⁶⁴

Camiguin Island

Catarman

Also known as Catadman, the mission of Catarman dates back to 1622—the first year of Recollect evangelization. It was said some six hundred souls were eventually baptized by the first Recollect missionary. The parish was put under San Roque as its principal patron saint.⁶⁵ Two more pueblos—Mambajao and Sagay—existed at the start of the 18th century, as proven by a document setting up the territorial limits.

Catarman is remembered in Recollect history for two personalities: Father Francisco de Santa Teodora (1716-1764) and Father Pedro [Jiménez González] de Santa Bárbara (1722-1794). The people witnessed the only homicide in the whole of Camiguin in 1764. Father Francisco de Santa Teodora, parish priest since 1761, had a long talk with a rebel leader. With some local authorities he led to the place, the Recollect was trying to bring the *remontados* back to the fold of law. The *gobernadorcillo* of Mambajao, who had an ax to grind against the *remontado*, arrived and saw what was going on. With all his strength, the town executive hurled a spear at the rebel chief who defended himself adroitly. With his shield, the *remontado* deflected the spear which hit instead the innocent missionary, piercing his chest. Father Francisco was killed on the spot.⁶⁶

Father Pedro de Santa Bárbara had already proved his worth earlier in Bohol.⁶⁷ The curate of Camiguin with residence at Catarman (1782-1791) condoled deeply with his parishioners who suffered much from frequent Moro incursions against their community and carted off with their hapless residents and property. Father Pedro then organized a punitive raid against the Moros whose hideout was in Balingoan

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 387.

⁶⁵ MARCELLÁN, 299-300.

⁶⁶ SÁDABA, 241-242; L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 172, 173, 315. This incident is described in detail by Father Santiago Álvarez, see L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, page 224 footnote 2.

⁶⁷ Father Pedro was then vicar provincial of Bohol. He did his best to make the famous rebel Francisco Dagohoy give up to Spanish authorities. He failed in this diplomacy due to the Spanish officials' duplicity but he succeeded in asking Dagohoy to allow him to administer baptism and solemnize the marriages of Dagohoy's men. Cf. SÁDABA, 252-254.

along the coast of northern Mindanao fronting Camiguin. Two large boats were built under Father Pedro's supervision, and the armed Camigueños shortly after sailed to Balingoan and fiercely attacked the unwary Moros. They inflicted so many casualties among the enemy that for so many years Catarman was free of Moro raids.⁶⁸

We can add two more missionaries: Father Juan Martín del Rosario and Father Luis Gómez de San José. Towards the close of the 17th century, both church and kumbento of Catarman were razed to the ground by Moro raiding parties. Father Juan Martín built a bigger church and kumbento. It took him ten years to finish the church (1806-1816). These same structures would be ruined in 1871 by volcanic eruptions.⁶⁹ The Recollect priest constructed the churches of Mambajao and Sagay as well.

Another parish priest Father Luis Gómez, who administered the curacy in 1843-1858, was best remembered by Catarman folks: well-known for his all-out generosity for his impoverished parishioners as well as for his military skills. He successfully defeated the Moro attackers and rescued the kidnapped parishioners.⁷⁰

The most horrifying event that the inhabitants of old Catarman could hardly cast into oblivion was the violent eruptions of the old volcano in February and May 1871. The first church built by Father Juan Martín del Rosario was destroyed during the eruption. Tourists and sight-seers now view the ruins of the old Gui-ob church. Providentially, only seventy people perished. Those who had time to escape at the time of the eruption crossed the sea to the coastal pueblo of Balingasag. A great number of residents trekked to the safety of the pueblo of Sagay. Untold however were the human casualties in the village of Lobo within the danger zone of the volcano. In the wake of the natural catastrophe, the parish priest Father Antonio Preciado viewed the desolation. Not wanting the same disaster to happen again, he decided to transfer Catarman down south. A new temple of God had to be constructed. The materials for the small kumbento came from what could be salvaged from the ruined church.⁷¹

⁶⁸ L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 316.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 229.

⁷⁰ SÁDABA, 417; L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 316.

⁷¹ L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 316-318.

Sagay

The town of Sagay is located at the foot of the highest mountain of the island where palay, corn, tobacco, cacao and root crops were cultivated for their sustenance. Abaca likewise grew in abundance. Sagay under the Marian patronage of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary acquired the status of a parish in 1848.⁷² It was but a league away from the new town matrix of Catarman. From the mountain side flowed nine or ten rivers and creeks that watered the few plains planted with palay.

At the start of the 19th century, the Christians of the visita of Sagay already had a primitive church. Father Juan Martín del Rosario, parish priest of Catarman and the whole island of Camiguin, began the construction of the *mampostería* church of the visita in 1805.

Father Fernando Ramos was appointed the first parish priest of Sagay in June 1848. A secular priest took over his post when he was appointed prior of San Sebastian Convent in Manila. Among the successors was Father Juan Francisco Marqués del Rosario⁷³ assigned to Sagay on 4 November 1865 when he was presented by the vice royal patron and governor general to serve the curacy. He extended the mampostería church of Father Juan Martín, as it had resulted too small for the population of 4,327 in 1867. In 1879, it had increased to 5,482 souls.⁷⁴ He also renovated the kumbento. As did his confreres in Misamis and Camiguin, Father Marqués supervised the construction of new roads and the improvement of old ones. He was building a solid bell-tower when tragedy struck Sagay in 1883 and almost annihilated its residents.

Father Marqués was the only priest to have passed away and to have been laid to rest in Sagay. He was assisting his ailing parishioners during the cholera outbreak of 1883 that wreaked havoc on the Visayas and Mindanao and laid waste on the population of Sagay when he too fell ill and received the last Sacraments from his confrere Father Constancio Asensio of Catarman parish. At age 46, Father Marqués died of cholera on 2 July, a victim in the line of duty.⁷⁵ Forty cholera victims were interred on that same day in the public cemetery.⁷⁶

⁷² MARCELLÁN, 300-301.

⁷³ Not Father Juan Francisco Miguel, as L. Ruiz conjectures in *Sinopsis* I, 318. There is no Recollect religious with that name in Sádaba's *Catálogo*. Father Fidel de Blas provides us with the correct name. Cf. FIDEL DE BLAS, 20.

⁷⁴ MARCELLÁN, 301.

⁷⁵ SÁDABA, 505. The cholera epidemic was in 1883. L. Ruiz errs when he puts 1882 as the year of the plague and Father Juan Francisco's death.

⁷⁶ L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 318-319.

Father Valentín Utande succeeded the lamented priest. He built a school for boys, plus a room for the teacher. A kumbento in Guinsiliban, then a visita of Sagay, was constructed during his term. The parish priest of Sagay, Father Santiago Álvarez, replaced Father Utande in February 1889. He supervised the construction of a good road for carriages up to the boundary with Catarman and four wooden bridges. He likewise opened a two-kilometer long road to Guinsiliban with four big bridges. Unmindful of the hefty expenditures, he restored the church and convent, besides building a sacristy with beautiful stained-glass windows. A school for girls and a house for their teacher were also built. Father Álvarez departed for Manila upon orders of the prior provincial on 30 November 1898.⁷⁷

Mahinog

In 1860, Mahinog [in some records, Majinog] was separated from its matrix Sagay and created into an independent parish under the spiritual patronage of Saint Michael the Archangel.⁷⁸ Father Aniceto Grima del Rosario was presented as its parish priest by the vice royal patron on 18 September 1860.⁷⁹ At the outset, there were only 2,300 souls in the new parish; in 1879 the population rose to 4,382.⁸⁰ He would attend to their spiritual needs up to the end of the Spanish regime. As there was no church, kumbento or roads, it was the lot of Father Grima to lay the foundations for the infrastructure in the new town. He was fortunate to have hard-working and dedicated parishioners who were all immigrants from the island of Bohol. Without any subsidy from the Spanish government whatsoever but sheer hard work and cooperation of his parishioners, first he constructed the very solid kumbento. Then he supervised the construction of the seven-kilometer stretch of a straight road across mangrove swamps and forested areas.

Then Father Grima, who ably acted as director of public works, prepared the materials for his next project: a decent temple of God. At the outset, for his church project he only had two hundred pesos in his pocket, four carpenter-apprentices, but a great deal of generosity and famed industry of his Boholano parishioners. He acquired logs for the *harigues* of the church edifice. By 1894, Father Grima—already 61 years old—was putting the finishing touches to his church with three

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 319.

⁷⁸MARCELLÁN, 302-303.

⁷⁹SÁDABA, 483; L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 319-320.

⁸⁰MARCELLÁN, 302-303.

naves and walls made of *tabique pampango*. His last project was the elegant belfry, neo-Gothic in style, with four bells.

Mambajao

The foundation year of Mambajao, the “most important pueblo” of Camiguin, was 1855 with the Augustinian Nicholas of Tolentino as patron saint.⁸¹ Since the early part of the 19th century, Mambajao already had an old church built under the supervision of Father Juan Martín. The parish priest in 1856 was Father Valero Salvo de San Sebastián who passed away at age 69 in Mambajao on 10 January 1860.⁸² He had been previously parish priest of Catarman (1826-1839) and Tagbilaran (1839-1856). In 1879, Mambajao had a population of 5,246 souls and 1,684 tributes.⁸³ The last Augustinian Recollect priest Father Dionisio Pueyo was assigned to Mambajao in 1890-1891 and 1894-1898.⁸⁴ The construction of the new parochial church under his supervision was already in full swing when the Revolution put it to a complete stop, and Father Pueyo had to leave for Manila upon orders of his prior provincial.

Outstanding Augustinian Recollects of Mindanao

Fray Agustín de San Pedro

Dubbed as *El Padre Capitán* for his heroic exploits at the height of the Moro Wars, Fr. Agustín de San Pedro (1599-circa 1660) epitomizes the 17th-century missionary who erected fortress-like temples, forts, palisades and watchtowers to shield his flock from pirates and 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. Agustín de San Pedro (whose family name was Rodríguez) studied at the University of Salamanca. He afterward entered the Recollect convent at Valladolid, making his profession in 1619. At Portillo, Valladolid, he devoted himself to the study of mathematics, and especially of military science to such an extent that “his superiors commanded him to desist from these as unsuited to the religious profession.” In 1623, he departed for the Philippines, where he was assigned to Mindanao, spending there many years. His military studies were made useful in defending the missions against Moro raids,

⁸¹ L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 315; MARCELLÁN, 301-302.

⁸² SÁDABA, 390.

⁸³ MARCELLÁN, 302.

⁸⁴ SÁDABA, 596.

and training the Christians to fight their enemies successfully; and he was known throughout the Philippines as *Padre Capitán*, a name that caused terror among Moros. He labored in God's vineyard in Butuan, Cagayan and Tandag in Mindanao. The remnants of stone forts and churches in Lanao, Cagayan de Oro, Romblon and Banton silently pay tribute to El Padre Capitan's commitment and defense of Christianity as well as to his parishioners' courage and love of freedom. He was parish priest of Cagayan and prior of its convent for a total of thirteen years (1626-1638, 1641-1642), Butuan (1638-1641, 1642-1644), Romblon (1644-1651) and secretary provincial (1651-1653).⁸⁵

A Recollect chronicler described the Padre Capitán's great deeds:

[Father Agustín] surrounded the village [Cagayan] with a high stockade with its sentryboxes and towers for the sentinels who stood watch at night, by means of which they were safe from the continual ambushes of the enemy. He taught the Indians how to make sallies, to shoot, and to spy out those who were in ambush, and in fine carried himself as the most skilful captain. The tyrant Cachil Corralat [Sultan Kudarat] was very angry that a small village like Cagayan should resist his power, and desired to finish it once for all. He launched his fleet of more than thirty caracoas manned by the best of his men and equipped with military supplies. The preparation of the enemy was learned, and the father prior sent to Caraga for some soldiers. Six soldiers and one hundred Indians came. A sudden alarm was sounded to call in those who were distant in their fields. The enemy disembarked more than two thousand Moros in order to attack the village; but they found so stout resistance that they returned, fleeing in disgrace. All that gave great annoyance to Corralat, and he was grieved to his very soul that the [Father] Captain should be the one to check his boldness. Therefore, desirous of seizing him, Corralat ordered ambushes to be set, and took other means to secure his end.

That action was not kept hidden from the prudent father, who, caring for the guard of the village, also forbade the people at times to make sallies, that they might not fall into any of the many stratagems arranged

⁸⁵ MARCELLÁN, 290292; SÁDABA, 81-83.

by the enemy, notwithstanding that he had frightened them from the vicinity. Sometimes he sallied out on horseback, with unsheathed sword, trampling many under foot, and causing the rest to flee in terror. That military valor of Fray Agustín is not to be wondered at; for there are many examples of priests in Holy Writ who fought like captains; and, in our España, many archbishops and bishops have performed great exploits, opposing themselves, clad in steel armor, in the field of battle to the barbarity of the enemies of the faith; and our religious opposed the Mahometans, because he was defending those whom he had converted to the law of God.

Even the early Jesuit historian Father Francisco Combés in *Historia de Mindanao y Joló* [History of Mindanao and Jolo] had only good words for the Recollect missionary: “Without owing 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 renown and he is known in the Philippines as *El Padre Capitán*.”⁸⁶

Father Jacinto de San Fulgencio

This indefatigable missionary was born in Concentaina, Valencia, Spain. Father Jacinto de San Fulgencio professed the religious vows at the Recollect convent in Valencia in 1614. He joined the fourth mission of twelve Recollects to the Philippines who reached our shores in 1620. One of the pioneering eight missionaries in eastern Mindanao, he devoted his time to the conversion of non-believers with best results. Father Jacinto was named prior of Bacoag, Higaquit, Butuan and Tandag. He established Recollect residences in Caraga, three of which were along the banks of Butuan River. The Christian population grew to over 20,000 souls during his time.

Father Jacinto contributed a great deal in the pacification of the Caraga rebels who rose in arms against Spanish rule in 1631. He negotiated the peace treaty with the remontados of Tandag in 1635, for which he was commended by the Spanish commanding officer, and thereafter Father Jacinto risked his life many times. To Binalbagan and adjoining settlements in Negros Island, he was sent in 1632 as prior and missionary for three years and catechized over 6,000 people. A very exemplary religious, Father Jacinto passed away in the Recoletos convent of Intramuros, Manila, towards 1653.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ SÁDABA, 82.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

Father Valero de San Agustín

Born in the Aragonese region of Teruel, Spain, Fr. Valero de San Agustín (1732-1788) arrived in Manila with fifty Recollect missionaries in 1756. He was ordained as priest in the colonial capital in 1759. He spent half of his lifetime in the Mindanao parishes of Cagayan, Surigao, Tandag and Cantilan. He was named vicar provincial of Caraga (1770-1773, 1785-1788). In the noble tradition of Padre Capitán, he heroically defended the Christian settlements from the Moro terror. In 1766, by words and by example he exhorted the faithful against the protracted Moro siege of Tandag and helped the *alcalde mayor* in the victorious military counter-attack against the besieging forces.⁸⁸ At one time, he was left alone for three years to take care of the extensive province of Caraga. Because of his affable and pleasant character, Father Valero acted as an “ecclesiastical judge,” an “angel of peace” between the feuding religious and public officials. He died in Cantilan in February 1788.

Father Francisco Jiménez de San Fermín

A native of Tudela, Navarre, Father Francisco Jiménez de San Fermín, saw the light of day on 10 April 1819. He joined the Recollect congregation when he pronounced the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience on 25 October 1840. He arrived in Manila in February 1842. Shortly after his priestly ordination in 1843, he was sent to Misamis as companion and in order to study the Visayan language. In 1845 he was installed as parish priest of Misamis. After twenty-one years in Misamis, he was assigned in 1864 to Iligan where he was curate until 1880. He retired to the Immaculate Conception convent of Cebu City and died on 20 May 1895 at age 76.⁸⁹

Father Ramón Zueco de San Joaquín

A prolific author and translator in Cebuano, Ramón Zueco (1828-1889) published works on 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-*

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 292-293.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 425.

española adaptada al sistema de Ollendorff (1890). Another missionary along the military tradition of *El Padre Capitán*, Ramón Zueco in 1876 led a successful punitive expedition composed of Spanish and Visayan troops against Moro lairs in Mindanao and Sulu.⁹⁰

Father Pascual Ibáñez de Santa Filomena

As newly appointed assistant priest en route to his Zamboanga parish in 1849, Fr. Pascual Ibanez (1821-1851) encountered Moro attackers in two vintas at sea and bravely repulsed them.⁹¹ He magnanimously showed charity by caring for hundreds of wounded Christians and Moros in the Balinguigui expedition. He was tasked by governor general Urbiztondo to lead a company of the 700-man expedition in twenty-one *barangayanes* that brought the war into the Moros' own backyard in February 1850. The Visayan-Spanish forces overcame Jolo with Father Pascual leading the assault against the fort of the Moro datu. Fatally wounded during the offensive, he died in early March 1851. He was a typical curate in a Mindanao or Visayan coastal parish who defended his flock against Moro piracies since time immemorial.⁹²

Post-Revolution Missionary Sallies

In the wake of the Philippine Revolution, there were so many personnel movements in the evangelization efforts. Having no official permanent appointment and being few in number, the Recollect ministers would simply go to a parish where they were most needed. The two Recollects Father Cipriano Chocarro and Father Pedro Jiménez returned to Misamis district to continue their evangelization tasks.⁹³ They left their convent in Manila on 4 October 1901 and headed for Jiménez. Amid the generally cold reception in almost all the former Recollect parishes, little by little the two religious gained the sympathy and good will of their former parishioners. Thanks, however, to an American officer who received them with respect and kindness and gave them every support. The nemesis then was the local leader or town executive with schismatic Aglipayan beliefs.

⁹⁰See page 174, Chapter 10 (*Augustinian Recollect Icons*) of this book.

⁹¹SÁDABA, 441-443.

⁹²See page 171, Chapter 10 (*Augustinian Recollect Icons*) of this book.

⁹³ L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* I, 321.

Father Chocarro stayed for a while at Jiménez, while taking care of Aloran. Father Pedro Jiménez later took charge of Aloran himself, but he made frequent visits to Oroquieta. Soon he was joined by Father Bernardo Araiz who was put in charge of Aloran in 1906. After his initial assignment in Jimenez, Father Cipriano Chocarro transferred to Tudela. Father Chocarro likewise visited Misamis and Loculan on a regular basis. Father José Abad joined the two confreres and originally fixed his residence at Aloran but he was requested by the *presidente municipal* to move to Jimenez.

As replacements, Father Juan Ruiz, a long-time curate of Iligan, Initao and María Cristina, and Father Victoriano Tarazona joined the ministers of Misamis. The former resided at Oroquieta in 1906; the latter took over Misamis parish in 1912. Father Jiménez had gone to work in Anda, Bohol, in 1904. Father Chocarro was ordered to return to Spain and joined the new Province of Santo Tomas de Villanueva. After a sojourn of six years in Aloran and two years in Loculan, Father Araiz moved to Guindulman, Bohol (1914). Father Juan Ruiz was assigned to Bacong, Negros Oriental and by 1910 was in Manila where he passed away.

A veteran parish priest of Negros and Siquijor, Father Andrés Ferrero Amatriaín de la Sagrada Familia replaced Father Araiz who was at Loculan before he traveled to Anda, Bohol. Father Tarazona was shortly after dispatched to Negros. He was at the helm of the parish of Dumaguete from 1914 to 1920. In 1918, Father José Abad fell seriously ill in Jimenez and was constrained to go back to the colonial capital where in 1919 he joined his Maker at the Recoletos convent in the walled city of Manila.

The last Augustinian Recollect missionary of Mindanao in the 20th century was Father Andrés Ferrero Amatriaín. He served Misamis and Kolambugan. His last parish was Loculan which he left in mid-1919.⁹⁴ He had received a letter from his superiors who ordered him to return to Manila and cede the parish to the Jesuit of Iligan. That ended the sojourn of the last Spanish Recollect in Mindanao.

Conclusion

Pedro Corro, author of a compendium of the history of the Augustinian Recollect Order (1930), once declared not without pride: “Perhaps the most glorious page [in the history] of the Recollect

⁹⁴ Miguel AVELLANEDA. *Continuación del P. Sádaba o Segunda parte del “Catálogo de los religiosos de al Orden de Agustinos Recoletos (1906-1936)* (Rome 1938) 134.

missionaries in the Philippines is the conquest of Mindanao.”⁹⁵ What the Recollect missionaries constructed—oftentimes at no expense of the State—such as churches, belfries, forts, bulwarks, roads and bridges with only the sweat and the anxieties, the hard work and complete zeal of its parish priests, coupled with the cooperation and personal service of their Christian communities, now remain mute witness of their evangelization endeavor. Christians today can only imagine the great sacrifices and untold deprivations that parishioners and Recollect missionaries hand-in-hand underwent in order to erect these stone relics in Jimenez, Camiguin, Cagayan de Oro, in the past for themselves and for those who would come after them. These are feats that shall be etched indelibly in every heart and mind of today’s Christian and forever be remembered by the next generations of Christian believers.

Paraphrasing what Recollect historian and former Sierra Leone missionary, René F. Paglinawan, once wrote about another Philippine mission territory, we can likewise declare⁹⁶:

What did the Recollects give to Mindanao and what did Mindanao give in return to the Recollects? [...] Mindanao gave much to the Recollects in the Philippines in particular and the whole Order in general. If gratitude is not the only narrower kind you feel when you receive something, but the larger kind when you are able to give something, then by giving Mindanao some of its best friars, missionaries *El Padre Capitán*, Pascual Ibáñez, Juan de San Nicolás, Valero de San Agustín, Francisco Jiménez, Ramón Zueco, José Abad, to name only a few of its rich history, Mindanao brought out the best from its mission heralds. The lay leaders, catechists, *fiscales*, teachers and simple faithful in Mindanao, through the centuries, have also given our missionaries lasting lessons in fidelity, generosity and gratitude.

Some Mindanaoans are also giving back to the Order by becoming one of its own, like Victor Leonar Lluh (Iligan City), Melquiades Modequillo (Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte), Walthrode Conde (Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte), Bernabe Dosdos (Margosatubig, Zamboanga del Sur), Raul Buhay (San Miguel, Surigao del Sur), Rouel Sia (Ozamiz City), Ferdinand Fornilos (Malaybalay City),

⁹⁵CORRO, 189.

⁹⁶René F. PAGLINAWAN, *The Recollects and Palawan*, in *The Recoletos Observer*, vol. 7, no. 3 (July-September 2006) 31.

José Ernil Almayo (Banga, South Cotabato), Joel Dequilla (Banga, South Cotabato), Russel Lapidez (Koronadal City), Bro. Jonathan Jamero (Noralá, South Cotabato), Bro. Teodulo Hayahay (San Miguel, Surigao del Sur), and simple professed religious William Cordero, Jr. (Banga, South Cotabato).

The Spanish adage “*Amor con amor se paga*” lives on. Indeed, love begets love, love reciprocates.

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Augustinian Recollect Contributions to the Church History and Cultural Patrimony of Palawan¹

Understanding our past determines actively our ability to understand the present. So how do we sift truth from belief? How do we write our own histories personally or culturally and thereby define ourselves? How do we penetrate years, centuries of historical distortion to find original truth?

Dr. Robert Langdon in the film *Da Vinci Code*

The past is a source of knowledge, and the future is a source of hope. Love of the past implies faith in the future.

Dr. Stephen E. Ambrose (1936-2002),
American historian and biographer

Prologue: Not Merely natural beauty

The international travel guide *Lonely Planet* published in the net its “Best in Travel” lists where Palawan landed at 9th place in the “Best Value Travel Destinations for 2014” list. The list consists of such awesome and paradise-like choice destinations as Italy, Greece, Portugal, Nicaragua, India and Fiji, where, as the website puts it, “your wallet will smile at the memories for years to come.” It counsels everyone: “When times are tight we suggest you travel more, not less – but pick

¹Reprinted from *Philippine Social Science Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1 (July-December 2018) 81-96.

carefully” and, yes, Palawan is one of such few picks. *Lonely Planet’s* Tom Hall gives us a great review of this Nature-blest destination on 28 October 2013:

Jungle rivers, limestone cliffs and awesome beaches – Palawan’s no secret, but it certainly rewards those who visit. This mix, combined with stand-out attractions such as Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park and the Bacuit Archipelago (all available at a competitive price), makes it a great-value pick for old Asia hands and novices alike. A journey on from Palawan leads to the Calamian Islands where apparently Alex Garland saw the strip of sand that inspired *The Beach*. Watch out for the May to October monsoon: it brings heavy rain, usually in the afternoon.²

Palawan in the Eyes of the Augustinian Recollects

Over three decades ago I researched for an article as mandated by former Cuyo missionary and at that time vicar provincial Padre Jesús Sobejano. The paper was to be read at a postprandial celebration of Palawan Bishop Gregorio Espiga’s silver jubilee at San Sebastian College Manila on 10 September 1980. This former mission territory of the Augustinian Recollect Order had brought about a famous apothegm: *De Palawan al Cielo*, From Palawan to Heaven. That was the title of my talk understandably aborted because of the ruckus and din caused by the clash of hundreds of plates, spoons and forks as well as the celebratory conversations and jubilant laughter.

Palawan was truly many things to many Augustinian Recollect priests and brothers. Indeed, one of the favorite ones was to affirm that Palawan was a stepping to heaven. I wrote some recent additions:

The annals of the evangelization of Palawan are etched in blood and sweat, in tears and fears. An archipelago in itself with 1,769 islands with a total land area of 14,745 sq. kms., Palawan truly posed a great challenge to some 200 Augustinian Recollect missionaries who labored for 365 years in its frontier

² “*Lonely Planet’s best value travel destinations for 2014*,” in <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/travel-tips-and-articles/lonely-planets-best-value-travel-destinations-for-2014>. Retrieved 2 November 2013.

mission stations from 1623 to 1987.³ The barely accessible towns—stemming from lack of road infrastructures—and island towns together with untold hazards of hopping from island to island through shark-infested waters were familiar to both missionaries and inhabitants whether these be Cuyunin, Agutaynon, Tagbanua, Ilocano, Visayan or Tagalog.

The great havoc of malarial *Anopheles* was since time immemorial a singular cause of distress and dread for both dwellers and missionaries of yore of these western Philippine frontier lands. Only a handful of Recollect priests were spared from the dreaded tropical malady. Even the founding missionary of Puerto Princesa City, first penal colony chaplain, first military chaplain in Palawan—Saint Ezekiel Moreno de la Virgen del Rosario (1848-1906)—had a critical bout with malaria that almost cost him his dear life. He was constrained to leave the new colony for Manila, thus ending his ten-month sojourn in Inagawan, Aborlan and Puerto Princesa.

The biggest thorn and constant source of alarm for both missionary and native in Agutaya, Cuyo, Linapacan, Dumarán, Taytay, Busuanga, Culion and other Calamianes islands and islets, was the seemingly endless series of ruthless Moro slave-trading and raiding expeditions against coastal towns and settlements from the 17th till mid-19th century.

For some Recollects, Calamianes is synonymous—aside from rhyming perfectly—with the Castilian term *calamidades* [calamities, disasters] that included strong typhoons, monsoon rains, Moro assaults, treacherous gigantic waves. According to Father Federico de la Rosa, OAR, secretary of Bishop Gregorio I. Espiga, the myriad trials, fatigues, martyrdoms and deaths concomitant to their evangelization tasks have given

³In a memorandum of agreement signed by Bishop Pedro Arigo and Prior Provincial Fr. Lauro Larlar, the Augustinian Recollects returned in 2005 to the future parish of Inagawan of the Apostolic Vicariate of Puerto Princesa as well as their assignment in 2008 in Casian Island of the Apostolic Vicariate of Taytay.

rise to a familiar Recollect phrase: *De Palawan al cielo*, from Palawan to Heaven.⁴

In the past, Palawan with its far-flung parishes and secluded missions was likewise deemed as a fitting place of exile, a lonely nook in abject isolation and silence, for those who had committed violations of the monastic vows. It was an appropriate place to perpetually meditate on the Four Last Things, an extended hermitage of a never-ending spiritual retreat, far from the madding crowd, sadly bereft of community life with confreres in religion.

Now everything has changed. Now Palawan is a major training ground of youthful newly-ordained Augustinian Recollect priests under the wise guidance of mature confreres. These senior Recollect confreres might have had their rigorous missionary experiences and training in Zambales and in Sierra Leone in West Africa.

Recollect Evangelization in Cuyo and the Calamianes

On 27 August 1622, Bishop Pedro de Arce (†1645) of the Diocese of the Most Holy Name of Jesus of Cebu handed the spiritual administration of Cuyo and the Calamianes, which belonged to his vast jurisdiction, over to Father Andrés del Espíritu Santo, vicar provincial of the Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines. The mission station had been vacated by its parish priest, Father Juan de Santa Cruz of the diocesan clergy. We do not know the length of stay of the last secular priest. Upon approval of the episcopal cession of Cuyo and the Calamianes by the governor general, the Recollect vicar provincial was to send “the competent and necessary ministers [...] to whom commission and jurisdiction have been given in order to administer the holy sacraments of the Church by teaching them all and preaching to them the holy Gospel.”⁵

In behalf of the Spanish monarch and by virtue of the Royal Patronage, Don Alonso Fajardo de Entenza, governor general in

⁴Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS. *From Palawan to Heaven*. 375th Anniversary of the Evangelization of Palawan, Cuyo and Calamianes, in *The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines. Hagiography and History* (Quezon City 2001) 125-134.

⁵Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas* (Manila 1925) vol. 1, 352-353; Patricio MARCELLÁN, *La Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas* (Manila 1879) 171.

1618-1624, confirmed on 23 January 1623 the decree of Cebu Bishop Pedro de Arce that granted the spiritual administration of Cuyo and the Calamianes to the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollects.⁶ Salaries and stipends for the Augustinian Recollect missionaries who were mandated to teach the natives Christian doctrine, preach to them the Gospel of Christ and administer the sacraments of the Holy Mother Church, were to be shouldered by the colonial coffers. The colonial government of Manila was mandated as well to fully support the material necessities for divine worship.

The pioneering four Recollect missionaries were the superior Father Juan de Santo Tomás (†1631), Father Francisco de San Nicolás (1590-1652), Father Diego de Santa Ana (1599-1652) and Brother Francisco de la Madre de Dios (†1638).⁷ In late January 1623,⁸ they landed at Cuyo which was described as “a very fertile land, suited for all kinds of crops, with an abundance of animals and edibles, endowed with a wonderful temperature, with lovely and calm skies.”⁹

The inhabitants of Cuyo showed a favorable disposition towards the Recollect missionaries and very soon accepted the Christian religion without much difficulty. Two thousand inhabitants were shortly after converted to Christianity in Cuyo. Their natural docility, inherent religiosity, stimulated further by the zeal of Spanish ministers of the Gospel of Christ, prepared the natives for the Catholic teachings.

In a span of a few months, the Augustinian Recollect missionaries had travelled to the main islands of the Calamianes and preached the Word of God in those far-flung areas. The settlements and much later towns with their churches and convents subsequently created by the pioneering ministers of Jesus Christ were Barbacán, Dumarán, Linapacan and Busuanga. They had much earlier established the towns of Agutaya and Taytay, which later on served as the base for missionary trips to Taytay and Paragua in the mainland.¹⁰

⁶*Sinopsis histórica*, 354.

⁷As regards the number of the first Recollects, we follow Angel Martínez Cuesta's *Historia de los Agustinos Recoletos* (Madrid 1995) (vol. 1, p. 379) and Licinio Ruiz's *Sinopsis histórica* whose frequently cited source could be José de la Concepción's *Reseña histórica* (1750); cf. p. 354. Marcellán erroneously claimed there were five Recollect pioneers—all unnamed except for the prior Father Juan de Santo Tomás—in his 1879 book, cf. 173.

⁸Angel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia* I, 379.

⁹MARCELLÁN, 173.

¹⁰*Sinopsis histórica*, 356.

Cuyo, cradle of Christianity

The first Recollects observed that the early inhabitants of Cuyo and the Calamianes offered sacrifices to the moon through shamans called *mangalog* in order to obtain healing of ill relatives and assistance at the time of death. They also sought the services of priestesses called *babaylanas* who rendered worship to various deities and spirits. The natives did not have any social or political life at all. They lived in complete freedom, scattered in various areas, or in the mountain fastness and forests without forming a single community.

It was further observed that the Cuyonins regularly waged war against one another but, on the whole, they were especially scared of the ruthless Moro slave-traders and foreign enemy whom they dared not engage in warfare.¹¹ At the unexpected arrival of foreign or Moro invading forces which composed of several caracoas and hundreds of warriors, the inhabitants of Cuyo merely rushed to the safety of the mountains. Those left behind in the scattered settlements had to fend for themselves, or they were hauled off as slaves to Mindanao and Sulu or they turned into victims of kidnap for future ransom.

The island of Cuyo had a regular missionary even when the colonial government in Manila ordered the pull-out of the garrison and European soldiers from the Calamianes towns and forts for fear of a massive invasion by the Moros. When the settlements were created into towns or parishes, a Recollect parish priest had already fixed his residence always in Cuyo.¹² They had eventually formed Christian community, attentively learned the basic Christian prayers, eagerly observed Catholic rites, and gradually did away with their indigenous animistic customs. A Recollect writer poses this question:

Which came first the fort or the church of Cuyo?
What attracts the tourists these days is the fort, an impressive opus of engineering and witness of an eventful history that can tickle the visitor's imagination. But the fort would not have been set up if not for religious reasons, and in the final analysis, in the service of the church. And at present, it is but a [seeming worthless] relic of the past, while the church continues to be seat of the parish of Saint Augustine, now belonging to the Apostolic Vicariate of Taytay, created in 2002. How

¹¹ MARCELLÁN, 172.

¹²MARCELLÁN, 173.

true does it is in our opinion what Father Jarauta said in 1931:

The church is old, quite well-preserved, and it's surrounded by a bulwark or wall of cut stones, constructed by constructed by our missionaries for the defense against the attacks carried out by the Moros.¹³

In his 2008 historical study, the Recollect author Father Pablo Panedas observes that there is a small lateral door that leads to what is called *casamata* in the front rampart and towards the interior of the fort. That existent door is crowned with an arch connecting directly to the church from where one goes to the *kuta* through another wide door. In not so distant past, the missionaries who served Cuyo and the Calamianes Islands had come with such amusing comments considering the church as the only one in the world when one could enter ordinarily with a car. The stone fort is well-preserved simply because the clergy and parishioners still use the church edifice inside the ramparts, and the convent as well until recently.

It is public knowledge that uninhabited structures like the Recollect stone forts, ruined churches, cemeteries and belfries have always been invaded by thickets and unstoppable vegetation. The growing forest usually enveloped the structures in no time. Hence the apostolic prefect of Palawan in 1904-1936 Msgr. Victoriano Román used to shell out the yearly of US \$ 10.00 to pay for the maintenance of the Fort of Taytay. The missionaries did the same in Cuyo. It is no wonder that the abandoned colonial edifices can be viewed presently in their ancient grandeur and majesty only in ecclesiastical archives.¹⁴

Saint Augustine Parish Church of Cuyo

The parochial church of Cuyo is as old as the fort, having been constructed by Father Juan de San Severo during his sojourn of nine years in the island (1686-1695). The distant belfry can be mistaken for a control tower of an airport. It was constructed on one of the ramparts during the reconstruction carried out in 1827. Observers affirm that interior of the church is rough albeit impressive. It is not simply due to the walls which are more than a meter thick. Every visitor is impressed by the simplicity and bareness of the church interior. It is bereft of

¹³Pablo PANEDAS, *Las Iglesias recoletas hoy en Filipinas*, in *Recollectio* 31-32 (2008-2009) 340; JARAUTA, 74.

¹⁴PANEDAS, 341.

lateral chapels, retables or any other decor. There are a few holy icons. In the 1990s one could view the original tiles of the floor. The altar is on its highly attractive silvery splendor, a donation of the Ponce de León family. Such an impression all the more highlights the disproportionate height, needed in order to allow fenestration, and the absence of a ceiling providing us with an open view of the roof.

The commemorative marker in the facade informs the visitor that the fort of Cuyo was—deservedly—declared in 1939 as a National Historical Landmark.

Moro Raids against Christian Calamianes missions

It was the unhappy lot of the Augustinian Recollects who arrived in Manila in May 1606 to be assigned to far-flung, isolated and the most difficult areas of evangelization, “exposed to the raid and plunder by their neighbors, the Moros.

Still and all, they earned the acclaim from the archbishop of Manila who wrote the Spanish monarch in 1751: “even though they were the last workers in the tasks [...] they merited the daily wage as the first workers compensating their lateness though not of their doing with the unceasing zeal in their efforts for the increase of Christian communities, without sparing any peril at sea and the great persecution of the adjoining Moros.”¹⁵ A little over a decade after their arrival in Cuyo and the Calamianes as well as in Mindanao, the Moro pillage of Christian missions under the Recollects began. With respect to the destruction, pillage, captivity and mayhem, the Recollect contemporary chronicler Father José de la Concepción remarked: “In a brief period of time, the [Moros] left the Province [referring to Calamianes and Paragua] without churches, with population centers, with icons, with sacred vessels and without ministers.”¹⁶ Saint Nicholas Province could bear any more tragic events and its terrible consequences.

In 1659, they returned their missions to the bishop of Cebu. But in 1676, Calamianes was entrusted to them once more after being promised with forts, arms and ammunitions. A fort was constructed in 1719 in Taytay which was to defend an land area of more than 440 kilometers. The Moro havoc continued unabated in Palawan, Cuyo and

¹⁵José Luis SÁENZ, *Invasiones de los moros filipinos en los ministerios agustinos recoletos a mediados del siglo xviii: sus repercusiones en la vida social y religiosa de las misiones*, in BPSN 74 (1985) 10.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 11.

Calamianes, in 1730 thereafter, reaching as far as Romblon, Tablas and Mindoro. The prior provincial reported that Saint Nicholas Province lost “more than 10,000 souls—dead and captive—in the duration of the Moro raids.

In 1752, the Moro hostilities spread to Caraga, Tandag, Siargao, Butuan even to the Jesuit-controlled island of Leyte. They sacked the Recollect missions of Mindoro, Burias, Ticao, Masbate, Romblon, Banton, Tablas, Sibuyan and Simara.¹⁷ They even reached Luzon from Mariveles and Zambales to Sual in Pangasinan. For lack of any mountain refuge, a considerable number of Christian believers in the small islands fled to the safety of Luzon, Panay and Leyte. Despite their protracted siege, the raiders failed to capture the capital of Romblon where priests and parishioners were armed to the teeth, equipped with ammunitions and food provisions and defended by cannons, forts and ramparts.¹⁸

By 1753, the Christian communities in the Calamianes were defended by forts and bulwarks. In Cuyo, Agutaya and Culion, the parishioners and their ministers had to stay within the safety of their forts, but “the fields, fruit trees and livestock” were left for the Moros to grab everything to their hearts’ content. In 1754, Taytay was raided and over a hundred were taken captive. Next stop was Calatan, an old parish near Culion, which was razed to the ground.

In eastern Mindanao, in a 1755 report to the Recollect vicar general, the provincial declared that over five thousand Christians were either killed or captured. This figure did not include the great number of non-Christian casualties in the mountain regions of Caraga. In the 1623-1641 period, six Recollects were slain; one religious was chopped to pieces. In the 1652-1776, thirteen religious were seized: five were murdered, two perished in captivity, five were ransomed, and one was declared missing, but presumed dead.¹⁹ The long siege brought about tensions, hunger and fear. Houses and harvests set afire. Fruit trees cut down. The captives turned to slaves and in the Celebes were sold to the Dutch. Maidens and married women were forced to become concubines of the Moros in Mindanao and Sulu. Some inhabitants of Calamianes and those towns near Taytay forged a pact with the Moros and became their vassals and committed themselves to pay the corresponding tribute.²⁰

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 15-17.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 19. See footnote 47.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

Since time immemorial, the Recollect response to the Moro raids was to construct forts, bulwarks, watchtowers and other defenses in their spiritual jurisdiction, with the willing assistance by their parishioners. Thus, fortifications were erected in Siargao, Caraga, Surigao, Catarman in Camiguin, San Jacinto, Romblon, Cuyo, Taytay, Agutaya and Culion. Such gigantic effort produced palpable results: the raids gradually lessened. Vigilance was always the order of the day. The people increasingly stood their ground and defended themselves courageously.

The religious minister had also to teach his people how to handle arms, like cannons and arquebuses. He had to devote his precious time to constructing fortifications, providing cannons, guns and gunpowder and assign sentinels day and night. Most of all, he had to preach the Word of God, to administer the sacraments of the Church, to be a witness of the salvific mission of Christ which after all constituted the primary duties of priesthood and religious vocation. After the pillage, the minister had to rebuild the temple of God, convent and other public edifices. He had to console the grieving families. Thus, here we find the missionary zeal at its best. In 1760, the prior provincial Juan de la Concepción once wrote the monarch in Spain about the spiritual conquest of Paragua [Palawan] with its “numerous multitude of over 40,000 souls, with a beautiful readiness to receive baptism” but the Recollect prelate added that it was necessary to free them first from the scourge of the Moros from Jolo.²¹

Two hundred years after, in 1872, Saint Ezekiel Moreno witnessed for himself the Palaweños’ inherent “dread for Joloans,” even as he forewarned future Recollect workers in the Lord’s vineyard about the harsh conditions in Palawan. In his letter to the prior provincial in Manila on 12 September 1872, the Recollect missionary wrote about this traditional fear:

I believe I have explained to your reverence about the conditions where one shall find himself or the missionaries who may go there shall find themselves. They have to suffer consequent deprivations from living among non-believers and the great labors of catechizing. In the formation of towns, it behooves to suffer all these, as it well-known. Likewise the greatest inconvenience are

²¹*Ibid.*, 32.

the caracoas from Jolo, although there have not been too many [Joloans], for whom the natives have a great dread.²²

The most beautiful pages of the mission history of the Augustinian in the Philippines were written at that time when pastor and parishioners forged their spiritual ties through those shockingly difficult periods of history they underwent together, confronting the common archenemy of Christian beliefs and morals, of their social and spiritual lives, and coming out strong and steadfast in their faith in Christ and in His Church even to these days.

Recollect Martyrs of the Calamianes

Since the early age of Christian persecution in the Roman Empire, it has been a traditional teaching that the blood of martyrs is the seed of new Christians.²³ The Apostles suffered martyrdom in their zeal to spread the Word of Christ. There was even a time in the ancient period of Church History when Christians eagerly and fearlessly sought the palm of martyrdom. The shedding of the martyr's blood was also a reality in the conversion of the New World. This was true as well in the Calamianes at the hands of Moro raiding forces. The Augustinian Recollects of yore had their fair share of sacrifice and martyrdom in their task of evangelization in those Christian communities widely scattered in remote islands.

So that the memory of their sacrifices shall be not erased from the memory of present-day Christians, we now recall their names and circumstances of their deaths. There was a crystal-clear evidence of hatred of the Christian faith on the part of those executioners who made fun of the ministers of Christ and desecrated and set their churches and convents afire and carted off with the sacred vessels and icons of the Catholic religion.

Father Francisco de Jesús María, OAR

The Recollect prior of Cuyo was captured in 1637 by Tagal, Sultan Kudarat's brother. Father Francisco de Jesús María was killed

²²Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA [ed.]. *San Ezequiel Moreno. Obras completas*, vol. 1 (Madrid 2005) 132; Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *Bishop Ezekiel Moreno, An Augustinian Recollect Saint Among Filipinos* (Quezon City) 61.

²³MARCELLÁN, 184-185.

during the skirmish between at sea between Spanish troops and Tagal's Moro forces.²⁴ Sultan Kudarat had led an armada of caracoas across the Calamianes, seizing the inhabitants, burning towns and robbing what they could. In Cuyo, the Moro salve-traders plundered the town, raided the convent, desecrated the chalices for the Mass and other sacred vessels and candleholders, committed all kinds of sacrilege against the revered Christian icons and paintings, by flaunting proudly their disdainful acts and chopping off the hands and feet of the Crucified Christ.

The Cuyonons fled to the safety of the mountains leaving the Recollect parish priest alone. The missionary was seized immediately and taken captive by the Moros. The Moro caracoas encountered the Spanish boats in the Calamianes. In the ensuing sea battle, the Recollect was cut down by friendly fire. Father Francisco de Jesús María agonizingly perished from his serious wounds, but not without the prior conversion of Tagal and four Moro fighters to Christianity.²⁵

Father Juan de San Nicolás, OAR

Two Recollect missionaries in the brave defense of their flock in Calamianes were martyred in the same year 1637. In 1636, both were missionaries of Linapacan where they were seized by Sultan Kudarat and his Moro raiders and later taken as captives to Basilan. When the Spanish punitive expeditionary troops started landing at Lamitan to recapture the two Augustinian Recollect priests in 1637, the furious sultan at once ordered Father Juan de San Nicolás beheaded and Father Alonso de San Agustín stabbed to death.²⁶

Father Juan de San Nicolás was born in Madrid in whose Recollect convent he professed the three evangelical counsels in 1613. He volunteered for the Philippine missions. After his assignment as prior of Bolinao in what is now Western Pangasinan, he was named prior of Linapacan in 1635. The following year Sultan Kudarat captured him and took him to his sultanate where the captive missionary was subjected to merciless insults, blows and torture and finally received the crown of martyrdom in 1637.

²⁴Francisco 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) 67.

²⁵MARCELLÁN 186-187.

²⁶SÁDABA, 62.

Father Alonso de San Agustín, OAR

Father Alonso de San Agustín was from Cádiz, Spain. He entered the Recollect convent in Madrid where he professed the three evangelical counsels in 1613. He volunteered for the Philippine missions in 1622. He was sent to the Calamianes as companion of Father Juan de San Nicolás and worked for the conversion of the residents for almost a year. He had just put on the Mass vestments when the Moros seized him. They invaders forthwith stripped him naked and subjected him to taunts, insults and bodily torments and then took him to Mindanao as captive for nine months. He was so emaciated and so ill that when the Spanish rescuing forces set him free him Father Alonso de San Agustín did not survive long after receiving the last sacraments.²⁷

In 1637, the process to declare the martyrdom of the three Recollect Fathers Francisco, Juan and Alonso was opened in Manila. Archbishop Fernando Guerrero initiated the documentation process for their possible beatification as martyrs of the faith. The witnesses declared they were all martyred *in odium fidei*, in hatred of the Faith. All those who perished *in odium fidei* were deemed “Venerable” in the Father Francisco Sádaba’s catalogue of Augustinian Recollects which saw print in 1906.

Brother Francisco de la Madre de Dios, OAR

Another native of Cádiz, Spain, Francisco de Guzmán entered the convent in Mexico as a young man and donned the Recollect habit. He chose his religious appellation—Francisco de la Madre de Dios—when he professed the monastic vows as a religious brother in San Nicolás Covent in Intramuros, Manila, in October 1622. By example and exhortations, he performed various evangelization tasks of the first missionaries in Cuyo and staunchly defended the Christian faith and morals. “The zeal for the honor and glory of God,” writes the biographer Francisco Sádaba, “moved [Brother Francisco] to reproach with great vehemence the *aniterías* or superstitions he had observed among the inhabitants; and this occasioned his death.”²⁸

One resident remained obstinate in his errors, vices and superstitious practices and wanted to free himself from the Recollect brother’s strong rebuke. He was a *sangle*y, Chinese merchant. One day in 1638, the *sangle*y took a pickaxe used for breaking rocks, approached the defenseless friar and struck him in the head, splitting his head into

²⁷MARCELLÁN, 190.

²⁸SÁDABA, 77-78.

two and scattering the brains on the ground. The religious Brother Francisco de la Madre de Dios went down in history as the proto-martyr of Cuyo.

Father Francisco de Santa Mónica, OAR

A native of the Spanish city of Ciudad Rodrigo, Francisco Enríquez travelled to Manila as a layman. He asked for the religious habit from the first Recollect batch missionaries and professed the evangelical counsels in 1607 in San Nicolás convent in Intramuros. After his various assignments in Luzon, in 1629, he was dispatched to Cuyo as prior and worked zealously for the salvation of souls there. He was appointed prior in their mission at Diuail in Busuanga Island where he met his martyrdom at the hands of the Moro invading warriors.

In 1638, he was deeply engrossed in mental prayer at the choir loft of the divine temple of Diuail when he was surrounded all of a sudden by Moros who mercilessly pierced him with spear thrusts. Father Francisco de Santa Mónica died very soon after “giving thanks to God for having granting the joy of dying while preaching His holy religion.” The Recollect chronicler reported that the Moro slave-traders went on to ransack and desecrate the church, took off with its sacred vessels and burned the friar missionary’s body.

Father Juan de San Antonio, OAR

A native of Mexico City, he joined the Recollect Congregation in San Nicolás convent in the Walled City of Manila in July 1639.²⁹ He was still a young religious when he was sent to Cuyo and showed his zeal in preaching for the conversion of non-believers. He was on the way to Romblon when the Moro Datu Achen captured the boat and all its passengers including the Mexican missionary.

A chronicler declared that Father Juan was held captive and subjected to cruel deprivations in prison. During his captivity, beautiful women were presented to him for marriage; properties and lands were likewise offered for him to live in comfort. Instead, the missionary rebuked the Moros for such wicked intentions and taught the pirates to obey God’s commandments. The Moros were burning with rage as they heard his preaching on Christian salvation to him. They then shackled him and subjected him to merciless blows. In the end, they forced the Recollect missionary to row the Moro boats, feeding him with scanty rice. He was further subjected to humiliations, nakedness,

²⁹SÁDABA, 553.

hunger and all kinds of torture until he passed away after four years of ruthless captivity, receiving his immortal crown of glory.³⁰

Father Antonio de San Agustín, OAR

Born of Spanish parents in Manila, Antonio de las Misas professed in their Intramuros convent in 1612 and took the religious appellation Antonio de San Agustín. He was an exemplary religious known for remarkable traits of a great leader. He was commissioned by Governor General Hurtado de Corcuera as missionary and captain of four hundred Zambal archers during the Sangley Revolt in 1639-1640. The Spanish military officers praised the leadership and valor of the Filipino friar who was the only one obeyed by the Zambal warriors.

Father Antonio was appointed to many high positions in Saint Nicholas province including his last assignment as canonical visitor of the missions of the Calamianes. He was approaching Lubang Island, north of Mindoro, when the Moros caught him and, as declared by the Jesuit historian Francisco Combés, Father Antonio was later slain by spear thrusts *in odium fidei*. The Moros treated the 66-year-old Filipino missionary brutally and mocked at the *Virgen del Populo* icon found in his possession. The Moro pirates set the Recollect missionary's native companions free. The Filipino friar's martyrdom took place in 1658.³¹

More Spanish Recollect missionaries in Linapacan, Taytay and the Calamian Sea were seized in the seventeenth century and later slain by the Moros and earned the title of Venerable. Three missionaries deemed martyrs by Recollect tradition are Father Martín de la Ascensión from Vera de Plasencia, Father Antonio de Santa Ana and Father Manuel de Jesus y María from Alcarria. According to witnesses, the hands of Father Manuel de Jesús y María were cut off and his breviary was placed on them to the Moros' "great jeering, mockery and contempt."³²

Iconic Recollects' contributions to culture and heritage in Palawan

Father Juan de San Severo, OAR

This religious from Barcelona joined the tenth missionary expedition of the Augustinian Recollects from Spain by way of Mexico

³⁰ MARCELLÁN 191-192.

³¹ *Ibid.* 195; SÁDABA, 739-740.

