



## THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES\*

(Continued)

Pablo Fernandez, OP

### Chapter 17

#### SACRAMENTAL LIFE

I. **Baptism.** Profiting from Magellan's experience, the Augustinians who came with Legazpi proceeded with extreme care before admitting the natives to Christian baptism. But when missionaries started to arrive in greater numbers, they began to admit neophytes for baptism with greater ease, even at times with little preparation. Father Aduarte mentions some itinerant missionaries who had traversed