³² MARCELLÁN, 192-193; 196-197

and arrived in the Philippines in August 1663.³³ He was put in charge of the ministries as prior of Bislig in 1668, Romblon in 1669, vice prior of Cagayan de Misamis in 1671, provincial secretary in 1672, prior of Tandag in Surigao in 1674, prior of Siargao in 1677, vice prior of Tandag in 1674, vice prior of Bislig in 1680, vice prior of Taytay 1683, vice prior of Cuyo in 1686, and reelected in 1689, vicar provincial of Calamianes in the same year, provincial visitor of Taytay and Tancon in 1691, vice prior of Cuyo in 1692, vice prior of Taytay and vocal prior of Mariveles in 1695. Once again in 1694, he was named Provincial visitor of Calamianes, Mangarin and Calavite.

The Fort of Cuyo whose construction expenses were shouldered by the Recollect Congregation was constructed under the direction of Father San Severo. The church and convent form part of the façade of the fort. The remaining sides form the four bulwarks of the fort. They constitute a perfect square that could accommodate all the inhabitants of the town. The repeated invasions of the Moros recommended the construction of this fort and others which produced admirable results for the defense of the towns in past epochs. Father San Severo passed away in 1697 according to the record of a private chapter on 29 January 1698 when a new religious was appointed to take his place in the parish administration.

Father Juan Juseu de la Virgen del Carmen, OAR³⁴

The Recollect priest was a native of Soria, Spain where he was born on 20 October 1819. He professed the vows on 22 October 1842. After his finished his theological studies in Manila, he was assigned to Cuyo on 28 June 1845 as companion of the parish priest. On 9 December 1847, he was appointed parish priest of Agutaya. On 10 January 1851 the superiors named him assistant priest of the parish priest of Himamaylan. In 1852 he was sent to Cagayan de Misamis which he served as parish priest for about a year. He was thereafter put in charge of the parish ministries of Isabela in Basilan (1853), Catmon in Cebu (1854) and Zamboanga (1868) where he passed away on 17 May of the same year 1868. It is put on the record that when he left the ministry in Isabela he was assigned to Negros Occidental and presented as parish priest of Sum-ag but this was only for short period of time because in the annual report of 1854 he was already parish priest of

³³SÁDADA, 109-110.

³⁴SÁDADA, 432.

Catmon. Father Juseu authored a *Gramática cuyona* when he was parish priest of Agutaya in 1847-1851.

Father Jerónimo de la Virgen de Montserrat, OAR³⁵

The Catalan religious was born in Baga of the Spanish province of Barcelona of the diocese of Solsona in 1744. He made his religious profession in the Convent of Santa Mónica in Barcelona on 16 January 1766. He arrived in Manila in July 1769. On 10 December 1770 he was assigned to Taytay where he studied and mastered the dialects of Palawan and Calamianes. According to the annual report of 1776, Father Jerónimo administered the parish of Pinagaioian in Mindanao. In his obituary, he was always assigned to Calamianes. If ever he had stayed in Mindanao, it must have been for a short time. In the intermediate chapter of 1778, we see him in Taytay as parish priest and vicar provincial. In 1802, he was elected prior of the San Nicolás Convent of the Walled City of Manila and in 1803 he became prior of San Sebastian Convent. After the triennium he was given the honor of ex-provincial with right to vote—proof of his merits he gained in the pastoral ministry and deep appreciation the prelates had for him. Very few have been the cases when religious of the Augustinian Recollection whose peculiar character has been humility were granted such honor. In February 1807 he was put at the helm of the convent in Manila. On 11 August of the same year 1807 he was named prior de San Sebastian convent where months later he died on 5 December of the same year.

Father Jerónimo de la Virgen de Monserrat wrote the *Vocabulario castellano-calamiano* which was written in the Convent of Saint Monica in the town and capital of Taytay, province of Calamianes. It was published in 1895. Wenceslao Retana who wrote the foreword of the book declared that it was the first Calamian dictionary.

Father Pedro Gibert de Santa Eulalia, OAR (1762-1843)

Father Pedro was born in 1763 in San Sadurní in Barcelona and donned the Recollect habit in 1782.³⁶ He joined the Recollect journey to Manila and arrived there in 1786. After his studies for the priesthood and sacerdotal ordination, the superiors assigned him to the Calamianes. Cuyo was his main field of evangelization tasks. Thus he stayed most of the time in Cuyo intermittently from 1791 to 1830. He was parish

³⁵SÁDADA, 336-337.

³⁶Sádaba, 345-347.

priest of Agutaya in 1788-1799. Then he was elected vice prior and novice master in 1799, prior of San Nicolás convent in 1800, and prior provincial for two terms in 1803 and 1821. He was on a canonical visit from Taytay to Culión when the Moros attacked and kidnapped Father Gibert and his secretary Father Salvador de San Luis Gonzaga. They were taken to Dumaran where negotiations for his ransom and release took place. The huge sum of 20,000 pesos was paid. Father Gibert was a prudent, learned and dedicated to study. He mastered the Cuyuno and published many books and devotionaries in the local dialect. At age 80, Father Gibert died at San Sebastian Convent in 1843.

Father Gibert wrote the *Himnos y oraciones* in Cuyunon to the praise of Jesus, Mary and Joseph and instruction for the prayer of the Holy Rosary. He gave advice for a good death and prayers for a devout reader. It was posthumously published in 1882. Another posthumous work printed in 1887 was *Doctrina cristiana o mga parangadien ng critianos ig lacted nga pagturo o casaysayan sa mga pono nga camatuodan, nga taqués maclamang yg tutumanén sa tauo, nga ma laiag pagpacon sa langit*. There was another version of *Mga pangadien sa mga cuyonong cristianos nga sinulat sa padre exprovincial.*, published in Manila in 1922. A booklet in Cuyunon with 32 pages by Father Gibert was *Lacted nga tocsoan nga vcasayodan sa pagradalan sa mnga cristianos*, printed in 1871.

Father Gibert left behind his thick manuscript collection called *Sermones varios en dialecto cuyono*. Surely, the considerate parish priest bequeathed it to the younger generation of Recollect missionaries in Cuyo Archipelago. He published his three sermons in Spanish on the Immaculate Conception (1802), Saint Andrew the Apostle (1805) and Saint Barbara in Manila (1802).

Ever an observant religious, the Recollect parish priest of Cuyo and Agutaya sent to the bishop of Cebu a long manuscript account on the superstitions of the inhabitants of the Calamianes, most specially the superstitious practices of the islanders of Cuyo. The *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino* published the Father Gibert's observations in its special issue for 4th Centennial of the Christianization of the Philippines in 1965 as *Supersticiones de los habitantes de Cuyo*, (Superstitions of the Inhabitants of Cuyo) twenty-three pages long, a great source for Palawan folklore and anthropological studies.³⁷

³⁷*Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino* 55 (1965) 279-302.

1. *Lacted nga tocsoan nga casayodan sa pagaradalan sa mga cristianos. Nga guinpaimprenta sa bisara nga cuyonon, sa Illmo. ig Rmo. Sr. D. Fr. Mariano Cuartero, Obispo. Manila 1871.*

2. *Mga Oracion sa pagdayao cay Jesús, Maria et José. Paghalad sa Santo Rosario, sanda anang mga excelencias. Pagdemdem sa mga nagaanac et beta sa pagbuñag, sa masaquiten nga intauan ig Santo Viatico. May sa mga magpacasal. Turumanen sa pagdangat isarang camatayen nga matadleng et ang iba mga sa cuyonong bisara. Manila 1909.*

3. *Mga parangadien nga cristianos ig lacted nga pacturo o casaisayan sa mga pono nga camatundan, nga taqués maelaman ig tutumamanen sa tauo, nga maliag magpacun sa langit. Manila. 1887.*

4. *Parangadien sa mga cuyonong cristianos. 3rd ed. Manila: 1922.*

Eduardo Abaurrea authored the *Novena sa mahimayaen nga Ama si San Agustin, patron sa dia nga banua sa quinayunong bisara* which was published in Manila in 1913.

A missionary in various parishes of Palawan for many years, Father Jose Francés had prepared an Agutaynin dictionary which he started during his assignment in Agutaya. He later continued it during his sojourn at San Sebastian Convent in Manila. We have not heard about the outcome of his trailblazing work.

Epilogue: The Recollects returned to Palawan in 2005

After a hiatus of eighteen years, the Order of Augustinian Recollects has returned to Palawan. The prior provincial of the Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno, Father Lauro Larlar, had requested the provincial secretary Father Larry Garces to accompany the all-Filipino batch of Augustinian Recollects of Father Louie Gabinete, then fresh from his Kamabai, Sierra Leone mission years, and religious brother Fray Teodulo “Dodong” Hayahay, fresh from his religious profession of the solemn vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, the historic return to the “Philippines’ last ecological frontier harboring vast tracts of tropical rainforest and a huge expanse of marine wilderness,” including rare and endangered species, seemed rather uneventful.

The glorious day was the 14th day of December in 2005. They took possession of the then chaplaincy of Our Lady of Mount Carmel at Inagawan, Puerto Princesa City. The first Recollects temporarily took up residence at the Home Economics building of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters' San Francisco Javier College in Narra.³⁸

Father Larry Garces, then provincial secretary and ex-officio provincial archivist, chronicled that arrival at Puerto Princesa—momentous at least for the historians. He wrote for posterity that it was partly a nostalgic retracing of the historic and eventful past of our forefathers and partly a gleeful return to the awaiting embraces of the faithful who continue to be hungering for the time and witness of the sacred ministers for the nourishment of their spiritual needs.

The first Recollects accordingly arrived through the smaller island of Cuyo even as early as 1622 [*sic*]. And from then on, a great tradition of Recollection ensured. Among the illustrious Recollects who came to the island of Palawan was Saint Ezekiel Moreno. They were builders and organizers of churches and cities. They were good preachers and evangelizers bringing the Good New to the farthest boundaries, and the innermost territories. We are indeed very fortunate that the last Recollects of the 80's left the island and its vast agricultural and coastal territories with impressive memories of hard work, religiosity and real care and concern for the flock. But that was the past—and yes, indeed, the glorious past.”³⁹

Bishop Leopoldo Tumalak, DD, military vicar general of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, declared on 19 August 2012 at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Puerto Princesa City:

How fortunate you are, people of Palawan. You have a saint who is willing to make miracles. And you have people around you to remind you of him. They are the Augustinian Recollect Fathers, the first missionaries

³⁸Jose Ernill ALMAYO (ed.) *Keeping the Fire Ablaze* (Quezon City 2009) 102.

³⁹Jose Fortunato “Larry” GARCES. *Destination: Palawan*, in *The Recoletos Observer*, vol. 6, no. 4 (October-December 2005) 21-24.

who came to your island. Their presence here—ten of them—in Palawan is the presence of San Ezekiel. Let us praise God for this privileged presence.

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The Augustinian Recollect Evangelization of the *Contracosta de Luzón* (1658-1704)

Prologue

Christianity was brought to the Philippines by priests and brothers of the religious orders from Spain. The immense task of conversion was commenced in 1565 by the first missionary order that arrived in these islands with *Adelantado* Miguel López de Legazpi: the Order of the Hermits of Saint Augustine or Calced Augustinians. Then the Order of Friars Minor or Franciscans arrived on 2 July 1578. These friars eventually took charge of the evangelization of Laguna, Quezon, Cavite, Bulacan and a huge part of Bicol Peninsula. The Jesuits followed in 1581 and the Dominicans in 1587. And finally came the thirteen Augustinian Recollects or Discalced Augustinians who arrived in Cebu on 12 May 1606.

The first Recollect missionaries reached Manila on 31 May 1606. Being the last of the major missionary orders in our country, the Recollects were given the most difficult portions in the vineyard of the Lord. They were given scarcely-populated, mostly isolated, hardly-accessible, very remote islands or uplands of Zambales (to which Bataan and Western Pangasinan then belonged), Cuyo, Calamianes, Caraga, Mindoro, Romblon, and Masbate.

Church historians are of one mind that: “The Augustinian Recollect apostolic field was doubtless the hardest, most risky and extremely inhospitable. A mere overview of the map shows that the Augustinian Recollects—the last to arrive in the Philippine missions—got to evangelize the remotest regions. All of them had earlier been

somewhat abandoned by the government—so alienated from Manila and with hundreds of kilometers between them, and very exposed to frequent raids by the Moros.”¹ In 1594, the mission territories had been distributed among the five religious orders, according to the royal order issued by Philip II. The people of the remaining regions were scattered in extensive areas. All of them therefore lacked regular spiritual services. Besides their population was very scarce and more dispersed than in other areas of the archipelago. The scarce population could not in any way support through stipend the missionaries’ sustenance. Their administration was most challenging and arduous.

A Dominican church historian acknowledged this exceptional character of the evangelization done by the Augustinian Recollects. Pablo Fernández has this to say on the Recollect territorial assignment:

To honor these truly self-denying religious, let it be said that it fell to their lot, in general, to minister to the poorest and more hazardous islands, and that they were able, at cost of much sacrifice, to keep them for Christ and for Spain. Their special glory lies in this, that they were able to overcome the sectaries of Islam, with the enthusiastic cooperation of their Filipino faithful and the dedication of their religious who lost their lives in the effort.²

The missionary’s tasks

The first endeavor of the early Spanish missionary was to gather the people scattered in fields, uplands and isolated places into a bigger *reducción* or settlement. The neo-converts were taught the rudiments of settled agriculture by the missionary. A church, rectory, belfry, streets, bridges, plaza, school buildings and roads connecting one *doctrina* to another were built under the supervision of the parish priest. A hardworking missionary went to the extent of constructing more infrastructure of the pueblo like the cemetery, jail, watchtower, fort and bulwark.

The primordial task of the minister of God was, as expected, to teach Christian doctrine to the people. He was to learn the language of the region where he was to evangelize. Among the consistent practices of the

¹Angel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los Agustinos Recoletos* vol. 1 (Madrid 1995) 367.

²Pablo FERNÁNDEZ, *History of the Catholic Church in the Philippines 1521-1898* (Manila 1981) 26.

missionary Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino of the Augustinian Recollect Order in the Philippines for over three centuries was the assignment of a newly ordained priest to a parish under the tutelage of a confrere proficient in the language. After a specific period of time the young missionary undertook a language proficiency examination before he was given a more or less pastoral assignment in another mission station or parish. Oftentimes, the newly-ordained ministers or those who just arrived from Mexico or Spain availed themselves of grammars and dictionaries written by Recollect confreres. *Sermonarios* or collections of sermons/homilies were likewise published to aid and guide the young minister in his preparation for preaching efficaciously the Word of God on Sundays, town fiestas and holy days.

A third task imposed on the missionary was to exert effort that the native population be shielded or protected from unjust treatment, abuses and exploitation by unscrupulous Christians and traders. A Jesuit church historian accurately observes that:

...The missionaries who lived and labored among the people were largely responsible for this improvement in the quality of life. It was under their guidance and direction that tribal warfare was eliminated, the practice of slavery—at least of chattel slavery—abandoned, and monogamous marriage established as the rule. By gathering scattered clan communities into townships, they effected the transition from a tribal to a political society.³

Contracosta during the Spanish Regime

To reach by sea or by land the Contracosta of Luzon during the days of Spain in her Asian colony both entailed a gigantic effort and heroic sacrifices. To undertake the journey by sea would take days. One had to sail down southeast along Bicol Peninsula, cross the San Bernardino Strait between Samar Island and Sorsogon, navigate up north to Catanduanes and Polillo Archipelago and find the Port of Lampon. Not unlike the Homeric odyssey eons ago! The maritime journey to the other side of Luzon and to the Port of Lampon that the missionary had to take was to travel the distance of one hundred and forty *leguas* [the equivalent of 780 km].

³Horacio DE LA COSTA, *The Priest in Philippine Life and Society: An Historical View*, in *The Filipino Clergy: Historical Studies and Future Perspectives* (Manila 1980) 9.

But there was a shorter route which was only twenty leguas [or 111 kilometers] cruising the large, then-navigable and idyllic Pasig River, climbing seemingly impregnable mountains and penetrating the apparently impenetrable jungles on horseback. The Augustinian Recollect historian Father Pedro de San Francisco de Asís, author of the fourth volume of *Historia general de los Religiosos Descalzos del Orden de los Hermitaños del gran Padre y Doctor de la Iglesia San Agustín*, describes for us the “short” route—but not less inaccessible:

Lapping the walls of Manila is a large river [Pasig River] which empties at that place into the sea. By it one ascends to the Lake of Bay, and on the opposite shore of that lake one finds the village of Siniloan [a town in Laguna, near Famy, Mabitac and Santa Maria]. Thence to the port of Lampon, which is located on the *Contracosta* of Manila, and comes to be as it were, inside of the arm, one need only pass the mountains of Daraëtan, and Caboan, which is a crossing of five or six leguas (28 to 33 km), but by ascending the river and crossing over the lake to Siniloan, and crossing the mountains of Daraëtan and Caboan there is scarce twenty leguas of distance (111 km).⁴

The first Franciscan missions in the Contracosta

Once again by the general chronicler of the Augustinian Recollect Order, we are informed that the Franciscan missionaries first spread the Good News of Christ in what was called *Contracosta de Luzón*, that is, the eastern shores of the opposite side of Manila Bay. Since 1588, the Franciscan Fray Estevan Ortiz and his confrere Fray Juan de Porras were destined to that jurisdiction which composed the districts of Baler, Binangonan and Casiguran. The fourth mission was Palanan way up north. The pueblos were composed of various villages, or mere “collections of huts.” Chroniclers of both religious orders affirmed that the first three—Baler, Binangonan and Casiguran—at first belonged to Mindoro.⁵

Fray Estevan Ortiz and Fray Juan de Porras were the evangelizers who first sowed the seed of the Gospel of the Lord. And

⁴PEDRO DE SAN FRANCISCO DE ASÍS, *Missions in the Philippines 1661-1712*, in Emma Helen BLAIR, James Alexander ROBERTSON [hereinafter BR], *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. 41, Cleveland 1903-1909, 93.

⁵BR vol. 41, 94.

they gathered the most seasonable fruits of fourth districts. They could not stay any longer in the Contracosta, as they were called by their superiors to evangelize other mission territories of their Order. They would have preferred to continue their evangelization task of bringing more natives to the Christian faith. Even a Franciscan martyr had worked in the Contracosta as well. Father Francisco de Santa María was credited with forming the three missions with sufficient number of converts, who were “withdrawn from the darkness of paganism by the influences of a zeal so seraphic.”

More Franciscan missionaries went on with their apostolic activity, preaching the Gospel up north along the eastern coast of Luzon, and extended their mission territories up to Cagayan [formerly named Nueva Segovia].⁶ These hardworking missionaries eventually founded the village and district of Palanan in what is now Isabela province. The Franciscans, who were already established as the Province of Saint Gregory the Great by Pope Pius VI on 15 November 1586, kept the administration of the four missions for many years. It was their ardent hope that “although there were but few people and conveniences, as the mountains which were peopled by pagans were nearby, they could continue ever to increase the flock of Christ, as they did do without ceasing, the sword of the evangelical preaching with the advantage gained by repeated triumphs.” The friar historian of the seraphic province Juan Francisco de San Antonio proudly declared: “The four districts had increased greatly with the new conversions.” In 1738, the number of Christians, however, was only 4,800 souls,” a population considered by a Recollect chronicler as a measly harvest after all.

⁶When the Nueva Segovia see was transferred to Vigan in 1758, there was no decent cathedral to speak of. The Recollect 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. This edifice cost him 12,000 pesos. He then began the construction of the grandiose cathedral. He 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 Laguna 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, made of lime and cut stone, 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 inside.

Franciscans cede the Contracosta to the Recollects

With beautiful metaphors, the great harvest of souls was depicted: “The boat of the Contracosta province found itself with a great quantity of fish in its nets, and with few fishers in its number for the support of the work, they called to their aid the individuals of our holy province. Nothing more than a sign was necessary to make them hasten thither, expressing their thanks for the opportunity.”⁷

The Franciscan major superior Fray Juan de Capistrano talked to the Augustinian Recollect prior provincial Fray Cristóbal de Santa Mónica and requested him to administer the four ministries, alleging that “they were unable to attend to so many villages, whose care devolved upon them, because of the lack of religious.” On 5 June 1658, the provincial chapter of the Saint Nicholas Province ordered that the four towns of Baler, Binangonan, Casiguran and Palanan be accepted. The ninth ordinance of the provincial chapter officially accepted the four ministries of the Contracosta of Luzon from the Franciscan missionaries, according to Fray Pedro de San Francisco de Asís.⁸ A Recollect provincial councilor named Juan de Evangelista was ordered by the chapter to prepare the necessary papers for the acceptance of the four missions. The official act redacted by Juan de Evangelista stated that “if the bishops would do any favor to the religious congregation with some ministries, these shall of course be accepted, mandating our Father Provincial to assign in them the necessary ministers, and in the same manner to grant him the authority to change any ministry as long as it would be of great usefulness to our religious congregation.”⁹

The bureaucratic paperwork was carried out fast. On 6 July 1658, Archbishop Miguel Poblete of Manila authorized the transfer of parishes. He further issued to the Recollect missionaries the necessary faculties to administer the sacraments and other pertinent functions as ministers in the towns and other future settlements in the area.¹⁰ The

⁷BR vol. 41, 95.

⁸*Crónicas* 4, 33. The *Crónicas* says the provincial chapter took place in 1659.

⁹Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* I (Manila 1925) 538-539.

¹⁰The official document signed by Archbishop Poblete and a copy of which safeguarded at the historical archives of Marcilla (Navarra, Spain) of the Province of Saint Nicholas strangely includes the unheard ministry of Polo in the Contracosta de Luzón! It could have referred to Palanan in the north or to the abbreviation of *pueblo*. See Archivo Histórico Provincial de la

government authorization had been issued earlier on 28 June by the Spanish governor-general.¹¹

The spiritual sons of St. Francis of Assisi obeyed their minister without any hesitation and ceded those missions to the Recollects without retaining any right of reversion. The Recollects believed that the Contracosta missions were not very desirable or enviable on account of the wretchedness of the soil and the small number of tributes therein.

The Franciscan major superior Fray Juan de Capistrano, writing from the convent of Dilao in Manila on 15 June 1658, in compliance to the ordinance enacted by their own provincial chapter then ordered all his friar subjects—Luis de San Antonio, Estevan Moreli, Jerónimo de la Madre de Dios—to give up the *doctrinas* and *conventos* of Valer [*sic*], Binangonan, Casiguran and their *visitas*. Under pain of automatic *excomuni6n mayor* or excommunication *latae sententiae*, they were to formally hand churches and convents over to the Recollect provincial councilor Agustín de Santa Mónica, including the church vessels, ornaments and jewels.

All were intended for the incoming Recollect missionaries, all except the one thousand gantas of rice which would be sent to the convent of Mauban because the Franciscan confreres there did not have any rice at all.¹² In the spirit of solidarity and collaboration in the missionary apostolate, the Recollects accepted the churches and convents in spite of the topographic situation of the Contracosta, which offered not a few hardships in their administration.

Recollect evangelization of Baler, Binangonan, Casiguran and Palanan

We are fortunate to have an important letter briefly detailing the initial evangelization work of the Recollect missionaries in the Contracosta territories. Twenty days after the provincial chapter in May 1683, Isidoro de Jesús María, newly-elected prior provincial in 1683-1686, wrote a letter to the superior general of the Recollect congregation in Madrid. The person concerned was the Vicar General Fray Juan de

Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino, Marcilla, Navarra, España, 4r, *Legajo* 72, Núm. 4 (Quezon) (1658) *Cesión por los PP. Franciscanos de los pueblos de Baler, Casiguran y Binangonan a los PP. Agustinos Recoletos*.

¹¹Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica* I, 539.

¹²APM, *Legajo* 72, Núm. 4 (Quezon) (1658) *Cesión por los PP. Franciscanos de los pueblos de Baler, Casiguran y Binangonan a los PP. Agustinos Recoletos*, 7r.

la Presentación (1678-684).¹³ No missionary expedition had arrived to the Philippines since 1676. Every missionary must be endowed with the spirit and character of a martyr. It was good that in 1693 some thirty religious left Cádiz for the Philippine missions.¹⁴

Fray Isidoro highlighted in his letter the apostolic ministry of the Recollects in the towns of Baler and Palanan, saying:

It's been three years of evangelization in this part, a great number of infidels had been taken from the bowels of the mountains and had been put under catechetical instruction. The catechetical work is still being continued. The missionary in his first phase of evangelization was predominantly vagrant, walking to places of the non-Christians. If he wishes to establish contact and relationship with the infidels, he should go in search for them, trudging mountains and valleys, fording rivers and overcoming all kinds of obstacles. Not only the Christian instruction but also the exhortation to a stable life up to the point of eradicating of the nomadic lifestyle presupposed many hours of effort and fatigue. If the seed of the Gospel should sprout and remain, it was an indispensable condition to resettle indigenous people in communities and avoid commerce of the converts with those who were pagans still.¹⁵

The provincial's lengthy letter shows, at the same time, that the missionaries were not in a hurry to administer baptism to the catechumens, especially when these were adults. The ministers go on with much caution and care because of experience of the inconsistency with which many usually go back to their old pagan practices. It must be considered that the strong temptation of return of the recently converted people to paganism loomed with great frequency. Clearly, these neo-Christians had not been able to assimilate the fundamental truths of the new religion in a relatively short time. This was very well known among our missionaries, hence the adopted wise measure of prolonging the period of catechumenate.¹⁶

¹³The original letter is found in the Manuscript Section of the Biblioteca Nacional of Madrid (Ms 13,739); please read this letter in José Luis SÁENZ, *Filipinas y China: Apuntes para la historia de las misiones recoletas en el signo xvii*, in BPSN 685 (1987) 17-28.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 17-18.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

Evangelization of Binangonan

We have only three names yet of the early Augustinian Recollect missionaries of the Contracosta: Benito de San José, Francisco de San José and Clemente de San Nicolás. They formally administered the extensive district. It is said they built the residence of the missionary in each of these three places. The first house and church of Binangonan, an inland village toward the mountain but located near the bay and port of Lampon. The Recollect missionary put up the first church edifice and establish the town. Binangonan was under the spiritual patronage of Saint William. Two religious fixed their residence in Binangonan. At that time the parish belonged to the Diocese of Nueva Cáceres or Camarines. Politically, it fell under the jurisdiction of Tayabas. Tagalog was the language spoken in the place. The Recollect ministers assigned to the village of Binangonan, likewise took charge of the visitas of Lampon and Umirèy along the bays that bore the same names.¹⁷ Several times the missionary had to scour the mountains in search of souls for the Savior Jesus Christ and worked untiringly for their settlements. Those upland territories were sixty to seventy kilometers away from the población.

Valer or Baler: springboard for mission among Aetas

Going thence following the coast to the north, one met the river and village of Valer [*sic*]. The Recollects founded another convent and church there and placed them under the titular patronage of the Augustinian thaumaturge and holy friar: Saint Nicholas of Tolentino. Baler belonged to the same language, province, and bishopric, like Binangonan. When there were a good number of missionaries from Spain, two were stationed in Baler. But, ordinarily only one religious lived in the mission station to administer the sacraments to the growing population. Our chronicler took special note of the hardships that the missionaries suffered in Baler. Aside from huge size of the town, the missionaries had to work indefatigably for the evangelization of the Aetas who according to Pedro de San Francisco de Asís were pagans or unbelievers that inhabited the adjoining mountains. From Baler, one could reach the province of Pampanga through Patabangan [*sic*] and Santor through very rough roads.

¹⁷BR vol. 41, 96.

Casiguran mission

To reach the next mission of Casiguran, the ministers of God had to sail to the north along the coast leading to Cape Engaño and Casiguran Bay. The Tagalog- speaking Casiguran natives received the Recollects who built a convent and church placed under the spiritual protection of their founder Saint Augustine of Hippo. It was the last pueblo of Tayabas and bishopric of Camarines or Nueva Cáceres. Two or three religious fixed their residence at Casiguran, given the jurisdiction along the coast and up to the mountains. The missionaries climbed the uplands inhabited by Aetas and Kalingas.

Palanan of Cagayan at that time

Fifty-five to sixty-seven kilometers northward was the village of Palanan, which fell under the episcopal jurisdiction of Cagayan (or Nueva Segovia, before the seat was moved to Vigan]. A convent was built there and the people revered as titular patroness Saint Mary Magdalene. The great distance took a heavy toll on the health of the Recollects. Missionaries had to climb mountains and exerted their best to convert the heathens and upland dwellers to the Christian faith.

Epidemics decimated Christian population

During the Recollect period of the history of the Contracosta missions, three or four epidemics had decimated the population of the region. Although the number of unbelievers converted to the Catholic faith grew by leaps and bounds, the plague cut down the lives of countless Christians. However, missionaries were quick to say that the number of tributes in the early years Recollect evangelization equaled its later years. The settlements of old Christians which were havocked by the epidemics remained the same, because they were replaced by new converts. Indeed, it was a testimonial of the character and apostolic zeal of the laborers in the vineyard of the Lord that won over a hundred natives to the Catholic fold.

Recollect missionaries of the *Contracosta*

Benito de San José joined the 7th mission expedition to the Philippines that left Cádiz in April 1633 and reached Manila in 1634.¹⁸ He was sent by his superiors to Taytay in northern Palawan where a Spanish fort had been set up to defend the Christian population from Moro piratical raids. After administering Cuyo (1654-1656) in the Calamianes Archipelago and Masinloc in Zambales (1656-1659), he was elected as provincial councilor in 1659 but he volunteered to work in the Contracosta that same year.

As vice-prior of Binangonan, Fray Benito was then designated to administer the new Recollect mission territory. He went back to Manila to preside the provincial chapter in 1662 where he was elected superior of Binangonan. In 1665, he was re-elected Binangonan superior. There is no date given for his death; our Recollect historian wrote the chronicles of the Recollect covering the 1661-1690 period surmised that Father Benito passed away in the Contracosta.¹⁹

Francisco de San José arrived at the port of Manila in August 1663, three years after his tenth group of Recollect missionaries left Spain.²⁰ For lack of available galleons to continue their odyssey to the Spanish colony in Asia, the twenty religious missionaries remained in Mexico for two years. He was to learn the rudiments of a native language before any official appointment to any mission or parish in the Philippines. In 1665, he was designated vice-prior of Casiguran and promoted to prior of the same mission until he was elected secretary provincial in 1671. He passed away most probably in 1672 when that post became vacant and another friar was assigned to it.

Clemente Ferreira de San Nicolás was a Portuguese from the colony of Macao. His parents were Antonio Ferreira and Francisca Acosta. He joined the Congregation of Augustinian Recollects at their San Nicolás convent in Intramuros, Manila when he pronounced the religious vows in 1641.²¹ He was dispatched to his first pastoral assignment in Masinloc (Zambales) where he soon became proficient

¹⁸ Francisco Sádaba, *Catálogo de los Religiosos Agustinos Recoletos de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas desde 1606, en que llegó la primera misión hasta nuestros días*, Madrid 1906, 88.

¹⁹ PEDRO DE SAN FRANCISCO DE ASÍS, *Historia general de los Religiosos Descalzos del Orden de los Hermitaños del gran Padre y Doctor de la Iglesia San Agustín, de la Congregación de España y de las Indias IV: 1661-1690*, Zaragoza 1756, 33.

²⁰ SÁDABA, 109.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 756-757.

in Zambal. Fray Clemente spent most of the years of his pastoral ministry in Taytay (Palawan), Tandag (Surigao), Cuyo (Calamianes) and Bolinao (now part of Pangasinan). The provincial chapter named him vice-prior of San Nicolás convent and novice master in 1656-1659. In 1690-1691, he was a conventual of Intramuros, Manila, and Cavite for some months. He spent the last nine years of his priestly ministry in Cuyo before he joined his Maker on 1 September 1700.

The chronicler Pedro de San Francisco de Asís identified him among the first missionaries of the former Franciscan missions of the Contracosta. He worked “with indefatigable zeal in the conversion of the inhabitants of that area.” Sádaba further informs us that he was appointed vice-prior of Baler in 1662 and reelected to the post in 1665.

Valero de San Salvador was a native of Zaragoza, Spain.²² In the Recollect convent of the same city, he pronounced his monastic vows in July 1688. Already an ordained priest, he joined the 14th Recollect mission of thirty priests and two religious brothers who journeyed to the Philippines and docked at Cavite Puerto in June 1694. A “zealous minister and perfect religious,” Fray Valero traveled to Casiguran on 18 October 1694 in order to acquire proficiency in Tagalog. Here he exercised his pastoral ministry for two years. On 4 November 1696 he was transferred further north to Palanan whose spiritual administration he took charge of until 1704. He was later entrusted with the pastoral administration of various doctrinas in Mindanao, Zambales and Mindoro. Fray Valero served as provincial councilor and president of the provincial chapter or as prior of San Sebastian Convent or as conventual in Cavite. He passed away most probably in 1729.

Silvestre de la Purificación saw the first light of day at Casar de Cáceres.²³ He professed the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in February 1691 in the Recollect convent of Madrid. Together with Fray Valero de San Salvador and thirty-six other friars, he arrived in the Philippines in 1694. In San Nicolás convent of Intramuros he had to finish his study of theology. He was ordained as deacon in 1696. In January 1698, he received the holy order of presbyterate. Two months later, on 1 March 1698, he was sent to his first parochial assignment at Binangonan. He became the vice-prior of their Binangonan residence until 1704 when the Contracosta ministries were ceded back to the Franciscans. Thereafter he subsequently worked as missionary in Mindoro, Romblon, Zambales, Bataan and Palawan. He was probably

²²*Ibid.*, 151.

²³ *Ibid.*, 154-155.

over sixty years of age when he retired from active ministry in the 1740s and resided in San Nicolás convent. Here Fray Silvestre, “laden with merits and very much loved by all the communities where he had exercised his sacred ministry,”²⁴ rejoined his Maker on 5 January 1742.

The Contracosta reverted to the Franciscans

Despite the difficulties, sacrifices and deprivations for several years, the Recollect Province of Saint Nicholas finally decided to return the ministries to the Franciscans in 1704. Despite the indubitable zeal and experience of the missionaries to bring Christ even to the farthest settlement in the hinterlands of the Contracosta, they were constrained to give up the *pueblos* to the Order of Friars Minor. The Recollect historian Angel Martínez Cuesta mentions some important reasons:

Their tremendous penury, their remoteness from the rest of the ministries of the province and dramatic scarcity of personnel brought about by seventeen years (1694-1711) of complete vocation drought had compelled their return to the Franciscans.

Martínez Cuesta further states that:

Ordinarily the province maintained from six to eight religious in them. In 1691 there were eight who were found in a desperate economic situation. “During most of the year,” wrote the provincial, “they have no rice and it is necessary to send it to them from Manila [...] I do not refer to what it costs the province to keep those ministries but it may not seem incredible because what they do and suffer for God is not disclosed” (*Crónicas*, vol 6, part 2, page 204).²⁵

Reasons given for the cession of the ministries

Indeed, the long periods of isolation stemming from the immense distance of the ministries from each other, aggravated by the inhospitable trails and insurmountable physical hindrances had taken a toll on the miserable plight of the Recollect friar missionaries. Added to these was the difficulty of sending the most basic provisions for their sustenance and survival for lack of reliable and regular transportation.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 154.

²⁵MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, 398.

How much they had to suffer from hunger and deprivations! The prior provincial said his Recollect subjects were aware and were not scared of the eventual distress and tribulations they had to undergo once assigned to such mission territories. He did not mind if dispatching the food supplies and other necessities would drain the coffers of Saint Nicholas Province.²⁶

A valid reason was the increase of religious personnel in the Province of San Gregorio Magno. The opposite was happening to the Recollects this time. They had recovered the mission lands of Zambales (Bataan and Western Pangasinan) from the Dominican friars upon orders of the archbishop of Manila. They therefore needed every capable Recollect for the vast territory in western Luzon. Hence it was their turn to suffer from a serious dearth of personnel.²⁷

A single episode that served as the last nail that sealed the coffin took place in Laguna. The Recollect superiors were not found wanting in their primordial obligation to send food supplies for the Contracosta missionaries. Oftentimes the supplies had to stay too long in Laguna awaiting the next expedition to the coastal towns of eastern Luzon. That halfway house was undoubtedly Siniloan where the Franciscans were requested by the Recollect superiors to facilitate communication with their subjects in those far-flung missions and attend better to their needs and sustenance. Sadly, the Franciscans rejected their pleas.²⁸ Definitely, these rejection influenced greatly in the return of the Contracosta ministries to the Province of San Gregorio Magno. After complying with legal requirements, the decision for the cession was firmed up in 1704. But the Franciscans did not want to let the matter go easily. In the spirit of brotherhood and mutual friendship, in 1716 they asked the Recollects to reconsider their decision and accept again the Contracosta towns. Two years after, another petition was dispatched to San Nicolás priory in Intramuros. Both pleas fell on deaf ears. The provincial council reiterated their adamant refusal to take back the four missions, arguing that their departure was definite and absolute and closing the issue of the Contracosta missions.

²⁶ RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica* I, 539.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ APM, Legajo 72, Núm. 4 (Quezon) (1658) *Cesión por los PP. Franciscanos de los pueblos de Baler, Casiguran y Binangonan a los PP. Agustinos Recoletos*, 9r-9v.

The Holy Christ of Casiguran

In the annals of Contracosta history, we read the story of a very ill Recollect missionary priest of Casiguran, isolated by immense distance from his nearest confreres in Palanan and Baler. The natives narrated the story which a certain Father Mozo handed to the next generations in a book. The ailing religious was carried to the choir in order to confess his sins to the Crucifix found in that place. The people of Casiguran said that the Crucified Christ freeing His hand nailed to the Cross gave the dying minister His blessing and absolution. There and then the friar died.²⁹ The Holy Christ of Casiguran is now a priceless treasure of Museo Recoleta in Quezon City.

Epilogue: Venerable Juana de Jesús, Recollect *mantelata*

Augustinian Recollect missionaries in our country produced exemplary and holy tertiaries or *mantelatas* [mantled ones] who lived a life both devoted to prayer and fruitful in the apostolate. In the 17th-century Philippines, we have found men and women tertiaries who assisted the Recollect missionaries as interpreters, teachers and catechists. They founded the Third Order in Butuan, Mindanao, in 1623. Towards 1650, we find a community of tertiaries also in Bolinao, belonging then to Zambales, now a town of Pangasinan. A Third Order also existed at Taytay in Palawan in 1670.

In Japan, Saint Magdalene of Nagasaki died a martyr's death in October 1634, heroically giving the supreme witness of her faith. The Japanese tertiary is revered as the patroness of the Third Order, now known as Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity, that has now sixteen local chapters and nine hundred members in Luzon and the Visayas. In the Contracosta, the missionaries also set up the Recollect Third Order. In 1703, lived a venerable *mantelata* named Juana de Jesús whose exemplary life and virtues sprang from the teaching of missionaries. She died in the odor of sanctity.³⁰ A fruit such as the *mantelata* Juan de Jesús reveals that all the evangelical endeavors of the Augustinian Recollects in the Contracosta could be considered as well employed.

Without any trace of a doubt, the greatest legacy bequeathed by the early missionaries to the People of God in Aurora Province is the indelible legacy of Faith. The abundant fruits of evangelization have

²⁹RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica* I, 541.

³⁰MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, 398.

continued to be harvested by their tireless successors and workers in the Lord's vineyard—the diocesan priests, religious congregations, the lay ministers and the devout families of Aurora where Christ is the center of their lives. The torch of the Gospel of Christ Jesus has been passed on from one generation to the next. The legacy of Faith lives on!

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The Augustinian Recollects in Bohol (1768-1898, 1904-1937)

Peace had reigned at last over Bohol Island after the remnants of the Dagohoy Rebellion (1744-1829) eventually capitulated to the superior Cebuano-Spanish forces. The Augustinian Recollect missionaries, who arrived in Bohol in 1768 in the wake of the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Philippines, worked more zealously for the moral and spiritual regeneration of all Boholanos. Two Recollect missionaries had joined the military expedition against the surviving rebels of the Dagohoy Revolt. Fr. Miguel de Jesus temporarily left his parish of Danao in Cebu. Fr. Narciso Hernández took leave of his parochial duties and eventually helped in the establishment of new settlements of rebel returnees in the lowlands.

Immediately after the surrender, the ministers founded more parishes consisting of rebel surrenderees. Many more towns and visitas were created. With the foundations came more religious personnel who could speak their Visayan Cebuano language. By mid-1850s, twenty-three Recollects and two diocesan priests served the spiritual needs of 142,033 Christians in nineteen parishes.¹

Spiritual life and popular piety steadily prospered. Marian confraternities, specifically that of Our Lady of Consolation, were set up. Devotion to the Blessed Mother was bolstered by the community singing of the *Salve* on Saturdays and by the early evening *Angelus*. The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Saint Joseph and the Holy Family was likewise encouraged. Parishioners filled the houses of worship during masses on Sundays, holy days of precept and at the Holy Week rites. Town fiestas were always celebrated with pomp and solemnity.

¹ *Estado de los conventos, curatos y misiones de la provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas*, AHNM, Ultramar 2204.

Traditional Filipino practices like the *Flores de Mayo*, chanting of the *Pasyon*, and the *Via Crucis* were abetted by the Recollect curates. Deep appreciation for the order of presbyterate was observed after many a newly ordained Recollect priest solemnly celebrated his *cantamisa* in the parish church. The bishop of Cebu regularly visited the parishes of Bohol and administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to thousands.

Tragedies and calamities

The missionaries dispensed the last sacraments of the Church to Boholanos fatally stricken by smallpox in 1873, 1882 and 1893. They witnessed heart-rending scenes during the worst cholera outbreak of 1883. The Recollects suffered with them amid such recurrent natural disasters as typhoons, earthquakes and floods. Swollen rivers, occasioned by torrential rains, storms and high tides, caused endless flooding of settlements formed along Loboc, Sevilla and Inabanga Rivers. Dwellers near riverbanks were swept away by rampaging currents. Loboc was severely inundated in 1848, 1874, 1876 and 1889. Sevilla's great deluge took place in 1876 when a violent typhoon buffeted the town.²

Floods severely hit Inabanga in 1876 and 1897. The Inabanga River burst its banks and overflowed in November 1876 sweeping away nearly all the houses along its banks and drowning thirty-five people. Floodwater lapped the portals of the parochial church.³ The violent typhoon that spawned floods in Inabanga in November 1876 flailed Talibon as well.⁴ No man-made structure of light materials stood on its devastating path. Over 200 dwellings, including the two schoolhouses and the *casa tribunal*, were razed to the ground. One thousand coconut trees were pulled down. More than 800 cows, carabaos, hogs and horses were either drowned or killed by the cold and torrential downpour. Providentially, no human casualties were reported.

The Revolution forces the Recollect exodus to Manila

The Augustinian Recollect pastoral ministry was interrupted in November 1898 by the Philippine Revolution. Over fifty curates

² *Cosas notables de Inabanga*, APM, Legajo 67, No. 1, f.1.

³ *Cosas notables de Loboc*, APM, Legajo 66, No. 4, f. 13; *Cosas notables de Sevilla*, APM, Legajo 66, No. 4, f. 3.

⁴ *Cosas notables de Talibon*, APM, Legajo 66, No. 4.

were forced to abandon the land “where they had labored so hard, shed so much sweat, suffered great fatigue” and embark on the journey to Manila. Only nine missions were received in 1768 from the Society of Jesus. In 1898, the Recollects left behind thirty-three towns/parishes and six barrios/visitas where 249,994 Boholanos dwelt.⁵ The interim hiatus would last solely five years and seven months. Acceding to Anda parishioners’ petition, the American prelate of Cebu allowed the Recollect provincial to send Calixto S. Gaspar (1853-1937) to the vacant curacy in May 1904. The American Bishop Thomas Hendrick and his successor Juan Gorordo, the first Filipino bishop, successively handed over the vacant parishes of Mabini, Valencia, Candijay, Clarin, Duero and Guindulman to the Recollects of Saint Nicholas province.⁶

The Augustinian Recollects’ final farewell to the Boholanos came in the wake of the cession of their last parishes to the ever-growing diocesan clergy in 1937. A glorious end to 169 years of dedicated and fruitful apostolate. By then, twenty-seven towns and parishes had been founded by them.

Mariano Gutiérrez OAR of Jagna

Countless illustrious members of the Augustinian Recollect Order left indelible legacies and contributed a great deal to the socio-economic progress of their constituents. First and foremost of the outstanding Recollects in Bohol was Mariano Gutiérrez de los Dolores (1788-1885), parish priest of Jagna from 1825 to 1855 except for brief stints in Manila as procurator general, novice master and provincial councilor. It was Gutiérrez who introduced the people of Jagna to the lucrative business of tanning hides of carabaos, horses, cows, big bats called *kawang*, highly valued in European markets, parchment and paper production as well as the manufacture of tints and ink.

⁵ AGUSTÍN DE SANTA TERESA DE JESÚS [Rafael García], *Corona de gloria*, in BPSN 49 (1959) 24. García states that the Recollects left Bohol in 1936.

⁶ Miguel AVELLANEDA, *Continuación del Padre Sádaba o segunda parte del ‘Catálogo de los religiosos de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos’ (1906-1936)*, Rome 1938, 490-491; Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas* 1, Manila 1925, 740-743.

Scientist, teacher, pastor

Gutiérrez's passion for geological and natural sciences impelled him to study mineral deposits, flora and fauna of Bohol and for posterity put his research output into writing.⁷ He maintained correspondence with noted scientists in England, Germany and Singapore, sending them preserved samples of different species of wood, plants, mineral deposits, seeds, fruits, resins, hides, seashells and snails. The women and young girls of Jagna were provided with looms and taught how to weave blankets, colored mats, bedcovers and others.

The Jagna curate established a vocational school for men where he trained future carpenters, leather tanners, construction workers, bricklayers and shoemakers. A cataloger of his numerous writings was pleasantly surprised to come upon an interesting list: the names of poverty-stricken persons who regularly received alms from the kind-hearted curate on Fridays. He was, above all, a pastor of souls endowed with a heart of gold for the underprivileged folks of Jagna.

The Recollects as farmers

Several parish curates in Bohol proved equal to the tasks demanded of them, especially in the field of agriculture.⁸ To instill love of manual labor among his parishioners of Catigbian, Santiago Navarro (1809-1872) took the plow, yoked his carabao, tilled the land and planted rice in a farm owned by the parish. In Bilar, he set the same example for his parishioners who were rebel returnees, wont to pillage and plunder or engage in *kaingin* type of agriculture. His *basacan* in Bilar yielded seven cavans annually.

Navarro's commendable feat in Bilar was ably matched by Manuel Plaza who grew the first bananas, coconuts and cacao in Balilihan, besides opening market roads to Loboc, Baclayon and Cortes. The first curate of Balilihan collaborated with the native *gobernadorcillo* in urging the people to engage in farming. The missionary was succeeded by Antonio Cortés (1817-1858) who pioneered in the cultivation of sugar

⁷*Cosas notables de Jagna*, APM, Legajo 66, No. 4, f. 14; Manuel CARCELLER, *Historia general de los Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* XI, Madrid 1967, 345-349, 823-830; Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Los agustinos recoletos en Filipinas. 375 años de presencia ininterrumpida*, in BPSN, special issue 1981, 61-62.

⁸Our information on the Recollect curates' socio-economic contributions is culled from various *Cosas notables de Bohol*. See *Sinopsis* I, 702-743.

cane and in animal husbandry. He also took great pains in constructing a bell tower atop a hill, quarrying stones from far-off Baclayon. Lorenzo Hernández (1837-1907), builder of the Guindulman church and rectory, introduced abaca in Anda. Coffee and abaca abounded in Carmen owing to the hard work and good example shown by its curates.

Infrastructure projects

In Dimiao, Bernardo Muro (1849-1930) erected a strong school edifice for boys and another for girls. Two schools for primary instruction were also put up for the youth of Alburquerque by Manuel Muro (1851-1896) who further provided living quarters for its two teachers. Apart from establishing parochial schools at Corella, Nemesio Llorente (1852-1931) supervised the improvement of its streets and taught the people how to build more durable dwellings of wood. Once more we must mention the “man of much vigor and energy,” Santiago Navarro of Bilar who opened roads leading to adjoining towns. After erecting the church in Daus, Julio Saldaña (1835-1909) tasked his laborers with the construction of a big embankment for a bridge connecting the island parish with Bohol mainland. The first curate of Antequera Casto Sesma (1850-1899) oversaw highly beneficial community projects: roadwork, communal houses, *casa tribunal* and town plaza that was adorned with marvelous gardens.

Santiago Alvarez (1857-1903) put up a rock quarry where he hewed stone slates for construction projects in Catigbian. With three hundred workers, José Lasala (1852-1928), builder of the church and convent of Garcia Hernandez, constructed the Dimiao cemetery and two big bridges over rivers near Sierra Bullones. A cemetery made of *mampostería* was built by Ambrosio Iturriaga. Countless municipal halls made of stone and lime owe their existence to Recollect priests. At the outset of the 19th century, Enrique García (†1818) had erected the church, convent, *casa real* for parish guests, *casa tribunal*, cemetery and watchtower in Dimiao.⁹ Francisco Arraya (1834-1913) supervised the construction of the first public buildings in Valencia. In Baclayon, José María Cabañas (1819-1899), its curate for twenty-eight years, erected the adjacent rectory and the public market.

Seventeenth-century Recollect missionaries of the flood-prone Saint Peter the Apostle parish of Loboc erected the bell tower

⁹*Cosas notables de Dimiao*, APM, Legajo 66, No. 4, ff. 15 -17; *Sinopsis* 1, 730-732.

near the old Jesuit church (1638) and six stone bridges on the way to Loay. Aquilino Bon (1831-1883) erected school buildings, a teachers' residence, the municipal cemetery and the church portico.¹⁰ In 1863, his laborers covered the church roof with brick tiles. A cholera outbreak in Loboc snuffed out 600 lives in 1883. The Recollect missionary, whose pastoral ministry totaled sixteen years, was among the casualties.

At the height of the Moro raids, the parish administrators of coastal towns supervised the building of solid forts and watchtowers against surprise attacks. Bernardo de San Agustín (†1821) acquired two harquebuses and five falconets and trained selected men in Loon in the effective use of the weapons against Moro pirates and brigands.

Antonio Úbeda, OAR

As a young missionary, Antonio Úbeda (1805-1870) was assigned in January 1830 to Bilar, a newly established town of settlers from Loboc and rebel returnees.¹¹ He then built the first church and rectory. After five years in Bilar, he was transferred to the Holy Trinity parish of Loay. In this coastal town, he directed the construction of a stone stairway from the national highway to the top of a small hill where he had built the rectory and parochial church. The three structures have all withstood the test of time. In the 1850s, Úbeda was parish curate of Baclayon. His apostolic work in Bohol totaled twenty-six fruitful years. The eminent religious further served as prior provincial for three terms.

The missionary authored two Visayan Cebuano books. First published in 1852, *La Teresa* was a 104-page novella on Boholano customs that imparted in a most pleasant and simplest manner lessons on Christian upbringing, ethical standards and values. It was favorite reading in Cebuano-speaking Catholic homes. Equally popular in Bohol, Camiguin, Cebu and Negros Oriental was the 48-page catechism pamphlet titled *Ang pangadyeon sa mga bisayang cristianos* [Prayer of the Visayan Christians]. It was issued an imprimatur in 1852 by the Recollect archbishop of Manila, Msgr. José A. Aranguren (1801-1861). The second edition of the catechism was published by the *Imprenta del Seminario de San Carlos* in Cebu in 1895.

¹⁰ *Cosas notables de Loboc*, APM, Legajo 66, 4, ff. 11-15.

¹¹ 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, 395-397; CARCELLER XI, 150-151; XII, 106-108; *Cosas notables de Bilar*, APM, Legajo 66, No. 4, ff. 12-13.

The Recollects as authors

An essential part of the missionary task of religious orders in the Philippines was the publication of catechism, novenas and preaching. The Recollects in Bohol did not lag behind in this vital activity for the edification and piety of the faithful. Aquilino Bon of long residence in Loboc composed the *Novena ni Señor San Pedro Apostol Patron sa Loboc* [Novena to Saint Peter the Apostle, Patron of Loboc] and *Novena sa mahal nga Virgen sa Guadalupe* [Novena to the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe], both in 1870.¹² Tomás Fernández authored the *Novena sa atung Guinoo nga si Maria Santisima Virgen ug Inahan sa Dios* [Novena to Our Lady, the Most Holy Mary Virgin and Mother of God] for the Marian devotees of Corella in 1883.¹³

Translators and preachers

Several Recollect friar curates translated Spanish devotional works into the native language of the Visayan islands. Two popular devotional pamphlets intended to promote the devotion to Saint Joseph were translated into Cebuano and published by Timoteo Gonzalo (1819-1887), curate of Panglao in 1882-1887. His third opusculum propagated the devotion to the Blessed Virgin's Seven Sorrows.¹⁴ A zealous pastor in seven Bohol parishes for twenty-six years, Demetrio Navascués (1845-1909) published his 311-page *Usa ca bulan nga hinalad can Maria* [A Month Consecrated to Mary] in 1885.¹⁵ In 1882, Maribohoc missionary Fernando Rubio (1814-1889) published his *Quinabuhi sa mahimayaon nga Patriarca San Jose* [Life of the Glorious Patriarch Saint Joseph] of 253 pages following a fruitful forty-year apostolate in Bohol.¹⁶

Félix Guillén (1846-1899) compiled a book of prayers titled *Ang angel sa calag nga cristianos* [An Angel for the Christian soul]. He published his 556-page opus in Manila in 1885 during his three-year respite from active parochial administration. His seventeen-year stay in Tagbilaran, Tubigon, Loon, Valencia and Dimiao made the minister very qualified to write a *Gramática bisaya* [Visayan Grammar] for

¹²Sádaba, 463; CARCELLER XI, 840.

¹³Sádaba, 486.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 635-636; CARCELLER XI, 841.

¹⁵Sádaba, 537-538.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 420; CARCELLER XI, 844.

Spaniards, especially missionaries who had to be skilled in the Cebuano language.¹⁷

Manuel Cabriada (1830-1905), curate of such towns as Loon, Catigbian, Tubigon and Garcia Hernandez, contributed several sermons to the *Colección de sermones en idioma visaya* [Collection of Sermons in the Visayan language].¹⁸ Published in 1881, the compilation aimed to facilitate the Recollect preachers' preparation of homilies for the solemn feasts of the Blessed Virgin and the saints.

Greatest legacies—parochial churches and rectories

As part of its cherished tradition, Saint Nicholas province had never failed to provide the People of God with decent places of divine worship wherever its religious were assigned as parish priests. Doubtless, it is the Augustinian Recollect Order's unwritten but wholehearted commitment to the Filipinos under their pastoral care. Thus, in every Boholano town and parish founded by Recollects, one can always find a decent house of worship. Some durable and magnificent churches—with their lavish and colorful interiors, ornate *retablos*, altars, pulpits, icons, organs, belfries, porticoes—and parish rectories built under the direction of the Recollects that dot the lush landscape of the island now constitute an enviable and priceless architectural patrimony every Boholano is proud of.¹⁹

Only three Jesuit churches—those of Baclayon, Loboc and Inabanga—have withstood the elements of time today. The age-old church of Baclayon (1727) underwent endless repairs and improvements since the 1678 takeover. So did the Inabanga church. The Augustinian Recollects had erected the divine temples even in the old Jesuit curacies of Tagbilaran, Talibon, Jagna, Dauis, Loay, Loon, Dimiao and Maribohoc.

The great Recollect churches of Bohol can certainly compete with the best in the land for their splendor, durability and architectural beauty. They have deserved their niche in Philippine art history. But knowledgeable Boholanos shall forever view them as heirloom wealth

¹⁷Sádaba, 588-590.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 460; CARCELLER XI, 840.

¹⁹ Emilio P. JARUDA JR. [ed.], *Commemorative Album of the 1988-1991 Triennium. Order of the Augustinian Recollects, Vicariate of the Philippines and China*, Quezon City 1991, 41-46.

they inherited from those indefatigable Augustinian Recollects who had touched the lives of their God-fearing forefathers for 160 years.

‘Most Christian’ Bohol

In 1882, Fidel de Blas, author of *Estado general de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino*, deemed the thirty-six curacies of Bohol as

the most prized under our administration not only due to the proximity of the parishes to one another, the healthful condition of the island, the beauty of its churches and *conventos* in majority of the towns, the densely populated and well-cultivated land, but on top of it all—a fact most worthy of praise—on account of the people’s excellent disposition, their love of work, the high esteem and affection they had for its parish priests, our religious. We the Recollects can rightly boast in Our Lord that we have successfully given the Boholanos Christian and civic education.²⁰

The special adulation and accolade on Boholano Catholics are echoed by Licinio Ruiz in 1925 in his *Sinopsis histórica*:

The priests of Bohol are indubitably most enamored of their island, because all the Recollects—from the first parish administrators down to the last—had exerted all their effort and energy for the moral and material welfare of the island dwellers. They have no doubt they had the most docile people, the most instructed, the most Christian in the Philippines... those beautiful churches, magnificent and spacious *conventos*, the most eloquent expression of the people’s great faith that endeavored to build for God worthy abodes.²¹

The torch of Christian ideals and the Recollect brand of witnessing to the Gospel have been passed on to three centers of learning managed by the female counterparts of the Augustinian Recollect family—the Augustinian Recollect Sisters—who certainly contribute much to the evangelization task in the island to this day. The Augustinian Recollect sisters manage Saint Mary’s Academy

²⁰Fidel DE BLAS, *Labor evangélica de los padres agustinos recoletos en las Islas Filipinas*, Zaragoza 1910, 61, improves on this quote from his *Estado general*.

²¹*Sinopsis* I, 739.

(Guindulman), Blessed Trinity School (Talibon) and Colegio de la Medalla Milagrosa (Jagna).²²

Boholano bishops and priests

Another happy fact showing that this “most Christian” land is truly blest by Divine Providence is the unprecedented number of priests and bishops—both diocesan and religious—nurtured by deeply devout Boholano families.²³ Perhaps no other province in the Philippines has ever produced so many bishops and priests as Bohol, a record so far unsurpassed in the annals of Philippine Church history.

Quadricentenary of Bohol’s Evangelization (1596-1996)

The year 1996 marked the Fourth Centennial of Bohol’s evangelization. Four hundred glorious years since the first Jesuit missionaries Juan de Torres and Gabriel Sánchez commenced on 17 November 1596 their mission in Baclayon. The island had only 4,000 inhabitants in 1594.²⁴

The local church of Bohol now has two dioceses. Erected in 1941, the Diocese of Tagbilaran in 2017 has eight vicariates and fifty-six parishes and occupies a land area of 1,734 sq. kms. The Diocese of Talibon created in 1986 comprises in 2017 seven vicariates, forty parishes and eight quasi-parishes in an area of 2,243 sq. kms. The two episcopal sees have a combined population of 881,486 Roman Catholics who constitute 93 percent of the province’s total population of 947,098, according to the 1990 census.²⁵ The figures slightly differ from those relayed by the former local ordinary of Tagbilaran Bishop Leopoldo S. Tumalak, now deceased, and by Bishop Christian Vicente F. Noel, also deceased, of Talibon to *The 1996 Catholic Directory of the Philippines*. Official church statistics of 1996 showed 815,447 Catholics, or 91 percent of the total population of 893,083.²⁶ *The 2000*

²²*The 1996 Catholic Directory of the Philippines*, Quezon City 1996, 448.

²³Josemaría S. Luengo has identified almost 400 priests in the 1868-1991 period. See *Appendices 4 and 5 of A History of the Philippines; a Focus on the Christianization of Bohol (1521-1991)*, (Tubigon 1992) 247-259.

²⁴Francisco DE ORTEGA, *Report on the Philippines*, in BR IX, 98.

²⁵THE NATIONAL STATISTICS OFFICE, *1990 Census of Population and Housing. Report No. 3-17G: Socio-Economics and Demographic Characteristics of Bohol*, Manila 1992, 56.

²⁶*The 1996 Catholic Directory*, 324, 332.

Catholic Directory of the Philippines puts the count at 898,512, still comprising 91 percent of the two dioceses.²⁷

250th Anniversary of the Augustinian Recollect arrival in 2018

In 2018, Prior Provincial Dionisio Selma, OAR, with seventeen confreres—majority of whom were of Boholano parentage or birth—celebrated in nine parishes the momentous 250th anniversary of the arrival of the first Augustinian Recollect missionaries in Bohol. The theme of the commemoration was *Pagpasalamat sa Mabungahong Pagsangyaw sa Ebanghelyo sa Isla sa Bohol* [Gratitude for a Fruitful Evangelization in Bohol Island]. The historic 18-19 August event was highlighted with concelebrated Masses, healing rites, propagation of devotion to Saint Ezekiel Moreno, Recollect missionary in the Philippines (1870-1885) and vocation campaign.²⁸

Truly, the seeds of faith—sown by Jesuit and Augustinian Recollect missionaries—are continued today by the diocesan prelates, clergy, religious men and women, church religious organizations, devout families, committed educators, Catholic school teachers and lay catechists. The seeds of the pastoral efforts of yesteryears have evidently yielded fruit in Bohol today, fruit in great abundance, continuous growth in religious and priestly vocations and in Christian population.

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²⁷*The 2000 Catholic Directory of the Philippines*, Manila 2000, 244, 237.

²⁸*Evangelization in Bohol: 250 years of the arrival of the Augustinian Recollects*, in/[www.agustinosrecoletos.com/2018/08/evangelizacion-250-aniver sario-llegada-agustinos-recoletos-bohol/?lang=en](http://www.agustinosrecoletos.com/2018/08/evangelizacion-250-aniver-sario-llegada-agustinos-recoletos-bohol/?lang=en). Retrieved 14 October 2018.

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Augustinian Recollect Legacy to the Church in Negros Island

Abstract

The Recollects' arrival in 1848 impacted every aspect of life in Negros. Their enthusiasm, supported by affluent immigrants, contributed decisively to a climate of optimism and progress placing Negros at the forefront of colonial provinces. Their evangelization effort converted countless unbelievers, settled later in new parishes. The Christian heritage of faith is deeply etched in Negrenses and settlers. The building legacy of Mauricio Ferrero, Manuel Gómara, Felipe Lerena—the cathedrals of Bacolod, San Carlos, Kabankalan—lives on. The pastoral work of Gregorio Espiga, Fernando Cuenca, Mariano Bernad is indelible in the annals of history. The educational apostolate in Bacolod, San Carlos, Valencia, Bayawan is reflected in their alumni in public service, business and religious or priestly ministry. Forever we cherish the sojourn of Saint Ezekiel Moreno, Blessed Martín de San Nicolás and Blessed José Rada who touched the lives of our forefathers in Talisay, Binalbagan and La Carlota.

Early Years of Evangelization (1622)

Father Jacinto de San Fulgencio, Father Juan de San José and Brother Francisco de San Nicolás were the Discalced Augustinian or Augustinian Recollect pioneers in the evangelization of Negros in 1622. A total of 1,500 families were spiritually ministered to by the first Recollect missionaries. Father Jacinto constructed a lowly convent in Binalbagan.

The Calced Augustinians had first evangelized three missions: Binalbagan, Tanjay and Ilog. The mission of Binalbagan was created in

1575, but three years later, it was abandoned for lack of priests. Under the patronage of *Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación* [Our Lady of the Incarnation], Ilog was made a mission by the Augustinian missionaries, as resolved by the provincial chapter of 1584. It was held for some years with “great hardship because of the wilderness of the people of the island” but by 1588 there was no missionary to take care of it and it had to be handed over to the secular clergy of Cebu. Thus, in that same year 1588 Bishop Domingo de Salazar lamented the spiritual neglect of Negros: “The [missions] have been abandoned and the baptized Christians are neglected and have again become idolaters.”¹ The first Augustinian missionary had left the mission of Ilog in 1586. The Jesuits re-established the mission station of Ilog only in 1630.

Tanjay was founded by Calced Augustinian missionaries in 1580 but in 1583 the mission was completely abandoned. Fray Diego Ferreira was the first parish priest in 1599. Thereafter, the Jesuit missionaries from Bohol visited their Tanjay mission station intermittently. In March 1620, Dumaguete was created into a parish with Fr. Juan de Roa y Herrera appointed as parish priest (1620-1623).²

Ilog was under the care of the diocesan priests after 1600. The Jesuits took over in 1630. The foundation of Binalbagan must have been in early 1600s. The last secular priest Fr. Francisco Rodriguez ceded it to the Augustinian Recollects in 1626. Among the Recollects who served Binalbagan were Blessed Martín de San Nicolás, Fr. Lorenzo de San Facundo, Fr. Gaspar de Santa Mónica, Fr. Jacinto de San Fulgencio and Juan de San José. In 1638, Prior Provincial José de la Anunciación returned it to Fr. Francisco Rodríguez in exchange for Romblon.

In the 1580s, the Island of Negros had about 2,987 tributes with each tribute representing five persons, hence the estimate would be 15,000 inhabitants.³ In 1606, the population had dropped to an estimated 13,500. Encomenderos had produced census in 1660 and the population estimate was 12,655.⁴

Foremost Negros historian Ángel Martínez Cuesta names five villages in the 17th century, which would become towns in the future: Ilog,⁵ Kabankalan, Binalbagan, Dumaguete and Tanjay. He further cites

¹Angel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros* (Manila 1980) 35.

²MARTINEZ CUESTA, 70-71.

³ *Ibid*, 39.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁵*Ibid.* 60, Martínez Cuesta believes that Ilog had an old name and it was Jima, found at the banks of Ilog River. Definitely, it was not the town of

the sitios of Inauanan, Manapla, Bago, Siaton, Bayawan, Sipalay, Marayo (Pontevedra), Manalongon (Sta. Catalina), Pandan (Pulupandan) and Dauin. Towns took long to exist for the following reasons: distance from source of livelihood, opposition of *encomenderos* to have their tributes lessened and most of all Moro piratical raids.

Immediately Prior to the Recollects' evangelization

The island of Negros had “fertile lands in greatest abandon.”⁶ The native sowed and planted a little of palay, corn, camote, etc., just enough to satisfy the needs for survival. There was no such thing as agriculture which was the chief means of progress elsewhere. There was no commerce and industry in the place which lay “in the most scandalous misery.”

The 17th and 18th centuries witnessed the lamentable decrease of population as well as the rampant piratical raids and plunder by Moros from Mindanao and Sulu. The pirates razed the churches and rectories to the ground. Palay harvests were carted off to Moro lairs in southern Philippines. Defenseless inhabitants were either slaughtered or captured and later sold in slave markets. Domestic animals they could not take with them as well as farms were mercilessly set afire. Missionaries and parishioners fled to the safety of the mountains and hinterlands. Often without arms and ammunitions, the parish priests were left to their fate; they had to fend for themselves and seek shelter in the wilderness. And the decades rolled on into centuries in barrenness and stagnancy.

The population increased notably prior to the Recollects' return. The causes were the continuous migration of people from neighboring islands, especially Panay. The war against piracies gained ground. Forts strategically located served as early-warning system against piratical invasions. The introduction of the smallpox vaccine aided in no small degree the reduction of mortality rate during viral epidemic. Thus, from a few thousands of scattered residents in the early years of mission work to 4,438 tributes (25,879 souls) in 1794 to 7,356 tributes (42,914) in 1818 and to 94,692 souls in 1846.⁷

Jimamaylan or Himamaylan.

⁶Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas* II (Manila 1925) 122.

⁷MARTINEZ CUESTA, 155-156.

The Recollects' Arrival in Negros in 1848

The arrival of the Recollects in Negros in 1848 is a major event in the history of the island. According to Ángel Martínez Cuesta, “their arrival would soon come to bear on all the aspects of her life. The enthusiasm of the Recollects would contribute decisively toward the creation of a climate of optimism and progress that would soon place Negros in the forefront of the Philippine provinces.”

Martínez Cuesta goes on:

One fact suffices to show how quickly the island developed. Whereas in 1848, it was a semi-abandoned island with no bearing on the country's economic context, in 1892, hardly 44 years later, it came to hold the first place in the country's exports. The exports of Negros sugar amounted in that year to 20% of the total value of the Philippine exports. Simultaneously and strongly intertwined with this fact, other factors came up, such as the multiplication of the population by four times, the massive foundation of new towns and parishes, the immigration of Spanish and Ilongo farmers and Chinese traders, and the improvement of the primary schools, health and communications. In 1896, the Recollects even were able to open in Bacolod a high school for the children of the emerging middle class of the island.

These changes were the happy result of a combination of circumstances, each of them contributing in its own way: The fertility of the soil and the mildness of the climate laid the foundation. Then came high prices for sugar in the world market, the liberalization of trade, the opening of the port of Iloilo to foreign shipping, technical progress, peace and order, the insight and tenacity of a handful of men, such as Fr. Fernando Cuenca, the English merchant Nicholas Loney, and the *hacenderos* Eusebio Ruiz de Luzuriaga, Agustín Montilla, Leopoldo Gastón, Miguel Pérez and Diego de la Viña; the abundance and cheapness of land and labor, the incentives given by some provincial governors and the enthusiasm and experience of a number of parish priests.

For long, both the civil and ecclesiastical authorities had wanted to replace the secular clergy with a religious order. They believed that the regular clergy, being better trained and more zealous, would take the island out of its paralysis and would stimulate the development of its immense natural resources. This belief plus the scarcity of priests in the Diocese of Cebu and a clear mistrust on the political loyalty of the native clergy brought about the turnover of its spiritual administration to the Augustinian Recollects.

On 15 April 1848, Bishop Romualdo Jimeno of Cebu wrote to Governor General Narcisco Clavería about the dearth of native clergy for the curacies of Negros. On 27 May 1848, General Clavería passed to the Provincials of the four religious orders in Manila the bishop's request that asked for the spiritual administration of the island by any of them. Two days later, the Recollect provincial replied and accepted the island, promising to send there six priests within six months. On June 20 1848, Clavería accepted the offering and entrusted "the spiritual administration of Negros to the Recollects that they may occupy those parishes and missions that may be vacant and those that as time goes on would become vacant."

Amlan and Siaton in the east coast and Kabankalan and Himamaylan in the west were the first four parishes turned over to the Recollects between 28 August and 28 October 1848. The first three were at that time newly created parishes, separated from Tanjay, Dauin and Himamaylan, respectively.

Himamaylan had a parish priest since 1842, the well-known peninsular priest Jose María Pavón who had been transferred to the nearby parish of Hinigaran, founded as a parish in the previous month of February.

In the following decades, the Recollects brought about an ambitious plan that changed the religious map of the island with the creation of a great number of new parishes and missions. From 1848 to 1861, no less than seventeen new parishes were created. After five years dedicated to their consolidation, in 1866, began what we may call the second chapter in the parochial organization of Negros, which could be extended until 1890. In these twenty-five years, eleven parishes came into being. The Recollects took over the five parishes that remained in the hands of the secular clergy. These were Tanjay (1866), Bacolod

(1871), Silay (1881), Bago (1882) and Ilog (1889). All of them were ceded to the Recollects only when the diocesan parish priests passed away. In this way, the spiritual administration of the island became homogenous.

The third chapter of the pastoral organization of Negros goes back to 1889, when the Recollects submitted to the national government a missionary plan that foresaw the simultaneous opening of ten new missions. Actually, it did not begin until 1894-1895, when, in the wake of much debate and major changes, the colonial government approved the foundation of no less than twenty-nine missions, and the Recollect superiors began to appoint their respective pastors. This project was the most ambitious pastoral plan ever cast by the Recollects in the Philippines. In it, we can see summarized all their deep concern for the poor and abandoned people. The Recollects were aware of the difficulties the plan entailed. Most of the proposed missions would rise in regions still unexplored with hundreds of deserters, robbers, murderers and every kind of undocumented people. The missionaries were also conscious that among them were also thousands of simple people deprived of any civil and church services. Some of them were still unbelievers, and the Recollects wanted to come to their help.

In five decades the Recollect established in Negros no less than 56 parishes and missionary stations: 16 between 1848 and 1861; 11, from 1866 to 1889; and 29 in the last seven years. We must bear in mind that parishes held by diocesan priests were ceded to the Recollects on account of the resignation or transfer to another parish, like those of Dumaguete (1855) and Dauin (1857). The six ministries were given to the Recollect Order upon the death of the parish priests: Sibulan (1856), Bacolod (1871), Tanjay (1866), Silay (1881), Bago (1882) and Ilog (1889).⁸

Negros Occidental

Bacolod City⁹

At the main entrance of San Sebastian Cathedral in Bacolod City the whitened statues of two great Augustinian Recollect missionaries of Negros garbed in their white habits and black cinctures stand guard. They are Fr. Fernando Cuenca and Fr. Mauricio Ferrero. Cuenca is

⁸MARTINEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros*, see footnote 7, 212.

⁹Pablo PANEDAS, *Iglesias recoletas hoy en Filipinas*, in *Recollectio* 31-32 (2008-2009) 286.

deemed as one of the makers of modern Negros Island.¹⁰ Mauricio Ferrero is dubbed as the Father of Bacolod City.¹¹ He was parish priest of the Negros Occidental capital for a total of 33 years (1870-1894; 1897-1898; 1902-1909).

Besides making and executing the city plan of Bacolod, Fr. Ferrero constructed the strong church, big convent, cemetery, mortuary chapel and schools.¹² He further built the jail noted for its fort-like characteristics. It took six years to finish the church and in 1882 it was inaugurated. The temple has three naves with a gilded *retablo*. Isidro Maria Lago of Iloilo painted and decorated the interior of the house of God. He would do the same for many churches in Negros. On 15 July

¹⁰Born into a family of farmers in Zaragoza, Spain, the future Negrense missionary joined the Recollects in 1844. The month of January in 1850 found him as the first curate of Talisay where he died forty-two years later. An assiduous community builder, Fr. Fernando Cuenca (1824-1902) proclaimed the Good News of 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—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 much from his expertise in herbal medicine and hydrotherapy in his *kumbento-cum-hospital*. He typifies the dedicated friar whose countless contributions to Philippine society, education, culture and economy are etched in the minds of grateful Filipinos.

¹¹The friar from Arnedo, La Rioja, Fr. Mauricio 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 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 rectory—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. The two statues at the Bacolod cathedral are tokens of gratitude to the Recollect priests' works in the service of Bacolod and the whole Negros. See 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; Dennis V. MADRIGAL, Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS. *Padre Mauricio Ferrero, OAR (1844-1915): Father and Builder of Bacolod*. Bacolod City 2016.

¹²L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis*, 172-173.

1932, it became a cathedral, elegant, spacious, enduring tangible legacy of the Augustinian Recollects to the Church in Negros. Its two bell-towers reign over the town square. His legacy to Bacolod was so great that at the outset of the Revolution in Bacolod he was free to go around free, while doing his pastoral tasks.

Kabankalan City

In 1848, Kabankalán had a fertile plain and was given a parish priest at once. In 1905, Fr. Tiburcio Fernández had to start from scratch. Working in a hostile environment after the Revolution, the Recollects perseveringly exerted great effort in regaining the trust of the people. Fr. Felipe Lerena had the church in honor of Saint Francis Xavier inaugurated in 1935. With the creation of the Diocese of Kabankalan, the Recollect church became its cathedral on 30 March 1987. The sugar central and the hacenderos contributed sums of money and materials for the construction.

San Carlos City

The construction of what is now the cathedral church of San Carlos Borromeo was started in 1928 by Father Leoncio Reta.¹³ 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

¹³Born to José María Reta and Claudia Unzué, Fr. Leoncio saw the light of day on 20 March 1893 in San Martín de Unx, Navarra. He entered the Recollect Order at its priory of Monteagudo and professed his simple vows in 1909. After his sacerdotal ordination in 1916 in Marcilla, he set sail for Manila in September of that year. The Recollect'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, Fr. Leoncio was named parish curate of Lemery. At this curacy he exercised his ministry until 31 July 1921. On 3 August he took over Old Escalante. Fr. Leoncio, however, could not bring the church of San Carlos to completion because in May 1928 he had to leave the parish for a foreign assignment. At the provincial chapter of that year, he was elected vice superior of Marcilla, Navarra. In subsequent years, he would return 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). See Miguel AVELLANEDA, *Continuación del Padre Sádaba o segunda parte del 'Catálogo de los religiosos de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos' (1906-1936)* (Rome 1938) 575.

suspend the works. Old people interviewed by this author averred that the Italian *contratista* had run off with the church funds to Australia.

In May 1935, Fr. Manuel Gómara,¹⁴ the builder of the church and convent in Lemery, Calatrava, wanted to continue with the construction. He sought the assistance of the hacenderos of San Carlos, the Menchacas, Llantadas, Broces and Gamboas, who wholeheartedly contributed much to the project. The target amount of ₱12,000 was not enough, and Don Julio Ledesma eventually donated the hefty sum of ₱20,000. The frenzied pace started immediately after and on 4 November 1935 was blest and inaugurated. With the creation of the Diocese of Can Carlos, the Recollect church became its cathedral on 30 March 1987. The church 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 ventilation. The temple of God followed the blueprints drawn by Dr. Cereceda and it was built under the supervision of Angel Locsin Yulo, a Bacolod architect.¹⁵

¹⁴Fr. Manuel Gómara was born in Cascante, Navarre, Spain, on 3 May 1895, the same year San Carlos was founded as a parish. In October 1911 he joined the Recollect Order at Monteagudo. Soon after philosophy and theology in Spain, he was sent to Manila where Archbishop Michael O'Doherty ordained him as priest in December 1919. In May 1920 the parishioners of Bacolod welcomed Padre Manuel as assistant priest. He 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. After seven years in Lemery and Calatrava, the 33-year-old Padre Manuel was assigned to San Carlos in 1928. Here he remained eight years until 1936. And here he returned as parish priest twice: 1937-1940 and 1949-1951. In 1941 he finished the construction of the high school for boys in San Carlos—Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute. After his appointments 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 curate. 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 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, feast of Our Lady of Consolation. He was 84. For more of his life, see Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *San Carlos Parish Yesterday and Today*. Quezon City 1995.

¹⁵Rafael GARCÍA, *Inauguración de la nueva iglesia de San Carlos, I.*

La Carlota City¹⁶

La Carlota became an independent town in 1869. The Recollects sought for its creation as a parish in 1876, separate from San Enrique, and put it under the spiritual patronage of Our Lady of Peace. It was an important center of sugar since the beginning. The sugar cane plantation reached the foot of Mount Kanlaon.

The first parish priest was Fr. Andrés Torres who administered La Carlota for almost twenty years (1877-1888, 1891-1898). He constructed a church with grandiose dimensions: 75 meters high, 14 meters high, 24 meters wide and 40 meters in the transept. It was unfortunate that he could not bring the enormous temple of God to its happy conclusion. The Revolution in Negros caught up with him in 1898.

The future Blessed José Rada, one of the Martyrs of Motril at the onset of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, was arrested in this town with four other confreres and all suffered indignities at the hands of the revolutionaries. Thirty-five Augustinian Recollect curates were held captive in La Granja, forced to work in the fields. After the Revolution, Fr. Pedro Pérez returned to La Carlota only to discover that the church edifice had been taken over by the schismatic Aglipayan sect. The Recollects fought hard to recover the parish church, which they eventually did. The church project was continued and in 1925, Fr. Leandro Nieto, the future apostolic prefect of Palawan, could put the roofing of the church and embellish its interior. Lack of funds forced the delay in the construction. Came Fr. Santiago Vilda who urged his parishioners to work hard for the church construction. The church was finally blest on 23 January 1936.

Calatrava¹⁷

Calatrava became an independent parish in 1870. Formerly a barrio of Escalante in 1860, the new parish of Saint Peter and Saint Paul had the villages of San Carlos, Guadalupe, Zaragoza, San Isidro, Lemery and Norzagaray under its extensive jurisdiction.

A church of *mampostería*, 47 meters long by 14 meters wide, had been built by Fr. Ángel Maestro. The Revolution left Calatrava without priests and the town fell under the Aglipayan sect until 1910.

F., in BPSN 27 (1936) 80-81.

¹⁶Pablo PANEDAS, *Iglesias recoletas*, 333.

¹⁷ Pablo PANEDAS, 331-332.

A new church was built by Fr. Manuel Gómara shortly before 1930. The actual parish church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul was the work of Fr. Facundo Valgañón who administered Calatrava for twenty-six years (1938-1964).

La Castellana¹⁸

An independent town from Pontevedra since 1894, La Castellana had its church razed to the ground by the American soldiers. The rectory was further damaged by the soldiers who made it unfit for habitation for the returning Recollect priest Fr. Pedro Pérez and it was aggravated by the eruption of Kanlaon Volcano in 1904. The present church was commenced by the Recollect parish priest Fr. Juan Lavaca in 1920 with the help of the hacenderos and American benefactors. It was once more burned to the ground by conflagration in 1949 which left only the walls standing. Again with the financial assistance of the hacenderos, Fr. Francisco Azcárate repaired the church and in July 1950 the Recollects ceded it to the Columban priests.

Talisay City¹⁹

The parochial church of Talisay City was initiated by Fr. Fernando Cuenca who was parish priest from 1851 until his death in 1902. It was constructed and dedicated to the Augustinian Saint Nicholas of Tolentino and finished by Fr. Miguel García in the 1920s. Fr. Cuenca's rectory-*cum*-hospital admitted as patients prominent persons, military personnel, diocesan clergy and Recollect confreres including Saint Ezekiel Moreno.²⁰ Prominent people from all over the Spanish colony trooped to Minuluan to undergo hydrotherapeutic cure.

Another church edifice was constructed in 1936 by Fr. Luis Álvarez. The construction stopped as Fr. Álvarez needed the sum of 80,000 pesos to finish the work. It was his successor Fr. Santiago Vilda who finished the church construction and the temple was finally blest by the papal nuncio Msgr. Guglielmo Piani on 9 September 1939.²¹

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 334-335.

¹⁹ PANEDAS, 335-336; Marcelino SIMONENA. *Fr. Fernando Cuenca of St. Joseph, Augustinian Recollect*. Bacolod City 1974.

²⁰Chapter 9 (Convalescence in Talisay, Negros Occidental) in Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *Bishop Ezekiel Moreno, an Augustinian Recollect Saint Among Filipinos* (Quezon City 1993) studies Fr. Cuenca's hydrotherapy in Talisay.

²¹Dennis V. MADRIGAL [ed.], *Handurawan. Visita Iglesia Negros y*

Valladolid

Erected in 1852, the parish of Valladolid was put under the spiritual patronage of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Quiapo, Manila-born Fray Celestino Romero was its first parish priest and he designed the layout of the town. The new stone church was begun by Fr. Carlos Úbeda in 1877 but he could not finish it because of the revolutionary upheaval in 1898. The Revolution erupted in Negros in November 1898 and the Aglipayans occupied the churches, including that of Valladolid. The Mill Hill missionaries served Valladolid parish from 1909 to 1917 and ceded it to the diocesan clergy.²² By 1925, this town was under the parish administration of Bago which likewise took care of San Enrique, Pontevedra and Zaragoza.

A zealous and much-revered Recollect parish priest for over fourteen years—Julián Miguel de San Antonio de Padua—who traveled to Iloilo City for treatment but passed away there in August 1872. His mortal remains were requested by the town authorities. From Iloilo the remains were transported by ship to Pulupandan, wherefrom the grieving parishioners walked with lighted candles in procession to Valladolid where they arrived at ten o'clock at night. Fray Julián was interred two days after in the parish church.²³

Old Escalante²⁴

The huge Silay parish jurisdiction had two of its barrios made into parishes: Nueva Sevilla or Escalante and Tucgagauan or Saravia. Escalante became a town in 1861 and it had Calatrava, Toboso, Salamanca, Bontoc and Arguelles as barrios.²⁵ Fr. Cipriano Navarro was its first parish priest of Saint Francis of Assisi Parish and served its parishioners in 1860-1867. Fr. Gregorio Aperte built the old parish church. In 1901, Fr. Eusebio Valderrama was put in charge of the parish after the Revolution. On the night of 15 May 1909, Fr. Víctor Baltanás was murdered in the rectory by an Aglipayan follower. He was a “person of peaceful disposition, ...incapable of doing any harm to anyone intentionally,” a victim of vilest sectarian Aglipayan conspiracy.²⁶

Recoletos (Bacolod City 2006) 45.

²²*Ibid.*, 49.

²³ SÁDABA, 472-472.

²⁴MADRIGAL, 77.

²⁵MARTINEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros*, 175.

²⁶The chapter *Padre Víctor Baltanás, Martyr of Escalante (+1909)* deals with the murder and trial in Bacolod. Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS,

Saravia

Formerly known as Tucaguan [or Tukgawan], the new parish was set up in 1860 and was renamed Saravia after Negros Politico-Military Governor Emilio Saravia. The parish jurisdiction included Marianas (Himogoan), Valdivieso (now Cadiz), Columela, Sicaba, Manapla and Torenos (Victorias). Saravia was renamed Enrique B. Magalona in 1967 in honor of a senator.

After his pastoral assignments in Liloan (Cebu), Dumaguete and Siaton, Fr. Pedro Lago administered the parish of Saravia in 1861-1872. His successors Fr. Lorenzo Cordon and Fr. Francisco Rada built a bigger church which existed until 1951. Fr. Inocente Lamata was the last parish priest in 1921-1922.²⁷

Negros Oriental

Bacong²⁸

A town since 1837, Bacong was separated from its matrix Dumaguete. It became a parish with former Prior Provincial Fr. Joaquín Soriano as its first parish priest in 1849-1858.²⁹ He first constructed provisional quarters and chapel. He then built the convent made of strong materials in 1856. The church dedicated to Saint Augustine of Hippo is attributed wholly to its hardworking parish priest Fr. Leandro Arrué.³⁰ He laid its cornerstone in 1866. During his second term that started in 1882, he finished the exterior of the temple. He was busy with the embellishment of the church interior when he was elevated to the see of Jaro in Iloilo in 1885. Fr. Laureano Navarro started the belfry. Fr. Jorge Carcavilla purchased the pipe organ from the Roqués Brothers of Zaragoza, Spain, installed in his church in 1894. The Recollects left Bacong during the Revolution and returned to the town in 1907. They finally ceded it to the diocesan clergy in 1965.

Sibulan

The parish of Sibulan was established in 1838 and was put under the religious patronage of the Lisbon-born Franciscan miracle-

The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines. Hagiography and History (Quezon City 2001) 89-98.

²⁷MADRIGAL, 83; SÁDABA, 462; AVELLANEDA, 85.

²⁸PANEDAS, 33.; MADRIGAL, 65

²⁹SÁDABA, 393.

³⁰Sádaba, 506-508 .

worker San Antonio de Padua.³¹ The civil town had been founded a year earlier, *i.e.*, 1837. The parish of Sibulan was ceded by the diocesan clergy to the Augustinian Recollects in February 1856³² after the death of its unnamed diocesan priest.³³

Sibulan was ceded to the Recollects in 1856 with Fr. Tomás Mezquita as first parish priest. He found his curacy bereft of church and rectory which had been razed to the ground in 1854. 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 had *harigues* [posts] made of sturdy wood and its walls were *cotta*.³⁴ Subsequent parish priests did great improvements to the edifice. Fr. Pedro Echevarría's successor, Fr. Eugenio Sola, who would become prior general of the Recollect Order in 1918-1920, constructed the retablos. The construction of the church atrium was done during the term of Fr. Manuel Clemente, who fenced it with wood and *cotta*. Every hardworking parish priest of Sibulan did not stop doing projects for the embellishment of the divine temple.³⁵

In the wake of his 1904 pastoral visit in 1904, Bishop Frederick Rooker of Jaro assigned a Recollect priest to Sibulan as specifically requested by the parishioners. With the prior provincial's consent, Fr. Nemesio Llorente was sent from Manila in August 1904 to San Antonio de Padua Parish in the wake of the Revolution in Negros Island in 1898 that had expelled almost all the Recollects from the parishes.³⁶ Recollect

³¹MARCELLÁN, 143.

³²Licinio 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.

³³MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros*, 122. 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 only after the diocesan priest had died. See MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los Agustinos Recoletos* II, 784.

³⁴Also *cota* or *kutà*. It is made of masonry, customarily built to enclose the churchyard and the cemetery.

³⁵RUIZ II, 157.

³⁶The author of the article in *Handurawan. Visita Iglesia Negros y Recoletos*, 69, is wrong when he claims that Fr. Licinio Ruiz was the first Recollect priest to return to this parish in May 1906 after the Revolution.

biographer Franciso Sádaba wrote that Fr. Llorente “was welcomed by the residents of this town, where he continues until now [1906] with extraordinary displays of joy.”³⁷ It was the collaborative effort of Fr. Llorente, the town leaders and parishioners that the attempts of revolutionary leaders and arsonists were frustrated from their church-burning activities in Sibulan. Unfortunately, its church edifices were preserved from destruction, unlike those of Valencia, Bais and Amlan.

The end of World War II found the church in ruins, as the Japanese Imperial Army made it their garrison and it was bombarded by the Liberation forces. The convent was likewise ruined. Fr. José Lizárraga rebuilt the church—63 meters by fourteen meters—in 1949. Fr. Fermín Samanes finished its construction in the 1950s. Sibulan was ceded to the diocese of Dumaguete in 1984.

Dauin

In 1857, Dauin was ceded to the Recollect province of Saint Nicholas whose superiors assigned Fr. Manuel Navarro as parish priest. He laid the foundations of the solid church, but it was Fr. Manuel Cabriada who finished it. Fr. Tomás Gonzáles endowed the parish with its convent.

Valencia

Luzuriaga or Nueva Valencia had Fr. Tomás Mezquita as its pioneering parish priest. It was his good fortune to erect the provisional church, convent and school buildings. Fr. Eladio Logroño erected the solid convent between 1869 and 1875. He then went on to build the strong church in 1886. He brought potable water source to the town. The Recollects left the parish during the Revolution only to return to it in 1904 in the wake of repeated requests. In their effort to scare and drive away the parish priest, some malcontents burned the convent and church of Valencia. But the undaunted Fr. Paulino Jiménez built another very strong church and convent with the willing cooperation of the whole parish population.

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 served the parishes of Siaton, Zamboanguita, Bacolod and in the curacies of Lazi and Maria in Siquijor Island, cf. AVELLANEDA, 77.

³⁷SÁDABA, 594-595.

Nueva Valencia was created into a parish in 1854. The church collapsed during the year.³⁸ Fr. Eladio Logroño built another edifice. The revolutionaries razed it to the ground. They did the same to the churches in Amlan and Bais. Fr. Paulino Jiménez reconstructed the church in record time. It was made of *mampostería* [rubblework] and a façade that provided the church with fine ventilation.

Zamboanguita³⁹

Zamboanguita was separated from Dauin in 1866. Fr. Faustino Sánchez was assigned as its first parish priest. The church construction began in the following year. The temple took so long until it was finished in 1890. Fr. Alejandro Osés covered the roof with galvanized iron in 1923. World War II demolished the church. Father Leandro Palacios celebrated masses and other administered the sacraments in a chapel made of bamboo and nipa. A new church rose in 1948 under the able aegis of Fr. Fermín Samanes who finished it in 1950. His own brother Fr. Gregorio Samanes built the convent. The church was begun and continued by the following Recollects: Tomás González, Laureano Navarro, Matías Villamayor, Lorenzo Cordon, Manuel Gamboa and Alejandro Osés.

Manjuyod

Once a part of Tanjay, Manjuyod was placed under Recollect administration as early 1849 and under the spiritual patronage of Saint Francis of Assisi. When it became a parish in 1854, a Recollect priest was assigned to it.⁴⁰ It was the hardworking Fr. Antonio Moreno who planned the streets, tribunal buildings and bridges, enough to make it a decent town. The tribute population increased. The people who once inhabited the uplands decided to construct their houses in the town and settled in it. Fr. Moreno further built the church that he blest in 1850. Manjuyod had four barangays, namely, Ayungon, Panabon, Malaga and San Antonio where new Christian and upland families resided. In a span of four years (1850-1854) Fr. Moreno could baptize four hundred adults of both sexes. This admirable achievement was not left unnoticed by Governor General Marqués de Novaliches who gave him additional financial support from government coffers.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹Ricardo JARAUTA, *Album de la Orden de los Agustinos Recoletos*, 46.

⁴⁰MARCELLÁN, 146-147.

Tayasan

In 1849, the superior government separated the Tanjay barrios of Manjuyod, Ayungon, Tayasan and Jimalalud. All these four villages became the sole parish of Tayasan under the patronage of Saint Anthony of Padua. Fr. José María Ruiz came to Tayasan only in 1854. As soon as the parish priest took possession of the new parish, he transferred it to a better and healthful location where he erected his rectory. Little by little, the people followed suit and built their houses along the streets of the present site of the town of Tayasan, according to the plan prepared by Father Ruiz and approved by the provincial governor. Fr. Bernardino Ramirez constructed the church of Tayasan with half of its structure of stone materials. In 1894, the church buildings were all finished.

Jimalalud

In February 1886, the new curate Fr. Cándido Díez saw the extremely dilapidated condition of the church and rectory of Tayasan and decided to move the town to a barrio called Jimalalud. He constructed a sturdy temple of God in Jimalalud whose residents willingly offered their cooperation to him. The bishop approved the plan but put the sole condition of preserving the buildings of Tayasan.⁴¹ Fr. Bernardino Ramírez spent his energy in erecting the two school edifices. Another floor was added to the rectory of Jimalalud.

Guihulngan

Founded at the outset of the 19th century, the parish of Guihulngan invoked *Nuestra Señora del Buen Suceso* as patroness.⁴² Unbelievers and Negritos occupied the upland territories of Guihulngan and were uncivilized and resented baptism. Fr. Miguel Alvarez was parish priest when the town already enjoyed good well-planned roads and a cluster of resettled inhabitants. In June 1860, Moro pirates sacked the town, razed the rectory, church and houses to the ground. They carted off everything of value including the four bells of the belfry. The mission had to be rebuilt. In 1874, a big fire gutted the new rectory and parochial church. Five years later, a very strong typhoon pulled down the new church edifices. Fr. Angel Martinez at the helm of the parish administration in 1892-1894⁴³ started to erect a bigger, stronger and more spacious

⁴¹ L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica* II, 164.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 165-166.

⁴³ SÁDABA, 646.

temple of God, but the events of the Philippine Revolution interrupted his task and that of his successor.

Vallehermoso

The area between San Carlos and Guihulngan was a village named Vallehermoso which was inhabited by upland unbelievers. It was a haven for malcontents, outlaws and fugitives.⁴⁴ The Christians who lived in that village had completely forgotten about God, immersed in all kinds of vices and totally ignorant of the teachings and precepts of the Catholic faith. Civil order was non-existent.

The first missionary in 1895 was Fr. Pedro Bengoa Cárcamo from La Rioja, Spain.⁴⁵ He had to teach the people again about the Christian doctrine and prepare them for the reception of the sacraments. When he left the place, Vallehermoso was a town and parish in every sense of the word. It is worthy of note that Fr. Bengoa joined the national upheaval in eastern Negros. The well-to-do *hacendero* and military general of the Revolution of Negros Don Diego de la Viña asked his Recollect friend to be the chaplain of the revolutionary forces. Thus, in the history of our Philippine Revolution (1896-1901), there was the much-hated Spanish friar—vilified by the Propaganda Movement of Rizal and Marcelo H. del Pilar, the hapless victim of carnage by Bonifacio's Katipunan revolutionists, easy target of hatred and violence by schismatic Aglipayans—who served as chaplain of Filipino revolutionaries!

Dumaguete City⁴⁶

An age-old parish, Dumaguete was founded in 1620. A Spanish diocesan priest, Father Jose Fernández de Septién at the helm of the parish in 1754-1776 built a solid church. This church interior was totally burned down in 1846, only the walls were left standing. The first Recollect Fr. Antonio Úbeda took charge of the parish in 1855. Subsequently parish priests—Antonio Moreno, Juan Félix de la Encarnación, Mariano Bernad—rehabilitated the future cathedral and embellished the interior. Fr. Antonio Moreno endowed the church with

⁴⁴ L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* II, 166-167.

⁴⁵ Padre Pedro Bengoa's interesting life, ministry and revolutionary activity are detailedly discussed in José Manuel Bengoa, *Un fraile riojano en la Revolución Filipina: Pedro Bengoa Cárcamo*, OAR. Zaragoza 1998.

⁴⁶ L. RUIZ II, 143-144; MADRIGAL, 68.

precious ornaments, silver altar and processional candlesticks and large finely crafted candlesticks for the main altar. It was during his term when the two *mampostería* school buildings were erected. He passed away in Dumaguete during the construction of the cemetery.

Fr. Juan Félix de la Encarnación replaced the primitive flooring of the church with durable durable wood. He subsidized the Manila artists to craft the magnificent *retablo*. He provided for all the needs of the church. Fr. Mariano Bernad had the interior decorated with oil paintings and finished the construction of the cemetery. He made important improvements on the church and rectorys. He also supervised the construction of roads, bridges and drainages.⁴⁷ After the Revolution, the Recollects returned to Dumaguete in 1909. Fr. Calixto Gaspar replaced the Filipino curate after his death. Fr. Melchor Ardanaz constructed a new rectory because the old one had been converted into a school for girls. The iconic belfry was constructed during the term of Fr. Francisco Ortuoste in 1925-1931. The last Recollect Fr. Alejandro Osés ceded the parish to the diocesan clergy in 1954.

Siaton

Historians Jarauta and Licinio Ruiz both declare that Siaton was handed over to the Recollects in 1848. Fr. Agustin Olmedillas took possession of the parish of San Nicolás de Bari. Fr. Tomás Mezquita succeeded him few months after. He scoured mountains to convince the inhabitants to resettle in the lowlands. The missionary succeeded in baptizing a great number of unbelievers. Fr. Mezquita started the construction of both rectory and church which were completed in later years by Fr. Manuel Cabriada and Fr. Julián Adán. A violent typhoon ruined the church in 1875. An earthquake partially ruined the church in 1925 and brought down the bell. Succeeding curates took turns in rehabilitating the church. Fr. Gregorio Samanes, parish priest in 1951-1958, finally reconstructed the church and the bell-tower. The last Recollect of Siaton was Fr. Esteban García when the parish was ceded to the diocesan clergy of Dumaguete in February 1960.⁴⁸

Churches and Rectories

Early churches

The first church edifice in the Spanish times was simply a “rectangular building with bamboo walls with a nipa or cogon roofing,

⁴⁷ R. JARAUTA, 40.

⁴⁸ MADRIGAL, 63.

often without doors or windows.”⁴⁹ Naturally, these were provisional temples found mostly in barrios. Later on, the parish priests built better churches. But it often happened that this type of church existed during the entire Spanish period. Martínez Cuesta enumerates them: Giligaon, Bombonon, Pamplona, Bais, Ayungon, Hibaiyo, Toboso, Honob-honob, Kabangkalan Norte, Concepcion, Alegria, Kumaliskis, Malibog, Guimbalaon, La Carlota, San Miguel, Magallon, Caron, Dancalan, Suay, Inawanan, Sipalay and Campomanes. The reason was that these were mission parishes created in 1894 or 1895. The convents were almost always of the same materials as those of the churches. Ayungon, Bais and La Carlota had better convents, though.

Durable and spacious churches

The second type of church in Negros are those made of first-class wood like ipil, molave or narra and their roof was made of nipa or oftentimes galvanized iron. The churches of this second type were as follows: Ayuquitan, Amlan, Basay, Bayawan, Guihulngan, Vallehermoso, Manjuyod, Tayasan, Valencia, Cadiz, Sicaba, Manapla, Victorias, Silay, Talisay, Sum-ag, Bago, Binalbagan, La Castellana, Ilog, Calatrava, San Carlos and Cauayan. Most churches had sturdy concrete or stone foundations, like the twenty-one convents of Negros, their upper floors were usually made of wood.⁵⁰

Stone churches comprise the third type. A priest who stayed long in a parish was wont to construct a strong temple of God, to last a long time, barring of course natural disasters like earthquakes, typhoons or conflagration. The list of sturdy cathedrals and strong stone churches and their Recollect builders found in Appendix 2 of this research work.

Writers and Lexicographers

Fr. Juan Félix de la Encarnación (1806-1879)

A missionary from Valladolid, Spain, Fr. Juan Félix de la Encarnación 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. He penned several devotional works, translations, census book with geographical and historical accounts of parishes and convents (1851) and studies on

⁴⁹ MARTINEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros*, 192.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 194.

Filipino surnames and improvements for Negros Island. Fr. Juan Félix, expert in the Visayan language and an accomplished writer, authored the two voluminous books of the unparalleled *Diccionario bisaya-español, español-bisaya*, “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* still in use by lexicographers, historians, Visayan writers and teachers.

Fr. Manuel Cabriada (1830-1905)

To help the newly-ordained confreres and other priests, Fr. Manuel Cabriada de la Virgen del Carmen compiled and published, together with other Recollect ministers, the *Colección de sermones en idioma bisaya de los misterios de nuestra Religion, de las festividades de la Virgen Santisima y de algunos santos y de otros varios asuntos* [Collection of sermons in Bisayan language about the mysteries of our Religion, about the feasts of Most Holy Virgin and about some saint and other various topics] in 1881. He started working in the parishes of Bohol in 1852. He spent many years in Siaton and Tolong. In Dauin, he stayed longest: 1874- 1897.⁵¹

Fr. Pedro Sanz (1837-1888)

Fr. Pedro Sanz de la Virgen de la Paz was parish priest of Himamaylan for twenty-seven years.⁵² He had short stint in Bacong and Hinigaran. He wrote the *Plan de Misiones para Isla de Negros* which had two editions (1881, 1883) with four pages including twenty-one pages census and maps. He authored two devotionalary books—*Día diez y nueve* [The nineteenth day] (1883) and *Culto perpetuo* [Perpetual worship] (1885)—in honor of Saint Joseph in Visaya Ilongo language both published in Manila.

Fr. Mauricio Ferrero

Fr. Mauricio Ferrero is the author of *Proyecto de misiones en la isla de Negros y ligera reseña de la isla al hacerse cargo de ella los*

⁵¹Francisco 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 día*, (Madrid 1906) 459-460.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 493.

PP. Recoletos y su estado en la actualidad [Mission Project in Negros Island, Brief Review of the Island when the Recollect Fathers took charge of it and its Actual State], published in Iloilo in 1889.⁵³

Education apostolate

Colegio de San José, Bacolod City

The first formal experience of the Augustinian Recollects in the systematic education of young Filipinos was a resounding success. Their administration of the diocesan seminary in Vigan, Ilocos Sur, started when Msgr. Mariano Cuartero (1830-1887), Bishop of Nueva Segovia (1874-1887), invited them to Vigan. Prior Provincial Fr. Juan Cruz Gómez (1835-1912) accepted the administration of the seminary. Fr. Toribio Moreno (1857-1896) and Fr. Luis Cabello (1858-1926) took charge of the seminary.⁵⁴ In 1883, Fr. Celedonio Mateo (1857-1941) was the seminary rector and stayed there until 1895 with a total of eleven friars in the faculty during the thirteen-year administration (1882-1895). New subjects were added to the curricular requirements of Philosophy, Dogmatic Theology and Moral Theology, to wit: Catechism, Geography, Sacred History, Grammar, World History, Philippine History and History of Spain.⁵⁵

Despite the positive evaluation of the Recollect seminary administrators made by the new Dominican Bishop José Hevía de Campomanes, the decision to pull out the Recollects from Vigan was firmed up in 1895 by the prior provincial Andrés Ferrero in order to set up their own school. Soon enough the government recognition was acquired in February 1896, and the permit was issued to put up a school “under the protection of Saint Joseph, affiliated to the Royal and Pontifical University of Santo Tomas of this capital.”

The prior provincial and his council favored Bacolod as the site of the new high school. Pedro Corro (1864-1934), the first rector, was joined by Francisco Sádaba (1871-1925), Benito Gabasa, former faculty members in Vigan. Other Recollect faculty members were

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 532-533.

⁵⁴ Manuel CARCELLER, *Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* XII (Madrid 1974) 440-442.

⁵⁵ José Luis SÁENZ, *Actividad pastoral, social y cultural de los agustinos recoletos en Filipinas*, in *Los agustinos recoletos ante la nueva evangelización* (Madrid 1995) 246-306. Our quote is in page 295. The article was earlier published in *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino* [BPSN] 82 (1992) 21-84 and in *Recollectio* 16 (1993) 299-300.

Juan Briones, Juan Lapardina, Gerardo Larrondo, Juan Benito Cañas, León Ochoa, and León Galdeano.⁵⁶ On 29 June 1896, the school was inaugurated with a holy Mass. The building temporarily occupied by the Recollect school was owned by Doña Carmen Cañete. The Recollects had grandiose plans to erect their own school edifice. About a hundred students were enrolled in the first months of the pioneering school. The first Recollect-owned school, however, did not last long: two years later, on 5 September 1898, it closed its portals owing to the Philippine Revolution and the Spanish-American War.⁵⁷

Colegio de Santa Rita, San Carlos City

It was another Recollect priest who commenced the first ever Catholic school in Negros. Fr. Manuel Gómara fetched the three Augustinian Recollect sisters from Manila to establish Colegio de Santa Rita in San Carlos City. A leading citizen of San Carlos Don Silverio Vicente and Fr. Leoncio Reta planned this project in the mid-1920s and it was Fr. Manuel who carried out their plan in 1933.⁵⁸

The first sisters were Sister Asunción de San José, Sister Pilar Lucero de San José,⁵⁹ Sister Mercedes Jayme de la Sagrada Familia.⁶⁰ The objectives of the new school, as declared by Fr. Gómara, have been that the religious sisters were not solely to manage a school where they could educate girls of more or less upper-class families. In addition, they were to cooperate in an active and effective manner with the parish priest, heeding his supervision and initiatives: Teaching the Christian doctrine to children in public schools, barrios and haciendas, and preparing them for the First Holy Communion; attending to the adornment, neatness and embellishment of the church and its sacred ornaments; promoting the

⁵⁶MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros*, 356, footnote 201.

⁵⁷L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* II, 322; MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros*, 322.

⁵⁸Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos, *The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines. Hagiography and History* (Quezon City 2001) 203-221.

⁵⁹Sister Pilar Lucero was directress of Saint Rita College-Manila in 1924-1929. She served as directress of Colegio de Santa Rita in 1933.

⁶⁰Sister Mercedes Jayme was born in 1906 to Antonio Jayme and Firmata Tijing of Bacolod City. Through the Recollect priests' example, she entered the religious life in 1931. She was sent to various communities either as directress, principal or superior. He was named superior before World War II until 1942. In 1964, she was elected third councilor of the congregation. She retraced her steps to San Carlos as superior of the community in 1965-1970. See Bernardita VILLAMOR, *The Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters, Past and Present* (Manila 1991) 21, 136.

growth and progress of religious organizations, like that of the Sacred Heart, Daughters of Mary, Catholic Action, etc. The whole thing seemed to conform very befittingly to the spirit and name of their institution *Augustinian Recollect Missionaries*.⁶¹ Don Silverio Vicente's widow, Doña Eusebia Broce, assisted the pioneering sisters even temporarily lodging them at her own residence and in later having Colegio de Santa Rita building constructed on a church property donated by the Broce family.

Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos, San Carlos City

The prior provincial of Saint Nicholas de Tolentino Province Fr. Pedro García de Galdiano (1897-1969) followed up the thirteenth ordinance of the provincial chapter held at Recoletos church with his salutatory circular on 14 April 1940 to all religious priests and brothers of Saint Nicholas province that then included the Philippines, Spain, England, Venezuela, Brazil and China. In it the prior provincial disclosed the true motives behind the Augustinian Recollect Order's decision to establish Catholic schools:

In Christian towns where people have known the Maker of their souls, [Saint Nicholas Province] 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.²

The provincial council with the prior provincial and his four councilors—Manuel S. Gómara, Aurelio E. Lacruz, Pedro I. Moreno, Domingo G. Carceller—and provincial secretary Martín T. Legarra met in session on 19 April 1940. The council members unanimously decided to establish two schools. One of them was to bear the name *Colegio Fray Luis de León* which was to be set up at Caracas, Venezuela. The other was to be called *Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute* at San Carlos. This name would be altered to *Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos* in the postwar years.

⁶¹ ROMANILLOS, *The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines*, 209.

Why put up the school at San Carlos? Among the reasons cited were: they took into account the ideal geographical location of San Carlos—being the focal point of the cities of Dumaguete, Cebu and Bacolod. They pointed out San Carlos' great potential for rapid development and economic progress with the presence of the sugar centrifugal mill built in 1912. They were likewise aware of the success of the girls' school owned and administered by Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters. They could not find any reason why a similar private Catholic school exclusively for boys would not succeed.

In June 1940, the Recollect school started as Boys' Department, affiliated to Colegio de Santa Rita. Its first rector, Fr. Pedro I. Zunzarren de la Inmaculada Concepción (1898-1950) employed four teachers at the start of school year 1940-1941. The construction of the new building was supervised by Fr. Tirso Ruana, the parish priest of San Carlos, who had worked for over twenty years in such Negros Occidental curacies as Kabankalan, Isabela, Bacolod and Vito, Sagay.¹⁵ The construction started in December 1940. Fr. Ruana did not live to see the inauguration for he passed away in May 1941. His successor Fr. Manuel Gómara finished it on time for the school year 1941-1942 which was unfortunately interrupted by World War II. A total of 153 students—including eleven in their fourth year—commenced the new academic year of Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute. The new building was blest by Msgr. Casimiro Lladoc, the first bishop of Bacolod, in July 1941. Twenty-four Recollect parish priests of Negros had pitched in their monetary contributions for the construction of the school edifice.

University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos

Occidental Negros Institute was the original name of what is now University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos.⁶² Founded 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

⁶²*Administrative Faculty Manual, Tertiary Level, University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos*, Bacolod City 1991.

extensive piece of land of fifteen hectares.⁶³ 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.

Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity (SARF)

In the 17th century, the Recollects missionaries accepted tertiaries or members of the Third Order, whose members in the 1970s were either called tertiaries or Secular Augustinian Recollects.⁶⁴ In Butuan, the Recollect chronicler highlighted the collaborative efforts in the ministry of two local women named Clara Calima and Isabel in 1623.⁶⁵ In 1650, a community of tertiaries lived in the mission of Bolinao in what is now Pangasinan. In 1670, a Third Order existed in Taytay, Palawan and a few years later another in Casiguran in actual Aurora province. They had produced wonderful fruits as cooperators in the Recollect mission work, living lives of prayer and generously devoting themselves to apostolate. The present OAR Constitutions refer to them as members of Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity who, “remaining in the world, pursue evangelical perfection according to the charism of the Order.”

The SARF is relatively new in Negros Island. The first chapter in Negros started at Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos whose members were mostly faculty members initially when Fray Rafael Cabarles, CST-R director/principal wrote to Vicar Provincial Victor Lluch asking for the establishment of SARF. Forty-one interested persons signed the petition letter. In 1991-1992, Fray Crisostomo Garnica acted as spiritual director of the core group comprising twenty CST-R faculty members. The official foundation of the SARF San Carlos was sanctioned on 23 March 1992 by the prior provincial with Cabarles as spiritual director. On 2 April 1992, the pioneering 23 members made their promise.⁶⁶

⁶³Inocencio PEÑA, *La primera Universidad de la Orden*, in BPSN 52 (1962) 446-451; Federico TERRADILLOS, *Universidad de Negros Occidental-Recoletos. Bacolod, Filipinas*, in BPSN 54 (1964) 67-72.

⁶⁴*Constituciones de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* núm 109 (Rome 1975) 106.

⁶⁵LUIS DE JESÚS, *370th Anniversary (1646-2016) of Isabel of Butuan: Life of a Pioneering Augustinian Recollect Beata or Tertiary in the Philippines*, in *The Recoletos Observer*, vol 18 (January-December 2017) 44-46.

⁶⁶ Dennis V. MADRIDGAL, *The Augustinian Recollect Secular*

The SARF – Bacolod was set up at the University of Negros Occidental – Recoletos on 28 August 1998 by the former university president Hermenigildo Ceniza. The first fourteen SARF members made their promise on 20 October 1999. They attended the Eucharistic Sacrifice on a specific Saturday, prayed the Liturgy of the Hours, held regular meetings and engaged themselves in community outreach programs.

Fray Arnie Visitacion met the core group of SARF chapter in Valencia, Negros Oriental. Parish Priest Fray Rafael Cabarles accepted the first thirteen aspirants to the chapter that was created in 1998. Their activities included sick visits, liturgical celebrations, formation of lectors and commentators and support to the religious community.

In Talisay City, Fray Casiano Cosmilla encouraged the establishment of its SARF chapter in 1993. The interested persons were initiated to SARF national convention in Cebu City in 1992. This was followed by their attendance at Casiciaco Recoletos in Baguio City in 1993. Thereafter, Cosmilla became its first spiritual director.

Augustinian Recollect Contemplative Nuns

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.⁶⁷

Fraternities in Negros, in Handurawan. Visita Iglesia Negros y Recoletos (Bacolod City 2006) 127-129.

⁶⁷The historical account in PDF was provided in August 2020 by the actual Prioress Mother Ma. Emy Catalonia and Sor Shirley Nonato, first Filipina vocations to the Augustinian Recollect contemplative life of Saint Ezekiel Moreno Monastery.

Conclusion

The most significant legacy of the Order of Augustinian Recollects to this island of Negros is without any trace of a doubt **is** the Christian faith. This is the Recollects' intangible legacy, the faith and hope and love that sustained the People of God in this beloved island, deemed as the land of promise and hope in the past by adventurous immigrants, well-off hacenderos, daring merchants and seasonal migrant workers (*sacadas*) from Cebu, Bohol, Panay and Luzon.

Now it is also worthwhile re-echoing the grateful words of Bishop Casimiro M. Lladoc as he commemorated in 1948 the first centennial of the Augustinian Recollects' methodical evangelization of Negros Island:

From the year 1848 to the present time they have been working in this portion of the Vineyard of the Lord. Our Lord has their names written in the book of life. The fruitful results of their evangelical work are incalculable indeed. That meager group of Christians of a century ago has increased to more than a million Catholics, which constitute today the Catholic population of this progressive Island of Negros and this is the most eloquent testimony of God's blessings on their evangelical enterprises.

Taking into consideration these great benefits obtained from heaven during these hundred years of plethoric and fruitful missionary work of the Augustinian Recollect Fathers, it is worthy and just to express publicly our gratitude to God and to give likewise public and solemn homage to those who were responsible for that beautiful realization of the salvation of souls and for the religious and material progress of our country.⁶⁸

We now bring to mind what Msgr. Jaime Morelli, chargé d'affaires of the Philippine Nunciature, declared on the Recollects in Negros six decades ago:

The Christian civilization that distinguishes the Philippines is the work of the religious congregations in the Islands. This is a kind of work which cannot be valued

⁶⁸Casimiro LLADOC, *Message, The Thomasian Memoir 1948-1949* (San Carlos 1949) 7.

in terms of material values. It is a work which tends to link man with God, which is a kind of relation of which only intelligent beings are capable. If the Philippines is rated among the Catholic countries, it is because of the work done in this respect by the religious congregations among which occupies a conspicuous place the illustrious Order of the [Augustinian] Recollect Fathers.⁶⁹

Appendix 1: OLD AND ACTUAL NAMES OF BARRIOS/BARANGAYS AND TOWNS

OLD NAME	PRESENT NAME
Simancas	La Carlota
Torenos	Victorias
Magallanes	Sagay
Odiong	La Castellana
Minuluan	-Talisay
Valdivieso	-Cádiz
Tucgaguan	-Saravia (Enrique B. Magalona)
Nueva Sevilla	Escalante
Madrigal	San Enrique
Marayo	Pontevedra
Zaragoza	Ma-ao
Kabankalan Norte	Eustaquio Lopez
Carolan	Orong
Manalongon	-Santa Catalina
Pandan	Pulupandan
Amblang	Amlan
Luzuriaga	Nueva Valencia (Valencia)
Payabon	Bindoy

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 5.

Appendix 2**Churches built by the Augustinian Recollects in Negros⁷⁰**

Cathedrals	Names of Priests
Bacolod	Mauricio Ferrero
Kabankalan	Felipe Lerena
San Carlos	Leoncio Reta, Manuel Gómara
Dumaguete	José Manuel Fernández de Septién (diocesan) and Mariano Bernad. Enlarged by Fermín Samanes who also built the façade.

Parish Churches (of Strong Materials)***Negros Oriental***

Siaton	Tomás Mezquita, Manuel Cabriada, Julián Adán
Dauin	Manuel Cabriada, Tomás González
Bacong	Leandro Arrué, Laureano Navarro, Lorenzo Cordón, Jorge Carcavilla
Sibulan	Pedro Echeverría
Tanjay	Julián Adán
Valencia	Paulino Jiménez
Zamboanguita	Tomás González, Laureano Navarro, Matías Villamayor, Lorenzón Cordón, Alejandro Osés

Negros Occidental

alatrava	-	Facundo Valganón, Manuel Gómara
Hinigaran	-	Francisco Ayarra
Isabela	-	Mariano Lasa
Murcia	-	Miguel Álvarez

⁷⁰A. MARTINEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros*, Manila 1981; *Brief Sketch of the Improvements by the Recollect Fathers*, in *The Thomasian Memoir* (San Carlos 1949) 61.

Pontevedra	Andrés Ferrero
San Enrique	Inocencio Sola
Saravia	Hilarión Narro, Francisco Rada
Talisay	Luis Álvarez, Santiago Vilda
Valladolid	Carlos Úbeda
La Castellana	Juan Lavaca, Francisco Azcárrate
Escalante	Juan Rodríguez, Juan Lavaca
Vito (Sagay)	Gregorio Aperte, Tirso Ruana
Murcia	Jacinto Alberdi
Binalbagan	Pedro García

Appendix 3

Creation of Towns /Parishes or Cession to Augustinian Recollects⁷¹

Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental

Amlan	1848	Silay	1888
Hinigaran	1850	Manapla	1890
Minuluan	1850	Victorias\	1895
Dumaguete	1852	Bombonon	1895
Valladolid	1852	Malibo (Mali-bog)	
Manjuyod	1854	Guinbalaon	1895
Tolong	1855	Concepcion	1895
Sibulan	1856	Alegria	1895
Ayuquitan	1856	Kumaliskis	1895
Guihulngan	1856	Zaragoza	1895
Nueva Valencia	1856	Pamplona	1895
Dauin	-1857	Magallon	1895
Escalante	1860	Calag-calag	1895
Murcia	1860	Odiong	1895
Saravia	1860	Suay	1895
Zamboanguita	1866	Hibaiyo	1895

⁷¹ A. MARTINEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros; This Table Shows the Inhabitants and foundation years, in The Thomasian Memoir* (San Carlos 1949) 62.

San Enrique	1867	Carol-an	1895
Inayauan	1868	Dangcalan	1895
Isabela	1861	Campomanes	1895
Bacolod	1871	Basay	1895
Cadiz Nuevo	1871	San Carlos	1895
Bayawan	1872	Toboso	1895
Bais	-1873	Honob-Honob	1895
Pontevedra	1873	Arguelles	1895
Calatrava	1873	Sicaba	1895
La Carlota	1876	Giligaon	1895
San Sebastian	1876	Tayasan	1895
Binalbagan	1888	San Miguel	1896

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A History of San Nicolás de Tolentino Parish in Talisay City (Negros Occidental) from 1850 to the 1990s

Prologue

On 20 June 1848, the whole island of Negros was entrusted to the Augustinian Recollects.¹ This was in the wake of the ocular inspection tour of the vast island of Negros by the governor of the Visayas in mid-1847 and his advice to the Dominican Bishop Romualdo Jimeno (1808-1872) of Cebu to increase the parishes. The governor deplored the state of the parishes in the hands of the diocesan priests. A few weeks after, Bishop Jimeno saw for himself the lamentable condition—both spiritual and material—of Negros Island and he then urged the transfer of the parishes to a religious order. The governor-general in Manila acceded to the bishop's request in a letter dated April 1848 and in May he informed the provincial superiors of the religious orders in Manila about the deplorable plight of Negros.

On 29 May 1848, the Augustinian Recollect prior provincial accepted the parishes of Negros and the governor general entrusted the spiritual administration of the huge but largely undeveloped province in a royal decree of 20 June 1848. The first two Recollects arrived at Amlan and Siaton [in present-day Negros Oriental] in August 1848.

On 26 October 1848, two Augustinian Recollect missionaries arrived in Negros. Father Tomás Mezquita (1817-1860) took possession of Himamaylan and, two days later, on 28 October Father Andrés

¹Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros* (Manila 1980)170-172.

Cobos (1816-1877) that of Kabankalan. The spiritual abandonment of the Christian population of the four towns was the chief reason for the priority of curate assignment given them by the Dominican prelate of Cebu.

Bishop Romualdo Jimeno and Minuluan

Minuluan was founded in 1788 and made into a parish in 1850.² In late 1848 or early 1849, Bishop Romualdo Jimeno advised the Augustinian Recollect prior provincial Father Joaquín Soriano (1800-1863) to designate not just any missionary friar as parish priest of Minuluan but a good-natured one, because he would be alone and if he could not get along with priests of adjoining missions and parishes, he might become bored and this could probably give rise to fatal consequences. The two nearby curates were brothers and they belonged to the Locsin family of Molo, “haughty people”³ who were known as trouble-makers in the province of Iloilo.⁴

The Recollect prior provincial dispatched to Minuluan a rather young missionary named Fernando Cuenca de San José (1824-1902), twenty-five years of age. However, the two Locsin brothers—Father Román, parish priest of Bacolod, and Father Eusebio of Silay would become in their senior years his patients in the convent-*cum*-hospital of Talisay. Father Eusebio would suffer from paralysis and weakening of nerves. His brother Román would also suffer from paralysis and degeneration of his eyesight. Father Fernando applied the hydrotherapeutic treatment on both of them.⁵

Let us quote lengthily the respected Recollect historian of Negros, Angel Martínez Cuesta, in his doctoral dissertation, who

²Santiago José MARTÍNEZ LÁZARO, *El Padre Fernando Cuenca, Fundador de Negros (Filipinas)*, in Mayéutica 41 (1990) 168.

³MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History*, 173. The translators rendered Father Cuesta’s *gente altiva* in the original doctoral dissertation as *provincial people*. The two secular parish priests referred to by Bishop Jimeno were Father Eusebio Locsin and Father Román Locsin. See Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de la Isla de Negros, Filipinas (1565-1898)* (Madrid 1974) 72, especially footnote 48.

⁴MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History*, 174; MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia*, 73.

⁵ARCHIVO HISTÓRICO PROVINCIAL DE LA PROVINCIA DE SAN NICOLÁS DE TOLENTINO (AHPM), Marcilla, Navarra, España, *Relación nominal del clero secular indígena que han estado en el sanatorio de Minuluan en busca de salud*, 010r.

extensively discoursed on Father Fernando Cuenca and his works in Talisay as well as in Negros as a whole:

Father Fernando Cuenca de San José arrived at his parish on the first day of January 1850⁶ and practically did not leave it until his death on 28 March 1902. From his parish Fr. Cuenca soon became the foremost promoter of progress in the island. He personified the spirit of the time. He was not a genius, not even a brilliant man. He was practical, observant and full of enthusiasm. He had particular insight into the needs of the moment and frequently found a remedy. There were no problems, no anxieties in Negros that he did not share.

At the beginning, he devoted all his time to the resettlement of natives [*indígenas*] and the establishment of population centers [*formación de poblados*]. He then dedicated his time to the improvement of communications and the cultivation of sugarcane. To this he gave the best years of his life. It was he who invented, built and popularized a hydraulic machine for the preparation of sugarcane. Later in the mid-1880s when he saw that difficulties would arise from the cultivation of a single crop and from the competition that sugar beets would soon pose to sugarcane, he began to experiment with and to propagate the cultivation of abaca, coffee and various root crops.⁷

The foundation of San Nicolás de Tolentino parish of Talisay in Negros was on 1 January 1850. This was the date when the Augustinian Recollect Father Fernando Cuenca as the first parish priest took possession of the vast “cogon wasteland” named Minuluan, peopled by some settlers in the lowland and indigenous tribes of Aetas in the northeast mountain of Negros Island.

In that year, there were a little over three thousand inhabitants in the whole town of Minuluan. In 1851, a year after, Minuluan was reported to the provincial curia in Manila by the first parish priest to have the census population of 819½ tributes and 3,731 inhabitants. It

⁶The original text is “a primeros días de enero del año 1850,” meaning “on the first days of the year 1850,” MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History*, 173.

⁷ MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History*, 173.

was the third biggest town in western Negros in terms of population, after Himamaylan, the provincial capital since 1795, and Cauayan.⁸

In 1879, the Recollect historian Father Patricio Marcellán (1834-1889) provided a succinct description of the topography of Talisay in the second half of the 19th century and gave the reason of its sustained development and fast progress, stating:

In 1850, Talisay and its environs were an extensive cogon wasteland and, thanks to an ingenious and unrelenting supervision, the residents had established an important town center; they were instructed on what they could get from the land where they stood; they were encouraged to devote to cultivation and planting; they were constantly sustained in the face of setbacks of time and adversities of the seasons which were intended to subdue the native to his indolence; however, through religious instruction, they acquired the practical manifestation of the truth that he who sows, shall reap and that he who works hard shall become wealthy.⁹

The land was plain and well-ventilated by the coastal winds on account of its vicinity to the sea.¹⁰ In the early Spanish colonial period, Minuluan was one hour away from Silay in the north and one hour away from Bacolod in the south. It was roughly eleven kilometers wide leading to the mountain. Minuluan was blest with big rivers or small rivulets that provided water to the plantations and thus fertilized the land. During the third quarter of the 19th century, the strong currents were used for a considerable number of hydraulic machines for the manufacture of sugar. The dwellers learned to value the phenomenal fertility of the land where they planted with sugarcane in almost its entirety.

The wealthy investors utilized powerful steam engines for their sugar mills. The impoverished farmer, however, had solely his carabao in ploughing with cane fields and with the sweat of his brow it had aided greatly in the production of sugar. Roads were opened and thus facilitated transit by carts and carriages and communications with the adjoining towns. Houses were constructed by the farm settlers. Progress and growth grew hand in hand. By the late 1870s, the sugar haciendas of Talisay had produced a hundred thousand piculs. The construction

⁸ FIDEL DE BLAS, 44-45.

⁹ MARCELLÁN, 157.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 156.

of sturdy and extensive bridges was supervised by Father Cuenca. All experienced moral and material satisfaction in their hard work and welfare. All this proved that there was great wealth which was distributed proportionately to the whole population.¹¹

In 1925, Historian Licinio Ruiz wrote about the great multifarious tasks of evangelization, civilization, agriculture, town planning and development of Talisay under the tireless administration of Father Fernando Cuenca:

If we had proposed to describe extensively the beginnings of this town and the growth it had undergone during the last seventy years, we would have material enough for a book. By limiting ourselves to the small and reduced space we give to these notes, we shall only say that the town of Talisay has undergone a very deep metamorphosis under the activity of the Recollect missionary Father Cuenca, its only parish priest since the year 1851 until the Revolution.

As we discourse on the general situation of the Island, we took note of the material and spiritual backwardness of the towns that compose it. With respect to its situation, Talisay was a jungle; in the spot where we can now view magnificent houses and the beautiful roads where cars and trucks pass now were once a cogon wasteland. The Talisay of today with all its advancements and progress is due to the civilizing activity of Father Cuenca, to the tenacious work, wise administration and continued vigilance of this great religious.

Evidently, Father Cuenca exerted more efforts in working and striving for the wellbeing of his spiritual children than for his own; because outside of the life of detachment he had always observed, as manifested by the very parish rectory where he lived, which neither through its proportions nor through its form, was not much different from other parish rectories.

Talisay inhabitants resettled and their town established

The pioneering Recollect missionaries in Negros Island closely collaborated with the provincial governor Don Manuel Valdivieso

¹¹*Ibid.*, 156.

Morquecho starting in 1848. They worked hard for the “conversion of the natives and their education in the urban way of life.”¹² In the cabecera of Himamaylan, the parish priest Father Agustín Olmedillas (1819-1870) and his young assistant Father Fernando Cuenca, who was at that time intensively learning the rudiments of the Hiligaynon tongue, from an old woman, evangelized the valleys near the curacy, especially Tinungan which would give rise to the town of Isabel.¹³

In Minuluan, he resettled the scattered dwellers of Concepcion, Dos Hermanas and San Fernando. He had earlier constructed the first church and convent of Minuluan, where upon his arrival there were but a few houses disseminated near the banks of Minuluan River and creeks. He then planned the growing town by setting the outlines and boundaries, creating the plaza fronting the church complex.

Talisay: springboard for mission and exploration in Negros

During his term in 1855-1857, Governor Emilio Saravia fully supported the systematic conversion of Negros inhabitants. Bishop Jimeno acceded to Saravia’s request for Father Fernando’s missionary trips. The only possible means of transport then was on horseback and travelling along coastlines and crossing rivers, big and small. In a short period of time, the energetic young Recollect missionay travelled to the rough and mountainous interiors of Bacolod, Bago, Valladolid, Hinigarand and Ilog.¹⁴

Governor Saravia and Bishop Jimeno permitted the parish priest of Minuluan to make missionary sallies to the north and northeast portions of the island. In his journeys in 1856, Father Fernando travelled alone, conducted the census in places he visited and personally assigned village officials or *tenientes* in the new resettlements.

Father Fernando’s Recollect confreres also helped him much later in the evangelization, “giving religious instruction, teaching and making a community of those poor people, who roamed around obeying their primitive instincts: some still pagan, while others who though baptized were still no better than the unruly and wild mountain dwellers.”¹⁵ The resettlements organized along the coastal areas by

¹²Martínez Cuesta, 225.

¹³Marcelino SIMONENA, *Father Fernando Cuenca de San Jose, Augustinian Recollect. A Short Biography* (Bacolod City 1974) 10-11.

¹⁴Martínez Cuesta, History, 227; Simonena, 11-12.

¹⁵SIMONENA quotes Robustiano ECHÁUZ’s *Apuntes de la Isla de*

Father Fernando would later become the towns of Saravia, Victorias, Manapla, Sicaba [now a barrio of Cadiz], Cadiz, Marianas [now Himugaan in Sagay], Argüelles [Bulanon in Sagay], Escalante and Calatrava¹⁶ Father Fernando is then considered the founder of mission stations, future towns, cities and parishes in Negros Occidental.

Saint Ezekiel Moreno in Talisay¹⁷

In February 1872, Father Ezekiel Moreno (1848-1906) was appointed chief missionary and military chaplain of a missionary expedition whose objective was to set up a military stronghold and penal colony at Puerto Princesa in Palawan. He further laid the foundation of the towns of Aborlan and Inagawan. Malaria nearly ended his earthly life while in a missionary sally to Inagawan.

A frigate took the ailing missionary to Manila in January 1873. Thence, Father Ezekiel travelled to Talisay to undergo hydrotherapeutic treatment of his anemia. We are indebted to Father Marcelino Simonena (1873-1959) for the detailed description of the Priessnitz method of hydrotherapy, to which patients with anemia, burning fevers and many other ailments were subjected. No scientific explanation of the Priessnitz method was given. However, the hydrotherapy consisted of compresses, drenched blankets and consumption of large quantities of potable water. Recollect patients and chroniclers proclaimed the successful results and healings. It is positively confirmed Father Moreno underwent hydrotherapy.¹⁸ Father Simonena describes the treatment for us:

The patient is made to lie down naked on a wet blanket. He is wrapped with another wet blanket. He is covered on top with two or three more wraps to induce him to perspire. A soaked towel enfolds the head, except the face. And he is kept that way for about two hours. Off and on he is given water to drink. In a very warm country like this, it would seem natural for the patient to be drenched practically in sweat from the very first hour, but nothing of the sort happens during

Negros (Manila 1894).

¹⁶Martínez Cuesta, History 229; Simonena, 15.

¹⁷This topic is based on Chapter 8: "Convalescence in Talisay, Negros Occidental" in Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *Bishop Ezekiel Moreno, an Augustinian Recollect Saint among Filipinos* (Quezon City 1993) 67-77.

¹⁸APSN, *Relación nominal del clero secular indígena que han estado en el sanatorio de Minulúan en busca de salud*, 010r.

the first or second day of treatment. In subsequent days, however, he sweats profusely and through all the pores of the body. This subjects the organism to an honest-to-goodness purgation, washing away or ridding the body of heaviness and toxic accumulations. It was something to see beddings, blankets and towels saturated by a yellowish bilious hue difficult to wash away.

After two hours of treatment, the patient is moved from bed to take an ordinary bath of water at room temperature. His whole body is cleansed completely. He is then told to put on fresh clean clothes. Finally, he takes a stroll along the corridors of the rectory.

The blanket treatment is normally applied for nine consecutive days. If deemed convenient, then the process is repeated after some time for another nine days. The patient is advised to consume plenty of water.

Every patient of the Talisay curate was admitted as guest in the rectory, so was Father Moreno. There was really no special diet for the guest. The anemic patient partook of the same meager meals of a simple priest in a rural parish: boiled rice, chicken, fish, eggs, green vegetables, fruits, but no canned goods nor preserves. He was lodged *gratis et amore* in the parochial residence. Philanthropic Father Cuenca made it a habit to refuse any fee or remuneration whatsoever in cash or in kind for any consultation, medicine and treatment from his patients. "He did people a good turn with no strings attached or implicit obligations," Father Simonena apprises us.

In March of that year, Father Ezekiel returned to Manila to accept his new assignment as parish priest of Calapan. Despite his young age, the archbishop of Manila and the Recollect provincial appointed the twenty-eight-year-old Saint Ezekiel as vicar forane and vicar provincial of the vast Mindoro island.

Father Cuenca and the Philippine Revolution¹⁹

We do not discuss here the Philippine Revolution that led to the independence of the colony from Spain. We can understand what this event meant for Father Fernando Cuenca and for the rest of the Recollect missionaries who had given the best they had for Negros as

¹⁹ MARTÍNEZ LÁZARO, 180-187.

well as for various islands and provinces. The number of Augustinian Recollect missionaries who were assigned in both Negros Occidental and Oriental during these tumultuous years was more or less eighty.

Bacolod in Negros was one of the places where the revolution against the Spanish forces in its capital commenced and wherein distinguished persons from Minuluan took part with General Aniceto Ledesma Lacson (1857-1931), Father Fernando Cuenca's close friend, at their helm. Lacson would be the most important leader in the north of the western part of the Island. Father Fernando was not vexed by the revolutionaries on account of the good relationship the two had kept.²⁰

Father Fernando personally could not believe that an uprising that would remove the religious parish priests from the towns would ever take place. Father Marcelino Simonena²¹ narrated pertinent instances that took place shortly before Revolution.²² He was a witness to it all for he was his companion close assistant priest in Talisay in 1895-1896 and later in 1901-1904. He relates to us that:

One day the politico-military governor of the province Don Luis Arcovendas together with José Luis de Luzurriaga²³ went to the convent. Very few days were left before the outbreak of the Revolution and the two informed Father Fernando about it. He answered them:

²⁰ MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros*, 448. The Revolution in Negros is extensively studied in pages 427-474. See also SIMONENA, 34-39.

²¹ Marcelino Simonena de San Luis Gonzaga was born 2 June 1873 in Olite, Navarra. He was a missionary of Negros where he served the parishes of Talisay, Hinigaran, Carol-an and Kabankalan. He was also a conventual in the convent at Cebu City. In November 1898, the revolutionists arrested him in Kabankalan. He regained his freedom less than three months later and returned to Manila, thence to Spain. He held high positions in the Order: prior of several houses in the Philippines and Spain, prior provincial in 1919 and general councilor in 1929. He authored *Manual del novicio agustino recoleto* [Augustinian Recollect Novice's Manual]; *Lo que debe saber un misionero* [What a Missionary Must Know], *La Medicina aplicada por los padres agustinos recoletos en Filipinas* [Medicine Applied by the Augustinian Recollect Fathers in the Philippines]. Among his unpublished works was the history of Collegio di Sant'Ildefonso in Rome, Italy. He was known for his great diligence, wise governance and intense love for the Order. He passed away on 22 October 1959 at the convent in Marcilla, Navarra. See SÁDABA, 716-717; AVELLANEDA, 113.

²² SIMONENA, *Breve biografía*, 107-109.

²³ He was a leader of the uprising in Talisay; see MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History*, 44.

‘Governor, the province of Negros Occidental is not bad; it is good and rich, but may the authorities refrain from abusing it because it is very slippery and they can break the backbone.’²⁴

On 10 September 1898, a group of Recollect missionaries gathered at Minuluan to celebrate the feast day of their patron San Nicolas de Tolentino. Several religious had been murdered in Cavite in the last days of August [1896]. In their conversation, the Recollects showed some mistrust on the natives of the country, a mistrust Father Fernando did not share at all.

Father [Pedro] Corro had the gall to tell him: ‘Don’t be naive, Father Fernando.’ How could he tell him that! That phrase seemed to pierce his soul, and he got even saying at the same time: ‘Show-off, look, he called me naive, that Father Pedro!’

Father Fernando under house arrest at Talisay convent

The month of November in 1898 came, and almost all the religious missionaries of the west coast of Negros were taken prisoners, and slowly they were taken to Bacolod. Father Tiburcio Fernández (1863-1937), parish priest of adjoining Concepcion, sojourned at the convent in Talisay, with Father Tomás Preciado (1873-1928).²⁵

The revolutionary leaders of Talisay arrived at the convent and relayed to Father Fernando the order issued by their superiors to take his two companions to Bacolod. The conversation between the aging parish priest and a revolutionary leader was recorded.

“Well, and what do you want to do with me?” Father Fernando inquired from them. “We have no intention of doing anything to you.”

²⁴SIMONENA, *Breve biografía*, 108. Father Cuenca did not close his eyes at the abuses of some provincial governors. He even exchanged heated words with Amadeo Valdés, governor in 1892-1894. Cf. A. MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia*, 127.

²⁵Father Tomás Preciado was Father Fernando’s companion from 5 October 1898, after teaching at their Colegio de San José from 1 June 1896. He was transferred to Kabankalan after a month. In November 1898, he fell into the hands of the revolutionary forces and was later set free in February 1899 (cf. SÁDABA, 714). Father Fernando was protected by his own excellent reputation during the Revolution (cf. MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History*, 455.) Three religious were constrained to remain in their curacies, although they eventually left their parishes, like Father Mauricio Ferrero in Bacolod, Father Miguel Álvarez in Murcia and Father Pedro Bengoa in Vallehermoso.

You can stay in the convent.” “No,” the missionary replied, “if you want to take me also, I am ready. Then, after I shall have passed Matabang River, I shall take my sandals off and I shall cast the dust at you.” They told him again: “No, you do not leave Talisay.”

Since his Filipino assistant priest, Father Nicolás Alba, had to go to Silay to administer the parish, Father Fernando stayed alone in the convent. He was the only Recollect religious who never abandoned the Island in the whole duration of the Revolution. He had problems with his eyesight on account of the cataracts.²⁶ Without any government pension at all, without the religious stipend, without financial savings, he would have undergone extreme deprivations and hardships were it not for the persons who knew him and who went to the parish rectory to give him every possible assistance.

As a prisoner, he could not leave the convent—he was under house arrest.²⁷ Ramon Diocsan accompanied him during the day. A *bata*, a son of his brother Domingo Cuenca, and Raymundo or Mundo, his faithful servant and assistant during his hydrotherapeutic treatments, spent the night with him in the convent. From his parish in Silay, Father Nicolás Alba visited him every month. Not a single moment did Father Fernando petition to leave for Manila, although he did ask the superiors in Manila to send him an assistant priest.

Aging priest’s companions: Father Fernández, Father Simonena

Father Fernando was a sort of landmark, a monument in the island, a living legend, an undeniable symbol of the agricultural progress of Negros, very much respected in his lifetime.²⁸ There never was an American who came to Bacolod and did not ask to meet the person whom fame deemed as the founder of Negros.

At last, Father Tiburcio Fernández was assigned to him after acceding to the petition by the military authorities of Bacolod and Iloilo. The officers manifested to the bishop of Jaro their request to the prior provincial in order to dispatch a companion to Talisay. Father Tiburcio

²⁶Cf. Letters of 15 January and 6 March 1896. In that 14 December 1895 letter he complained of his ailments, and in another letter dated 8 May about some *granos* [pimples]: “I am mortified by my *granos* ; and if they say I am in good health I can give them to anybody.”

²⁷Cf. Licinio RUIZ II, 455; MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History*, 454-455.

²⁸MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History*, 454.

did not stay long in Talisay because of the circumstances adverse to the religious habit.²⁹

Later, on 28 June 1901, the superiors sent to Talisay Father Marcelino Simonena, erstwhile parish priest of Kabankalan and other Negros curacies. He remained beside Father Fernando until his death, providing us with minute details of the aging city founder's last months on earth.³⁰

Father Simonena declared how he was able to come in through the protection of the Lacsons. Since his arrival he could not wear the clerical garb because of the aversion that some people had shown against the religious habit. His presence had eventually stirred up protests in the newspapers in Bacolod.³¹ Gradually, the Augustinian Recollect missionaries returned to Negros and they found refuge under the beneficial shadow of the aged Father Fernando.

Illness and death

Father Simonena was at his bedside until his death. Thereafter, he succeeded him in the parish administration of Minuluan. Two existent letters were written by Father Simonena to the prior provincial. In those letters he described the development of Father Fernando's illness and consequent death:

About nine months had passed since I came to Talisay when Father Fernando caught a catarrh, apparently. He even underwent the treatment of wet blankets and general baths without being able to cure the catarrh. Perhaps, and that was my impression at that time, when—all drenched in sweat—he got out of the blankets and submerged himself in the bath-tub of water, he felt so very cold, or after the bath he did not react enough. What happened was that the catarrh took hold of his lungs and the slight illness got worse quickly until its final outcome.

²⁹ Licinio RUIZ II, 137.

³⁰ SÁDABA 715-716.

³¹ We have not found the newspaper in question, although a proof of it is a document signed by individuals in Bacolod and addressed to the bishop of Jaro, wherein they showed their aversion to the presence of a friar there in 1902, in *Archivo Histórico de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino*, Marcilla, Navarra, Spain, Legajo 57, núm. 4.

In his 25 March 1902 letter, Father Simonena wrote the prior provincial that in the beginning of the month Father Fernando's health was deteriorating fast:

We have no more hope that he would come out of this illness... about three weeks ago he commenced to swell, and far from diminishing, the swelling increased all the more. There was an American physician from Bacolod who paid him a visit. He wanted to send him to the capital but the old man refused [...] He was already starting to become worse and he had moments of great exhaustion. When the moment comes for the swelling to spread to the heart, then it will be the time he leaves us.

Father Simonena further said he had given him communion twice and the illness had come at the most inopportune moment, doubtless referring to the difficult plight that the Recollects were experiencing after the Revolution. At that time, Father Mauricio Ferrero sojourned for a while in Minuluan with plans to return to Bacolod, whose cathedral, rectory and prison he had constructed.

From the night of Maundy Thursday until Good Friday, he became gravely ill and the Sacraments were administered to him while he was still conscious. He sneezed in a very natural but forceful manner once and, followed by another sneeze, and he breathed his last at that very instant.

We have this additional information culled from Father Simonena's letter on March 28:

Last night, at one o'clock in the morning our old man Father Fernando gave up his soul to the Creator after receiving all the Sacraments and the blessing of His Holiness. May he rest in peace. It was Good Friday so they placed the image of the dead Christ in the church for veneration by the faithful.

The corpse of Father Fernando was also taken down to the church in an open casket. 'The fact was that all the people formed a long queue before the cadaver of the father, kissing his hand, and stopped proceeding to the *Santo Entierro* of the Lord. I just allowed it to happen and I acted normally.'

Funeral and interment

The following day the interment took place. His mortal remains were taken to the parish cemetery. During the funeral rite Father Simonena donned the Augustinian Recollect friar's habit—something he had not done before in order to shun the attacks by some residents. And from that time on, he did not take his habit off anymore in public. His March 30 letter reiterated the news of Father Fernando's demise. He had bequeathed almost nothing at his death, Father Simonena tells us: "If he had left anything at all, it was for our survival. That is all we have."³²

As written in the *Book of Noteworthy Events of Minuluan*, on 22 May 1912 his remains were exhumed together with those of Father Manzanares and Father Cándido Medrano (1868-1897). Father Fernando's remains were placed in an open niche on the wall of the presbytery on the Epistle side, following solemn funeral rites. A simple tombstone with his name on it indicates the place.

Towards 1930, Father Licinio Ruiz set up two statues to Father Cuenca and Father Mauricio Ferrero, garbed in their white habit, in the garden of the cathedral church of Bacolod. The same statues embellish the place until today.

A church begun by Father Cuenca, finished by Father Miguel

Father Miguel García (1860-1929), parish priest in 1915-1921 in his first term, erected a new convent for the priests' residence and offices. The old parish rectory would give way to the present one which was constructed in 1980-1981 during the parochial administration of Father Jesús Gabriel Pérez Recio. Fondly called "Ilonggo" for his proficiency in the Hiligaynon language, he was the last Spanish parish

³²Perhaps that amount of 200 pesos is the same one we have earlier referred to. In this letter and in a previous one, Father Simonena further recounted the behaviour of the family of Don Domingo Cuenca, Father Fernando's sibling. In the letter dated 25 [March 1902] visibly annoyed by the manner how the family members took away things from the parish rectory, including the inventory of the convent: "This updates me on their nobility and manners." Later, in his 30 March letter, he explained that it was Father Fernando himself who had requested them to take everything upon his death in order to surrender it to Father Simonena. As this assistant priest himself had earlier stated, majority of the objects in the convent belonged to the family of Father Fernando, although the manner how they did it was not correct.

priest of Talisay. He resided in Talisay for seventeen years—from 1969 to 1986.³³ He took over the helm of the parish in 1975.

As regards the church, Father Fernando wanted to construct a monumental edifice at least for its dimensions but death had surprised him, when the church project was only half done. Father Miguel García himself, exerting his effort, brought to a completion the undertaking commenced by Father Fernando, by putting the ceiling and installing electricity in this second church edifice of Talisay.

Construction of the present church (1936-1939)

The urgent need for a new and bigger parish edifice was felt by the growing community of Talisay and by the parish priest himself, Father Luis Álvarez (1898-1960), who “with great enthusiasm” commenced the gigantic construction project in 1936.³⁴ A truly enormous project lay ahead and major preparations for it were done. The Recollect priest had prepared the hefty budget as well. Sadly, the construction of the grandiose church in Talisay was paralyzed, after its enthusiastic start, for a little over a year. This delay stemmed from utter lack of funds.

In the meantime, Father Pío Santillana (1909-1979) took over the reins of the curacy from Father Luis Álvarez in 1937. It was eventually the fortunate lot of the hard-working Father Santiago Vilda (1900-1966) who was appointed parish priest in early 1938,³⁵ to continue the monumental church project. And, “after a year and a half

³³After a year in Monteagudo, Spain, following his sacerdotal ordination at Marcilla in 1968, the 25-old-old neo-presbyter was sent to Talisay in 1969. Father Recio was assigned to Guam (1986-1989); thence to the parish of Lodosa in Navarra, Spain (1989-1991). Since 1991, he worked in various parishes in the United States such as Saint Anselm in New York, Mesilla in New Mexico and El Paso in Texas. He was likewise assigned to Saint Anne Parish in Vauxhall, London. In 2009, he administered three parishes in Almería (Spain) and later that of Puerto Viejo (Costa Rica). See *Tras el fulgor de una estrella*, 423. More information was culled from news items and reports in the Province of Saint Nicholas website: <http://www.provinciasannicolas.org>.

³⁴LA VANGUARDIA, *Los PP. Recoletos dejan completada otra grandiosa obra en la Isla de Negros Occidental, Islas Filipinas, con la terminación de nueva Iglesia del pueblo de Talisay, por el P. Santiago Vilda*, in BPSN 30 (1940) 19-20.

³⁵Father Vilda was appointed parish priest in early 1938 for his first term, not 1939 as claimed by the researcher on San Nicolás de Tolentino Parish in *Keeping the Fire Ablaze* (Quezon City 2009), page 98.

without any pause for rest,” he was able to finish the magnificent church in time for its solemn blessing and inauguration on 9 September.

Father Vilda thought that the project could just not be delayed any longer because, first, “it was God’s work and then because the Recollect fathers have laid their hands on it.” The hefty church costs eventually rose up to 80,000 pesos when the project finally reached its happy conclusion.

Solemn blessing and inauguration in 1939

The big day for whole populace of Talisay commenced with the triumphal and grandiose entrance of a long convoy of more than 300 cars in the humble town of Talisay. The guests were led by the papal nuncio Archbishop Guglielmo Piani (1875-1976), Bishop Casimiro M. Lladoc (1893-1951) of Bacolod, and Bishop James Paul McCloskey (1870-1945) of Jaro. The famous musician Father Domingo Carceller (1894-1967), Provincial Councilor Father Manuel Gómara (1895-1979) and the Recollect confreres from the parishes in the Diocese of Bacolod covering the whole Negros Island were present in full force to celebrate another momentous event in the annals of the Augustinian Recollect Order in Negros in recent history.³⁶

The secular priests, consecrated men and women of various religious institutes and orders in the Diocese of Bacolod and Jaro, and other guests joined Father Santiago Vilda, his coadjutor Father Francisco Azcárate (1912-1985) and the parishioners of Talisay in the festive occasion.

At the entrance of the new temple of the Lord Almighty, the parish priest happily welcomed the apostolic delegate and multitude of guests. The solemn blessing and inauguration of the Church of San Nicolas de Tolentino started at once according to the rites prescribed by the ritual. The representative of Pope Pius XII (1876-1958) then addressed the congregation in glowing words. Archbishop Piani highlighted the works of the Recollect priests and brothers in the ecclesiastical territories entrusted to them by the Holy Mother Church

³⁶The historic event in Talisay was the third significant church blessing in the period of four years: the parish church of San Carlos in November 1935 and that of Kabangkalan in December 1935, which in due time became cathedral churches, respectively. See Pablo PANEDAS, Emmanuel Luis ROMANILLOS, *Cathedral Churches Constructed by Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines* (Quezon City 2008) 9-12.

since their first arrival in 1606. He heaped endless praises upon Father Vilda for the magnificent temple he had just blest.

At the choir loft, the choir of vibrant seventy voices under the expert baton of the famed musician Domingo Carceller sang his version of the thanksgiving hymn *Te Deum* he himself had composed for similar appropriate occasions.

The next day the 10th of September—feast of San Nicolás de Tolentino, under whose religious patronage the town and parish of Talisay had been entrusted by Father Fernando Cuenca in the distant past, Archbishop Piani celebrated the pontifical mass. The papal nuncio was assisted by the bishops of Bacolod and Jaro, the superiors of the religious orders—Augustinians, Redemptorists, Vincentians, diocesan parish priests and Augustinian Recollects.

The great majority of mass-goers filled the brand-new church to the rafters. Father Vilda then delivered the sermon in flawless Visayan Ilongo. As he closed his inspired sermon, the parish priest addressed the papal nuncio in elegant Spanish offering to him as representative of the Roman Pontiff in the Philippines everything that was celebrated in the name of the entire Augustinian Recollect Order.

The guests filed out of the church in an orderly manner towards the parish rectory for the traditional *De missa ad mensam*, “from the mass to the table.” A sumptuous meal was earlier prepared by the parish priest, his coadjutor and friends for the scores of guests in that memorable evening celebration.

A Letter from Archbishop Guglielmo Piani

In the brief news write-up penned published in *La Vanguardia*, a Manila-based newspaper, the correspondent reported that the apostolic delegate wrote an appreciative personal letter to the Talisay parish priest from his official residence in Taft Avenue, Manila:

After leaving your parish and returning in Manila,
I wish to manifest my wishes to you now that you have
rested from the enormous task that the very solemn
feasts in Talisay had imposed upon you.

I want to thank you for the attention, the kindness
and the expressions brimming with affection and
politeness proclaimed inside the church and outside of it
by your Reverence, and certainly, that cordial company

as well. I shall never be able to forget the days I spent in Negros, on the occasion of the solemn blessing of the Temple, beautiful and worthy of the Majesty of the Lord, with reference to our condition. My most sincere congratulations and greetings to your Reverence and to all of them, to the Catholic gentlemen and ladies of Talisay. With feelings of true esteem, we greet you and bless you.

1972: a Recollect high school rises at Talisay

The chronicler and co-founder of what would be in the course of time the Colegio San Nicolás de Tolentino-Recoletos—Father Jesus Gabriel Pérez Recio—himself reveals to us the reasons for the establishment of a Recollect high school in Talisay in many words:

Set up in the shadow of the church, within the property of the parish, it is entirely a symbol of the mission that is incumbent upon all those who trudge the path of the predecessors. What we have proposed with its establishment is to instil religion in their souls and in their hearts, to educate the youth and to get them used to work. To train them as good citizens who in their tender age may comply with their religious and civic obligations. And even more, that they themselves may feel the need to accomplish their duties.³⁷

But then Vicar Provincial Father Jesús Sobejano, who authored the 1981 article on the origins of UNO-R High School, was succinct in informing us about the real motive for setting up this Recollect educational center in Talisay: “It was not only to provide civic education to its students, but also, principally, to encourage and create new Christian leaders while in their youth.”³⁸

Birth of UNO-R Talisay, now Colegio San Nicolás de Tolentino

A parochial school was established in Talisay in the early part of the 20th century. It was later closed for hitherto unknown reasons.

³⁷Jesús PÉREZ RECIO, *Nueva escuela en Talisay*, in BPSN 63 (1973) 42.

³⁸Jesús SOBEJANO, *Los Agustinos Recoletos. 375 años en las Islas Filipinas. 1606-1981* (Quezon City 1982) 52.

There was a persistent talk among the priests who felt the convenience and the need of putting up a Catholic school. Plans were afoot to establish either a parochial grade school or a secondary school. The final decision was to set up a high school, affiliated to the University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos in Bacolod City under the Recollect administration.

The plans for that high school turned into reality in 1971. The cornerstone of the future Catholic school was laid on 1 January 1971. Bishop Antonio Y. Fortich (1913-2003) blest it in the presence of several Recollect priests, benefactors, parishioners and friends.³⁹

Five and a half months later, on 15 June 1971, the solemn blessing and inauguration of UNO-R High School Department took place. The academic year 1971-1972 commenced with only 90 students due to the stiff competition posed by other public high schools with its free education in the locality and, largely, because of the dearth of a much-needed aggressive propaganda.

Summer of preparations galore

The summer of 1972 for the Spanish Recollects of Talisay was different from all the other past summers. For them, that particular summer was not a deserved period of rest from the monotonous and habitual tasks nor was it a fine time to travel to other places for pleasure or leisure. It was a summer of hectic activity, extreme hard work and endless concerns and preoccupations.

The founders were fully aware of the challenges they faced upon setting themselves to the task of putting up the private high school project, challenges that they accepted bravely and willingly. They knew too well about the stiff competition posed by the free secondary education that a public high school was offering for a long time to the young children of the townspeople. Therefore, very intense publicity and all-out propaganda activities were the top priority in the Recollect fathers' summer agenda. No stone was left unturned. Literally, they were "babes in the woods" in the field of education in Talisay.

They knew only too well that there was a great need to disseminate information about the Recollect school and brand of education far and wide. A great deal of planning was done. Hence, they initially inquired assiduously about families with young boys in their

³⁹*Ibid.*

high school age. Their next step was to write a personal letter each to those families informing them about everything pertinent to the subjects to be offered by the soon-to-open school.

The doubts and apprehensions were never lacking in the beginning. Qualms and anxieties prevalently plagued the minds of the school founders in the initial or planning stage.

Through the years, the growing Recollect school saw the construction of additional rooms, laboratories, mini-gymnasium and school buildings. The parish priest was concurrently the school director. The director was assigned to directly supervise and manage the school. In 2008, UNO-R Talisay High School obtained the new name “Colegio San Nicolás de Tolentino-Recoletos” upon the approval by the Department of Education. The Elementary Department was opened in the academic year 2009-2010. Since the turn of the century, the student population has roughly averaged 480 annually, a far cry from the ninety students in 1971. In school year 2012-2013, the student population was 405 in high school and 198 in the grade school.⁴⁰

A grateful town dedicates a monument to Fr. Cuenca (1974)⁴¹

A date, a month, a year may not have the greatest importance for a town, for some individuals. Dates of little value abound in the calendar. But if such dates of minor significance abound, there are also those which have become famous in history and live on in the grateful memory of the people because of something that exalts and immortalizes them.

That date the people of Talisay held dear was the 30th of May. It was on the 30th of May 1824 when Father Fernando Cuenca de San José, the town founder, was born in Aragón [Spain]. And on the 30th day May 1974, the 150th anniversary of his birth, Talisay marked a page in its history in order to show its gratitude with the dedication of a commemorative plaque that was attached to the pedestal constructed at the public square. On it the statue of Father Fernando was built on the feast of San Nicolás de Tolentino, patron of the parish and town. Through this gesture, the 30th of May shall be indelibly embedded in the annals of Talisay.

⁴⁰The information was provided by the prior and school director Father Jose Ernil Almayo through a text message on 16 May 2013.

⁴¹The Spanish original is *Agradecimiento de un pueblo. En Talisay se erige un monumento al P. Fernando Cuenca*, in BPSN 65 (1975) 32-35.

Father Recio narrated about the true significance of that event, a glorious page in the annals of history of the Augustinian Recollect evangelization in Negros Occidental:

These ceremonies paid homage to the person honored as well as to those who rendered honor. The honored personality was Father Fernando Cuenca who, as anyone aware of the mission history of the Philippines knew, was one of the chief architects of Negros Island. A newly ordained priest, he was one of the first Recollects who arrived in Negros in 1848. And he was one of those who worked most for the spiritual and material aggrandizement and progress with his renowned [evangelization] journeys to the interior of the island in 1856, with the motivation he gave to the sugar cane cultivation and production, with the construction of hydraulic [water-powered] mills, with the medical ministry at the parochial convent that was converted into an infirmary and hospital, with his apostolate and the foundation of Talisay which metamorphosed from a vast cogon wasteland during his arrival into a town that became the pride of Negros for its planning, for its elegant buildings, for its large-scale sugar plantations, wellspring of prosperity and wealth. They heaped accolade on our Recollect habit because they showed gratitude from their hearts to one of their distinguished benefactors.

Father Recio lamented that during those years past the name of Father Cuenca might not mean a great deal to the present generation of Negrenses. If he was not completely unknown, so his story and the achievements he had done were unbeknownst as well. He was glad, however, that Father Cuenca has become known through the efforts of the Negros Occidental Historical Commission, whose members included Father Pedro Lerga (1932-1984), a professor of University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos [UNO-R] in Bacolod City, and Modesto Sa-onoy, a great friend and historian of the Augustinian Recollect missionary work in Negros Island.

The idea of rendering tribute of public acknowledgement of his beneficial deeds in this island stemmed from that commission. For this purpose, the biography [of Father Fernando Cuenca] written by Father Marcelino Simonena⁴² was translated into English by Soledad

⁴²The following series of articles published in the *Boletín de la*

Lacson Locsin, the spouse of Aurelio Locsin, president of the Historical Commission.⁴³ The translation and printing followed the decision to build a monument for him at the public plaza of Talisay. Thus if Talisay was its implementing agency, the motivation and documentation were provided for by the Historical Commission.

Due to unavoidable circumstances, the setting up of the monument underwent two phases. The first phase was the location and construction of the pedestal with the commemorative plaque of Father Fernando. The second phase was the putting up of the statue and its blessing.

The first phase took place on the 30th of May. There was a concelebrated Mass presided by the bishop of the diocese, Msgr. Antonio Y. Fortich, who highlighted in his homily the great personality of the Recollect pioneer of Talisay in his religious, human, social and educational aspects. The concelebrants were Father Víctor Hermosilla (1909-1983), the visitor general from Rome, the three priests of the parish and of the university in Bacolod. Representatives of provincial authorities, members of the Negros Occidental Historical Commission, all the municipal authorities led by the town mayor Jose Carlos V. Lacson, relatives of Father Cuenca, religious associations and the parishioners filled the church to the rafters.

On his tomb inside the church beautiful wreaths were laid, and prayers were recited so that from heaven he would continue to shower his beneficial action on the inhabitants of Talisay and the whole Negros Island.

Immediately afterwards, they proceeded to the solemn inauguration of the pedestal where the monument of Father Cuenca was going to be erected and the unveiling of the plaque dedicated to his memory that says:

Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino (BPSN) was collected and given by Father Lerga to the translator: Marcelino SIMONENA, *Breve biografía del padre Fernando Cuenca*, 33 (1943) 209-212; 231-234; 252-254. 34 (1944) 40-43; 63-64; 82-86; 105-109; 134-136.

⁴³Soledad Lacson Locsin was the acting chair of the Negros Occidental Historical Commission when the booklet *Father Fernando Cuenca of St. Joseph, Augustinian Recollect* she had earlier translated was published and launched in 1974 at Bacolod City. Father Pedro Lerga had provided her with copies of Simonena's article. This biography was annotated by Negros historian Modesto P. Sa-onoy.

Father Fernando Cuenca de San José
Agustino Recoleta

May 30, 1824-March 28, 1902

Organizer of the Barrios and Town
of Talisay and other Towns of Negros
Occidental. Inventor of the Hydraulic
Sugar Mill, Famed as Hydrotherapist,
Moving Spirit of the Socio-Economic
Progress of Negros Occidental

May 30, 1974

Municipality of Parish of
Talisay Talisay
Negros Occidental
Historical Commission

At the ceremony, Mayor Jose Carlos V. Lacson delivered a speech. So did , secretary of the Historical Commission, and a Cuenca family member in the name of the descendants of Don Domingo Cuenca, brother of Father Fernando. On behalf of the Order, Father Víctor Hermosilla gave thanks for the homage rendered to one of its illustrious members. The parish priest Father Florentino Echávarri (1926-1991) then encouraged everyone to continue cooperating for a better Talisay and for a Negros great in the spiritual, social and human spheres. The affair was followed by a fraternal lunch. During the meal the conversations focused on the personality and achievements of Father Fernando.

In the afternoon, there was an academic activity at the social hall of UNO-R. Various lectures were delivered, and they all highlighted the varied facets of the multifaceted character of Father Cuenca. In time, Father Hermosilla spoke on behalf of the Order and expressed the collective gratitude of the religious community. The final number of the program was the launching of the newly published biography of Father Cuenca.

The second phase of the celebration took place on the 10th of September, feast of San Nicolas de Tolentino and town fiesta of Talisay. It has been 124 years that Talisay had trod the path of life illumined by the light of the Star of Tolentino. It was Father Fernando Cuenca who had showed it to them. And it has been under its brilliant glitter when Father Fernando Cuenca was honored with the inauguration of this monument which should perpetuate his memory among Talisaynons

and Negrenses and shall remind them—from up high in the pedestal—of his virtues and endless efforts for the wellbeing of their ancestors.

Because, if Talisay now one of the great towns of the province of Negros Occidental for its big population, for the wealth of its great sugar industry and for the Catholic faith of its inhabitants, it was the glory of Father Cuenca who founded it, who administered it for fifty-two years and who established it in such a way that on the basis on the Faith even in these times it was still professed in 1974 by 57,245 of the total population of 57,284. Therefore, the San Nicolás feast day patron of that year was set aside for the inauguration of the monument as a well-deserved tribute of public recognition.

Since it was the town fiesta, the faithful and guests who arrived at Talisay to attend the religious celebrations were extraordinarily multitudinarian. The holy mass was presided by the bishop of the diocese and concelebrated by Recollects religious and secular priests. The municipal council came in full force together with the members of the historical commission and a great number of the faithful from other towns, barrios and farms joined the townspeople of Talisay.

It was after the Mass when the inauguration of the monument and the unveiling of the statue took place. During the ceremony, the following prayer composed by a Talisaynon was recited:

O Lord, our God, deign to hearken to the prayer of the faithful of Talisay, who ask you to bless this statue of Your servant Father Fernando Cuenca of the Order of the Recollects so that the memory of his missionary zeal in Christianizing and educating our ancestors be a seed that shall sprout with everlasting life and shall bear fruits of holiness and prosperity for our benefit and for that of our children and descendants. This we ask you through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

This monument built as a tribute to the city founder Father Fernando Cuenca was put up at the public plaza, fronting the main portal of the parish church. It was donated by the town council with contributions from individuals who wanted to honor him and to put it on the same level as the other Filipino heroes' statues erected at the same square.

Practices and devotions in the parish

Known devotions and devotional practices are provided to us by parish priests in their annual reports [*memorias*] which began only in the second half of the 19th century. From the Spanish Recollects we know that there was the traditional popular devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in the parish. The Marian devotion is cherished also in her invocation as Our Lady Perpetual Help, for whom the novena prayers are recited every Wednesday, as in every parish in the Philippines.

Lately, the Recollects have the devotion and novena to Saint Ezekiel Moreno who had earlier lived in Talisay with their forefathers in early 1873.

The patron saint of the parish Saint Nicholas of Tolentino is also well revered for a century and a half, thanks to the initiative of Father Fernando who gave the forefathers the first Augustinian saint as patron of Minuluan.

Father Casiano Cosmilla tells us about *palapak*

From the Filipino parish priest, Fr. Casiano Cosmilla, we learn that the most endearing devotional practice disseminated far and wide in Negros is the *palapak* which has been done since time immemorial. It is a very renowned tradition for which Talisay parish has attracted multitudes of devotees. It is a primarily a personal devotion to San Vicente Ferrer that takes place every First Friday of the month. But it is on the First Friday of the year when droves of devotees fill the parish church to the rafters for the traditional *palapak*.

The devotees of the Dominican priest and miracle-worker show their love by kissing the image of our patron saint and while kissing they prayers of petition for graces need from the Almighty God through the intercession of the saint. Furthermore, they ask the one holding the image of San Vicente Ferrer to have the image touch their heads and other parts of the body inflicted by an ailment and at the same time they pray for cures from their illnesses.

Father Kizzy, as Father Cosmilla is called, in an annual report further informs us that many devotees did:

...experience miracles of cure and attested that their prayers were answered. And they tell other people ain their own places about the miraculous happenings

in their life [lives] so that they may come back again and again. Blessed are these people because of their great faith and devotion they see miracles happening in their [life] lives. Most of the people who come to fulfil their devotion are simple but profoundly religious people because they have no other recourse for help in both their material and spiritual needs but God who is the source of everything that is good and through the prayers and intercessions of our patron saint.⁴⁴

Father Kizzy is remembered for putting a chapel or prayer room in 1992 inside the kumbento for the use of the community of the parish priests and vicars and school director in order to fulfil the mandated statutes of the Rule of Saint Augustine and Constitutions of the Order of Augustinian Recollects, such the daily prayer of the liturgy of the hours, meditation and visit to the Blessed Sacrament, principal acts of their religious and community life.

Population statistics (1851-2010)

From a scattered community of merely 3,000 inhabitants and settlers in 1850, the new parish grew to 3,731 inhabitants a year after and 819½ tributes. A decade later, the population of Talisay had leapt to 5,525 inhabitants and 1,373 tributes, as recorded in the Recollect parish priests in the Philippines. In 1871, it had increased to 7,618 inhabitants and 2072 tributes. Twenty years later, in 1891, Father Fernando Cuenca reported to the provincial office in Manila the population of 12,828 souls and 4,252 tributes.

Towards the close of the 19th century, in 1897, the population had gone down to 12,132 souls but the tributes had slightly increased to 4,657 tributes.⁴⁵ The population decrease can be explained by the creation of the new curacy of Concepcion independent from its parish matrix of Talisay in 1895. The population of the new parish was recorded in 1897 by its Recollect parish priest Father Tiburcio to be 2,497 souls and 999 tributes.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Casiano COSMILLA, *Parish of San Nicolas de Tolentino, Talisay, Negros Occidental*, in BPSN 698 (Julio-Diciembre 1993) 243-244.

⁴⁵FIDEL DE BLAS, 45.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

The Roman Catholic population in 1995 was 68,581 souls. This total population included the faithful of the barangays of Dos Hermanas and Concepcion.⁴⁷

Talisay was created into a city on 11 February 1998 with a total land area of 20,118 hectares, over 60% of which is agricultural land and its forest land covers 33%.⁴⁸ As mandated by the national government in 2007, the census takers recorded a total population of 96,444. In 2010, the population of Talisay City had increased to 97,571.⁴⁹ It is the ninth of the thirteen cities with biggest population in the Province of Negros Occidental which has a total population of 2.4 million.

Epilogue

It is very opportune to recall the centennial document *Religiosas familias* (1912-2012) of Pope Saint Pius X who had honored the thousands of Augustinian Recollects who for four centuries offered their youthful priestly ministry and religious life for the world, especially in the Philippines, declaring:

We willingly and joyfully reverence and accord privileges and honors to those religious families that, by reason of antiquity of the great host of members throughout the world, of their exhausting labors to procure an increase of the glory of God and the eternal salvation of men, have deserved to be held in the highest regard by the Church.

It is wonderful to what degree the aforesaid Congregation has risen in so short a time, for, made resplendent, not only in Spain but also in South America, Japan, and the far-away Philippine Islands, by learned and holy men, many of whom became martyrs, it has everywhere given distinguished testimony of apostolic zeal.

⁴⁷CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES, *The 1996 Catholic Directory of the Philippines* (Manila 1996) 12.

⁴⁸"Talisay City Profile," in <http://www.talisaycity.gov.ph/about/city-profile>. Retrieved 23 August 2012.

⁴⁹"2010 Census of Population and Housing: Western Visayas, Negros Occidental, Talisay City," in <http://www.census.gov.ph/sites/default/files/attachments/hsd/pressrelease/Western%20Visayas.pdf>. Retrieved 22 September 2012.

In 2014, the 190th birth centenary of the city founder Father Fernando Cuenca de San José is commemorated with gratitude. Furthermore, the grateful parishioners and the Order of Augustinian Recollects celebrate in 2014 the Diamond Jubilee (1839-2014) of the parish church of San Nicolás de Tolentino. Future chroniclers shall declare that the twin commemorations doubtless serve as a fitting tribute to the big-hearted sugar hacenderos, well-to-do families, open-handed firms and hundreds of unheralded, generous parishioners whose names are known to the Almighty God and to the faithful of Talisay City, who indubitably can take pride in this timeless legacy and to the intangible heritage of Christian Faith.

Both sturdy temple of God church and steadfast Catholic Faith are a glorious and lasting memorial to the church builders Father Luis Álvarez and Santiago Vilda, all true spiritual brothers of San Nicolás de Tolentino, and to the selfless Augustinian Recollect pastors of Talisay from 1850 when Father Fernando Cuenca planted the seeds of the Gospel until the present time, true sons of a long line of offspring and followers of Saint Augustine of Hippo.

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Colegio de Santa Rita: Pioneer in the Education Apostolate in San Carlos City

The education apostolate runs deep in the tradition of the Augustinian Recollect. Since the early decades of the Augustinian Recollect Order's missionary enterprise in the Philippines, every Recollect friar curate was duty-bound to impart Christian doctrine to young and old parishioners under his spiritual care. We simply cannot brush aside the Spanish missionary's remarkable contribution to the people's spiritual and moral edification and to their uplift from the quagmire of ignorance.

Education in the Recollect tradition

We find in the earliest editions of the age-old Augustinian Recollect pastoral manual *Modo de Administrar* [Manner of Administration] several provisions for the establishment of schools of primary instruction in their parishes, even in *visitas* or villages whenever possible. The Recollect missionary should see to it that such schools were built in the vicinity of the rectory so the "fathers could take better care of them."¹ The curate or his coadjutor was earnestly enjoined to pay the parochial school a weekly visit. He should not get tired of doing it nor lose his patience. He was further ordered to aptly reward students who showed greater disposition for learning, thus goading the indolent ones to emulate them. The Recollect pastoral manual declares:

Boys and girls with ages seven or higher should attend schools. With earnestness, they must be taught

how to read, write, count as well as the Christian doctrine. Books, paper, ink and pens were to be given free to those who had no means to buy them, for which the provincial superior had set aside a certain amount to every father minister. The latter himself subjected the students to examinations on a regular basis. He should reward them with some prize, or at least show his satisfaction and affection to the more diligent and brighter ones, especially with respect to Christian doctrine.²

Parochial schools

Historians today concede that schools run by early missionaries were schools of primary letters, though “operated solely in aid of religious instruction.”³ No doubt the evangelization of the Christian youth “occupied an unparalleled place in the missionaries’ scale of values.”⁴ Their chief goal was essentially apostolic: “They aspired to inculcate Christian ideals to the tender souls of the young and to mold their character according to the teaching of the Gospel.” Catechesis was therefore the focus of the teacher’s attention; the rest of the available time was divided among reading, writing and arithmetic. Such schools admittedly could not be considered as a school system in the modern sense. But then there was no other learning center but the parochial school which was the highest school in a town.⁵

We do not deny that the apparent dereliction of the Spanish colonial government in their primordial tasks of education and character formation had to be counteracted by religious orders that were in the vanguard of civilization. The inherent insufficiency of colonial funds, aggravated by the perennial dearth of qualified teachers, was doubtless the primary cause of the lackluster implementation of royal decrees on colonial education. The political will at last came three hundred years after Miguel López de Legazpi’s arrival in the Philippines. The Spanish school system became a reality only in the middle of the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, religious orders rose up to the occasion and assumed the role of educators, rather than lamenting endlessly the colonial government’s blatant neglect in the field of education.

Primary education in Negros

For a time, a condition required by law for a village to be raised to a town was the existence of a school for boys and another for girls. By 1869, there were thirty-eight schools for boys and as many for girls in the towns of Negros. In 1887, the boys' schools numbered forty-five and the girls' schools totaled forty-four. In 1895, San Carlos was listed among those towns with a school each for boys and girls. The schools in the huge island were unfortunately served by inexperienced teachers who were miserably compensated by the civil government. There were instances when children were taught the rudiments of learning by some catechist who was assigned by the missionary of the place or by some other person of the locality "who was somewhat better trained than most of his countrymen."

While the prosperous towns of Dumaguete, Bacong and Dauin in southern Negros boasted of school buildings made of rubblework masonry and an upper floor made of lumber, those of Calatrava, Cadiz, Tanjay and Bais were rectangular wooden structures with a roofing either of galvanized iron or nipa or cogon. The school edifices of San Carlos, Guihulngan, Siaton, Himamaylan and Sum-ag were "humble shelters of bamboo and nipa."

Pioneers of Catholic education

The Augustinian Recollect priests were the first to introduce secondary education in Negros.⁶ They opened the all boys' school—Colegio de San José—at the provincial capital of Negros Occidental on 1 July 1896. A Recollect historian gives us the enrollment for that academic year: 50 pupils in the primary level and 82 in the secondary. Colegio de la Sagrada Familia, a school founded by Don Miguel María Lara in 1895, was absorbed by the new school. The Recollects Tomás N. Preciado (1873-1928), Pedro M. Corro (1864-1934) and José Lapardina were assisted by at least five lay faculty members. The Bacolod school did not last very long. Two months before the Revolution swooped down upon Negros, on 5 September 1898, Colegio de San José was forced to close its portals. Some of the Recollect administrators fell captives of the Revolution.

Colegio de Santa Rita

Elementary and secondary education with its distinctive Catholic and Augustinian Recollect mark came to San Carlos in 1933 with the foundation of Colegio de Santa Rita, the oldest Catholic school in the city. It is likewise the second oldest—after Saint Rita College of Manila—of over thirty schools under the able aegis of the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters whose mother-house is situated at Plaza del Carmen in Quiapo, fronting the Manila landmark of San Sebastian Basilica, the only prefabricated all-steel church in Asia.

Three Augustinian Recollect sisters, who would be elevated to the highest position as superior general of their congregation, zealously took turns as superior and directress in setting up, nurturing, developing and caring for what is now the oldest and pioneering Roman Catholic school of San Carlos City: Mother Rosario Rosales de San Luis Gonzaga (1902-1981), and Mother Carmen Alba de la Sagrada Familia (1907-1977) and Mother Remedios de la Cruz (1914-1985). Another was Mother Mercedes Jayme de la Sagrada Familia who was third general councilor in 1964-1970. Still another sister who was once assigned to San Carlos and rose to become superior general in 1970-1976 was Mother Ma. Bibiana Vendiola.

Humble beginnings

The Augustinian Recollect missionary sisters, then headed by the superior general Mother Presentación de San José, accepted the invitation of the parish priest Padre Manuel S. Gómara to set up a school in San Carlos. Vicar Provincial Leoncio U. Reta—past curate of San Carlos—knew too well the educational needs of his former ministry. For this reason, he gave his fraternal encouragement to the new field of educational apostolate of the Recollect sisters. Padre Leoncio fully supported the superior general's brilliant and expeditious move to dispatch Sister Pilar de San José and Sister Rosario Rosales de San Luis Gonzaga to San Carlos to study the feasibility of setting up a girls' school.

In August 1933 the pioneer community of Recollect sisters arrived to organize kindergarten classes. Mother Asunción de San Jose was superior of the first batch of sisters that included Sister Pilar de San José and Sister Mercedes Jayme de la Sagrada Familia.⁷ A religious chronicler recalled the trying times during the planting of the first seed

of Catholic education in the central Negros town. With hardly any means of survival, the first community was largely sustained by the parish priest and the generous family of Eusebia Broce vda. de Vicente. Padre Manuel Gómara willingly permitted the religious sisters to hold kindergarten classes at the ground floor of the rectory. Meanwhile, the parish curate constructed a three-story edifice for Colegio de Santa Rita at the adjacent parcel of land that was at that time church property.



San Carlos Parish Church is flanked by [left] the rectory in whose ground floor the first kindergarten classes of the pioneer school were held and [right] the three-story edifice of Colegio de Santa Rita. All were built before the WWII by Padre Manuel Gómara, OAR.

Primary and intermediate courses

The gradual opening of various levels of learning could be traced to the pioneer sisters who worked doubly hard to give the growing population of San Carlos distinctively Christian education. The news of the opening of the four primary classes in 1934 was doubtless met with exultation by the populace. That year the permit to open complete primary courses was issued by the government. In the meantime, Sister Imelda and Sister Paz had joined the teaching staff. As their edifice was still under construction, primary classes were conducted at the old house of Florentino Broce. The stamp of government recognition and approval was granted at the close of the school year.

The year 1935 saw the start of complete intermediate classes. Recognition of these intermediate courses followed a year after. A new school directress and principal Sister Rosario Rosales was named that

year. Sister Magdalena de Santa Teresita, a pianist and Music teacher, arrived with the new administrator. Months later, Sister Remedios de la Cruz came to replace Sister Magdalena.

Secondary school

In 1936, Sister Rosario Rosales worked for the opening and government recognition of the first and second years of secondary school were opened. A year after, students enrolled for the third year courses. Finally in 1938 fourth year courses were offered; thus by the end of the academic year the entire four-year secondary education was operational and duly recognized by the government. With pride and feelings of satisfaction, the batch of 1939 marched during the commencement exercises. They went down in history as the first high school graduates of Colegio de Santa Rita. Sister Rosario ended her term in 1939, capping a successful campaign to establish secondary education in San Carlos.

War and reconstruction

World War II did not spare the fledgling Colegio de Santa Rita from devastation. The armed conflict totally razed to the ground the educational pioneers' painstaking labor of love. "The war years," sadly writes a chronicler, "destroyed everything the sisters have made, save their faith and devotion in the service of God." Padre Manuel's three-story building was pulverized by American incendiary bombs at the close of the war. The religious sisters' rock-solid faith in Almighty God, coupled with their inner strength and selfless commitment to San Carlos youth, had kept them firmly rooted on the ground, as they weathered the storm.

Mother Carmen Alba de la Sagrada Familia was the superior of the community in 1941-1944. Undeniably, it was to her sole credit and firm grasp of the situation that the year 1945 saw the school's phoenix-like rising from the ashes of destruction. Kindergarten, elementary and secondary courses were re-opened at once. New edifices were gradually built. Library materials, office furniture and other school facilities were painstakingly acquired. Mother Carmen rose up to the occasion and proved herself equal to the arduous task of restoration. We must likewise give due credit to the munificent Catholic benefactors and parents who willingly aided the Augustinian Recollect missionary sisters in their reconstruction efforts.

New degree programs and edifices

The junior normal course, Elementary Teacher's Certificate (ETC), was opened in 1947. Sister Amanda de la Virgen del Carmen worked hard for this course offering. In 1950, the new school directress Sister Mercedes Jayme commenced the construction of the high school building. An annex to the main building likewise rose up in order to accommodate the refectories of the sisters and the *internas* (students who stay in school dormitory). The return of Sister Rosario Rosales in 1953 coincided with the construction of an additional wing for the sisters' cloister and ropery of the *internas*. In 1961, a two-level concrete building was constructed to meet the increasing demand of additional courses and rapid expansion of student population.

The institution of more curricular programs followed suit. A two-year Liberal Arts degree program and a six-month vocational course of dressmaking were instituted in May 1955. A one-year Secretarial Science course for college students was offered the year after. Also in 1956, a three-year course leading to the degree of Bachelor of Science in Commerce was opened.

More relevant courses

Always attuned to the fast changing times and urgent challenges, the administrators have hearkened to the varied demands for relevant programs or have revised and enriched the already-instituted degree programs. Thus, the dearth of public school teachers in 1958 elicited a quick response from Colegio de Santa Rita. To address this pressing shortage of teachers, the school administrators consequently worked for the immediate institution of a collegiate normal course leading to the degree of Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education (BSEEd). In response to the increasing demand for Home Economic (HE) instructors, combined HE and BSEEd courses were offered in 1961.

Through these delicate years of growth and expansion, Mother Rosario Rosales with the total cooperation of other school administrators ably guided the Recollect college and used all her energy to expand its degree programs. Her unflagging efforts for the enrichment of course offerings brought about the opening of more relevant courses like Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science in Education and Collegiate Secretarial Science.

During Mother Remedios de la Cruz's term as directress in 1974, the only Catholic college of San Carlos City instituted its Master of Arts in Educational Management program. Thirty-two graduate students from the neighboring localities at once enrolled in this new masteral course. The dean of the Graduate School then was Casilda Peña, Ph.D. Four years later, the first two MA graduates proudly marched along with other Ritarian graduates at the commencement rites of March 1978.

Ever attuned to the challenges of the times

Sister Esperanza Escaño ushered the school into the computer age and met head-on the myriad challenges of modern Catholic education. The continuous acquisition of personal computers and latest computer programs continued into the 1990s. Colegio de Santa Rita must be ranked among colleges that are continually aware of the encompassing technological advances and their far-reaching consequences. A computer literacy course was subsequently instituted as a required subject in the revised curricula of the Commerce, Education and Liberal Arts programs. Computer literacy was inserted as well into the Bachelor of Science in Secretarial Administration program. A two-year Computer Secretarial Course was opened to address the pressing demand for computer-literate office workers. In addition, Mathematics has been made available as a major field of specialization for Education students.

The unceasing improvement of school facilities and salary increases provided a convincing rationale for the inevitable increase of tuition, which their students understood only too well. A well-furnished audio-visual room was inaugurated. Library acquisitions were expanded. The science laboratory, Home Economics room, school canteen were all refurbished by the alert school administrators. PMT and ROTC offices were built. A speech laboratory was set up for short-term speech courses.

Courses offered

In school year 1971-1972 Colegio de Santa Rita—which originally offered a high school education exclusively for girls—veered away from tradition and opened its portals to young boys. Their pre-school and elementary education had been coeducational since its

inception. In its Bachelor of Elementary Education program, a Ritarian possesses a wide array of majors to choose from: Mathematics, Filipino, English, Home Economics and Technology, Guidance and Counseling. A student wishing to teach in high schools enrolls in the Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) program and may opt to major in one of the four fields: English, Guidance and Counseling, Filipino, Home Economics and Technology.

Commerce and graduate programs

At present, there are four major fields of specialization under the present Bachelor of Commerce (BSC) program: Management, Marketing, Finance and Banking, Computer Science. For those who hope to be accountants in the future, the Recollect college offers a Bachelor of Science in Accountancy (BSA). An Bachelor of Arts (AB) student of Santa Rita has three choices for his major field of specialization: English, Filipino or Social Science.

It is in the secretarial education where a whole gamut of job-oriented courses is offered. There is the Bachelor of Science in Secretarial Administration (BSSAD). It is a four-year course with two majors to choose from: Office management and computer secretarial administration. Two diploma courses that can be attained in merely two years are Computer Secretarial Course and Junior Secretarial Course. As part of their unwavering commitment to meet the high-priority needs of the growing community of San Carlos and its adjoining towns, Santa Rita opened a two-year midwifery course in 1994.

In the Graduate School today, a graduate student can enroll in the MA in Education program and choose from any of the three major specializations: Educational Management, Filipino and Guidance and Counseling.

Mission statement

The Augustinian Recollect Sisters' learning institution steadfastly holds on to their Mission Statement that guides their education apostolate in San Carlos City. Below we print the Mission Statement of Colegio de Santa Rita:

Desiring to participate in the teaching mission of the Church while, at the same time, remaining faithful to its Magisterium, Colegio

de Santa Rita-San Carlos City [CSR-SCC], places itself in the service of the local Church and shares in the task of the State in the education of its youth.

As a Catholic school, CSR-SCC contributes to the task of evangelization by spreading the Gospel forming mature Christians of those placed under its care, and leading them toward the fulfillment of their end.

As an Augustinian Recollect school, CSR-SCC inculcates prayer, work, study, fraternal charity, and oneness of mind and heart in God to its school community.

As a Filipino school, CSR-SCC seeks to instill in its constituents love for what is truly Filipino in tradition, culture and values.

Furthermore, it is the religious sisters' fervid hope that Colegio de Santa Rita would continue to fulfill "its vision of hope that God in His infinite mercy guide the college safely amidst all troubles and difficulties to fulfill its mission of educating the youth for their intellectual and spiritual growth."

Mother Eufemia Lauzon's 1992 message

Mother Ma. Eufemia Lauzon, then superior general of the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters, excellently sums up in a message what Colegio de Santa Rita has stood for in its long history of committed and untiring teaching apostolate in San Carlos parish. The festive milestone was the anniversary of the educational institution in 1992-1993. Below are some relevant excerpts of the superior general's message:

Colegio de Santa Rita has served the domestic Church of San Carlos City in the education apostolate. It has experienced its ups and downs yet with God's grace it has stood up with courage to overcome the obstacles that popped along these years. To think that the College is now in its sixtieth year of untiring service to the people of God in this particular vineyard and its vicinity is very inspiring and encouraging indeed—it is a manifestation of its commitment. It has been faithful and true to its goal and mission from the very first moment of its history.⁸

It is no small feat what this Augustinian Recollect institution of learning in San Carlos City has continually contributed to the local society for the past six decades. The thousands of alumni who have left the portals of Santa Rita "now form the backbone of San Carlos in education, business, government and even in the homes."

For this rare achievement and their vital role in molding the youth and preparing them for the future, there is truly so much to thank

Almighty God for. For, as Mother Eufemia says not without some sense of pride: “It has turned out many professionals who are successful in their chosen fields of endeavor, and to cherish among them is the vocation to the religious life. Let us rejoice and thank God for His continuous blessings. He is very much worthy of honor and praise.”

A successful apostolate

Sister María Luz Nitura, directress and superior in 1988-1995, additionally reminds everyone in a message during their school’s sixtieth anniversary: “The success of an organization depends above all upon the blessing of God; and on men and women with vision, integrity and dedication. In the midst of these events, let us not be oblivious of our predecessors who have gone to their reward; we give our homage and gratitude to them.” And she aptly ends her message with a supplication: “May the Lord of the education apostolate—through the intercession of our patroness Saint Rita—bless us all!”

Perhaps no better encomium can be heaped on this venerable learning institution of San Carlos City than the succinct observation of a very youthful Santa Rita grader: “The teachers and students in Colegio de Santa Rita are friendly. The school is beautiful and clean. I consider it as my second home.”

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The Beginnings of Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos in San Carlos City

The roots of Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos in San Carlos City, Negros Occidental, can be traced to the provincial chapter of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino Province that took place on 11-16 April 1940 at the now-defunct Recoletos priory in Intramuros, Manila. Among the capitular ordinances promulgated by the chapter fathers was the 13th Ordinance that created the first private Catholic school exclusively for boys at San Carlos. The chapter ordinance declares that:

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 possible colleges and schools of primary and higher education in cities or population centers that could offer the most guarantees of success in this apostolate.¹

The new provincial superior Father Pedro A. García de Galdiano (1897-1969) followed up the 13th chapter ordinance with his salutatory circular on 14 April 1940 to all religious priests and brothers of Saint Nicholas province that then included the Philippines, Spain, England, Venezuela, Brazil and China. In it the prior provincial discloses the true motives behind the Augustinian Recollect Order's decision to establish Catholic schools:

In Christian towns where people have known the Maker of their souls, [Saint Nicholas province] wants those

¹ Martín T. LEGARRA OAR, *Inauguración del Santo Tomás de Villanueva Institute*, in BPSN 32 (1942) 12.

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.²

Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute

The provincial council, composed of the prior provincial himself, the four councilors—Manuel S. Gómara, Aurelio E. Lacruz, Pedro I. Moreno, Domingo G. Carceller (1894-1966)—and provincial secretary Martín T. Legarra (1910-1985) met in session at Recoletos priory on 19 April 1940. The council members unanimously decided to establish two schools. One of them was to bear the name *Colegio Fray Luis de León* which was to be set up at Caracas, capital of Venezuela in South America. The other was to be called *Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute* at San Carlos. This would be changed to Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos in postwar years.

It is not hard to understand why the new Augustinian Recollect schools were named after Fray Luis de León (1528-1591) and Saint Thomas of Villanueva (1486-1555), two great Augustinians and reformists of Spain in the sixteenth century. A well-known poet of the Golden Age of Spanish Literature, Fray Luis de León almost authored in 1589 the *Forma de Vivir* [Way of Life], the first Constitutions of the Augustinian Recollection.

Saint Thomas of Villanova

Saint Thomas, archbishop of Valencia, Spain, in 1544-1555, zealously promoted reform policies for the Order of the Hermits of Saint Augustine during his terms as provincial of Andalusia and Castile. In 1550, he erected the first seminary in the Roman Catholic world. Saint Thomas of Villanova is honored as patron of studies of the Recollect Order.³

In a letter to Vicar Provincial Father Manuel S. Gómara in Manila on 15 October 1940, Father Tirso O. Ruana (1892-1941), parish

² *Ibid.*

³ José Manuel BENGÓA, *Tomás de Villanueva, el limosnero de Dios* (Marcilla, Navarra 1993) 22.

priest of San Carlos who was put in charge of the acquisition of land and the construction of the new school edifice, was the first to suggest the name *Colegio de Santo Tomas de Villanueva*. In his letter he gives various reasons why he considers Archbishop Thomas of Villanueva the fitting patron saint for the pioneering school for boys:

Who deserves more to be named patron of a Spanish Catholic school than the celebrated archbishop of Valencia, an exemplary student in Salamanca and Alcalá [sites of two very highly regarded universities in Spain], a brilliant professor in the cloisters of Salamanca, father of the poor, most devoted to the Virgin and one of the strongest pillars of the Hispanic spirit and heritage?⁴

Why San Carlos?

The provincial council was confident that the endeavor would be a great success with its choice of San Carlos as the site of the school. Four reasons can be culled from the council deliberations. First, the provincial and his four councilors felt it was their duty to forge stronger the historical bond with the people of San Carlos, a parish which had always been a Recollect ministry since a resident curate was assigned to it in 1891. Second, they took into account the ideal geographical location of San Carlos, being the focal point of the cities of Dumaguete, Cebu and Bacolod. Third, they pointed out the locality's great potential for rapid development and economic progress with the presence of the sugar centrifugal mill built in 1912.

And finally, there was a felt need to complement the Augustinian Recollect sisters' Colegio de Santa Rita, then an institution exclusively for girls. The members of the provincial council further observed the success of the girls' school. They could not find any reason why a similar private Catholic school solely for boys would not succeed.⁵

Pedro I. Zunzarren, OAR

Aware of the myriad bureaucratic requirements, including the construction of the school edifice that would certainly delay the opening of the new school, the Recollect superiors put Father Pedro I. Zunzarren

⁴ Rafael E. CABARLES, *The Centenary of the Recollects in San Carlos City, Negros Occidental, and the Golden Jubilee of the Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos Foundation* (San Carlos City 1991) 51, note 43.

⁵ LEGARRA, 13.

de la Inmaculada Concepción (1898-1950) in charge of the tasks preparatory for the school year opening in June 1940. The Recollect educator was born on 31 January 1898 at Cizur Mayor, Navarra, Spain. His simple profession took place in 1914. After ordination in May 1921, he journeyed to the Philippines in October of that year. In March 1924 he joined the first Recollect mission to Kweitech in the Chinese province of Honan after a sojourn of two and a half years in Manila.⁶

Various assignments

Father Zunzarren yielded his office as director of Santo Tomas to his confrere Father Gregorio Espiga in 1946 to become rector of the new Recollect school in Manila, San Sebastian College. The following year saw him in Shanghai as procurator of the Recollect mission there. In 1949, he was elected vicar provincial with residence at San Sebastian convent.

After a short but painful illness, he expired at the Santo Tomas University Hospital on 21 May 1950 at age 52. From the faded Book of Necrologies kept at the vicarial house in Quezon City, we cull this interesting information on the first Santo Tomas director: "His last ambition was to construct a new novitiate house for Filipino postulants who wish to enter the Recollect Order. His efforts to that effect had just commenced when the Lord called him to His bosom."⁷ Father Zunzarren was endowed with very impressive personal traits and virtues that his demise was deemed "a great loss of one of the Order's most valuable personnel in the Philippines."

Boys' Department

As professor of philosophy and theology, Father Zunzarren was trained and for that reason he was sent to Spain in 1929 and teach at their Marcilla house of theology. He had likewise taken up pedagogical courses in secondary education. Hence, he was the most logical choice for the new San Carlos high school project. In view of the urgent need to start the new school, he providentially found an unused building, a

⁶ 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. 169; Jesús Ignacio PANEDAS GALINDO OAR, *Los Agustinos Recoletos en China*, in *Recollectio* 17 (1994) 228.

⁷ *Libro de defunciones 1943-1981*, 96-97. Archives of the Vicariate of the Philippines and China, Quezon City.

stone's throw from the Recollect sisters' Colegio de Santa Rita. The edifice was the house of a Broce family, located at the present site of Centro Soda Fountain—between the Philippine National Bank and the now-extinct Cafe Magdalena—at Araneta Street [actual Gustilo Street]. In this building the Recollects temporarily housed what was then called the Boys' Department.

The school was affiliated to Colegio de Santa Rita for all civil effects solely. As concurrent school director and instructor of the Boys' Department, Father Zunzarren employed the following teaching staff: Sister Carmen Alba de la Sagrada Familia, Arturo C. Eusebio Jr., Exequiel B. Ramos and a certain Miss Espina.

A joint Recollect effort

On 17 June 1940, the prior provincial Father García del Galdiano and his council unanimously approved the construction of the new building. They further ordained the provincial delegate of the Recollect priests in the two civil provinces Negros—then known as superior of mission—to take the necessary steps for the immediate realization of the school project. Exactly two months later, on 17 August, the provincial council authorized Father García del Galdiano to set aside adequate funds for the erection of a worthy and suitable edifice. Part of the funds could be taken from the income of the Recollect parochial ministries in Negros. The prior provincial was allowed by their statutes to draw funds from the general procuration so long as the total amount did not exceed ₱10,000.⁸

The provincial then dispatched on 28 September 1940 a circular letter to all the religious curates of the Diocese of Bacolod which then comprised the parishes of Negros Oriental as well. In that circular Father García del Galdiano sought material assistance from the Recollect parish priests for the erection of a school at San Carlos, that was the common aspiration of all the religious of Saint Nicholas Province. The person in charge of the collection of funds was the superior of mission who was based at Bacolod City. Below are the words of the provincial superior:

In our desire to make the school the principal outcome of the joint effort of the religious who exercise the sacred ministry in the Diocese of Bacolod, we hereby ordain that religious of the ministries of said diocese directly remit to the reverend superior of mission the extra amount after

⁸ CABARLES, *Centenary*, 47, note 32.

they shall have attended to their needs with the decorum that their priestly status requires of them.⁹

Twenty-four parish priests in the two provinces of Negros readily heeded the provincial's call. Funds also poured in from various sources. A car used by Father Samanes and a truck were sold, and the net proceeds [₱900.00] were accumulated for the common Santo Tomas fund. A year after, the fund campaign netted a total of ₱25,140.90.

Land purchase

The next move was to search for a most appropriate site for the new Recollect school. The services of the church organist Eusebio Calderon were employed by the parish priest Tirso Ruana. At that time a parcel of land owned by Emilio Broce was up for sale. Its location along Castro Street [renamed Azcona Street], a few meters away from Santa Rita and the parochial church, was most accessible to future students, faculty and other school personnel. Its total land area was 13,575 square meters. It was planted with equidistant coconut trees. The school site would cost Saint Nicholas Province the sum of ₱4,400.00.

The parish priest represented Saint Nicholas Province in the purchase of the lot. The deed of sale was signed on 12 October 1940 between Padre Tirso Ruana and the landowner Emilio Broce. Cesar Gamao, Arturo Eusebio and Eusebio Calderon affixed their signatures as witnesses. Victorino G. Apuhin notarized the deed of sale and was paid ₱11.70 for his notarial services. Two days after the sale, the pertinent papers were forwarded to Bacolod City for registration at the Civil Registry of Deeds. The Recollect fathers availed themselves of the legal services of the Hilado and Hilado Law Office of the provincial capital.¹⁰

Canonical status

The next important step was to seek the Bacolod bishop's permit for the establishment of a Catholic school and for the canonical status of the future religious house at San Carlos. For that purpose, a formal communication was dispatched by the prior provincial on 8 December 1940 to Bishop Casimiro M. Lladoc:

⁹ *Ibid.*, 48, note 33.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

Considering as one of the most effective means for the people's spiritual well-being the setting up of schools and colleges where the youth are given sound religious instruction, the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino of the Augustinian Recollect fathers yearns to further contribute through education to the progress of religion in the Diocese of Bacolod which your Excellency administers with so much competence, by opening a school of secondary education named after Saint Thomas of Villanova in the town of San Carlos.

For that purpose, we further wish to set up in that town a canonical house where our religious will reside. Hence with utmost respect we seek your consent and special permit in accordance with Canon 497 so we can proceed with the erection of that canonical house and school in the municipality of San Carlos, Negros Occidental, Philippine Islands.¹¹

In February 1941, the Bacolod prelate granted his approval for the canonical erection of the religious house.

Cornerstone blest

In December 1940, the prior provincial conducted his canonical visitation to the religious communities and parishes in the Visayan islands. From Cebu, he started off for San Carlos to officiate at the blessing of the cornerstone. The festive affair was scheduled for 19 December to coincide with the college day celebration of Colegio de Santa Rita.

Mayor-elect Eugenio A. Antonio Jr. (1910-1992) of San Carlos graced the memorable occasion. The outgoing Mayor Domingo A. Medina (1880-1944), who had earlier approved the building permit and other requirements, also attended the momentous event. Fathers Manuel S. Gómara, Martín T. Legarra, Pedro Zunzarren, Eladio H. Aguirre (1889-1950) and Tirso O. Ruana assisted the provincial and lent more solemnity to the affair. The administration, faculty and students of Santa Rita were joined by special guests and a big crowd of onlookers at the laying of the cornerstone. Later that day, Father García de Galdiano wrote the bishop of Bacolod about the successful affair that had just taken place.¹²

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 51-52, note 44.

¹² Modesto P. SA-ONOX, *A Brief History of the Church in Negros Occidental* (Bacolod City 1976) 103.

Construction in full swing

According to the blueprints drawn up by a Manila architect named Mañosa who lived in the vicinity of San Sebastian Convent, the two-story edifice was 64 meters long, 27 meters wide and eight meters high. It would occupy a portion of the 13,575 square meters of the school campus which faced Castro Street. The proposed building was E-shaped before the Recollect priests made some necessary modifications. The construction of the new high school started on 3 December 1940. It was Padre Tirso O. Ruana who supervised the project since its inception.

A Japanese foreman

A Japanese national named Kawahara was hired as foreman. He had been strongly recommended to the Recollects by his close friend Msgr. Flaviano Ariola, vicar general of the diocese and future bishop of Legazpi in Albay. Kawahara resided in Bacolod while working in the construction of a new building of La Consolacion College beside the Bacolod cathedral.¹³ He moved to San Carlos with his wife, two daughters and a son. World War II broke out and Kawahara was suspected of being as a spy. We have no information on his wartime activities.

Soon after the Liberation of the town from the Japanese invaders, the American forces threw him and his entire family in prison at the San Carlos sugar central compound. Informed about his Japanese friend's plight, Msgr. Ariola then asked Father Gregorio Espiga of Colegio de Santo Tomas to arrange everything for the release of Kawahara's family.

Tirso O. Ruana, OAR

The builder of Santo Tomas, Padre Tirso Ochoa Ruana de la Virgen del Carmen, was born on 28 January 1892 at Vitoria de Rioja, Burgos, Spain. He joined the Recollect Order in 1908 and was elevated to the dignity of priesthood in February 1915. The people of Calapán in Mindoro welcomed the new priest. He later moved to Pola. In these two parishes he discharged his parochial ministry for a total of three years.

¹³ CABARLES, 17. Negros historian Modesto P. Sa-onoy names another Japanese engineer named Paul Ishiwata who was contracted by La Consolacion College sisters "to construct the building, the facade of which still stands today." See SA-ONUY, 101.

Before he succeeded the newly elected vicar provincial and first councilor Padre Manuel Gómara in the parochial administration of San Carlos in 1940, Padre Tirso had worked for over twenty years in such Negros Occidental curacies as Kabankalan, Isabela, Bacolod and Vito, Sagay.¹⁴

The hard-working parish priest of San Carlos wanted Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute ready for the much-awaited opening of academic year 1941-1942. The construction was therefore done at full speed. There never was a moment wasted. A Recollect chronicler describes for us Padre Tirso's zealous efforts: "He spent the time allowed him by his ministerial duties, inspecting the progress of the construction, supervising the workers, encouraging them with his presence and his words of affection."¹⁵

Undetermined illness

During the construction stage, Padre Tirso was taken ill. The fever he was spiking refused to recede despite the prescribed rest he had taken. He was obliged to be admitted for several days at Saint Joseph Hospital in Manapla in northern Negros where he tried to recover from his illness. The attending physicians, however, failed to pinpoint the cause of his ailment. When he felt his health somewhat improved, he then travelled to San Carlos and went on with his construction project which was nearing completion, aside from attending to his pastoral obligations. But his fever never waned.

In his Father's bosom

Padre Tirso eventually took the trip to Manila and immediately entered San Juan de Dios Hospital. After severe complications, his health deteriorated all the more. Still, the Manila physicians could not determine his ailment. Because of the irreversible backslide of his health, he had to receive the last Sacraments. It was on 16 May 1941 when Padre Tirso returned to his Maker at age 59. His parishioners were startled by the news of his untimely demise.

The parish priest was well-loved by his parishioners for "his exemplary zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls." Proof of this great affection was the very impressive deed done by the lowly

¹⁴ AVELLANEDA, 158.

¹⁵ LEGARRA, 14.

construction workers of Santo Tomas: they passed the hat around and used the collection to pay for the stipend of a mass all of them attended.¹⁶

Padre Manuel takes over

Once more Padre Manuel Gómara had to finish a job started by a confrere. But then he was the right man for the project. As a Recollect chronicler says: “He had taken an active part in the preparation of the blueprints, the purchase of land, and other preliminary steps; and he was fully aware of the wishes of the venerable council on the matter.”¹⁷ He took over on 4 June 1941. Yet it seems he had been on the job right after Padre Tirso’s death. In fact, on 27 May, Mr. A. E. Ordoñez, sales manager of Elizalde and Co., submitted a proposal to Padre Manuel to paint the whole edifice for P3,000.¹⁸ On the same day, this bid was approved by the renowned Recollect builder of churches, rectories and schools. Among the suppliers of construction materials were Ong Bon Tic, Marsman, Victorias Lumber and Visayan Trading System. The pre-war price of a sack of cement was ₱1.60, while gasoline was ₱0.18 per liter.

First Thomasians

On 23 June 1941, a total enrollment of 153 students from first to fourth year high school entered the hallowed portals of Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute. They went down in history as the first Thomasians. The Boys’ Department once affiliated to Colegio de Santa Rita in the previous academic year turned extinct.

The eleven fourth-year Thomasians were Emilio Arcellas, Maximo Atienza, Policarpo Belangel, Hermoneges Demabildo, Jesus Dineros, Carlos Ledesma, Ramon Nemenzo, Restituto Nemenzo, Bernabe Panugalinog, Jose Valderrama and Vicente Valle. They could not complete the academic year, as the World War II conflict in the Pacific arena had begun with the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941. All eleven Thomasians were officially deemed high school graduates since the Bureau of Private Schools had accelerated them through mass promotion. They were rightfully dubbed as the first batch of CST-R alumni.¹⁹

¹⁶ *Noticiario de nuestra Provincia*, in BPSN 31 (1941) 187-188.

¹⁷ LEGARRA, 14.

¹⁸ CABARLES, 55, note 59.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

Administration

The first Recollect community was headed by Father Pedro Zunzarren who was concurrently director of the high school. He took charge of History, English and Religion subjects. Father Felix M. Bartolomé (1907-1969) taught Spanish and piano courses. History and Religion subjects were likewise handled by Father Gregorio Espiga. Brother Juan Machicote (1899-1945) held the sensitive post of treasurer.²⁰

Father Zunzarren had joined Fathers Bartolomé and Espiga in Manila at the close of school year 1940-1941. The three priests had enrolled in a summer education course at the University of Santo Tomas. On 3 June, the first four administrators of Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute headed for San Carlos in time for the 23 June school opening.

First faculty

Among the faculty members of note was Arturo C. Eusebio Jr., a BSE graduate who taught National Language (Pilipino later on), Biology and General Science. He had been with the Boys' Department since 1940. In the last decade of his sojourn at Santo Tomas, he would solely teach Filipino subjects to third and four year students. Mr. Eusebio—or *Opô* as his students and alumni commonly alluded to him—would continue in this noble teaching profession until his retirement in 1966.

Santiago Madamba was assistant principal and English teacher. Martin Atienza, a civil engineer, handled Physics and Mathematics subjects. Mathematics courses were also taught by Arturo Ramos. Lieutenant Ibañez was put in charge of Military Training and Physical Education subjects. The officer was shortly after called to active duty and was forthwith replaced by Lieutenant Narrajos.

Preparations for the blessing

The religious community agreed to hold the solemn blessing of the school edifice on 20 July 1941 after the Bacolod bishop had fixed the date. This was in reply to Father Zunzarren's query and invitation to Bishop Casimiro Lladoc mailed on 19 June. The Recollect director first informed the prelate that classes would open on 23 June with good

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

enrollment prospects. He then asked the bishop which date he preferred for the blessing and thanksgiving mass: the 13th or 20th July.²¹

In his reply dated 21 June 1941, the diocesan prelate opted for 20 July as the date of the blessing and inauguration of the building. Additionally, he “prayed for the success of the whole community of the new school during this momentous event in the Recollect Order.”²² Bishop Lladoc, known for his “great zeal and interest in endowing his diocese with new centers of Catholic education,” told them he did not want to miss the event.²³ He further wished to express his appreciation for the Augustinian Recollects with his presence.

Inauguration of the new school building

The prior provincial came for the red-letter day of San Carlos in order to witness the realization of the aspirations of the provincial chapter of April 1940. Father García de Galdiano was accompanied on that occasion by his councilor Father Simeón Asensio. A torch parade was held around the locality in the evening of 19 July 1941. At 7:00 a.m. of the next day, a solemn thanksgiving mass was celebrated by Bishop Lladoc at the parochial church. The Recollect administrators, faculty, students of Santo Tomas and Santa Rita were joined by the municipal and school officials as well as parishioners at the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

Immediately after the church rites, everyone walked to the new landmark of the town, which was a few minutes’ walk away. The bishop then blest the new building. This rite was followed by the solemn enthronement of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus at the main hall with the prior provincial officiating. In a brief speech, Father García de Galdiano proclaimed in all solemnity fitting for the occasion that the Lord Jesus Christ would thenceforth be the King, Lord, Master, Guide and Director of the new center of learning.²⁴

Speeches galore

Lunch was served at 12:00 noon. At 4:30 p.m., a military review was held to honor the distinguished ecclesiastical and civil officials.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 55, note 64.

²² *Ibid.*, 55-56, note 65.

²³ *Ibid.*, 56, note 67.

²⁴ LEGARRA, 15.

A literary-cultural program followed not long afterward. A literary musical number titled *Secreto de Confesión* [Secret of Confession] was well applauded by the audience. Bishop Lladoc, Father Zunzarren, Mayor Eugenio Antonio Jr. and Don Roberto Llantada delivered each an eloquent speech either in English or Spanish on the great benefits and significance of Santo Tomas for the locality. Sabiniano R. Mariano, principal of the public school, gave the closing remarks.

Bishop Lladoc and Mayor Antonio had very kind words for Prior General Padre Leoncio U. Reta who had discharged his pastoral duties for many years in San Carlos. They also reminisced the assiduous efforts of the deceased Padre Tirso Ruana who almost single-handedly brought the Recollect school project to its happy realization.²⁵

Don Roberto Llantada

Of the countless speeches and sermons delivered during the occasion, we have at hand solely Don Roberto Llantada's memorable address. Only the full text of his speech was handed down to posterity, having been printed in a Spanish magazine for the missions *Todos Misioneros*, previously edited by Father Zunzarren in Shanghai, China. And deservedly so. Don Roberto, a prominent hacienda administrator and in due time president of the prestigious San Carlos Sugar Planters' Association (1951-1970), was a close friend of the Recollect priests since time immemorial.

Below we quote salient portions of his well-researched speech on the significance of the new Roman Catholic institution for the municipality. In so many words, he began his address by thanking all the religious—both parish priests and educators—of the Augustinian Recollect Order for their immeasurable contribution to the material progress and spiritual welfare of San Carlos:

There is in me an ardent impulse... a yearning to publicly acknowledge my testimonial of gratitude to the members of this admirable Recollect Order, whom the people of San Carlos owed so much in their progress, both in the moral and religious aspect and in the material. I do not know if all of us residents of this town have realized the great work done by these laudable Recollect Fathers. I am not sure if all of us are truly aware of the significance of the establishment and realization of Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute for our people. There is no need to

²⁵ *Ibid.*

mention its importance to the locality with respect to its ornate appearance, because we view it with our own eyes and proclaim: this is an imposing, majestic, monumental edifice.²⁶

Education and instruction

Don Roberto goes on to elucidate his attentive audience on what a Catholic school means. He further makes an exquisite distinction of the terms *instruction* and *education*. Today's administrators and faculty of Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos may do well to consider the following fine points raised five decades ago by Don Roberto as ageless food for thought and timeless principles to guide their pedagogical activities as well as their administrative policies and responsibilities:

This building we inaugurate today is a Catholic institution, a Catholic school. And a Catholic school is a home where our sons are instructed and educated. A Catholic school is the second home where our sons go after taking leave of their parents. In the bosom of this school with its ambiance of piety, probity, patriotism, the boys receive instruction and education.

And observe well what I've said: a school where they receive education. Indeed, a big difference lies between instruction and education per se. And for that very reason, we must underscore that distinction very often forgotten by many. Instruction is a means; education, the goal. Instruction is to the intellect and memory; education, to the will. Instruction tends to produce skills; education tempers characters and initiates them into virtue.

A beacon of moral education

Don Roberto further played up the Christian formation, spiritual well-being and moral values that would form the crux of the particular

²⁶ CABARLES, 57, note 68. The entire speech was delivered in Spanish and originally published in *Todos Misioneros* (1939-1941) 158-159.

brand of education to be imparted by Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute. This school, for Don Roberto, is “first and foremost, a beacon of moral education”:

A French spiritual writer Ernest Lavisse has very well said: ‘There is a profession that differs from that of a physician, a lawyer or engineer, it is the profession of a man of good.’

Well then, San Carlos can therefore congratulate itself for today it can count on the grandiose Catholic school which in fitting response to the demands does not restrict itself to dispensing science like a disinterested treatise of wisdom. For science imparts, illumines, guides. Art captivates, impresses, uplifts, it’s true. Moreover, on top of science and art is the moral and religious well-being that as a supreme ideal must take control of man’s whole life.

That is why this institution does not consider its mission accomplished after making its students share in the fruits of its reflections and labors. Besides involving itself with our children’s instruction, this institution focuses on their spiritual interests, their moral needs, their physical health, even to the point of augmenting their modest recreation. In one word, Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute is a superior school of learning. But first and foremost, it is a beacon of moral education.

Let all this be an acknowledgment of our grateful hearts, as we fulfill our Christian obligation.

Reactions and comments coverage

In 1941 a Spanish magazine published by the Augustinian Recollects in Shanghai [which moved to Manila and later Marcilla, Navarra, Spain, on account of World War II] and catered especially to the missions had printed Don Roberto Llantada’s speech *in toto*. It also brought up the news of the Santo Tomas inauguration, expressly alluding to comments and reactions made by the residents of San Carlos and neighboring towns. The most salient points are reprinted below:

The people of San Carlos and adjoining towns now appreciate the firmness, ventilation, hygiene, in

one word, total and absolute comfort and beauty of the building of Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute. In like manner, they observe the huge size of its campus for sports and recreation, its reasonable school fees, the selection of its teachers, the best of the best, and the unquestionable competence of its professors and administrators. For that reason, the enrollment in this first year alone has surpassed the expectations of most optimists. And all of it forecasts a very brilliant future for this new center of learning.

With the establishment of Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute in San Carlos, three ideals were the goals and aspirations of the pioneer educators and founding fathers of Saint Nicholas province: “first, to render the greatest glory to Our Lord God”; then, “to continue the evangelization task in the Philippines by adapting its methods to the demands of the modern apostolate; and third, to effectively contribute to the aggrandizement and luster of the Order of Augustinian Recollects.”²⁷

Congratulatory messages and media coverage

Congratulatory messages were received from as far as Manila, specifically from the Director of the Bureau of Private Schools and the superior general of the Augustinian Recollect sisters. San Sebastian College-Manila faculty and students also dispatched their telegraphic best wishes. The provincial governors of Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental likewise conveyed their specially greetings through the wires. The Visayan regional print media prominently featured the news of the blessing and inauguration of Santo Tomas. Most of the press accounts highlighted the great benefits that the new center of learning could give to the youth of the locality and adjoining towns.

Among the regional newspapers and magazines that played up the San Carlos event were *El Tiempo* of Iloilo City, *La Nación* and *Ang Lungsuranon* of Cebu City. In Manila, *El Debate*, *The Philippines Commonweal*, *Cultura Social*, *Boletín Eclesiástico* and *Ecos* feature the news with photos of the first existent Roman Catholic school for boys in the whole island of Negros.

²⁷ LEGARRA, 17.

End of the beginning

The euphoric atmosphere, however, was short-lived. In less than five months, classes would be abruptly suspended. The Bureau of Private Schools ordered all schools closed on 10 December 1941. Santo Tomas would remain closed to students and teachers alike for the next three and a half years.

The European War had turned global when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and crippled the American naval forces in the Pacific. World War II came to San Carlos only in June 1942 when the ruthless invaders put the town under their brutal control. Japanese officers went on to forcibly occupy the whole building and campus of Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute. War survivors said Santo Tomas was immediately converted into a Japanese concentration camp.

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The Augustinian Recollects of San Carlos, Negros Occidental during the Second World War

It was in early December of 1941 when the Filipino people commenced to taste the bitterness of the war that had gone out of the confines of Europe and engulfed the whole world, thus commenced a war chronicle of San Carlos. At 6:30 a.m., 8 December, the flames of war played havoc on the American colony in Asia when Japanese squadrons raided and wiped out the United States Air Force stationed in Davao. Later that day Japanese planes struck Baguio, Aparri, Clark Field, Iba and Tarlac. Nichols Field and Sangley Point suffered the same destructive fate much later. The simultaneous air raids happened after the naval and military forces of the Empire of Japan had treacherously attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawaii a few hours before—at a little past two in the morning [Philippine time] without previous warning nor declaration of war.¹ The sneak attack that occurred at 7:55 a.m., Sunday 7 December [Hawaiian time]—“a date which will live in infamy”—crippled the American Pacific Fleet based at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii.

United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s address to his fellow Americans and to the free world was unforgettable: “The sudden criminal attacks perpetrated by the Japanese in the Pacific provided the climax of a decade of international immorality. Powerful and resourceful gangsters have banded together to make war on the human race... We are now in the midst of war, not for conquest, not for vengeance, but for a world in which this nation, and all that this nation represents, will

¹ Teodoro A. AGONCILLO, *History of the Filipino People* (Quezon City 1990) 389-390; Antonio M. MOLINA, *The Philippines Through the Centuries* (Manila) II, 1960) 327-328; Gregorio F. ZAIDE, *The Pageant of Philippine History* (Manila 1979) II, 476.

be safe for our children.” The United States Congress at once declared war against Japan. The Philippines, a U.S. colony since the turn of the century, was dragged into the Second World War.

Lull before the storm

In San Carlos everything had come to a standstill: schools, offices and the parochial ministry. Public and private schools of the locality were immediately ordered closed on 10 December. Business had almost come to a standstill. Economic activities were similarly limited. Able-bodied men had either volunteered their services to the United States Army Forces in the Far East [USAFFE] or were conscripted into the army. Most reserved officers had been called to active duty when the war broke out in Europe. The townsfolk, dreading the inevitable Japanese invasion, fled in hordes to the safety of the adjacent hills and mountains. It was a typical reaction reminiscent of the piratical Moro raids against coastal settlements in Negros and other Visayan islands during the Spanish colonial regime.

Gregorio Espiga, OAR, war chronicler

The Augustinian Recollect Father Gregorio Infante Espiga who authored a poignant account of the people of San Carlos gauntlet during World War II,² was with his confreres Pedro I. Zunzarren, Félix M. Bartolomé, Francisco M. Azcárate, Eladio H. Aguirre, Aquiles G. Alfaro and religious brother Juan L. Machicote either at the parish rectory or at Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute, as they anxiously awaited developments. A handful of residents remained in town to guard their homes and properties from looters. Oftentimes a family could reside at an unguarded home and transfer to another with impunity. In this state of solitude and trepidation, the friars stayed for seven months in the almost deserted town.



**Fr. Gregorio Espiga,
OAR: Guerrilla Padre
of San Carlos**

² Gregorio ESPIGA, *Hablan nuestros misioneros*, in BPSN 26 (1946) 228-233.

The Guerrilla Padre of San Carlos

At the 1980 silver jubilee of Espiga's consecration as bishop held at San Sebastian Basilica in Quiapo, Manila, his long-time secretary Federico P. de la Rosa briefly recalled the episcopal jubilarian's war effort in San Carlos. An excerpt of the sermon goes this way:

During the Second World War in San Carlos, Negros Occidental when others were always in conferences about how to help the guerrillas in the mountains, Father Espiga was crossing the Japanese lines to attend to the spiritual needs of the Filipino guerrilla soldiers, to the extent that people started calling him the Guerrilla Padre.³

We owe part of our history of the war years in San Carlos to Espiga's lengthy chronicle.

The Japanese Occupation

In the first week of June 1942, it was when the invaders seized the town of San Carlos.⁴ Japanese officers lost no time in occupying Santo Tomas, converting its administrative office into a prison. Later during the occupation period, the Japanese Imperial Army set up a well-fortified garrison at the spacious compound of San Carlos Milling Company, Inc., located at the northern entrance of the town and manned by five hundred troops.

Through intense propaganda, Japanese soldiers goaded the upland refugees to come down and live at the town proper. It became the standard practice of the Japanese Imperial Army in the duration of the war to drop from their low-flying planes thousands of propaganda leaflets on mountainsides and forested areas believed to be hideouts of guerrillas, their families and other evacuees. Initially assured of their safety at the town proper, the people trekked down from the mountain fastness. Everyone in town was issued by Japanese officers stationed at Santo Tomas a personal name tag that served as safe-conduct pass as well.

³ Federico DE LA ROSA, *Palawan's Glorious Past. Sermon delivered on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee celebration of the episcopal consecration of the Most. Rev. Gregorio Espiga OAR, DD* (Manila 10 September 1980) 9.

⁴ Tomas KATALBAS, *A Short History of San Carlos City (Negros Occidental)*, (San Carlos 1965) 11. The author of this historical account claims that "in the first week of June, 1942, the Japanese Imperial Forces arrived and occupied San Carlos."

The residents soon witnessed the savagery and oppression committed by the Japanese Kempei Tai. Individuals who were suspected of giving support to the guerrillas were rounded up in the dead of the night and jailed at the SCMCI compound. Most of the hapless prisoners were thereafter never heard of. They had suffered barbaric tortures, death by beheading, mortal bayonet stabs, dismemberment or gunshot at the hands of Japanese soldiers.

Informers, collaborators and traitors

Local collaborators and informers were quick to denounce the guerrillas' presence. Innocent relatives were secretly picked up and jailed right away in order to coerce the guerrillas' surrender. They were subjected to heinous tortures in order to ferret out some confession, but they were put to death in the end. Japanese boats ferrying captured guerrillas or their hapless kin stopped at mid-sea between the población and Sipaway Island where the prisoners were mercilessly executed. Their corpses were then hurled into the deep blue waters of Tañon Strait.

Arrest, torture and murder of Manuel Y. Apuhin

At one time, Japanese executioners bound three prisoners with an electric wire to a huge piece of iron rail that was then cast into the sea between Guadalupe, a village south of the población, and Ermita in Sipaway Island, also known as Refugio Island.⁵ One of the prisoners of the Japanese Imperial Army executioners was Manuel, eldest of the eight children of Victorino Gonzaga Apuhin and Quirina Miravalles Yunsay, San Carlos residents since the 1920s. Eyewitnesses disclosed after World War II to the surviving Apuhin family members the gruesome murder of Manuel at the hands of the executioners in 1944. War refugee families had fled to the upland camps of San Carlos. Victorino Apuhin had told his son to go down to the lowland, specifically to Barrio Guadalupe, to purchase salt as it was the village market day in that village. A Filipino collaborator in Barrio



**Manuel Y. Apuhin,
murdered by dreaded
Kempeitai for not
squealing on his USAFFE
brother.**

⁵ Corazon A. ROMANILLOS, *New Signs of Hope. War Exploits of Guerrilla Leader Loreto Y. Apuhin* [manuscript] (San Carlos City 1984) 8.

Guadalupe had reported Manuel to the enemy soldiers and pinpointed him as the brother of Captain Loreto, already a well-known USAFFE officer and guerrilla fighter, who had escaped from the Japanese concentration camp in Bacolod City in May 1942. Manuel was arrested, tortured and executed by bayonet stabs. His cadaver was tied to an iron rail which was hurled into the deep sea.⁶

Majority of the guerrilla fighters decided to trek back to the hills to continue the struggle. They earnestly beseeched the oppressed people to follow them back to the safety of their mountain fastness. The local resistance movement tried in vain to incite them to join a general uprising in July 1942.

Recollects in a quandary

The priests Manuel Gómara, Pedro Zunzarren, Aquiles Alfaro and the religious brother Juan Machicote left for Bacolod on 11 August 1942. Félix Bartolomé, Francisco Azcárate, Eladio Aguirre and Gregorio Espiga opted to stay behind initially. The four Spanish missionaries threw in their lot with the people and—if it would be God's will—to suffer and perish with them. Their native country, they argued, was not at war with Japan. Apparently, they saw no immediate danger nor any cause for alarm. The situation, nevertheless, turned for the worse in every passing day.

In addition, the missionaries received very urgent warnings from Manuel Gómara—superior of mission in Negros Island—and from Bishop Casimiro Lladoc to withdraw without further delay to either Cebu or Bacolod in groups.

Recollect trips to Manila, Cebu and Bacolod

In August 1942, Zunzarren and Machicote left Bacolod for Manila. Machicote also went to the capital for medical treatment. At the height of the Battle of Intramuros in February 1945, the religious brother perished together with five other Recollects of San Nicolás priory and several members of religious congregations, victims all of Japanese atrocities.⁷ Zunzarren later journeyed to Cebu City and resided at their Immaculate Conception convent until the end of the war.

⁶ Interview with Victorino A. Romanillos, 11 April 1995, San Carlos City.

⁷ *Los mártires de Intramuros*, in BPSN 39 (1949) 229-230.

The missionaries had to obey their superiors' orders; with a heavy heart they abandoned San Carlos and set off for Bacolod. They could not do anything but "leave behind the población besieged by guerrillas and laid open to perish from hunger."⁸ Eleven Recollect missionaries were reunited at the residence of Bishop Casimiro Lladoc in Japanese-occupied Bacolod City. Never was there an idle moment for the big community of clergy amid constant peril and apprehension. Ever faithful to their ministerial priesthood, they lent a hand to the diocesan clergy in discharging such pastoral tasks as sick visitations, baptisms, communions, preaching, confessions, spiritual retreats, besides the daily masses at the cathedral, constructed almost a century ago by a Recollect confrere Father Mauricio Ferrero (1844-1915).

In this manner, the Spanish religious reciprocated the bishop's generosity and hospitality. On one occasion the Recollect Manuel del Val took charge of delivering sermons in Spanish during the Holy Week of 1943 at the cathedral. Espiga traveled to Silay to conduct spiritual exercises in English to the faithful.

The población in distress

In February 1943, the superior of the Negros mission gave Espiga and Aquiles Alfaro permission to go back to San Carlos. The missionaries wished to "suffer the plight of our brothers, whom some months ago we had abandoned with hurt feeling." The rueful situation they found at San Carlos remained the same as they had left it six months earlier. The town was controlled by Japanese troops who were quick to lock up suspicious-looking and undocumented persons in jail. Espiga discloses to us his first-hand observation of the deprivations suffered by the people in the Japanese-occupied area:

The town was surrounded by guerrillas and the Japanese continued to execute their victims. Famine was at its greatest apogee because nobody was permitted to enter the town proper. Sun-dried horse meat or carabeef and some vegetables were our chief sustenance, and sometimes we even had to bewail the lack of almost all this. There was rice shortage. The destitute people could not do anything but have recourse to what they never dreamed of before: eat buri stalks, bananas and coconuts. For some time, the situation turned for the

⁸ ESPIGA, 228.

better and for that we gave thanks to God for He still
deigned to keep us alive.⁹

Missionary trips

In 1944 the American forces were getting closer to the Far East. Meanwhile, two Recollects Félix M. Bartolomé and Francisco M. Azcárate left Bacolod and rejoined their confreres at San Carlos. All were busy looking for ways to reach the war refugees in the uplands of San Carlos. Aware of their sacred ministry as pastors, they wanted to save as many lives as possible. They just could not remain oblivious of the fact that the war refugees in the mountains were also under their spiritual care. Compelled to abandon the población by unfortunate circumstances beyond their control, thousands of parishioners were for a long time deprived of the sacraments. The parish priests yearned “to work in those far-flung portions of the Lord’s vineyard,” declares Espiga. “For more than two years, they had not received the beneficial nourishment by His ministers’ hands.”

Apostolate in guerrilla territory

It is true that Recollects dreaded the Kempei Tai’s hatred and constant vigilance over them. At first, they also feared the guerrillas in the uplands, who they thought might receive them with extreme hostility and unfairness, once they paid a visit to refugees living in the safety of their mountain hideouts. Nonetheless, the time had come to risk it all. Sharing the other Recollects’ common judgment, Espiga decided to climb the mountains with Azcárate, entreating his brothers at the rectory to pray for the success of their hazardous mission. The Guerrilla Padre recounts to us their travails and successes in their incursion into war refugee camps and guerrilla-controlled territories:

We left in a small boat from San Carlos to
Calatrava, as we tried to evade the Japanese sentries.
Late into the night a small storm struck us, almost
drowning us. However, by breaking the sail of our small

⁹ *Ibid.* From our personal interview on 3 November 1995 in San Carlos City with Vicencio Y. Apuhin, then 84-year-old, we learned that—although during the war the refugees in the mountains did not suffer from dearth of nutritious food—they were constrained to descend to the Japanese-controlled lowlands to acquire dried fish and salt.

sea craft, finally we were able to reach our destination already very late at night.

From that place, as recommended by our dear, indefatigable confrere Padre Facundo Valgañón [parish priest of Calatrava], we went up traversing mountains till we reached the upland portions overlooking San Carlos. With their eyes brimming with tears, the people welcomed us. So long a time had they last seen a priest who was so near to them. With our good command of English, we succeeded in winning over the guerrillas' sympathy.

We celebrated holy masses in various camps. We preached to them. There were confessions. Those we thought would inflict harm on us were now asking me with great earnestness to remain with them as chaplains. This was not possible. We should not put the lives of the religious who were left behind in San Carlos in a bind. We must go on working in the company of those selfless missionaries who preferred to face the risks posed by one faction or the other. And all this we do out of our love for the Filipinos.

Two hundred baptisms were administered. Quite a good number of weddings were solemnized. A big group went to confession.

A sea mishap

The journey back to the Japanese-occupied lowlands was not all that easy and uneventful. Espiga and Azcárate took the only accessible route back to San Carlos, retracing their steps to Calatrava. In this town the two priests waited until nightfall. When the time came, they took the sailboat under the cover of darkness into Tañon Strait, hoping and praying that no Japanese patrol boat would cross their path. At mid-sea, however, a mishap nearly snatched their lives. The big waves had buffeted their small sea craft which eventually capsized. Let us read Espiga's account:

And having gained everyone's sympathy, we set off for our trip back to town. But, at about two in the morning we were shipwrecked at sea. It was lucky I know how to swim. With the help of an old man who

accompanied us, I pushed the banca and the other priest [Azcárate] who was half-submerged in it. It was daybreak when we were able to reach the shore. We gave thanks to God for having saved us. After hiking a great distance, barefoot, with practically nothing on us, we arrived at the town proper, like true shipwrecked people.

The sea tragedy did not deter the Guerrilla Padre and Azcárate from embarking once more on more perilous missionary sallies to guerrilla camps and refugee communities. Undaunted by Japanese patrols, unafraid of being caught in the crossfire between belligerent forces, they drew up plans to visit more barrios that had not been visited by priests for several months.

Many times resistance fighters sent for Espiga and requested him to solemnize marriages in the mountains. Oftentimes, at the risk of his own life, the Recollect minister wedded guerrilla couples even at the parish church.¹⁰

To the southern sector

The Recollects' next concern was the spiritual uplift of thousands of people who had headed south before the Japanese forces took over the town in June 1942. For one reason or another, these refugees had refused to descend to the lowlands. The priests had to find ways to communicate with and hopefully win over the guerrillas of that sector in the south. In the meantime, Espiga visited an unnamed barrio and lived with the people there for some days. The Guerrilla Padre was received with the customary display of kindness and affection. He was able to administer the sacrament of baptism to one hundred fifty children of evacuees. In addition, he solemnized several marriages.

A trip to the south was arranged at length. The first object of Espiga's pastoral attention was the mountain sitio of Hunob in Buluangan, about seventeen kilometers from the población. We quote the Augustinian Recollect priest's detailed chronicle of that successful trip:

With the same companion Father Azcárate, I set out for that barrio through muddy routes. We suffered a lot in this trip. Nonetheless, a lot greater was the

¹⁰ In 1995, Espiga was remembered as a "very courageous priest" by a survivor, Felipe Y. Apuhin, who recalled that right after the war the priest went to municipal treasurer's office to change his guerrilla script money circulated during the Japanese Occupation.

consolation the Lord has deigned to apportion us. Those people, abandoned for a long time, those people—so simple and so benevolent—must have done much good to the priests of San Carlos in not so distant past. With a joy that was beyond words, they received us.

The whole territory was observed to have been energized by a new spiritual rebirth. That was a real mission. Many marriages of *amancebados* [who lived together as husband and wife without the benefit of marriage in accordance with Church rites] were solemnized: sixty weddings in all. Four-hundred-twenty children were baptized. And a great number of people went to confession.

After a few days, those good people remained once more disconsolate and unhappy at our departure. But we explained to them that although we had left our heart with them, with great speed we would return and visit them once more even at the risk of our own lives.

Deliverance in sight but it took too long in coming

Some of these missionary sallies occurred in October 1944. At that time squadrons of American planes had begun to engulf the Philippine skies and spread more and more desolation in all places. Everywhere the situation was turning for the worse. The United States Navy had vanquished the Japanese naval forces at Leyte Gulf. Gen. Douglas MacArthur, honoring his pledge to return to the Philippines, debarked shortly after at Leyte. American troops then relentlessly continued their island-to-island liberation of the Visayan archipelago from the Japanese. “The suffering seemed to come to an end,” ruminates Espiga in his war chronicle. “Unfortunately, however, it was not so,” he quickly adds. “It was merely the beginning of a tragedy that was to consummate the debacle.”

Fierce fighting

On 19 November 1944, Sunday, the fierce battle of San Carlos took place. It was furiously fought by local guerrilla units and Japanese Occupation troops. The United States liberation forces had not yet arrived. The Japanese had readied their defenses as they awaited

the inevitable coming of the American troops. "That very morning, ominous, sad and raining," narrates the war chronicler, "we were set to celebrate a Requiem Mass when the firefight began." All hell broke loose. The ensuing battle and ambushes were to continue for the next three months and a half.

Three thousand guerrillas had entered the town from all entry points and inflicted considerable losses on the few Japanese defenders. The resistance fighters eventually compelled Japan's Imperial Army to concentrate their forces at the sugar central. A surviving guerrilla fighter Sgt. Antonio R. Saludar disclosed in 1995 that only a handful of Japanese soldiers were stationed at the sugar central at the time of the coordinated guerrilla assault.¹¹

Refuge inside the church

The people rushed inside the apparently impregnable church for sanctuary and shelter. Their better judgment had forced them to seek safety within its concrete walls. Hundreds of men, women and children lay prostrate on the floor for two days, successfully evading the endless rounds of nerve-wracking machine-gun fire and mortal shelling from the warring forces.

In the end, the Japanese troops beat a retreat. The guerrilla fighters seized control of the town proper. Espiga had the good fortune of knowing the guerrillas of San Carlos personally. The Guerrilla Padre mustered some courage to welcome them for the first time to the war-scarred town. Luckily, the first guerrilla leaders to enter the población were very familiar to him. Fully cognizant of Espiga's spiritual assistance to war refugees and guerrilla comrades in the past, they treated the all the Augustinian Recollects with due respect and highest regard.

All the missionaries, in turn, tried to attend to the people's needs the best way possible. The Recollects begged the resistance fighters to respect the lives of all residents as well. As a result, the

¹¹ *Interview with Antonio R. Saludar*, San Carlos City, 4 November 1995. Sgt. Tony R. Saludar was born on 5 January 1921 in San Carlos City but grew up at the Central Azucarera de Tarlac. In November 1944, he led a suicide platoon which attacked the sugar central. The guerrilla veteran lost his right eye in a previous combat. On the eve of the Liberation of San Carlos, he was bed-ridden and malaria-stricken at Hacienda Refugio while Japanese troops were withdrawing towards Calatrava. He worked at the San Carlos Milling Co., Inc. from 1951-1981. At 79, Saludar passed away on 12 August 2000 in San Carlos City.

guerrillas promised to do so. The priests then focused their attention on former government officials who had collaborated with the Japanese for whatever reasons:

We also had comforting words for the government officials and for people who had been detained inside the church as collaborators. We asked the guerrillas not to maltreat them. And, as far as we were concerned, we would provide the prisoners with food for the first night. How fondly they [accused collaborators] would later recall our show of affection for them!

The battle for San Carlos, however, was far from over. Japanese Zero fighters from La Carlota appeared from the horizon and flew over the población, bombing the guerrilla-controlled territory. It was the rueful start of the gory carnage of San Carlos civilians and guerrillas. Bombs and mop-up operations by the Japan's Imperial Army Forces slaughtered the first of the thousands of victims. They perished from November 1944 to March 1945.

Several guerrilla troops, especially those along the highway, were killed during the intense bombing and machine-gun fire.¹³ Pandemonium reigned. Looters once again carted away their compatriots' possessions. The parishioners raced once more to the safety of the sturdy temple of God. The Guerrilla Padre tells us more about the great damage inflicted on the church by the Japanese Zero fighters:

More and more persons took refuge inside the church, terrified, wailing, and others shedding blood. We went out to help them. But it was no longer possible to maintain order inside the temple. They machine-gunned the edifice, and we feared that the next bombardment would target us.

Espiga recalled the most prudent decision that his confreres were constrained to make if they wished to stay alive after the war:

What are we to do? We took control of ourselves. We were all moved to compassion upon seeing so many victims of the war and fearing for so many more innocent lives. Concurring with the fathers' opinion, I started advising the ill-fated folks to come to a decision. They must abandon the población. We the fathers reassured them we would go and accompany them all the time.

Evacuate San Carlos!

At 4:00 in the afternoon of 22 November 1944 commenced “the exodus of poor civilians who were all suffering from intense hunger pangs.” They had to evacuate their homes as well. The whole town was in complete turmoil. There was general panic and looting everywhere. With their breviaries, mass kits, small bundles of clothes and sleeping mats, the five Recollects headed southward. But Espiga had to repair once more to town. He was accompanied by a young Spaniard—good, kind and generous—in his effort to acquire foodstuffs for the long hike to the south. The fleeing religious would certainly need those provisions not only for themselves but also for those unfortunate people dying of illness and hunger.

Not surprisingly, sugarcane workers of the various haciendas where the Spanish priests passed through received them with the characteristic warmth and affection. The Recollect sisters of Colegio de Santa Rita eventually got separated from their confreres. They had accepted the offer of a good family in a place which was certainly very far from the priests. Making a little sacrifice, the Guerrilla Padre with Aquiles Alfaro later visited the place where the community of religious sisters sought refuge. They had the opportunity to celebrate masses and hear their confessions. The sacraments were also administered.

Exodus to Hunob

As if starvation, material deprivations and the cold December nights were not enough, the dreadful anopheles mosquitoes endlessly feasted on the defenseless refugees’ frail and numb bodies. Malaria ultimately decimated their number, as thousands began to die everywhere. It was high time to seek safer and healthier grounds. Espiga reveals to us that he had earnestly appealed to his confreres to repair to Sitio Hunob in Buluangan, south of San Carlos town proper:

I begged the fathers to transfer to Hunob since I was familiar with that place and it was free from all perils. After several trips, I succeeded in convincing those good people to send us thirty men who would help us transfer our things. Despite the fact that the boys were already stricken with malaria, we continued our journey. We promise the residents of that place that their priests would not fail them, that we would endeavor to frequently visit all those living in contiguous areas.

We arrived at Hunob and, frankly, words fail me how to portray the affection of those unpretentious mountain folks who welcomed us to their place. The leader of the community even offered us his own house. May God bless a thousand-fold that good family and all those who knew how to attend to us with so much love.

More missionary sallies

The missionaries would not remain idle in the safety of their mountainside community. They had left behind them that period of ostracism to the missionary activity. Two priests—Félix Bartolomé and Aquiles Alfaro—embarked on daring missions southward, near the boundary with Vallehermoso. The communities visited by the two Recollects were most probably Magbaboy, Katingal-an and Buluangan. Aguirre and Azcárate remained in Hunob to exercise their apostolate in adjoining refugee camps.

The Guerrilla Padre, who enjoyed excellent health, proposed to administer the sacraments to those in malaria-infested areas. His extensive mountainous territory stretched from Hunob up to the north in the vicinity of Calatrava. The war-torn población by this time had been retaken by the Japanese troops with the help of their zero fighters. In his dauntless trips to refugee communities, what Father Espiga saw were heartbreaking and appalling sights: unburied deceased kin, the moribund alongside the living, the dead left to decompose, victims all of the Grim Reaper.

Men of uncommon valor

The war had brought out the worst of men and situations. Loved ones were forcibly torn away from their families. The familiar and touching sight of innocent children orphaned in their infancy was deplorable. There were gallant soldiers desperately yearning to reunite with their families in those difficult times.

Guerrilla bivouac areas whose location had been betrayed by informers were totally overrun by enemy forces. Courageous patriots perished as they defended their civilian posts in the free highland territories. This was how Jose ‘Peping’ Montelibano—brother of Negros Occidental Governor Alfredo Montelibano Sr. and head of the civilian government at Pagbatangan—and Nicolas Macoy, a native son of San Carlos, met their untimely death.

The gauntlet of the armed conflict

Espiga records for posterity the cruelest ordeal which the people of San Carlos from all stations in life had undergone during the few remaining months of the armed conflict. The gauntlet of World War II is epitomized below:

Crossing steep mountains from December [1944] to March [1945], I had the chance of visiting all those adjoining territories all over again, administering the sacraments, visiting the sick, consoling so many thousands of forsaken people who suffered from famine and death. That entire vast zone showed nothing but lamentation and grief.

What rueful scenes I had to witness! Houses had all metamorphosed into hospitals; several others became veritable graveyards. To prevent the outbreak of plagues, with untold pain the residents set fire to their wretched shanties together with the latest victims' corpses. In one house I viewed four ill persons in agony alongside two cadavers because there was nobody to assist them or to bury their dead. I saw a poor young boy trying to drag his own father's corpse so it would not infect the whole household. The boy turned out to be the lone survivor of his family.

Perseverance and hope

Amid the grimness of disease, death, despair and anguish that would strike the living daylights of ordinary mortals, Espiga witnessed many more poignant scenes in his missionary sallies. He took particular note of the outstanding virtue manifested by Filipinos during vexatious times—perseverance:

I contemplated one moment of true bitterness when all the sick members of a household embraced me, begging—not for food or medicine—but for a blessing! And I could not offer them any remedy at all! It was an appalling, heartrending sight! With so much pain deep inside I repeated to myself: 'Until when, O Lord, until when!'

In truth, I have never seen such a people who suffered with so much perseverance, in deafening silence,

in emulation of the Lamb of God. In every people on earth
I have come upon some virtue; for me, in the Filipino
people the greatest is this [virtue of perseverance].

Last visit to the Recollect sisters in Baticulan

A physician from San Carlos—very charitable and with great abnegation—ordinarily accompanied the two Augustinian Recollect priests in their several trips to guerrilla encampments and refugee communities. The three offered their disinterested assistance to the hapless folks.

To offer spiritual assistance to needy souls, the Guerrilla Padre embarked on another trip to the place where the Augustinian Recollect sisters stayed. It was dubbed Sitio Baticulan. The five sisters had later gone up to a high point in the mountains. There they spread with full hands all kinds of solace and consolation among the nearby communities of refugees. “These selfless missionary sisters,” remarks Espiga not without some fitting poetic tone, “had arrived there with their small bale of clothes, barefoot, hiking unceasingly along the banks of the river for some twelve kilometers, suffering and commingling their tears with the waters of the brook.” One of the five Recollect religious sisters caught by the global conflict at San Carlos—Sister Bernardita Villamor—would live to recall with gratitude Espiga’s visits and spiritual assistance extended to them during those difficult years.

Indeed their unshakable faith in God had sustained them all through all those years of deprivation and torment. In addition, the Recollect sisters showed the destitute folks that they too knew how to valiantly remain firm amid life’s tribulations and, above all, how to suffer with them in times of great misfortune.

A light at the end of the tunnel

A light at the end of the tunnel seemed to glow brighter. The end of the catastrophic war could be glimpsed from the horizon. But apparently there was to be no cause for joy and exultation. The stench of death spread far and wide. The exact death toll was known to God alone. About 10,000 civilians were estimated by the Guerrilla Padre to have already perished at pitch battles, bombings, executions and skirmishes in and around the town.

The final deliverance of San Carlos from the gauntlet of World War II was to come only on 1 March 1945. It was approximately five months after General Douglas MacArthur had fulfilled his pledge to retrace his steps to the Philippines.

The Resistance Movement in northern Negros

War-torn San Carlos, in May 1942, belonged to the North Negros Sector of the resistance movement that was organized by Filipino guerrilla commander Major Ernesto S. Mata. The USAFFE major was a regular officer of the Philippine Army. He was the commanding officer of the Third Battalion of the Negros Island Forces before the negotiated surrender of Negros defenders to the Japanese Imperial Army.

In mid-May 1942, the commander of the Negros Island Forces Col. Roger Hilsman Jr. (1919-2014) had convoked a command conference in Fabrica, Sagay, Negros Occidental. The American officer ordered the peaceful surrender of Negros defenders. Moreover, some Filipino officers refused to capitulate to the enemy. Among them were Major Ernesto S. Mata and his staff officers who swiftly fled to the mountains of Marapara after the Fabrica conference and later headed for the area near Mount Canlaon.

Major Mata at once set up his command post initially at the mountain barrio of Quezon, located southwest of the población of San Carlos.¹² Mata had scorned the thought of capitulating to enemy rule. With some loyal men, the guerrilla leader headed deeper into the forests and mountains of Negros to size up the entire situation of the resistance movement. To go ahead with the fight against the Japanese was all what the USAFFE officers had in mind.



Major Ernesto S. Mata

On 3 June, Major Mata reached Bagonbon, an upland barangay of San Carlos bordering with Calatrava. He had successfully put off Filipinos spies and fifth columnists in the service of the Japanese on his trail. The invading forces had earlier put a price on Major Mata's head because the bulk of his Third Battalion units refused to surrender to the Japanese who had landed at Banago wharf in Bacolod on 20 May 1942. It was reported that about 1,000 officers and soldiers of the total 4,500 of the Negros Island Forces gave themselves up to the enemy. At

¹² Uldarico S. BACLAGON, *They Chose to Fight* (Quezon City 1962) 163.

Bagonbon, Major Mata learned that “most USAFFE personnel who did not surrender and some civilian groups were trying to contact me to join me in the resistance movement against the enemy.”¹³ From Bagonbon, Mata and his staff officers trekked westward to Barangay Igmaya-an, north of Kumaliskis, near the confines of San Carlos. Igmaya-an now belongs to Don Salvador Benedicto town, created in 1983, but it was then under the jurisdiction of Murcia.

Command post at Igmaya-an

Major Mata established in Igmaya-an the command post of the growing resistance movement of North Negros Sector. The major had earlier issued orders to absorb into his group all qualified USAFFE stragglers, escapees, reservists and surrenderees to forge a stronger resistance army. Competent personnel were therefore commissioned; deserving officers duly promoted.

Before the surrender of the Negros Island Forces in June 1942, Major Mata had craftily hidden records, money and a big cache of assorted weapons and ammunitions somewhere in northern Negros. To arm his guerrillas, he ordered the war materiel dug up and distributed at once to different units. Soon afterward, staff officers and men of various units reported to Mata for a conference he had convened on 11 June 1942 at Igmaya-an. He himself gives us an account of what transpired at the conference:

The subject covered was reorganization and mode of operations. Some suggested a passive resistance consisting of sabotage, propaganda and intelligence. Some suggested more active guerrilla operations. I decided on active guerrilla activity and an immediate reorganization of all units of northern Negros. I assumed command of all units north of the line Bago-La Carlota-Vallehermoso.¹⁴

On 4 July, the Japanese Army that had just occupied San Carlos, directed its first mountain campaign against Igmaya-an. As a result of the assault, Major Mata was compelled to transfer his command post to the northern base of Mount Canlaon. The North Negros Sector command post was returned to Igmaya-an in the wake of the Japanese withdrawal to San Carlos. Mata spent the whole months of July and

¹³ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 165.

August, conducting inspection tours from the northwestern parts of the island up to the mountains of Victorias and Cadiz.

Guerrillas' primary mission

The resistance movement in Negros against the Japanese forces was officially born in June 1942. According to a Negros historian, the chief role of the local guerrillas was clearly spelled out at the outset: "to harass the enemy, prevent the deployment of Japanese forces elsewhere and make the occupation of the island less hospitable and extreme costly in lives and supplies."¹⁵ Later on, they were ordered to gather intelligence for transmission to the Southwest Pacific Area [known by its acronym SWPA] general headquarters in Australia where Gen. Douglas MacArthur was putting up a liberation force.

Thousands of guerrilla troops and civilian intelligence operatives would soon take part in the liberation of San Carlos and other northeastern towns with the air and naval support of MacArthur's Allied forces.

On their own volition, stranded or returning USAFFE soldiers of San Carlos had either organized or joined guerrilla units in the inaccessible mountains some weeks before the Japanese soldiers set foot at the población. Lt. Leonardo 'Dodong' Marane¹⁶ and Lt. Alfredo 'Nene' Valdivia set up their own resistance groups in mid-June 1942. At about this time, Eugenio A. Antonio Jr.,¹⁷ municipal mayor of San Carlos at the outbreak of the war, likewise established his own guerrilla outfit.

¹⁵ Modesto P. SA-ONOX, *A History of Negros Occidental* (Bacolod City 1994) 229.

¹⁶ *Interview with Victorino A. Romanillos*, SCMCI, San Carlos City, 11 April 1995. Victorino 'Boy' Romanillos revealed that Leonardo 'Dodong' Marane, then vice mayor of Canlaon, Negros Oriental, was assassinated in 1953 for both political and personal vendettas. The former guerrilla leader was gunned down inside the *carinderia* [local eatery] owned by his family inside the public market near Medina Street. Eyewitnesses said the assassin Loreto de la Serna, a man hired by Governor Rafael Lacson, used a M1-Garand to execute the dastardly act. At that time of the murder, Boy Romanillos was a Grade II classmate and close friend of both Marane's son Docdoc and the assassin's son Resurreccion.

¹⁷ Nonoy Antonio was described as "a man of courage and of strong character and convictions." He was born in San Carlos on 4 September 1910 to Eugenio Cuevas Antonio Sr., of Caridad, Cavite City, and Agatona Ante Adalid of Guadalupe, San Carlos. After his grade school at San Carlos Elementary School, he studied high school at Silliman University in

Another band of armed men with Puring Gemillian as leader operated in the San Carlos-Vallehermoso area. Initially, all these guerrilla units were not officially recognized by higher military authorities. The recognition and consolidation of units were essential to the successful conduct of the war.

Eugenio ‘Nonoy’ Antonio Jr.

One of the first to organize a resistance group at San Carlos in late May 1942 was its municipal mayor Eugenio ‘Nonoy’ Antonio Jr. The town chief executive assembled thirty policemen and thirty-seven soldiers and hied off to the hills of Sitio Malambatan in Guadalupe. He armed his followers with seventeen rifles, seven shotguns, besides several sidearms. The defiant Nonoy Antonio would go down in history as the only municipal mayor in Negros who did not surrender to the Japanese. On 20 June, the bivouac area of his guerrilla unit was raided by an enemy patrol. The guerrillas hastily dispersed and the former mayor sought shelter in Cebu.



President Ramon Magsaysay meets with former Mayor Eugenio ‘Nonoy’ Antonio, Sr. at Malacañan Palace

When he returned to San Carlos in August, Nonoy Antonio was commissioned as a second lieutenant by Lt. Col. Gabriel Gador, former commanding officer of the Negros Forces. Thereupon, Lt. Nonoy Antonio reorganized his unit. He was ably assisted in this tremendous task by Lt. Dionisio Jaboni who exerted his best to consolidate the independent guerrilla bands operating in the vicinity of San Carlos.¹⁸

Dumaguete. Likewise at Siliman, he went on to obtain his Associate in Arts (1932) and Bachelor of Science in Chemistry (1934). Two other cherished events occurred in his life in 1934: his marriage to Pacita Villaester of La Libertad, Negros Oriental, who bore him nine children, and his victory at the San Carlos local election as vice mayor. In 1937, he ran for mayor but lost to Domingo Medina. At age 30, he was elected mayor in 1940. In the wake of World War II, he finished his term of office in 1946. In 1952-1957, he was Deputy District Governor for the First District of Negros Occidental. Cf. *Eugenio Adalid Antonio, Jr., 1910-1992, in Tañon College, 1952-2002. Golden Jubilee Year, September 1-4, 2002* (San Carlos City 2002) 8.

¹⁸ BACLAGON, 46-47.

Lt. Dodong Marane and Lt. Nene Valdivia

Lt. Dionisio Jaboni successfully contacted the leaders of the resistance movement of the San Carlos-Calatrava-Vallehermoso area. The first leader contacted was Lt. Alfredo Valdivia whose bivouac area was at Balî. Next to be contacted was Lt. Leonardo Marane. Marane's guerrillas operated at Buclad in Barangay Punao. Both guerrilla chiefs were reorganized by Major Mata to constitute the San Carlos-Calatrava-Vallehermoso sub-sector I under its commander Nonoy Antonio Jr., who was promoted to captain.

San Carlos USAFFE soldiers and guerrillas

In the first few months of the protracted guerrilla warfare, Dodong Marane's unit had in its ranks such noted USAFFE soldiers as Lt. Andres 'Dodong' Arrogante, Lt. Loreto 'Etong' Apuhin, Lt. Florencio 'Toto' Yap, Jose 'Joe' Marquez, Salvador 'Nonoy' Rigor, Pedro 'Pete' Algarme, Loreto Marquez and others.¹⁹

Many an army soldier and constable joined the resistance movement upon reaching home. Unbending up to the last moment, they had rebuffed their superiors' order to peacefully submit to enemy rule. Once in the movement, they were assigned according to their expertise to different guerrilla units, like artillery, supply, infantry and intelligence service.



Lt. Leonardo 'Dodong' Marane, San Carlos guerrilla leader.

The USAFFE soldiers who came home to San Carlos from the battlefronts of Bataan and Mindanao and other reservists were taken up upon reporting for duty. These freedom fighters had vowed to fulfill their pledge to go on with the struggle. They renewed their commitment to finish the fight against the Japanese. Residents of San Carlos today recall with deep gratitude the patriotic deeds of local guerrillas, like Capt. Epifanio D. Liberal, Capt. Dominador Justiniani, Capt. Porfirio A. Villafior, Lt. Teodulfo Limas, Lt. Crescencio Portuguez, Lt. Nestorio L. Layumas, Lt. Federico Legaspina, Lt. Simplicio Algarme and hundreds more whose names are known to God alone.²⁰ These unknown

¹⁹ BACLAGON, 47; C. ROMANILLOS, 7.

²⁰ Isaac L. YAP, *San Carlos Yesterday, Today and Then*, in *San Carlos*

soldiers knew how to fight with valor beyond the call of duty. They knew how put their lives on the line for our country's freedom.

Professionals join the resistance

Several professionals and civilians of the beleaguered municipality of San Carlos were also inducted for service. They joined the guerrilla movement in the mountains and valiantly fought Japan's occupation forces. Among those worthy of mention were lawyers Eufemio A. Parana and Paul G. Gores; engineer Dominador Cejalvo; chemist Carlos M. Madrazo, physicians Arturo A. Cruz and Oscar A. Quisumbing.²¹ In the twilight months of the war, the fearless freedom fighters increased their daring ambushes against the enemy.

In compliance with Ernesto Mata's orders, Capt. Nonoy Antonio contacted the Bagahansol brothers and urged them to consolidate their guerrilla forces under the unified command. A certain Machitar and another guerrilla leader by the name of Abendan, who both refused to join the growing unit, were arrested, disarmed and taken into custody by Antonio. The men of these guerrilla leaders were absorbed into Antonio's unit. That was how the roving resistance groups in the San Carlos-Calatrava-Vallehermoso area were united and organized into a battalion in the initial months of the conflict.

Nonoy Antonio was deservedly named battalion commander and Dionisio Jaboni his executive officer. Marane and Valdivia each commanded a company of this guerrilla battalion.²² By August 1942, Nonoy Antonio had been promoted to the rank of captain for meritorious service. He was then designated to head Sub-sector I of the North Negros Sector.²³ Much later, Capt. Antonio, as a regimental commander under Col. Gador, operated in Ayungon, Tayasan and Jimalalud in Negros Oriental. In the later part of 1943, the 77th Infantry Regiment was assimilated to the 7th Military District.²⁴

City Fiesta Souvenir Program, 31.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² BACLAGON, 47.

²³ *Ibid.*, 166.

²⁴ Along with other battalions of the 7th Military District, the 2nd Battalion under Captain Antonio joined forces with the American troops to liberate the Negros Oriental capital of Dumaguete from the Japanese Imperial Army on 26 April 1945. A memorial marker erected between Sibulan and Dumaguete perpetuates the successful liberation of the Allied Forces.

Major Edward Maclenahan and his relief and transfer

There was for some time a serious rift at the top echelon of the San Carlos guerrillas that put them in a precarious situation. The estranged relations between Capt. Nonoy Antonio and Edward Maclenahan, a USAFFE major, had been closely observed. The American officer who abhorred the thought of yielding to the Japanese forces in Cebu crossed Tañon Strait over to Negros in 1942. The USAFFE officer then sought refuge in the mountains of San Carlos. Mata, North Negros Sector commanding officer, describes in a classified report the reorganization moves he had implemented after a conference with Nonoy and Maclenahan:

At this time a certain Major Edward Maclenahan, who escaped from the Japanese Occupation of Cebu, emerged from hiding and expressed the desire to assume command of the area. Maclenahan claimed that he was the only genuine American officer in Negros and he should be the commander there. In a conference between Mata, Antonio and Maclenahan, an agreement was reached to make Maclenahan the commanding officer.²⁵

Mata then goes on to relate the subsequent volatile situation in San Carlos resistance movement arising from the Antonio-Maclenahan tiff that eventually led to the transfer of the American officer to another unit:

Antonio, who earlier agreed to be executive officer, found out upon his return to San Carlos that Maclenahan was abusive and anti-Filipino. He refused to recognize Maclenahan as commanding officer, and for a while there was danger of violence erupting between the two. Mata solved the situation by relieving Maclenahan from San Carlos and placing him under Major Baclagon in the headquarters of the 74th Infantry.²⁶

Japanese concentration camps

War stories would not be complete without exciting accounts of prisoners' daring, spine-tingling escapades from ruthless Japanese concentration camps. Historical narratives reveal that, upon strict orders

²⁵ BACLAGON, 166.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

by American military officials of the Negros Island Forces, several Filipino USAFEE officers and men gave themselves up to the enemy, albeit reluctantly. This capitulation was carried out in compliance with Col. Roger Hilsman's order. Negros surrenderees were then hauled off to the Japanese concentration camp at Fabrica and subjected to hard labor and other atrocities.

In July 1942, the imprisoned USAFFE's were transferred to the new prison camp at the Bacolod East Elementary School [renamed Mabini Elementary School] in front of the Bacolod Electric Plant. They were to be shipped later to Capas, Tarlac, to reunite with thousands of survivors of the infamous Death March from Bataan and Corregidor. A group of officers hatched an audacious plan to escape to freedom.

Uldarico S. Baclagon

Lt. Uldarico S. Baclagon, who in February-March 1945 would lead the guerrilla forces in the liberation of San Carlos, conspired with six other USAFFE lieutenants—Roberto S. Benedicto, Lorenzo Teves, Hector Rivera, Marino Rubin, Anicio Ykalina, Loreto Ma. Y. Apuhin—to execute a mass escape.²⁷ They were joined by Sgt. Jose Villanueva and seven other enlisted men. Baclagon had earlier learned from his wife that Major Mata was looking for him. The other officers had individual plans to flee to the mountains and join the resistance movement.

Escape to freedom

The night of the great escape was pitch dark. There was not a single Japanese sentry around because “the inclement weather with its strong winds, heavy downpour and occasional lightning and thunder had kept the guards inside.”²⁸ After painstakingly crawling under the barbed wire encircling the concentration camp, the prisoners dashed out to freedom, like unstoppable marathon runners, oblivious of their bruises and deep wounds. In knee-deep waters of the irrigation canal of a sugar plantation and



**Capt. Loreto 'Etong'
Y. Apuhin: Judge
Advocate General**

²⁷ BACLAGON, 16; C. ROMANILLOS, 1.

²⁸ C. ROMANILLOS, 2.

amid the camouflage of the continuous, blinding rainfall, they all scurried into the dark night.

Baclagon, who would later chronicle the events of World War II and his own war effort in the Negros resistance, describes the triumphant escape in his 1967 book *They Chose to Fight*:

The group infiltrated their way towards Murcia. Unfortunately they found the Magsungay River, which they had to cross, to be swollen. Rather than risk the lives of the members of the party who could not swim, the group waited till morning for the river to subside. Early the next day, using a banana raft, the group battled against the swift current of the river and reached the other bank. The same morning they reached the hacienda of [Primitivo] Villanueva, rested there for one night, and then proceeded toward Pandanon where they expected to contact Major Mata.²⁹

Different fates and roles awaited the USAFFE escapees in the subsequent months. In September 1942 Baclagon was designated commanding officer of the 2nd Battalion of the 74th Infantry that was activated in the Bacolod-Murcia area. That same month, Benedicto was named intelligence officer of the 72nd Division of the Negros Guerrilla Force. Anicio Ykalina was arrested in July by armed groups in southern Negros. Unable to convince his Filipino captors of his intention to join the resistance, Ykalina was executed for being a spy.³⁰

Loreto Ma. Y. Apuhin and his secret missions

Following his daring escape, Lt. Loreto ‘Etong’ Yunsay Apuhin had in mind to be reunited at once with his refugee family who had not heard from him since the war broke out. His parents—Victorino and Quirina—, brothers—Manuel, Salvador, Vicencio, Felipe, Jose—and a sister—Corazon—had sought refuge at the hardly accessible mountainside of Binitinan in Palampas. The USAFFE Lt. Loreto Apuhin attached himself not long after to Dodong Marane’s Battery *M. Etong* Apuhin’s guerrilla brother Serafin (Apin) served as secretary in this unit. North Negros Sector chief Col. Mata who took note of

²⁹ BACLAGON, 16.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 16-17. Abcede disclosed to another author that he assigned Ykalina to his unit and that said officer was later killed by the enemy in an encounter in Iloilo. See SA-ONOX, 205-206.

Etong Apuhin's excellent record with Battery *M* ordered him to report to the division headquarters at Igmaya-an for new assignments. In due course, he was deservedly promoted to the rank of captain and assumed two concurrent posts: S₂ Intelligence Officer and S₃ Plans and Training Officer. Since he was already a practicing lawyer before the war, Capt. Apuhin was shortly after designated as Judge Advocate General under the S₃.³¹

On top of his ordinary assignments, Capt. Apuhin was sent on secret missions. Twice he led a group of ten men to fetch rifles, carbines and ammunition at Tolong [renamed Santa Catalina], Negros Oriental. On a regular basis, these weapons had been stealthily delivered by American submarines from Australia for the resistance. The fatiguing hike across the steep, rugged terrain and treacherous forests to the southernmost tip of the island seemed endless. The stamina, inner strength and courage that Apuhin and his comrades had gathered for the exhausting trip back to their Igmaya-an headquarters were "miraculously astounding."³²

Lt. Andres L. Arrogante

Etong's long-time friend and comrade-in-arms, Andres L. Arrogante, had also received the order to report to Igmaya-an for new assignments. Known as Dodong among friends, Arrogante was a second lieutenant of the PC-USAFFE when he was caught by the Pacific war in Digos, Davao. He adamantly refused to surrender to the enemy. Both officers had met in Andoon, Palampas, and together they went to pay their respects to Lt. Nene Valdivia at Balî also in Palampas. Much later they joined Lt. Dodong Marane's unit at Buclad in Punao close to the San Carlos-Calatrava border.³³ Lt. Arrogante was promoted by Mata to the post of commanding officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, Third Battalion, 72nd Field Artillery Regiment of the Seventh Military District. During the liberation of Negros Island, Dodong Arrogante was named Provost Officer, 72nd Military Police Company, 72nd Division.³⁴

Abcede, head of the 72nd Division

In September 1942, Salvador Abcede, then a USAFFE major, assumed the post of commanding officer of the 72nd Division

³¹ C. ROMANILLOS, 10.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

of the Negros Guerrilla Force. He then undertook the herculean task of reorganizing the guerrilla units of Negros Island. The eventual confirmation of his position by the Philippine Scouts Headquarters came in the following month together with his promotion to lieutenant colonel. At this time Abcede's 72nd Division was estimated to have only 7,000 men.



**Col. Salvador Abcede, head of
Negros Resistance Movement.**

Both the North Negros Sector and the 74th Infantry Regiment were assigned to Lt. Col. Ernesto S. Mata. The Northeast Negros Sector comprising Sagay, Escalante, Calatrava and San Carlos was put under Major Daniel Morga's command. Major Manuel Jalandoni headed the 72nd Field Artillery with three batteries strategically stationed at the Sagay-San Carlos area.³⁵

Directives for guerrilla warfare

On 13 September 1942, Col. Salvador Abcede, acknowledged head of the Negros Resistance movement, issued directives to all partisans in the island for the successful conduct of guerrilla warfare. Below we cite the important ones:

Guerrilla groups, not to exceed thirty riflemen, should keep on moving from place to place to engage the enemy in battle and avoid difficulty of supply.

'Hit and run' tactics should be used. No more than six rounds should be expended in skirmishes, ambushes, raids, except in encounters where annihilation of the enemy was possible.

Guerrillas were not to fight in places chosen by the enemy but to fight only on the ground prepared for them.

Livestock, poultry, rice and corn must be pulled out from places likely to fall into enemy hands. Provisions surely to be seized by the enemy must be destroyed.

³⁵ BACLAGON, 61.

Spies, scouts and patrols should be sent out daily; they must place the enemy under constant surveillance. Guerrilla patrols must be armed with grenades, ammunition, machetes and molotov cocktails.

Severe punishment must be imposed on spies, traitors and fifth columnists. Lawlessness, looting and banditry must be stopped. Guerrillas were to kill at least one Japanese daily.³⁶

Major Jesus Villamor sets up the 7th Military District

The year 1943 was an ominous year for the resistance movement in Negros. On 23 January, a group of men in two small rafts waded ashore at Catmon Point in Hinobaan, southwest of Negros Oriental.³⁷ The American submarine *USS Gudgeon* from Australia had taken them there after a 2,000-mile voyage. The leader of the secret mission from Gen. MacArthur turned out to be Major Jesus Villamor, undisputed hero of the initial combat in the Philippine skies in December 1941.³⁸ MacArthur himself had awarded the ace pilot with the Medal of Valor and evacuated him to Australia.



**Gen. Douglas MacArthur
pins the Distinguished
Service Cross on Major Jesus
Villamor.**

Major Villamor met with all the recognized resistance leaders of Negros. He had carried some special instructions for them from Gen. MacArthur, commander-in-chief of Southwest Pacific Area [SWPA] that included Australia, the Philippines, New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Indonesia and Bismarck Islands. Among the SWPA directives was to organize the Seventh Military District. This Villamor did on 14 May 1943.³⁹ The 7th Military District comprised the islands of Negros

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 139-140.

³⁷ Virgil N. DE LA VICTORIA, *Espionage: Major Jesus Villamor and the Negros Guerrillas in World War II*, in *News Record*, year 24, no. 28 (15-22 April 2009) 1, 3.

³⁸ BACLAGON, 33. According to Virgil de la Victoria's article, Villamor's group landed at Catmon Point on 14 January 1943, at 9:00 in the evening.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 125.

and Siquijor. Its headquarters was established in the safety of the mountains of Hinobaan.

Reorganization moves

Villamor himself assumed command of all the guerrilla forces when he realized the instability of Lt. Col. Salvador Abcede's leadership due to the presence of more senior officers in Negros. Col. Gabriel Gador was named executive officer, but was shortly after relieved of his post. Abcede was designated commanding officer of the 72nd Division. Mata became chief of staff of the 72nd Division; he was concurrently commanding officer of the 74th Infantry Regiment and the North Negros Sector.

Major Rito Dominado, who occupied various posts at the San Carlos Milling Co, Inc. in postwar years until his retirement, was named commanding officer of the 75th Infantry Regiment and concurrently of South Negros Sector. Central Negros Sector and the 76th Infantry Regiment were under the command of Major Abenir Bornaes.⁴⁰



[right] Rito Dominado at his USAFFE training at Fort McKinley in 1941.

Col. Salvador Abcede, 7MD chief

Salvador Abcede took over as district commander of Negros and Siquijor Islands when Villamor was recalled to Australia on 23 July 1943 for an important intelligence-declassifying mission. Mata was named commanding officer of the 72nd Division and concurrently executive officer of the Seventh Military District. Major Baclagon took over command of North Negros Sector, replacing Mata. San Carlos-Sagay area had earlier been designated Sub-Sector H under Major Manuel Jalandoni.

Effective communication system was installed. Intelligence data gathered were now directly radioed to Australian SWPA headquarters. Guerrilla troops received constant training in the use of new sophisticated American weapons and ammunition—the carbines, the Thompson automatic, the M1 Garand rifles, air-cooled machine guns,

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

plastic explosives, bazookas and 37-mm cannons fit for fast carriage. The war materiel was stealthily delivered by Allied submarines at the southern Negros coasts.⁴¹

Intensified guerrilla activities

To harass guerrilla bivouac areas, the Japanese conducted continuous mountain operations throughout Negros Island. The enemy used mountain guns and aircraft in many of their operations. Wherever they went, the Japanese destroyed agricultural crops, killed the work animals and murdered innocent civilians. They grew more merciless in their treatment of prisoners of wars and suspected guerrillas. There were unconfirmed reports of children's flesh fed to their prisoners in Manjuyod, Negros Oriental. True or not, the reports roused the guerrillas and civilians to greater fury against the enemy.⁴²

From their bivouac areas, Valdivia, Marane, Arrogante and Apuhin led endless attacks and ambushes against the unwary enemy. In foot patrols into unfamiliar forested terrain, the Japanese Imperial military forces eventually ended up like sitting ducks in skirmishes or ambushes, despite their perfidious guides and informers. Both Japanese invaders and their Filipino guides were converted into easy prey to guerrilla snipers in the thick foliage and atop the trees. Capt. Etong Apuhin gives us an eyewitness account in a postwar chronicle:

With our rifles and carbines we shot the Japanese as they passed. We were up on our safe cogon grass camouflage. Above them, up in the trees our snipers were sharpshooters too. We saw the Japanese run for their lives. Some, however, were brave enough to carry back their dead as they zigzagged along, while our bullets were trailing behind them.⁴³

Guerrilla intelligence network

The Japanese patrol operations and their Filipino informers and guides were practically powerless vis-à-vis the excellent intelligence network of the guerrillas. Civilians in the lowlands stealthily conveyed information to the guerrilla units operating in the mountains of San Carlos about troop movements and other activities of the Japanese

⁴¹ SA-ONUY, 229.

⁴² BACLAGON, 109.

⁴³ C. ROMANILLOS, 9.

occupation forces. Some of them, writes military historian Uldarico S. Baclagon, were “motivated by a desire to save their relatives and friends in the mountains from being captured by the Japanese.” As a result, “the guerrillas were forewarned of impending attacks; and not only were they given the opportunity to ambush the enemy but also were able to avoid capture.”⁴⁴

During the protracted guerrilla war in the ridges, valleys, forests and mountains of San Carlos, numerous patriotic guerrilla spies, supporters and sympathizers were of paramount service to the movement. Most of these highly efficient intelligence operatives were ordinary civilian volunteers, expecting no compensation. Fame and glory were farthest from their minds.

As eyes and ears of the mountain guerrillas, these brave men and women constantly put their lives on the line. At the town proper and in other strategic barrios where the enemy maintained garrisons or outposts, guerrilla spies ordinarily based their operations. They came from all stations in life—sugar planters, teachers, Boy Scouts trainers, professionals, housewives. From Capt. Etong Apuhin we learn some of their names: Don Andres Menchaca, Carlos Sanchez, Antonio Azcona, Francisco Garcia, Nicanor Araujo Sr., Mercedes Alforte and Nene Lazaro.⁴⁵

Barrio Bunga of San Carlos

Lt. Col. Mata was designated commanding officer of the 72nd Division. Again he moved his division headquarters to Barrio Bunga of San Carlos near Igmayaan in Murcia. Bunga now belongs to the town of Don Salvador Benedicto.⁴⁶ On 23 May 1944, Mata was once more promoted to the post of executive officer of 7MD. Effective resistance intelligence had reported enemy troop movements and patrols. On 11 August 1944, some 210 Japanese troops were sighted as moving from La Carlota to La Castellana. On foot, they took the La Castellana-Vallehermoso national highway en route to San Carlos. The Japanese patrol stayed at Masolog for the night and conducted campaigns in nearby areas before proceeding to their garrison in San Carlos.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ BACLAGON, 92.

⁴⁵ C. ROMANILLOS, 8.

⁴⁶ NATIONAL STATISTICS OFFICE, *1990 National Census of Population and Housing Report No. 3-59F: Socio-economic and Demographic Statistics of Negros Occidental* (Manila 1991) 2.

⁴⁷ BACLAGON, 92.

Deliverance at hand

Plans were afoot to retake the town from the invaders at all costs. In Northeast Negros Sector, the 72nd Engineering Battalion, reinforced by the Fourth Battalion of the 72nd Field Artillery Regiment, was given this primary mission—the reduction of the strongly-fortified Japanese garrison at San Carlos. Other Negros guerrilla units went on harassing enemy garrisons in their assigned areas.

The freedom fighters' synchronized assault against San Carlos was conducted on 21 November 1944. To their great dismay, they learned that the enemy garrison was virtually an impregnable fortress. Despite their relentless assaults, the guerrillas' attempts to capture the Japanese garrison set up at the sugar central compound all ended in failure. The four-month stalemate lasted until 1 March 1945, the day of the Liberation of San Carlos from the shackles of the Japanese Occupation.

Liberation comes to San Carlos

Colonel Salvador Abcede, commanding officer of the Seventh Military District, organized two combat groups to hasten the collapse of the Japanese defense in Negros Island. In mid-1944 the 7MD had 606 officers and 8,262 enlisted personnel.⁴⁸ Although not all of his troops were sufficiently equipped with modern American weapons, most of them were well trained in their use.

United States submarines from Australia had ferried war materiel to the guerrillas after Major Jesus Villamor's arrival at southern Negros in January 1943. Clearly outnumbered, the underground fighters of the 7MD were prepared to confront an enemy whose number of troops was increasing by leaps and bounds.

Japanese troop build-up

A gradual build-up of Japanese troops in the two Negros provinces was discovered by efficient network of guerrilla spies. In early 1943, guerrilla intelligence network had reported some 3,500 Japanese Imperial Army soldiers stationed in Negros island. These units were under the command of Col. Matzuka Yamaguchi in Bacolod and Col. Nabutao Kawada in Dumaguete. Combat troops arrived to reinforce the defenders who by May 1943 had reached 7,700, composed of marines, air corps, infantry soldiers and engineering personnel.

⁴⁸ SA-ONOX, 238.

In June 1944, Lt. General Takeshi Kono in Cebu headed the 77th Brigade that likewise comprised the islands of Negros, Siquijor and Panay.⁴⁹ In the same month, Negros fell under the direct control of Lt. General Shimpei Fukue of the 102nd Division.⁵⁰ The Leyte landings compelled Gen. Kono to transfer to Negros where he commanded some 17,000 troops.

During the Liberation of San Carlos in March 1945, the total number of Japanese troops in the island was estimated at 19,000. It went up to 22,000 with the arrival of survivors from the fierce maritime battles at Leyte Gulf and in other parts of the Visayan Sea. By the time the war ended, the number of Negros defenders was reduced to 17,500 because reinforcements had sent to beef up beleaguered Japanese defenses in Cebu and Panay.⁵¹

Mata's First Combat Group

Abcede designated the 72nd Division as the First Combat Group under Lt. Col. Ernesto Mata, head of the North Negros Sector. The Second Combat Group composed of the Provisional 73rd Division under Major Ceferino Galvez's command was to operate in the south. On 5 March 1945, the 7MD was transformed into an effective regular combat unit of the Allied Forces of Liberation after it was released from the operational control of the general headquarters of Southwest Pacific Area. It was attached to the United States Eighth Army under Lt. General Robert L. Eichelberger that conducted ceaseless mop-up operations in the Visayan islands in the wake of the Leyte landings in October 1944.⁵²

Baclagon's First Combat Team

Mata's First Combat Group had three combat teams. The First Combat Team was composed of the Headquarters Battalion and the First and Third Battalions of the 74th Infantry Regiment. Added to these units were the Headquarters Battalion, the Second and the Third Battalions of the 72nd Field Artillery. Commanding the First Combat Team was Major Uldarico S. Baclagon.

The First Combat Team's primary mission was the reduction of the enemy at the sugar mill of San Carlos. For four months, according

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 226, 238.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁵² BACLAGON, 111.

to Baclagon, units of the Northeast Negros Sector had been trying to subdue the redoubtable garrison. However, each raid against enemy defenses entrenched at the sugar central compound was repulsed by heavy machine-gun fire coming from the pillboxes and bunkers made of concrete and steel. These impregnable pillboxes were so carefully constructed by the Japanese as to be mutually supporting.⁵³

Take San Carlos at all costs!

Toward the end of February 1945, Abcede received special orders from the US Eighth Army headquarters to take the San Carlos garrison at all costs. Lt. General Robert Eichelberger's Eighth Army by then had taken over the war operations in the Visayan islands.

On 27 February, the commanding officer of the 7MD ordered Major Baclagon, then chief of staff of the 72nd Division, to assume command of the First Combat Team in Northeast Negros Sector. He was further mandated to leave at once for San Carlos and personally direct the attack on the infamous Japanese fortress.⁵⁴ When the besieged garrison was finally overrun, Baclagon's forces would continue to march day and night and ceaselessly pursue the enemy for two months from 28 February till the end of April 1945.

Typical of the war operations conducted by the 7MD units prior to the American landing were those of the First Combat Team that was responsible for clearing Japanese resistance in the entire Northeast Negros area—from San Carlos to Manapla.

The siege against the sugar mill

Major Baclagon had reached San Carlos on 28 February. He found the Filipino guerrilla troops laying siege against the Japanese-controlled sugar central compound. The futile protracted siege had begun on 21 November 1944, two days after the resistance units assaulted the heavily defended town. The Japanese Imperial Army had retaken it with the help of zero fighters. By February, the Imperial Army pocket resistance had been reduced to defending the sugar mill and had successfully repelled all attacks. The local partisans tried to starve the trapped Japanese soldiers to death, to no avail. The enemy had stockpiled supplies and ammunition to last for months.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 113.

Abcede contacted Baclagon by radio upon his arrival at San Carlos. The 7MD commanding officer further stressed that he wished to see the major Japanese garrison in Allied hands within twenty-four hours. He told Baclagon to arrange for American air and naval support in his all-out attack. On the night of 28 February, Baclagon and his staff worked on the plan of attack and coordinated their plans with representatives of the US Navy and US Air Force. The guerrillas of San Carlos were reorganized into commando teams. Every commando unit was to target one Japanese concrete pillbox each. During the night, the troops moved to their attack positions and readied themselves for the shortest but fiercest battle for San Carlos.

Final battle for San Carlos

At daybreak an American patrol torpedo boat pounded the sugar mill garrison for half an hour. The successful naval operation straight away was followed by an air attack by planes of the US 13th Air Force. The Filipino guerrilla commando teams then rushed in for the kill. Major Baclagon describes for posterity the last hours of the much-vaunted garrison:

At 5:30 in the morning of March 1, US naval gunboats began shelling the enemy garrison from the sea. Thirty minutes later, planes of the US 13th Air Force launched an air strike with heavy explosive and incendiary bombs.

At 7:00, the H-hour, the commando units assaulted the pillboxes and destroyed whatever enemy troops were found to have survived the naval and air bombardment. By 9:00 a.m., San Carlos sugar central was in the hands of the guerrilla troops.⁵⁵

Baclagon lost no time in reporting the accomplishment of the mission of his First Combat Team to higher headquarters. First Lt. Nene Valdivia of Battery *K* of Major Manuel Jalandoni's Battalion, 72nd Field Artillery Regiment, perished during the decisive battle. The resistance movement organizer and leader was a real hero of San Carlos.⁵⁶ A street beside the city's public market was later named after him to perpetuate the memory of his heroism and war effort.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 204. World War II veteran Antonio R. Saludar recounted that Nene Valdivia who led the commandos from the southern flank was

Hot pursuit of the enemy

On the eve of the final offensive, a great part of the defense force of the Japanese garrison had slipped through guerrilla lines and escaped to the north, presumably to get reinforcement. After the capture of the garrison, Lt. Marane led his men in pursuit of the fleeing enemy force.⁵⁷ The Filipino troops overtook the enemy on Tanquinto hills, west of Calatrava. Baclagon writes in his book that the Japanese soldiers were annihilated in the ensuing fire fight.

Baclagon ordered his men to proceed at once to Central Danao to attack another major garrison. The First Combat Team found the Japanese garrison at Central Danao abandoned. Information given by guerrilla patrols revealed that Balintawak was deserted alike by the Japanese. The garrison at Crossing Sagay was still occupied but was easily overpowered by the First Combat Team after a brief battle.

In the meantime, the US 40th Division with two tank battalions and several Field Artillery battalions had landed at Pulpandan on 29 March. The American landing signaled the death knell for the Japanese rule in Negros. General Kono's decimated forces had made their last bloody stand in the mountains. The Japanese general and his staff made their official surrender to the Filipino and United States military on 11 September 1945 in Murcia.

Onward to Fabrica

Baclagon's next objective was the heavily fortified Fabrica in Sagay, defended by 400 enemy soldiers. On 2 April, the First Combat Team commenced its assault on the Insular Lumber Mill with 57-mm guns and 3.6-inch mortars. A two-pronged assault forced the Japanese defenders to abandon the burning mill and withdraw posthaste to the mountains. The capture of Fabrica by Filipino combat units canceled the planned parachute drop by 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment of the US Eight Army, aimed to liberate the Insular Lumber Mill.⁵⁸

treacherously shot from behind at the height of the final assault against the sugar central. The culprit was never identified. Most certainly, it was one of his guerrilla troops that had some ax to grind. Valdivia's niche in the glorious annals of San Carlos history had long been secured when he organized the resistance movement and led countless successful raids against enemy outposts. Valdivia lost a considerable number of his men in several skirmishes with Japanese patrols.

⁵⁷ Saludar said only a handful of Japanese soldiers were left to guard the sugar central when the Americans bombarded it on 1 March 1945.

⁵⁸ BACLAGON, 113.

Last missionary sally

Meanwhile, towards the end of February 1945, Espiga mustered all his strength and prepared once again for more missionary excursions to the mountain refugee camps and hideouts in Calatrava and San Carlos. This time the Recollect sought the prompt assistance of a Spanish friend. Together they set out to visit once again the resistance fighters and war refugees. In his war chronicle, the Guerrilla Padre discloses his very close brush with a column of Japanese soldiers who had been put to flight:

We had already traversed two kilometers when two guerrillas informed me how the Japanese had abandoned the San Carlos central and were found ensconced in the small hills nearby. Acceding to his advice, I desisted from the undertaking. I returned by the same road leading to Hacienda Refugio. Such stuff of the war! A Filipino, who accompanied the Japanese and surrendered the next day to the guerrillas, had seen me pass by about four hundred meters away. Why didn't they open fire? Were they afraid they would be discovered? I do not know.⁵⁹

The Guerrilla Padre headed for Calatrava and reached the town ahead of the Japanese troops. Ensnconced inside the church, he then spent a harrowing night with Padre Facundo. Espiga tells us why:

At any rate, I went on my way to Calatrava. In the company of Father Facundo Valgañón, I spent the night in anxiety. Both of us ensconced ourselves inside the church. It was the only remaining sanctuary in town.

At twelve midnight, the Japanese passed through the town indiscriminately firing all around. But thank God, since their desire was only to flee, they crossed the bridge of the town. Little by little the machine-gun fire and mortar shelling were fading in the distance, and everything once again reverted to its most sepulchral silence.

Sgt. Ramon Buya and Capt. Nating M. Buya

A guerrilla intelligence operative was not as fortunate as the two priests. He was S/Sgt. Ramon Buya (1911-1945), a veterinary

⁵⁹ ESPIGA, 233.

medicine practitioner in prewar years and husband of another high-ranking intelligence officer Salvacion Natividad ‘Nating’ Mondragon (1912-2004).⁶⁰ Buya worked as S₂ of Hq & Hq Q Sv Co, 72nd Field Artillery, 7MD; he was shot and bayoneted by withdrawing Japanese troops near Patun-an in Calatrava.⁶¹

Known as Matahari and later as Four Aces, the San Carlos-born Nating operated in an inaccessible secured area with a clear view of a Japanese garrison in Guihulngan. She was an intelligence special operative under Lt. Reynerio Benedicto and Lt. Atulfo Alvarez, G₂, Armed Forces of West Pacific (AFWESPAC).

Promoted early in 1943 to the rank of captain under Major Ruiz, Nating Buya daily risked her life as she gathered data through a network of runners and spies dubbed as bolo brigade. By means of a very powerful, well-absconded radio set provided by AFWESPAC, Capt. Nating Buya reported her coded messages directly to Australia anytime.

A mayor charged as enemy collaborator

In the latter part of 1944, Sgt. Buya was informed by his operatives that three men had been rounded up at San Carlos and taken to a guerrilla-controlled barrio in Guihulngan to face grave charges of collaboration with the Japanese.

The prisoners turned out to be Juan P. Broce, mayor of the Japanese-occupied area of San Carlos, his son Florentino ‘Ponting’ and a certain Juanito believed to be their man Friday. A well-respected political leader, Juan P. Broce, had been elected *presidente municipal* in 1925-1928 and 1931-1934.

⁶⁰ *Interview with Mrs. Salvacion M. Buya*, 27 August 1996, Ermita, Manila. Ramon hailed from Burgos, Pangasinan, and finished veterinary medicine at UP Los Baños. Nating was born in San Carlos on 3 October 1912 to Andres Mondragon and Isidra Rabacal. A public school teacher by profession, she volunteered as catechist under the parish priest Manuel Gómara. Ramon and Nating were married at the new parish church in 1936. They later resided and worked at Hacienda Apolonia in Panubigan near the boundary of Vallehermoso and San Carlos. In 1941, the Buya family transferred to Guihulngan where the war caught them.

⁶¹ *Interview with Mrs. Salvacion M. Buya*. The inspiring story of Ramon Buya was narrated by his wife who opted to be a *war widow* rather than be a *war veteran* to honor her late husband’s memory. At 84, she provided this writer with cogent insights into the events of pre-war San Carlos and stories of war heroism.

When Sgt. Buya learned of the detention of San Carlos prisoners, he hastened to their rescue and lost no time in facilitating the release of the prisoners. Had they been found guilty of Japanese collaboration by a guerrilla court martial, the accused would have been meted out with the death penalty and outright execution. Out of deference to his wife Nating, Sgt. Buya lied to his Guihulngan comrades-in-arms that the three were secret operatives working for him. He led the guerrilla officers to believe that with his blessing he had permitted them to operate at San Carlos and spy on high-ranking Japanese military officials there. As a result of Buya's effort, the prisoners were expeditiously released and handed over to his wife's custody.

A sound of gunfire saves lives

In early March 1945, Sgt. Buya had gone on an intelligence mission to the guerrilla bivouac area at Patun-an in Calatrava. After his delicate mission, he headed for San Carlos late into the night of 9 March. That same night the guerrillas were merrily celebrating the birthday of a resistance leader. The intelligence officer took the road to San Carlos under the cover of darkness.

Buya was not very far from Patun-an when he saw a Japanese column coming toward him. The enemy troops came from their garrisons in Vallehermoso and Guihulngan and marched toward Calatrava to make their last bloody stand in the mountains of northern Negros near Silay. Dr. Buya, who wore the usual white coat and pants, dashed to the cane field when the Japanese troops sighted him. Thereupon the enemy fired at him and felled him. Alas, the Japanese discovered him crawling in the cane field, mercilessly bayoneted his leg and left him for dead.

The distant gunfire that shattered the stillness of the night alerted the guerrillas who all scurried to the safety of the adjoining hill. In their haste, some even abandoned their weapons and failed to clean up the area of their merry-making. The enemy thought it best not to pursue the resistance fighters in unknown terrain in the dead of the night. Instead, the Japanese marched on to Calatrava.

Mors sua vita nostra

In an improvised linen hammock, the bleeding officer was rushed at once by his comrades to San Carlos. It was in a big house at Rizal Street owned by Constantina 'Tanting' de Jesus Agraviador which

was converted into a hospital where Sgt. Buya came to his senses. The first words he uttered were: “Are the men saved?” Nobody understood the question at that time. Neither did his wife who had rushed to his side on horseback all the way from Guihulngan.

With his wounded leg in an advanced state of gangrene and with much loss of blood, Sgt. Buya saw it utterly futile being transported to a United States navy hospital ship docked in the vicinity of San Carlos. The American military doctor had wanted the leg amputated at once to no avail. But the dying father’s last wish was to see his young children—Araceli, Chichi and Boy. As a result, he passed away on 11 March, deeply mourned by the local resistance.⁶² Latinists would best describe what was in the mind of the troops who were providentially forewarned by the gunfire as *mors sua vita nostra* [his death was our life]. Sgt. Buya’s misfortune and death had doubtless saved the lives of scores of his guerrilla comrades.

From San Carlos to Hunob and back

After the harrowing night in Calatrava, the Guerrilla Padre hied off on 4 March for San Carlos on foot. He rested for a while at the rectory. After briefly inspecting the damage inflicted on the church, he continued his journey to Hunob under the scorching sun. Espiga informed his confreres about the urgent need to return to the liberated town and save the properties of the church and Santo Tomas. The buildings of Santa Rita were beyond repair. Its main edifice had also been razed to the ground by incendiary bombs dropped by American planes.

The Guerrilla Padre took what was necessary. With a Spanish friend—Señor Arturo M. Anckermann—who for decades would be *encargado* [administrator] of the outlying Hacienda Socorro of Gamboa Hermanos—and fifteen strong men, Espiga brought down their belongings to the lowlands and proceeded to San Carlos.⁶³ The next two days were devoted to the general cleaning of church and rectory both in a shambles. The state of the house of God was lamentable. On the third day, all was cleaned spick-and-span.

For the first time, an American gunboat appeared on the shores. The GIs then landed at the war-torn town and distributed chocolates, cigarettes, packs of chewing gum and other foodstuffs among the survivors. The Americans talked to Espiga and lavished him with gifts,

⁶² BACLAGON, 204.

⁶³ ESPIGA, 233.

too. They inquired from the missionary if there were civilian casualties stemming from the relentless bombardment of the sugar central by their gunboats.

American medical aid

Espiga told the American GIs about the immediate needs of his destitute parishioners. The next day the commander of one of the American torpedo boats gave him 10,000 *Atabrine* tablets for distribution. This synthetic drug was widely used to treat malaria in the Pacific theater of World War II. The *Atabrine* did not cure malaria but controlled its symptoms.

Espiga at once set out to assist the malaria-stricken parishioners in different villages. With great effort he was able to distribute half of the *Atabrine*s. Little by little he apportioned the rest of the medicines to various families who flocked at the church yard. “What a heartrending sight to behold!” writes Espiga with grief in his heart. “Hundreds of starving, trembling men, women, children arrived at the portals of the rectory where the priest could alleviate them in their misfortune.”

Preparations for the Holy Week of 1945

The Guerrilla Padre remained alone at the población for two weeks. His confreres were still in Hunob. He celebrated a holy mass as an act of making amends to Almighty God for the profanation perpetrated in the church. The eucharistic celebration was well-attended. Availing himself of the opportune occasion and big crowd, Espiga delivered a sermon on the significance of the occasion.

Azcárate, who often traveled with Espiga to bivouac areas and refugee camps, at last arrived at the rectory to help him prepare for the Holy Week rites. The Recollect sisters descended as well from the mountain hideout for the same reason.

The war-weary people of San Carlos attended the centuries-old rites re-enacting the institution of the Holy Eucharist on 29 March Maundy Thursday. The next day they followed the solemn Good Friday rites commemorating Christ’s Passion and Death. The first of April was Easter Sunday and people rose up early for the mass of the Resurrection.

Memories, wounds and scars of World War II

Life in San Carlos had gone back to normalcy months after the painful years of servitude and ruthlessness of the Japanese Occupation.

Dramatic accounts of bravery and heroism in the mountains were repeated by word of mouth. But the long days and nights of the strife lingered in the memory of the war-wary populace.

Not long afterward, the bitter memories of the darkest moments of famine, malaria, anguish and betrayal had soon turned to Christian forgiveness. Families who suffered irreparable human casualties later magnanimously showed pardon to local puppets and collaborators. The survivors even learned to forgive the traitors who sold fellow Filipinos for thirty silver pieces.

Mrs. Corazon A. Romaillos, a keen observer and chronicler of postwar events in San Carlos, aptly puts it in a manuscript written in 1984:

Most of the people forgave and forgot. Even the families with war casualties had kept mum. The searing scars of war had been met head on. Such is the miracle of Christian forgiveness. The wounds had been healed, albeit the scars remain. Time indeed is a great healer. You never get rid of an enemy by meeting hate with hate. You only get rid of your enemy by getting rid of enmity itself.⁶⁴

“The war is over,” Espiga sighs at last with relief, as he winds up his war chronicle. But he hastens to add that the armed conflict had left the town almost in complete ruin. The Guerrilla Padre lamented that the armed conflict and its concomitant hunger, epidemic and treacheries had mercilessly claimed 25,000 lives in San Carlos. He then requested all to say a prayer for the eternal rest of the departed.

The chronicler ends his narrative

It behooves us to cherish the memory of the fearless men and women of the cloth. In those trying moments, Augustinian Recollect priests and sisters opted to stay and suffer with their flock. They risked their lives when they provided spiritual consolation to guerrillas and refugees in the mountains. They offered sacramental benefits to residents in Japanese-controlled areas alike. May their charitable deeds be forever etched in the annals of history.

The Guerrilla Padre of San Carlos concludes his chronicle of the World War II and of the missionaries’ continuing evangelization tasks and sacrifices in this manner:

Today our priests still continue working with renewed enthusiasm and with equal zeal in San Carlos

⁶⁴ C. ROMANILLOS, 8.

parish, as in all their parishes in Negros. The people are loved by their fathers who knew how much sacrifice and abnegation as true pastors had shown to soothe their pains and misfortunes. The memory of the sufferings of the Recollect fathers in the Island of Negros must always remain in the mind of those pitiable souls. In most critical times these people received the greatest corporal and spiritual assistance from the hands of the Lord's ministers.¹⁹

On 9 February 1952, Espiga who was in his last term as rector of Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos was made as an "Adopted Son of San Carlos," by the municipal council of San Carlos. It was an honor he so rightly deserved.

A fitting monument stands at the plaza

On 10 May 1963, almost two decades after the end of World War II and the Liberation, a life-size concrete statue of a Filipino soldier rose up at the public plaza to perpetuate the memory of gallant USAFFE soldiers and guerrillas of San Carlos, like Nonoy Antonio Jr., Nene Valdivia, Dodong Marane, Andres L. Arrogante, Loreto Y. Apuhin, Arturo A. Cruz, Rito Dominado, Fernando D. Estampador, Dominador Justiniani, Carlos M. Madrazo, Primitivo Marquez, Eufemio A. Parana, Crescencio C. Portuguese, Mansueto D. Quijote, Oscar A. Quisumbing, Serafin Y. Apuhin, Antonio R. Saludar, Eduardo Tambis Sr., Camilo Siroy, Uldarico Lazaga, Florencio C. Yap, and many others whose names are known to Almighty God alone.

The concrete monument was further aimed to pay homage to the heroism and patriotism of all freedom fighters—Filipino, American, Australian—of Negros Island, lovers of liberty and democracy, and foes of tyranny and servitude, whose ranks included Salvador Abcede, Edward MacLenahan, Jesus Villamor, Ernesto Mata, Gabriel Gador, Manuel Jalandoni, Abenir Bornales, Uldarico Baclagon and others.

In memoriam

The fitting monument—as the brass plaque informs us—was erected by the San Carlos City Chapter (Negros Occidental) of the Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor, Inc., whose local officers (1958-1969) were the following: Porfirio A. Villaflores, chapter commander, Epifanio D. Liberal Sr., vice commander, Miranda Tan, secretary,

Guillermo S. Laguda Sr., treasurer, Teodulfo Limas, auditor, Loreto Y. Apuhin, judge advocate, Nestorio L. Layumas Sr., public relations officer, Simplicio Algarme, sergeant of the guard. The text of the stone slab in the monument reads as follows:⁶⁵

In grateful memory of Negros defenders USAFFE and Guerrilla Sons of San Carlos who died in the service of their country during World War II.

‘They stand in the unbroken line of patriots who have dared to die that freedom might live, and grow, and increase its blessings, freedom lives, and through it they live - in a way that humbles the undertakings of most men.’ Eisenhower, Pres. U.S.A.



Monument to USAFFE and Guerrilla Sons of San Carlos, Negros Occidental at the San Carlos City Public Plaza.

Let us therefore perpetuate, perpetuate and hold dear the memory of the thousands of both famous and unknown guerrilla fighters’ deeds and lives gloriously offered at the altars of liberty and democracy. We likewise give due recognition to the least of our lowly, unheralded countrymen but nonetheless noble war heroes—the members of the bolo and *toltol* brigades composed of ordinary men and women who for love of country had put their lives on the line. May the memory of their courage and heroism live on in the hearts of all freedom-loving residents of San Carlos. May their gallantry be forever etched in their hearts and emulated by the present generation.

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⁶⁵ The 8.5”x13” brass plaque also informs us that the renovation of the monument and the installation of the plaque were completed on 15 November 1983.

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N.B. For sharing with me the vintage old photos, I thank the following:

AHPM *Archivo de Fotos*, Monserrat Buya Marane, Cynthia A. Sanchez, Carlos L. Apuhin, Helen Joy A. Aragona, Renier I. Alviola OAR, Hernan V. Antonio, and the Dominado [Jug, Ching, Becky] siblings. Likewise, I extend my profound gratitude to Engr. Eddie Ledesma Apuhin for expertly restoring the photos.

Last Decade of the Augustinian Recollects in San Carlos Borromeo Parish, Negros Occidental (1965-1975)

In the early 1960s, quite a number of changes at the helm of the Augustinian Recollect parish of San Carlos Borromeo in Negros Occidental took place. Padre Esteban R. García, who took over the late Padre Alonso S. Bernal's post in September 1964 in an acting capacity, was transferred to the parish of Saint Peter in Calatrava, a few kilometers north of San Carlos City. On 8 December 1964, Padre Esteban yielded the reins of the curacy to a Spanish confrere and classmate whose immediate past assignment was San Nicolás de Tolentino parish in Dauin, Negros Oriental. Who could have foretold that this amiable curate Father Víctor Celigueta, *Padre Víctor* to parishioners, would be the last hardworking Augustinian Recollect parish curate after more than eighty years of the Augustinian Recollect Order's parochial stewardship of San Carlos Borromeo parish.

Víctor A. Celigueta, OAR

It was the Marian solemnity of the Immaculate Conception on 8 December 1964 chosen by Padre Víctor Celigueta (1926-1981) for taking possession of the parish. He was born on 20 April 1926, at Olite, Navarre, Spain. He pronounced his monastic vows in 1942. At

Ivybridge in England, he was ordained a priest on 31 July 1949 together with Padre Esteban García. After his arrival in the Philippines in 1949, Padre Víctor was sent to Saint Augustine of Hippo parish in Bacong, Negros Oriental, in order to learn the Cebuano language and acquaint himself with the Filipino people and their way of life. He served the parishioners of Bacong until 1960. From 1961 to 1964 he was put in charge of San Nicolás of Tolentino parish in Dauin.

During the last ten years of the Order's administration of San Carlos which coincided with the pastorate of Padre Víctor, six Recollect priests served as parochial vicars, namely: Francisco Irrisari in 1964-1970; Herminio Álvarez, 1969-1971; Melchor Dano, 1969-1970; Pedro A. Escanillas, October 1973; Eusebio Zabaleta, 1970-1975; and Rafael E. Cabarles, 1971-1975.

From the then Philippine vicar provincial's files of obituaries, the following scanty information on Padre Víctor's fine qualities was obtained. His superiors remembered him for:

His zeal for the confessional and towards the sick.
Great love for the affairs of the community. His cheerful
and jovial character that made him an ideal companion in
religious life always.¹

Confreres' reminiscences

Old parishioners of San Carlos still recall Padre Víctor as the hardworking motorcycle-riding priest. He later abandoned the unsafe motorcycle and drove his owner-type jeep. In the recollection of the Recollect Father Emilio L. Larlar, Padre Víctor—an ecclesiastical sponsor at his *cantamisa* in 1965—was overly generous, approachable priest and a good member of the religious community.²

Another Spanish confrere Father Antonio Ramón Palacios, who occupied various positions at Santo Tomas in 1974-1984, knew him well as a hardworking priest, dedicated, very down-to-earth, compassionate to the indigent families.³ These personal observations were readily confirmed by Padre Rafael Cabarles, Padre Víctor's

¹ *Libro de Necrologías, Protocolo Núm. 42/1981*. Vicar Provincial's File. Vicariate of the Philippines and China, Quezon City.

² *Interview with Father Emilio L. Larlar*, 15 April 1995, University of San Jose-Recoletos, Cebu City.

³ *Interview with Father Antonio Ramón A. Palacios* 10 April 1995, University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos, Bacolod City.

Filipino companion towards the close of the Augustinian Recollect annals of San Carlos parish.⁴

Remarkably fluent in Cebuano after fifteen years in two Negros Oriental parishes and gifted with a deep baritone voice, Padre Víctor delivered his homilies effectively and never failed to hold the attention of his hearers. His great baritone voice stood out from the rest in fraternal gatherings and birthday celebrations of fellow Recollects. He was quick to smile; his guffaw was extremely contagious.

An enduring legacy he left for San Carlos is the present two-story rectory that houses the sleeping quarters and offices of the parish curates. With the generous help of his parishioners, it was constructed in the wake of the fire that completely gutted Padre Manuel Gómara's old rectory in 1967. The parochial records were providentially saved from that conflagration.

A Saint Paul sister's visit

Father Antonio Ramón Palacios once recalled a bittersweet episode in 1974—Padre Víctor's presbyteral silver jubilee.⁵ One day a Saint Paul sister from Bacolod *en route* to Cebu had stopped over at San Carlos. She had failed to catch the last ferry trip to Toledo City across Tañon Strait. It seemed natural that she sought the parish priest's assistance. On Padre Víctor's recommendation, the jovial Saint Paul sister was then taken to adjacent Colegio de Santa Rita where she spent the night with the Recollect sisters.

After mass she was invited to a breakfast at the rectory. The ebullient religious sister gladly commended the Spanish priest's amazing proficiency in the Cebuano language. Furthermore, she profusely congratulated Padre Víctor for his fruitful twenty-five years in the presbyteral ministry. All those twenty-five years of pastoral zeal and dedicated service solely for the People of God in parishes of the diocese of Dumaguete.

A plaque for 25 years of service?

"Padre Víctor, you ought to be given a medal by the diocese, Father," the Paulinian religious sister delightedly told the parish priest,

⁴ Interview with Father Rafael E. Cabarles, 13 April 1995, Our Lady of the Abandoned Parish, Valencia, Negros Oriental.

⁵ Interview with Father Antonio Ramón Palacios.

according to information conveyed by Father Antonio Ramón Palacios. “You definitely deserve a plaque of appreciation or whatever from your bishop! Twenty-five years of dedication!” Had she known the fate that befell on the jubilarian priest not long after, she would have been appalled at the ironic and incomprehensible turn of events in the coming months. But then the Paulinian religious never got to know that Padre Víctor and his two Recollect associates had to leave San Carlos parish shortly afterward. Had the good sister known the outcome, she might not have been able to comprehend the irony of it all. Father Palacios said it was definitely a rueful end to twenty-five years of selfless ministerial priesthood for the God’s People in the Dumaguete diocese.

Padre Víctor resided for two months only at Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos after the takeover in January 1975. He might have asked for a parochial assignment. He then went to Manila to have his travel papers processed. Not long afterward, he was sent by his superiors to San Juanico in Mexico. In Tecamachalco, Mexico, he passed away, a victim of lung cancer on 20 May 1981. His untimely demise came exactly a month following his fifty-fifth birthday.

Rafael E. Cabarles, OAR

A native of Talisay in Negros Occidental, Padre Rafael E. Cabarles was assistant priest in 1971-1975. The multi-talented Visayan Recollect finished his secondary education in 1960 at Colegio de Santo Tomás-Recoletos. Of this school he would be director and concurrently prior of its Recollect community in 1977-1979 and 1988-1994. He became vice president (1979-1982) and president (1982-1988) of the University of San Jose-Recoletos.⁶ Shortly after ordination at the Recollect theology house at Marcilla, Navarra, Spain, in 1971, he was sent to assist Padre Víctor. He was to be the last Filipino Recollect curate of San Carlos.

Setting the record straight

In 1988—at the inception of his second triennium as director of Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos—Padre Cabarles had authored an unpublished 17-page narrative *How the Recollect Parish of San Carlos*

⁶ A BA graduate of Saint Louis University of Baguio City, Padre Cabarles got another degree—BS Education—from Santa Rita in 1972. In USJ-R, he finished his Master in Management, major in Education Management in 1982.

City was taken by the Secular Clergy. It was replete with photos and relevant documents. He was a most knowledgeable person, being a participant in the “historical drama” that unfolded during the last quarter of 1974. He had to write the well-documented account for the reason that since 1975 a great number of parishioners “were not aware of the why and the how the Recollect parish was taken by the secular clergy.”⁷ The lengthy article later became the basis of a chapter of his informative and richly-documented book *The Centenary of the Recollects in San Carlos City, Negros Occidental, and the Golden Jubilee of the Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos Foundation*. The centennial opusculum was published in December 1991 and launched at USJ-R.

Ex-future spiritual director

On 15 October 1994, Padre Cabarles traveled to Dumaguete to submit a “very important document” to the chancery. The document contained the lay leaders’ request to have San Carlos Borromeo parish designated as pilgrimage center, Dumaguete being a far-off site. At the same time, he requested Bishop Epifanio B. Surban of Dumaguete to grant him a written authority to effectively coordinate the various activities of the 1975 Holy Year in San Carlos.

In an interview with this writer, Padre Cabarles said Bishop Onesimo C. Gordoncillo, auxiliary of Dumaguete, then redacted the authorization letter that was later signed by the local ordinary and personally handed to the guest from far-off San Carlos. Bishop Surban told the Recollect curate in that letter that he was “moved by the spiritual welfare of the people of God and desirous of promoting the Spirit and aims of the Holy Year. He further “hoped to give our people the chance and opportunity to fittingly commemorate this memorable event of the Universal Church by encouraging the faithful to make pilgrimages, together with the different acts of piety and forms of penitential rites and sacrifices.”

Continues the episcopal letter:

Taking cognizance of the distance of parishes from the Mother Church, our Episcopal See, the Cathedral Church, Saint Catherine of Alexandria in Dumaguete City, and in order to facilitate the making of these

⁷ Rafael CABARLES, *How the Recollect Parish of San Carlos City was taken over by the Secular Clergy* [unpublished article], (San Carlos City 1988) 6.

pilgrimages by our people in the North, we, Epifanio B. Surban, establish the parish church of Saint Charles Borromeo in San Carlos City as a center of pilgrimage.

I also appoint you Rev. Fr. Rafael Cabarles OAR as the Spiritual Director to coordinate with the activities in connection with the pilgrimages from the other parishes. You will please explain to the pilgrims the spiritual benefits and indulgences that can be gained through these religious activities.

In the aforementioned 1988 article, Padre Cabarles regretted that neither Bishop Surban nor Bishop Gordoncillo “hinted to me that they were planning to take over the parish.” The Recollect curate had joined the two bishops for lunch. They had all the time for a post-prandial conversation. Yet nothing of the imminent takeover was insinuated to the young Recollect during his brief Dumaguete visit. The prelates never disclosed to him what was at the back of their minds. It was merely nine days before the momentous meeting of the diocesan board of consultors that would decide the fate of San Carlos Borromeo parish under the aegis of the Augustinian Recollect Order for eight decades.

Padre Cabarles could not perform his tasks as spiritual director for the Holy Year pilgrimages to San Carlos because on 6 January 1975 the Augustinian Recollects had to leave the parish, ending their eighty-four year administration.

Pedro A. Escanillas OAR

A newly ordained priest of San Pedro, San José, Antique, Padre Pedro A. Escanillas was informed of his first pastoral assignment after he received the holy order of priesthood.⁸ On 18 October 1973, the Filipino Recollect priest was sent by the vicar to San Carlos to replace Padre Eusebio Zabaleta then on vacation in Spain. The Spanish curate had not indicated yet his intention to go back to the parish.

Upon his arrival, Padre Escanillas buckled down to work. Padre Cabarles showed his younger confrere the hacienda ministry of the parish. They visited the haciendas personally. Padre Víctor had

⁸ *Interview with Father Pedro A. Escanillas OAR*, 16 August 1995, Our Lady of Consolation Parish, Mira-Nila Homes, Quezon City. See also *Meet our new parish priest: Father Pedro A. Escanillas*, in *Souvenir Program of Parish Fiesta Celebration of Our Lady of Consolation Parish*, 2-3 September 1995 (Quezon City 1995) 8-9.

requested them to supervise the sugar haciendas that were not under the supervision of Colegio of Santo Tomas. The two curates then apportioned the haciendas between themselves.

To his great surprise and dismay, Padre Escanillas received the *patente* of another assignment. Colegio de San Jose-Recoletos in Cebu City had urgently needed the services of a Filipino administrator. Furthermore, Padre Eusebio Zabaleta had expressed his wish to return to San Carlos. On 25 October, exactly a week after his arrival, the young Filipino priest reported to his new assignment in the education apostolate of the Order. He was to organize the theology department of the future Recollect university.

In the Recollect annals of San Carlos parish history, Padre Pedro Escanillas would be remembered as the first and only priest ever to hold the briefest term—seven days—as parish curate.

Foreboding October 1974

A secular priest from the Dumaguete diocese, Father Elmo Luis Vergara, had come to San Carlos in late September or early October of 1974. He had relatives in the city. “Being the administrator of their family farm in Guihulngan,” Padre Cabarles writes in his book, “he had the books of the farms audited by Mr. Antonio de la Cruz, a certified public accountant who lived near Santo Tomas in Broce Street.”⁹ Apparently, there were some conflicts in the family business that required the diocesan priest’s immediate attention and presence.

During a mass celebrated at the parochial church in the early part of October, Father Vergara had publicly announced that diocesan authorities were poised to take over the parish from the Recollects. He had spread the word of the imminent takeover. And in the extraordinarily small-town ambiance of San Carlos City where walls possess ears and words have wings, the report caught in no time the attention of the Augustinian Recollect priests of the parish and of Santo Tomas religious community. But the matter was simply brushed aside by both Recollect communities for lack of any official communication on the extremely vital issue from the Dumaguete diocese.

⁹ CABARLES, *Centenary*, 6.

Persistent takeover rumors

Among other places visited in the early days of October 1974 by Father Elmo Luis Vergara was Colegio de Santa Rita. Following the community mass at the conventual chapel, he conversed with the Augustinian Recollect sisters and inquired about their relationship with the parish administration. He then informed them that plans were afoot to take over San Carlos. The sisters told the parish guest that the inter-Recollect relationship had never been so good. They lost no time in conveying the information to their fellow members of the big Augustinian Recollect family and sought confirmation on the scuttlebutt. Nevertheless, no explanation nor confirmation by their confreres at the rectory could be given them.

An absurd variant of the malicious rumor was the imminent expulsion of the Spanish Recollects Padre Víctor and Padre Eusebio Zabaleta from the parish. The Filipino curate was to remain behind, together with the new secular priests from the Dumaguete diocese. Evidently, some parishioners had yet no crystal-clear distinction between secular and regular clergy. They never imagined that once the takeover was completed, the three Recollect priests, including Padre Cabarles, would have to vacate the parish.

A diocesan consultor's visit

On 3 November 1974, the diocesan consultor Msgr. Tomas Q. Avenido, vicar general of Dumaguete Diocese in 1957-1965 and later parish priest of San Carlos Borromeo cathedral parish in 1984-1993, arrived at San Carlos for the pompous city fiesta. He was accorded the customary gesture of hospitality and deference by the Recollects at the parish rectory.

In his trip to San Carlos City, Msgr. Avenido was accompanied by Father José María S. Martínez, then coadjutor of San Antonio de Padua parish in Sibulan, Negros Oriental.¹⁰ The former vicar general of Dumaguete was the main celebrant of the principal mass of the city fiesta. In that mass, vividly recalled Father Martínez, the preacher invited for the special occasion was the Recollect Father Cirilo M. Durana (1929-1995), parish priest of Santo Niño parish in Quezon, an upland barangay of San Carlos.

¹⁰ *Interview with Father José María S. Martínez OAR*, 12 July 1995, San Sebastian Convent, Quiapo, Manila.

Prophetic words

During his sojourn at the rectory, Msgr. Avenido engaged Father Martínez in a conversation at the terrace. As they both gazed at the imposing spires of the temple constructed four decades back by Padre Leoncio Reta and Padre Manuel Gómara, the guest uttered some prophetic words about the parochial church: “That is going to be a cathedral someday.” Indeed, in 1988, the diocesan consultor’s prediction became a reality. Still the takeover plan was well kept under wraps.

The vicar provincial’s visit

Also in November 1974, the vicar provincial Father Alejandro L. Remírez visited San Carlos City to conduct consultation with the Recollect priests. Plans for a reshuffle in parochial assignments in Recollect parishes in Negros Occidental were afoot. Padre Víctor, Calatrava’s Padre Esteban R. García and Talisay’s Padre Florentino R. Echávarri (1926-1991) had just arrived from vacation in their native Spain. At Santo Tomas, the vicar provincial then talked with the Recollect priests directly affected in the planned reshuffle of personnel.

One of those consulted first was Father Marcelino Mayor with residence at Santo Tomas since 1969. He had served as parish priest of Zamboanguita, Negros Oriental in 1964-1969 and as school administrator at Santo Tomas in 1960-1963. At that time, the forty-year-old Recollect priest was enrolled in a master’s degree program at the University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos [UNO-R] in Bacolod City and religiously traveled to the provincial capital every Saturday for his graduate studies.

Padre Marcelino was being eyed by the vicar provincial as Calatrava’s new parish priest. Padre Esteban García had sought to be relieved of his post for health reasons. After weighing the pros and cons of the issue, the vicar provincial permitted Padre Marcelino to pursue his master’s studies.

Reshuffle proposed and opposed

The fate of Padre Cabarles was likewise considered. The vicar provincial was toying the idea of making him the national vocation director. He was to replace Father Dalmacio Sua-an of UNO-R. In fact, the vicar provincial had already firmed up his decision. Father

José María L. Juango, then director of Colegio de Santo Tomas and superior of its religious community, had earnestly sought Father Cabarles' appointment. Padre Víctor, however, was adamantly against such proposal. He put his foot down on his associate's new designation because he wanted to retain him at the parish.

Nothing resulted from the planned reshuffle. Apparently, the vicar provincial had decided not to disturb the status quo. He retraced his steps to Manila with the parish and school personnel in northeastern Negros intact. Nevertheless, a series of disquieting rumors, emotion-filled events and convoluted arguments from October 1994 to January 1975 would severely upset the whole ecclesiastical set-up in San Carlos, Calatrava and Barrio Quezon.

It was two days before the tenth anniversary of Padre Víctor as parish priest of San Carlos—6 December 1974—when some portentous event was taking place elsewhere. That day a letter from Prior Provincial Father Javier M. Pipaón in Madrid reached the office of the vicar provincial of the Philippines and China at Quezon City.¹¹ The letter enclosed another from Bishop Epifanio Surban which was written on 5 November 1974 in Spanish and addressed to the provincial house at Paseo de la Habana in Madrid, Spain. For appropriate and speedy action, the prior provincial dispatched it—through Father Pedro Herce, a Recollect returning to Manila—to the Philippine vicar provincial, Father Alejandro L. Remírez.

Episcopal communications

In his 5 November 1974 letter, the Dumaguete bishop informed the prior provincial about the decision of the diocesan board of consultors who were convoked to a meeting on 24 October 1974 at the chancery in the Negros Oriental capital. They had come up with a resolution to “ask the cession of San Carlos Borromeo parish in San Carlos City, Negros Occidental, from the Corporation of the Recollect fathers into the hands of the secular priests.”¹²

Attached to Bishop Surban's letter to the Recollect provincial superior in Madrid were the approved resolution signed by the diocesan consultors and a copy of his letter dated 2 April 1960 to then Vicar Provincial Father Tomás Z. Cornago (1900-1980). In 1960, the Dumaguete prelate had told the Order's major superior in the Philippines

¹¹ CABARLES, *Centenary*, 5.

¹² *Ibid.*

that unless there were sufficient priests the Recollect priests could go on with their pastoral work in his vast diocese. A letter—similar to the one dispatched to Father Pipaón in the Spanish capital and dated 29 November 1974—was also mailed by the bishop to the vicar provincial. This episcopal communication was received in mid-December 1974 by Father Remírez upon his return from Negros.

Diocesan board of consultors

Padre Rafael E. Cabarles had acquired months later—on 13 June 1975—a true copy of the minutes of the diocesan board of consultors meeting from the San Antonio de Padua parish in Sibulan, then at the hands of the Recollects. At that time Padre Cabarles was invited to preach at the solemn Mass of their town fiesta. Among the pertinent points of the board meeting that lasted two hours and a half are what follows:

Since Manjuyod is left vacant, the Board of Consultors agreed to have it attended by Father Fermin Martin of Bindoy.

The taking over of the administration of San Carlos City Parish from the Recollect fathers was discussed lengthily and the board came to a unanimous agreement to send a resolution signed by all the members to the provincial superior of the Recollect fathers giving reasons for the taking over of the said parish by the diocesan clergy.

A letter framed by the bishop should accompany the resolution stating that upon receipt of it, an allowance of three months is being given to vacate the parish. Father Elmo Luis Vergara will be assigned pastor of Saint Charles Borromeo parish, San Carlos City.¹³

5 November 1974

The episcopal letter of 5 November 1974 to the prior provincial in Madrid listed the important reasons given by the diocesan board of consultors for taking over San Carlos parish. Three most important ones were cited: first, “the increase in the number of the diocesan priests requires that some of the parishes be turned over to the diocesan clergy;

¹³ *Ibid.*, 45, note 22.

second, the term of ten years that has been granted to the Recollect fathers upon the request of then Vicar Provincial Father Tomás Cornago has already expired as evidenced by the accompanying letter; and third, the consensus of opinion of the diocesan board of consultors is that the parish of San Carlos Borromeo, San Carlos City, which eventually may become a diocese should be the foothold in the northern parishes of the Diocese.”¹⁴

The board resolutions were signed by Msgr. Epifanio Surban and the six *present* consultors: Auxiliary Bishop Onesimo C. Gordoncillo, Msgr. Tomas Q. Avenido, Msgr. Benjamin Hiponia, Msgr. Antonio Ferreron, Fathers Elmo Luis Vergara, Andres Aguilar and Jose J. Agan who was chancellor and secretary.

A discrepancy noted

In his 1991 book, however, Padre Cabarles detected a number of discrepancies in the resolution of the diocesan consultors’ board meeting. One impossibility, observed the Recollect author, was the physical presence of Father Elmo Luis Vergara at the 24 October meeting of the diocesan board of consultors, which was adjourned at 11:35 a.m. Padre Cabarles contended that this diocesan consultor was never at that board meeting. Father Vergara could not have participated at the board deliberations in Dumaguete City because he was on that very day at San Carlos—over 150 kilometers away. In fact, the diocesan consultor had been staying as guest at the rectory “since the beginning of October,” according to the Recollect writer.

On 23 October, the night before the board meeting, Father Vergara returned to the rectory with the parish-owned *petromax*. He had returned from the accountant Antonio de la Cruz’s residence at the brownout-plagued city of San Carlos. At the rectory he saw the catechists preparing sandwiches. On 24 October, a Thursday—the day of board meeting at Dumaguete City—the diocesan priest partook of the hearty lunch with the Recollect priests of the parish and Santo Tomas, for it was the celebration of Padre Cabarles’ natal day.¹⁵ At 2:00 p.m. Father Vergara watched the movie *Tinimbang Ka Ngunit Kulang* at a downtown movie-house.

On 27 October the diocesan guest said the 8:00 o’clock Sunday mass—which the Recollect coadjutor ordinarily celebrated—and

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

developed the theme of his sermon on the Brocka classic. Consequently, according to Padre Cabarles, the diocesan consultor could never have been present at the momentous deliberations at the Negros Oriental capital for the simple reason that he was all the time at San Carlos.

More discrepancies

Padre Cabarles noted more inconsistencies in the diocesan documents: alleged sufficiency of priests in the diocese mentioned in the episcopal letter to the Recollect provincial superior and the actual pressing need for a parish priest in the central eastern Negros parish of Manjuyod, as disclosed in the minutes of the board meeting.

In another resolution, the diocesan board of consultors agreed to grant a grace period of three months after receipt of its resolution to vacate San Carlos parish. Yet the bishop in his 5 November 1974 letter asked the provincial to act on the request “towards the end of the coming month of December this year.”¹⁶ In less than two months, the curacy should be vacated as urged by the bishop, in contravention to the board’s three-month grace period. But then it was most probably within Bishop Surban’s competence to shorten the grace period.

Vicar Provincial convokes a meeting

In a personal interview this writer conducted on 18 March 1995 with Father Alejandro J. Remírez, actual parochial vicar of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino parish in Quezon City, the former vicar provincial said he had immediately summoned his vicarial councilors—Father José Antonio Calvo and Father Jesús N. Sobejano—to an emergency meeting on 7 December. The following day a telegram dispatched by the vicar provincial reached the rectory of San Carlos, informing the Recollect priests about a vicarial consultative meeting to be held on Wednesday 11 December. The vicarial council had agreed to meet four days later at Colegio de Santo Tomas and consult all the Recollect parish priests assigned to the diocese of Dumaguete.¹⁷

Padre Cabarles said in an interview that the Recollect priests were fetched from their curacies by the Toyota Hi-Ace van owned by Colegio de Santo Tomas. This information was corroborated in

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 44, note 17.

¹⁷ *Interview with Father Alejandro L. Remírez OAR*, 18 March 1995, San Nicolás de Tolentino parish, Quezon City.

another interview with Father José María S. Martínez who was at that time coadjutor of Sibulan. The vicar provincial and his councilors who arrived at the Dumaguete airport, geographically located at Sibulan town, joined the Recollect priests of Negros Oriental in the long ride to San Carlos City for the emergency meeting.

11 December 1974

The momentous gathering took place at Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos on 11 December 1974. In a tense atmosphere, some religious proposed that all the other parishes administered by Recollects in the Dumaguete Diocese be given up to the Dumaguete diocese. The ministries included Calatrava, Zamboanguita, Sibulan, Valencia and Barangay Quezon of San Carlos City. However, the proverbial cooler heads prevailed. Some believed that should they cede all the parishes they would certainly merit a severe censure from the Holy See. Padre Pedro L. Ko, then curate of Valencia in Negros Oriental since 1960 and director of a parochial high school there, would not agree to part with his parish and his San Pedro Academy, a school he had founded and single-handedly administered.

At length, it was unanimously decided that the two parishes contiguous to San Carlos—San Pedro Apóstol of Calatrava and Santo Niño of Barangay Quezon—be turned over to the diocese as well. They deemed it improper for diocesan officials to get the better and more progressive parish [San Carlos] and “leave less prosperous ones behind.” Now if the diocesan authorities had enough priests as the prelates and the consultors claimed and categorically stated in the resolution—the Recollect superior and parish priests reasoned out—let them have Calatrava and Barangay Quezon as well.¹⁸

The reply

The official response redacted by the Augustinian Recollect Vicariate of the Philippines and China for the ecclesiastical authorities of the Dumaguete Diocese was terse, concise and categorical. We reprint it below:

The Council of this Provincial Vicariate of the Philippines and China in a meeting held on 11 December 1974 at San Carlos City, Negros Occidental, after having

¹⁸ *Interview with Father Alejandro L. Remírez.*

listened to the opinion of our religious parish and assistant priests on the petition of the bishop and his consultors that the administration of San Carlos Borromeo parish be ceded to the secular clergy, has unanimously approved the following resolution: 'To turn over to the Bishop of Dumaguete the parishes of Santo Niño of Barangay Quezon and San Pedro Apóstol of Calatrava at the same time and date that the secular clergy assumes the administration of the San Carlos Borromeo parish of San Carlos City, Negros Occidental.'¹⁹

The vicarial council's resolution bore the signatures of Father Remírez and his councilors Fathers Calvo and Sobejano. The three Spanish Recollects had affixed their signatures on the official document on 11 December 1974 at San Carlos City.

Two reasons for the cession

The cover letter for the vicarial resolution was later prepared and typewritten at the San Antonio de Padua parish rectory in Sibulan, according to information personally conveyed by its former curate Father José María S. Martínez to this writer. Two important reasons for giving up Barrio Quezon and Calatrava together with San Carlos parish were cited by Father Remírez in his 12 December 1974 cover letter for the vicarial council's resolution:

1. The cession of the San Carlos parish to the secular clergy would leave the parishes of Quezon and Calatrava very isolated and our religious excessively isolated from the others who would go on working in the rest of the Negros Oriental parishes.

2. Our laws, corroborated once more by the most recent General Chapter that ended a month ago, insist that our religious must not live isolated from one another and that at least two must live in every parish or ministry. In this case, Quezon had only one priest for many years and would continue for many more years; with respect to Calatrava, this too would have only one religious due to the resignation of Father Esteban García for health reasons and, as of now, it would be impossible to substitute him for lack of personnel.

¹⁹ CABARLES, *Centenary*, 44-45.

The resolution had the vicar provincial and his two councilors Father Calvo and Father Sobejano as signatories. Attached to the first resolution was a similar document signed by the vicar provincial, his two vicarial councilors, the parish curates and coadjutor priests: Víctor Celigueta, Esteban García, Eusebio Zabaleta, Herminio Alvarez, Faustino Paglinawan, Pedro Ko, Paulino Lerena, José María Martínez, Francisco Oviedo, Leovigildo Jaboni and Rafael Cabarles.

The rejoinder

The cover letter for the dual resolutions revealed the vicar provincial's and his vicarial councilors' rejoinder of the Dumaguete prelate's letter. With reference to the alleged sufficiency of secular clergy, the Augustinian Recollect vicar provincial maintains that:

We have been greatly surprised that the purpose—perhaps the primary one—for asking San Carlos parish from us should necessarily be the sufficiency of secular clergy when Your Excellency knows there are still many parishes in your diocese without priests and other parishes that have one priest but would have required the services of two or more.

Father Remírez and his councilors further answered two more points brought up in the episcopal letter:

We do find it irrelevant quoting at this moment the letter your Excellency had addressed on 2 April 1960 to the vicar provincial then when during the ten-year grace period—1960-1970—that your Excellency had set, the Recollect fathers ceded the parishes of Bacong and Dauin.

We do not believe the possibility that the continuance of the Recollect fathers would pose any obstacle to the creation of a new diocese in the future. Any difficulty that would arise therefrom could be easily remedied at any given moment.²⁰

True enough, the parish of Dumaguete was turned over by the Augustinian Recollects to the secular clergy on the day the Dumaguete Diocese was erected in 1955.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

What is tactfully but clearly underscored in the response is the undeniable fact that the selfless Recollects and founders of numerous towns, mission parishes and active missions in the whole Negros Island had gradually and consistently ceded the same ministries to the diocesan clergy whose number grew through the years:

We firmed up this decision with deep sorrow and despite our wishes to go on cooperating with your Excellency and with your secular clergy in the pastoral work in the diocese. The work accomplished by the Recollect fathers in the diocese of Dumaguete as well as in the entire island of Negros is evident, and we are not remiss in continuing our Recollect tradition. Never has our Order been opposed to the practice that secular priests would continue our work when we realized that the secular clergy was numerous enough to take over the reins of our parishes. This is attested by the great number of parishes that were founded and administered by our religious and nowadays are in the hands of the secular clergy.

Apart from reciprocating the bishop's heartfelt gratitude for the Recollects' evangelization effort, the vicar provincial ended his letter expressing his request from the diocesan authorities to prepare in due time the necessary contracts with respect to the remaining Recollect-managed parishes in the Dumaguete diocese:

All these circumstances make us less secured in your diocese, and therefore, even as we ask you to assume the administration of the parishes of Barrio Quezon and Calatrava together with that of San Carlos, we would like to express our desire to you that—in obedience to the ordinances of our last provincial chapter—the status of the remaining parishes we administer in your diocese be formalized through a contract stipulating the time period that your Excellency wishes in order for us to plan the transfer and preparation of our personnel ahead of time.

I do not wish to end [this letter] without sincerely thanking you for the laudatory words for the Recollect fathers your Excellency has expressed in your letter.

Trip to Dumaguete

The next move was to inform forthwith the local ordinary of Dumaguete about the vicarial council's decision. Thus, together with Father Antonio Ramón A. Palacios of Santo Tomas, the confreres assigned to Negros Oriental parishes and the vicar provincial then traveled in the same Toyota Hi-Ace to Dumaguete City, then a long journey of over five hours due to the rough and dusty roads. CST-R's Father Delfin A. Castillo and Father Antonio Ramón Palacios recalled that the Recollect delegation left for the Negros Oriental capital in the wee hours of 12 December.²¹

Father Remírez could still vividly remember in an interview how his group went to the bishop's palace before noon to personally deliver the vicarial letter and council's resolution. The Recollect delegation had come from a long way to seek an audience with the bishop. They did deliver the letter but they failed to see Msgr. Surban personally.²² Father Palacios said that same day the priests of Santo Tomas trekked back to San Carlos.

The vicar provincial and his councilors spent the night at the parish rectory of Sibulan, located very near the airport, according to Father Martínez. Their scheduled flight to Cebu City was set for the next day. From the Central Visayan metropolis, they would board a Philippine Airlines jet that would fly them back to Manila.

Official announcement

It was Padre Cabarles who broke the news to the parishioners at the Sunday mass of 29 December 1974 after the distribution of Holy Communion when public announcements were customarily done. That was the first official confirmation of the rumors that had spread like wildfire since early October. We have a reaction from a lay leader of long residence. It is culled from a rather long letter that the active leader and educator wrote on 30 December 1974 to a son studying in Europe. We quote below pertinent portions of the personal letter:

It breaks my heart to tell you that only now—after nearly a century—the Recollect fathers will leave San Carlos, or forced to vacate our parish. I really did not want to believe the rumor during the Cursillo for men.

²¹ *Interview with Father Delfin A. Castillo*, 21 March 1995, Recollect Formation Center, Mira-Nila, Quezon City.

²² *Interview with Father Alejandro L. Remírez*.

According to Padre Víctor and company, the bishop of the diocese had prearranged the takeover as early as November. A letter from Madrid was read by Padre Sitô [a nickname of “Rafaelcito” Cabarles] after the afternoon mass of December 29 last Sunday.

I can’t believe it as the secular priests will not suffice the needs of our parish. We have three priests at present, yet the CST-R fathers extend help, go out to the haciendas for Masses, as you well know.²³

Black is for mourning

Aside from mentioning the dearth of priests in the Dumaguete diocese, the letter-sender had noted that the Filipino curate wore the black habit instead of the customary white tunic and cowl with a cincture:

Do you know what? Immediately after the Mass, I went up to the convent. No one was up there, but right after I sat in the *comedor* [dining room], Padre Sitô arrived. I was wondering why he wore the black *sotana*. Then beyond my control, I burst into tears, honest real ones, the pent-up emotions I had during the Mass. He was in the same state too, but his tears never fell.

Why? Why? Do you know that there are three towns in [Negros] Oriental with no priests at all because the supply of secular priests can’t fill the demand? What must be the real reason?

The white religious habit had been prescribed since 1882 for all the Augustinian Recollect friars working in this torrid country.²⁴ However, black is the traditional habit worn by Recollects in other parts of the world, which serves as a “sign of their consecration and as witness to poverty.”²⁵ Padre Cabarles had worn the black tunic and cowl for its evident and opportune connotation of the color in the Philippine setting—mourning. He was grieving the eventual loss of the curacy where for decades his confreres had really worked hard for the continued evangelization of the People of God.

²³ Corazon A. ROMANILLOS, *Letter to Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos*, San Carlos City, 30 December 1974, from the author’s personal file.

²⁴ Manuel CARCELLER OAR, *Historia general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos XII* (Madrid 1974) 418-419.

²⁵ *OAR Constitutions*, no. 99.

6 January 1975

Indeed, 6 January 1975 was like any ordinary day, not unlike any treadmill of a Monday. It was an apparently uneventful day. Perhaps nobody knew then about its significance in the annals of the parish. The tens of thousands of San Carlos parishioners might have been unaware of the event that unfolded at the parish rectory.

It was at about four o'clock in the afternoon of the day after Epiphany Sunday when the last Augustinian Recollect parish priest waited in vain to turn over the books of the curacy to Father Elmo Luis Vergara who represented the secular clergy. Both Fathers Cabarles and Palacios confirmed to this writer that Padre Víctor had earlier affixed his signature on all the parochial books in his room at the rectory he himself had built years back.

The long futile wait

Father Antonio Ramón Palacios of Santo Tomas likewise waited for the diocesan priests since the morning of 6 January at the terrace of the rectory. No diocesan priests came for the turnover ceremony. Father Palacios then decided to leave for Santo Tomas at about four o'clock in the afternoon. After a long fruitless wait, Padre Víctor hired a pedicab—the foot-pedaled tricycle—at five o'clock and headed likewise for Santo Tomas. They were informed before long that Father Elmo Luis Vergara, the first diocesan parish priest, arrived at the rectory at twilight of the same day 6 January 1975.²⁶ No formal turnover ceremony took place. No official communication came from the diocesan authorities to formally notify the parish curate of San Carlos, Padre Cabarles said in an interview in April 1995.

Finis coronat opus

The great impact of 6 January 1975 was of course not felt by the parishioners at once. Maybe no one—except the last Recollect parish curates Celigueta, Cabarles, Zabaleta and a handful of knowledgeable people—realized then that what was being written was the last page of a glorious chapter in the Augustinian Recollect annals of San Carlos Borromeo parish.

It was the end of a total of 127 years of their spiritual administration of San Carlos as part of the matrix town of Silay, then Escalante and finally Calatrava. It was a finale to eighty-four years of virtually uninterrupted and

²⁶ *Interview with Father Antonio Ramón A. Palacios.*

fruitful parochial ministry where over forty of the most zealous and hard-working Recollect religious had labored for the material advancement and spiritual well-being of God's People at San Carlos Borromeo parish.

Sum-ag example

In Sum-ag parish of Bacolod City, the thoughtful parishioners and religious association members adopted in February 1967 a fitting resolution "expressing their sincere gratitude for the unfailing spiritual and moral enlightenment given them by the Recollect priests for more than a century."²⁷ The occasion was the cession of the curacy administered by the Recoletos since 1855 to the diocesan clergy.

The historic resolution "embodying the sentiment and appreciation of the grateful parishioners of Sum-ag" for the Recollect religious "who have ministered to this parishes, for all the differences in their personalities and talents, have left indelible and precious traces and influences on the spiritual as well as practical lives of the people" was presented to the Augustinian Recollect prior general, to the prior provincial and to the vicar provincial. Absolutely nothing of the sort has occurred hitherto at San Carlos since 1975. But then it is never too late if it does happen. A debt of gratitude endures forever.

The beginnings recalled

Surely no one at that time grasped the momentous event that unfolded before a handful of people. Yet it was the conclusion of an almost uninterrupted annals in the Augustinian Recollect history of the evangelization of San Carlos that saw Padre Pedro Chivite in 1891 as the first resident priest and in 1895 as the first parish curate. Who would ever remember him now? Who would remember now the undaunted Padre Eusebio Valderrama? Despite the myriad perils to his life in the wake of the Philippine Revolution, he chose to return to San Carlos and zealously ministered to the spiritually famished ecclesial communities of the entire eastern coast of Negros Island.

Unless something positive is done to perpetuate the memory of their great evangelization tasks and that of his confreres who planted and maintained the blessings of our Christian Faith, their memory would be forever lost to the coming generations of Catholics. With fervor and dedication, they served the

²⁷ Rafael GARCÍA OAR, *Parroquia de Sum-ag, Negros Occidental, Filipinas*, in *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino* 58 (1968) 83.

spiritual needs of our ancestors and the first immigrants of San Carlos. If the memory of their evangelical efforts would not be perpetuated, their legacy of Christianity to us and our blessing of faith would probably be all for naught.

Seeds of faith

It had fallen on these zealous Augustinian Recollect pioneers to sow the seeds of the Gospel and toil on the Lord's most fertile vineyard. Who could remember how much with selfless dedication they had done to bring down the scattered families along the rolling hills and to convince them to live at the coastal settlement in order to enjoy the spiritual and moral benefits of their Christian faith?

In 1891, the settlement had only a thousand souls. Today the population of the progressive city has grown to over a hundred thousand Roman Catholics. Padre Pedro's pastoral visits in 1899 amid the lurking revolutionary hazards and Padre Eusebio's early return in 1901 to his beloved parish had definitely checked the furious onslaughts of schismatics and apostates into San Carlos parish. A schismatic fury that even mercilessly took the life of former San Carlos curate Padre Víctor Baltanás in Escalante. The loving memory of these two great ministers of God—Padre Pedro Chivite and Padre Eusebio Valderrama—must live on.

Spiritual and material blessings

Profound gratitude must be likewise due to their equally zealous Augustinian Recollect confreres for their unceasing spiritual nourishment and moral enlightenment to our forefathers. We now fully enjoy the non-tangible fruits of their labors in our firm faith in Almighty God, strong marital commitments and family bonds, righteous ethical conduct, spiritual fulfillment, unfailing civic consciousness, social responsibility and countless vocations to the priestly and religious life.

The proper commemoration of the centennial would be incomplete if we fail to duly acknowledge the great material advancement, economic progress and social uplift, from which almost every lay leader and every ordinary parishioner presently benefit. These are tangible fruits of the educational apostolate of both Augustinian Recollect sisters and priests since the 1930s.

Bishop Surban's note of gratitude

Bishop Epifanio B. Surban did not fail to express his gratitude for the zealous evangelization done by all the Augustinian Recollect curates of

San Carlos Borromeo parish. It was contained in his 5 November 1974 letter to Father Javier M. Pipaón announcing his takeover plan for San Carlos. The relevant portions of the episcopal communiqué, written in Spanish and translated into English by this writer, fully acknowledge the pastoral endeavor and untold sacrifices of the scores of Recollect parish priests:

We profusely thank the services rendered and great sacrifices so admirably shown by the different parish priests who had successively administered the aforementioned parish. May the Lord abundantly reward the apostolic zeal that had left so much well-being to the whole parochial jurisdiction of San Carlos. I reiterate my thanks and may God bless your efforts.²⁸

And in another letter to the Recollect major superior in the Philippines residing at Quezon City, the bishop of Dumaguete declared: “We wish again to express our thanks to the Recollect Fathers for their contribution to the evangelization of our people in the Diocese of Dumaguete, especially for San Carlos City.”²⁹ It was a fitting grateful acknowledgment of the missionary effort of the Augustinian Recollects who had sown the first seeds of Christian faith towards the close of the 19th century. And it came from no less than the highest religious authority of the diocese. For, after all, Msgr. Epifanio B. Surban wanted only the best for the progressive San Carlos parish. He had envisioned a primordial role for this progressive parish, a status that would speak highly of the steadfast faith of its people and the zealous evangelization efforts of Augustinian Recollect missionaries. Bishop Surban wanted it to become a diocese. Together with Msgr. Antonio Y. Fortich, then Bishop of Bacolod, he was an architect of the future episcopal see of San Carlos.

The cherished dream of the two bishops, aided by the Almighty God, would be crowned with complete success when the Holy See announced on 30 March 1987 the creation of San Carlos diocese as one of the four dioceses of Negros Island.

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**The Black Nazarene:
Notes on the *Myths and Miracles
of the Nazareno de Quiapo*,
published in the *Philippine
Daily Inquirer*¹**

What is a *myth*? The Oxford Dictionary (1995th edition, p. 900) defines it as “a widely held but false notion.” In these notes I do not just clarify the so-called myths declared in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* by the Morallo-Zulueta article. We simply bring out the testimonies and facts based on reliable Augustinian Recollect contemporaries and historians and then make conclusions from their statements. What will be pointed out are the glaring historical blunders, conjectures and false conclusions obviously occasioned by the failure of the two writers of the article to consult primary Latin and Spanish sources at the Archivo Recoleta in Quezon City, Recollect university or college libraries, and reliable chroniclers and historians of the Augustinian Recollect Order. They based their article on authors who had never set foot at the Recollect archives in Spain or Quezon City. They never consulted primary sources whether manuscripts, published chronicles or historical accounts in those archives or in Recollect libraries. These corrections and clarifications have to be done before their blunders and conjectures in turn become myths themselves, as they may be quoted, copied and perpetuated by other writers or even by historians in the future or even in the coming fiestas of the Black Nazarene every 9th January.

¹ The article can be retrieved from lifestyle.inquirer.net/283887/myths-miracles-nazareno-de-quiapo/.

The coauthors Audrey B. Morallo and Lito B. Zulueta contend that the Black Nazarene of Quiapo, Manila, whose feast is the 9th of January, is biggest Catholic devotion in the Philippines is nothing but a myth. They cited the late Dominican historian Fidel Villarroel who preferred the Santo Niño de Cebu of the Augustinians as the biggest devotion. But if we base the combined multitudes of devotees of the Black Nazarene at the *Pahalik* in Luneta, *Dungaw* at Plaza del Carmen and the *Traslación* from Luneta to the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene, we can clearly observe the millions of Filipinos who profess deep devotion and firmly believe in *Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno*. It is noteworthy that the devotion to the Santo Niño includes the festivals in Iloilo, Capiz, Cebu and Tondo as well as the numerous parishes whose patron is the Divine Child.

It is safe to avoid the discussion on the magnitude of hugeness of the devotion to the Santo Niño or Black Nazarene as both refer to the same devotion to Our Lord Jesus Christ whom we worship as the Incarnate God and Second Person of the Holy Trinity. The two devotions manifest the Filipinos' profound and solid Catholic Faith displayed in religious processions and reverent kissing of the age-old icons. Both deepen the Filipinos' complete confidence in God's mercy, blessings and compassion and rely totally on Divine Providence at all times.

Cognizant of the Iconoclastic Controversy in the Byzantine Empire of the 6th century, the Church Fathers taught the doctrine that Catholics, both Roman and Orthodox, never worshipped graven images. Catholic theologians and priests further teach that Black Nazarene devotees do not worship the age-old image itself, but the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ represented by the blackened icon. Theology professors often cite the usual example of a man or woman who kisses the photograph of a loved one. The person does not show affection for the photograph and pour out his or her love for it but on the beloved represented by the picture. In the same manner that government officials or foreign dignitaries show reverence and honor by offering bouquets or wreaths to and bowing their heads before a life-size concrete or metal statue symbolizing a hero or heroine or before the Filipino flag symbolizing the country. Consequently, devotees do not worship nor adore the images of the Santo Niño or the Black Nazarene, they adore and worship the Lord Jesus Christ, represented by the images. This is repeatedly and consistently taught in homilies, catechism classes, in theology courses and religious education courses in Catholic institutions of learning.

The *Inquirer* writers' second myth is that "Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno" is not the original icon now venerated by hundreds of thousands of Catholic devotees in the Basilica Minore of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo or along the streets of Manila every 9th January, Good Friday or 31st December, for centuries. Morallo and Zulueta claim that the original icon was totally destroyed "when World War II laid Intramuros to waste."

It is a fact that most of the Spanish churches, convents and other edifices in the Walled City were destroyed by American shelling. It is also true that San Nicolas Church, popularly known as Recoletos Church, lost its roofs and the grandiose retablos and icons inside the age-old temple during the Liberation of Manila, with only its walls left standing. The ruined church was eventually levelled to the ground in 1959. See *Simbahan at Kumbento ng Recoletos* historical landmark installed at Recoletos Street corner Muralla Street in Intramuros by the National Historical Institute on 7 December 2006. Of the four revered sacred images of Recoletos Church (*Virgen de la Salud*, *Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno*, *San José* and *Santa Lucía*), dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries, solely the small *Virgen de la Salud* icon which arrived in Manila in 1634 was saved from shelling by US Army howitzers stationed at the liberated University of Santo Tomas campus. The Spanish Augustinian Recollect Fray Severino Cuesta (1925-2000), a San Sebastian Convent resident from 1947 until his demise, disclosed to this writer that a confrere disclosed to him how a US Army officer positioned himself inside a belfry of San Sebastian Basilica with binoculars during the Liberation of Manila in 1945. The officer directed the shelling by American howitzers stationed at the University of Santo Tomas campus at their targets in Intramuros.



Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno at Recoletos Church in Intramuros before World War II

Fr. Emil Edgardo A. Quilatan, Church History professor and Archivo Recoletos Administrator for years, informed this writer that there exists an oral tradition claiming that there used to be two images of Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno in the Recoletos Church of

Intramuros: one was in the lateral chapel and another in the sacristy of the church. The same tradition contends that the second image was handed over to Saint John the Baptist Church in Quiapo in 1787 by the Recollect friars upon orders of Archbishop Basilio Tomás Sancho de Santas Justa y Rufina, Archbishop of Manila (1767-1787). Among Recollect historians, it is an accepted fact that the Black Nazarene devotion is, definitely, not 414 years old today. The first group of thirteen Augustinian Recollects had left Cebu where they had landed on 12 May 1606 and brought with them the images of *Virgen de la Correa* [*Nuestra Señora de la Consolación*, Our Lady of Consolation] and of *San Nicolás de Tolentino*. After a couple of weeks, they proceeded to Manila and arrived there on 31 May.

Since the Recollect sources were silent on the exact date of arrival of the Black Nazarene icon, we can only deduced from undeniable facts: the eyewitness account written by the Recollect contemporary chronicler Fr. Andres del Espiritu Santo (1585-1657) on their first Recollect mission. This chronicle was published in 1965 in pages 174-179, no. 600, of *Boletín Oficial de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas*.² Fr. Andrés del Espíritu Santo in 1647 made no mention of the Black Nazarene in his list of divine images found in Recoletos Church in Intramuros. Father Rafael García puts the year 1645 as the date of this early contemporary account. In this early chronicle, only three sacred images and their year of arrival were mentioned by Fr. Andres del Espiritu Santo: *Virgen de la Correa* (1606), *San Nicolas de Tolentino* (1606) and *Virgen de la Salud* (1634). The image of *Virgen del Carmen* in San Sebastian Church which was brought by the third mission led by Father Rodrigo de San Miguel to the Philippines, a gift of the Discalced Carmelite nuns in Mexico City, was left unmentioned by Andrés de Espiritu Santo because the 400-year old Marian icon which arrived in 1618, was later enshrined in 1621 at the small church located at San Sebastian de Calumpang outside the walled city of colonial Manila. There was indeed a big doubt that cast upon the fourth centenary of the Black Nazarene icon in Quiapo in 2006. It was intended by its organizers to coincide with the Recoletos 400 or the commemoration of the 400 years of uninterrupted presence of Augustinian Recollect missionaries in the Philippines and Asia. However, the Recollect archival sources and history did not categorically confirm the arrival of the Black Nazarene in 1606. Just the

² BSNP, *Bulletin of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino of the Philippine Islands*, is the official newsletter which contains official communications, year-end reports of Recollect communities and historical studies.

same, the “Quiapo clergy who mounted the fiesta in 2006 had billed the celebration as the ‘fourth centenary’ of the icon,” as noted by Audrey Morallo and Lito Zulueta.

Recollect historians, obviously, were not consulted on the commemoration by Quiapo Shrine authorities. During the liturgical rites at the Basilica of Quiapo in 2006, Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales, then Archbishop of Manila, who had invited Fr. Lauro Larlar OAR, then Prior Provincial of the Province of Saint Ezekiel Moreno, informed the Recollect superior why they were celebrating the fourth centenary of the Black Nazarene. The fourth centennial had been earlier recommended by the members of Quiapo historical committee. Since they were in a quandary with respect to the exact year of the arrival of the Black Nazarene, Cardinal Rosales informed the prior provincial that the Quiapo historical committee suggested the dual celebration of *Nazareno 400* and *Recoletos 400*. The corrected celebration of the Black Nazarene arrival is to be done if further archival research would unearth in the future the exact arrival date.

Going back to the alleged ranking or competition between the Black Nazarene or the Santo Niño as the biggest Catholic devotion in the country, I think such ranking or competition of popular devotion to Jesus, to Mary under her various invocations, or to the saints, is simply out of place in Catholic tradition and belief. I personally believe that it is exceedingly difficult to quantify any Catholic devotion by the name of physical and numerical presence of devotees during the celebration of their fiestas. The criterion or gauge of popularity or hugeness of a devotion cannot be made by the number of devotees in attendance at a religious procession or *Traslación* event.

Now if we count the number of parishes devoted to Santo Niño in the Philippine dioceses like those of Calapan, Cagayan de Oro, Bacolod, Talibon, or in the provinces of Rizal, Benguet, Eastern Samar, Zamboanga del Norte, Misamis Oriental, etc., or if we



Thousands of devotees join the annual procession of the Black Nazarene of Quiapo.

count the number of replicas and parishes of the Black Nazarene in Cavite City, Cagayan de Oro City, Bohol, Pangasinan, Camarines Sur, Masbate, should we count as well the number of parishioners who are devotees of the Santo Nino or the Black Nazarene in those curacies? This quantification is next to impossible, the data being unavailable or may be increasing by leaps and bounds as the years pass by.

Citing the Dominican Fr. Fidel Villarroel, the authors state that “the biggest is that of, ironically, the diminutive Santo Niño, either the original icon in Cebu or its various replications in the Visayas and elsewhere, notably in Pandacan and Tondo in Manila.” They further declare: “Tondo’s Fiesta de Santo Niño even rivals in pomp and pageantry that of Quiapo’s. Incidentally, both feasts are celebrated on the same month.” Well and good. And we may add that both icons were brought to the Philippines by Augustinian and Augustinian Recollect missionary confreres who followed the same Rule of Saint Augustine of Hippo and who up to now share the same Augustinian ideals and spirituality: the first group, the Calced Augustinians came in 1565 and the second group, the Discalced or Recollect Augustinians, in 1606.

Historians are at odds as to when the image of the Black Nazarene arrived in the country. But they agree that the original icon did not arrive with the first “barcada” or boatload of original Augustinian Recollect missionaries in 1606, as virtually claimed by the “quadricentenary” celebration in 2006. It is noteworthy that “Fernando Nakpil Zialcita of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of Ateneo—himself a Quiapense—said he had yet to see documents relating to the exact date of arrival of the Black Nazarene. Augusto de Viana of the Department of History of the University of Santo Tomas noted the ‘conflict in the documents’ regarding the arrival of the image.”

The Morallo-Zulueta article claims that “even the account of the first mission of the Augustinian Recollects to the country bore no record of any black image resembling the *Señor*. The account was written by Fray San Jeronimo (1593-1610), one of the 10 priests and four brothers of the inaugural Recollect mission.” This is a huge blunder and bereft of truth to affirm that Fray Juan de San Jerónimo, superior of the first Recollect mission to the Philippines, authored an account of the inaugural missionary expedition. The superior never wrote any chronicle at all.

We only have two contemporary accounts. As we wrote earlier, the first accounts were authored Fray Andrés del Espíritu Santo (1585-1658) and Fray Rodrigo de San Miguel (1584-1625). A probable source,

attributed by Morallo-Zulueta to Fr. Andrés del Espíritu Santo, is the first volume of *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], written by the Recollect chronicler from Colombia in South America, Fr. Andrés de San Nicolás (1617-1666).

Fr. Andrés de San Nicolás wrote that a May 1, 1605 royal decree from King Philip IV of Spain gave clearance to the Recollects to go to the Philippines. They left Cadiz on July 12, 1605, and arrived in San Juan de Ulúa in Mexico on Sept. 17, 1605 to re-charge. On Feb. 22, 1606, on board the ship “Espirito [*sic*] Santo,” they left Acapulco to sail for the Philippines.

Storms, challenges

The two authored further attributed to Fray Andrés de San Nicolás: “In the middle of the Pacific, the ship faced innumerable challenges, including storms, which the Recollect missionaries attributed to lack of faith. The fathers then ordered everyone on the ship to confess and take the Holy Communion. Only then did the Pacific crossing went smoothly and without a chink. It would have been the first miracle attributed to the Black Nazarene, except that there’s no record to show the icon was on board.”

Intense devotion to *Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno* in Intramuros

It is true that in the San Nicolás Church of the Recollects in Intramuros that there was an intense devotion to the *Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno* where the original Nazarene was enshrined. But Morallo and Zulueta, unfortunately, added that “the fierce devotion was even called a superstitious cult by Fr. Pedro Herce, a 20th-century Recollect historian.” His oft-quoted article is *The Recollects in the Philippines*, in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* 435 (1965) 210-253. In page 223, he said that a “cult” is given to the Black Nazarene but the *Inquirer* article writers inaccurately attributed to Fr. Herce the superstitious cult to *Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno*. The Spanish Recollect simply translated *culto* as cult, and Morallo-Zulueta worsened it by declaring it was a “superstitious cult.” The *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*

defines *culto* as *homenaje externo de respeto y amor que el cristiano tributa a Dios, a la Virgen, a los ángeles, a los santos y a los beatos* [External homage of respect and love the Christian renders to God, to the Virgin, to the angels, to the saints and the blessed]. This Spanish definition has nothing to do with the Filipino *matinding debosyon o pagsunod sa isang tao, ideya o bagay* (UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino 2010). The suitable meanings for Herce's cult are *formal religious veneration* (2014 Merriam-Webster Dictionary and Thesaurus) and *devotion to a person or thing* (1995 Oxford English Dictionary). The term *superstitious* inexplicably added by Morallo-Zulueta to Herce's *cult* is a complete blunder, totally out of the question because Merriam-Webster tells us that *superstition* refers to *beliefs or practices resulting from the ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance*.

Descalzos not Descalzados

Morallo-Zulueta continues: "But to be sure, they prayed to the same Jesus Christ, who apparently granted their wish: for finally on May 10, 1606, the Augustinian *descalzados* safely set foot on Cebu." Evidently, without consulting any Spanish dictionary at all and thus inventing the past participle of the verb *descalzar*, Morallo and Zulueta coined the word *descalzados* to refer to the *Agustinos Descalzos*, *Discalced Augustinian*, indistinctly as Augustinian Recollects or Recollects. However, the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* categorically says that *descalzo* is the irregular past participle, definitely not *descalzado*. Yes, that the past participle of *calzar* is *calzado* is correct. Hence, the friars of the Order of Saint Augustine, out of which Order the Discalced Augustinians or Augustinian Recollects originated in the 1588 provincial chapter of the Augustinian Province of Castile, Spain, are *Agustinos Calzados*, differentiating them from *Agustinos Descalzos*. The Augustinians of this revered Order of Saint Augustine which originated from the Great Union of 1256 are called indistinctly *Agustinos Calzados*, Calced Augustinians or Augustinians mostly by Recollect chroniclers and historians.

Arrival of the first Recollects

The historians of the first Recollect mission to the Philippines gave the exact date when the first missionaries on board the *Espíritu Santo* reached San Bernardino Strait: 10 May 1606. The Recollects

did not disembark there because they received orders to proceed to Cebu.. Morallo and Zulueta claimed that on that day they docked at Cebu on 10 May. The Recollect historians Francisco Sádaba and José María Echeverría declared that the pioneers proceeded to Cebu where they docked on **12 May 1606** and were welcomed by the Augustinian bishop. The Order of Augustinian Recollects commemorated the Fourth Centennial of their Continued Presence in the Philippines and Asia on the 12th of May 2006, for which the Recoletos 400 Monument was erected and inaugurated at Plaza Independencia near Fort San Pedro in Cebu City by government officials, church prelates and Recollects.

Icon made in Mexico

Conjectures and probabilities abound in the last paragraphs as the two *Inquirer* duo concede: “Regarding the exact date of and circumstances surrounding the arrival of *Señor* [Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno], historians could only **surmise**.” Two researchers [ADMU Prof. Fernando Zialcita and UST Prof. Augusto de Viana] then declared that the blackened icon “**probably** came from Mexico, having been carved by an Aztec artist who supposedly tinted it dark brown to liken it to the color of his race, mulatto, a hybrid.” Then Zialcita added: “It was **probably** through the Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade that the Nazareno was brought to the country.”. Meanwhile, the *Cofradía de Jesús Nazareno* was first mentioned in the 1650s, according to Zialcita. Zialcita added another probability: “It was **probably** already in the 18th century, around 1760s, when the image of the Black Nazarene was brought down and installed in Quiapo.” Still another conjecture is given by Morallo and Zulueta: “According to *A Study on Filipino Culture: The Devotion to the Black Nazarene* by M.M. Aguinaldo, the **most probable** date of installation of the Nazareno in Quiapo Church was 1767, when the image was blessed by Archbishop Basilio Sancho.”

Conclusion

Morallo and Zulueta have, admirably, made the following conclusion: “The Black Nazarene has united Filipinos across the centuries. Filipinos have related to the icon so much so that the image has become their own identity and history. And that is no small miracle among several miracles attributed to *El Señor* across the centuries!” Indeed, the Black Nazarene is an enduring legacy of the Augustinian Recollect friars to the Filipino nation, to the Church in the Philippines for all time.

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The Author/Editor

Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos retired in 2015 as Full Professor 6 of Italian, Spanish and Latin from the University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City after almost thirty years. He obtained his AB Classical degree at Casiciaco Recoletos Seminary, Baguio City. He finished his four-year theology at Marcilla, Navarra, Spain. In 1978, he received his Church History Licentiate *magna cum laude* from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Italy. He pursued doctoral studies in Hispanic Literature at UP Diliman. He earned a *Diploma de Lengua y Cultura Española* from the Menéndez Pelayo University at Santander, Spain. The Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs awarded him with a grant to do research on various topics in April-June 1997 at the archives and libraries of Madrid and Sevilla where he researched on Bohol in July-August 1978. He did research too at the OAR Provincial Archive in Marcilla, in March 1979 and April 1997 and at the OAR General Archive in Rome in June 1998.



Among his books are *The Spires of San Sebastian; Bishop Ezekiel Moreno, an Augustinian Recollect Saint among Filipinos; The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines: Hagiography and History; Chabacano Studies; Events in Bacolod, Negros Occidental, in the Parish Chronicle (1871-1909) of Fr. Mauricio Ferrero and other Essays; San Carlos Parish Yesterday and Today* and *Saint Ezekiel Moreno. Studies on His Missionary Activity in the Philippines*. He edited/co-authored *Ardent Desire to Proclaim Christ; Holiness and Heroic Witness: Augustinian Recollect Saints and Blessed; Augustinian Recollect History of Mindanao (1622-1919). Studies and Documentary Sources; Saint Ezekiel Moreno. Augustinian Recollect Icon of Holiness in the Mission, and Padre Mauricio Ferrero, OAR (1844-1915): Father and Builder of Bacolod*.

A professor of History, Church History, Spanish, English, Italian and Philosophy for forty-three years (1975-2018), Romanillos taught at Colegio «San Agustín» (Valladolid City, Spain), Casiciaco Recoletos Seminary (Baguio City), University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos (Bacolod City), San Sebastian College (Manila), Saint Ezekiel Moreno Novitiate-Recoletos (Antipolo City), Recoletos School of Theology (Quezon City), Lyceum of the Philippines University (Manila), Far Eastern University (Manila), Miriam College Foundation (Quezon City), Carlos P. Romulo School of Diplomacy of the Department of Foreign Affairs (Pasay City), and Magsaysay Institute of Shipping (Dasmariñas City).

Since 2005 Prof. Romanillos is a member of *Academia Filipina de la Lengua Española*, *correspondiente de la Real Academia Española*, of which he was director/president in 2016-2019, and a founding member of the Church Historians' Association of the Philippines, established in 2011.

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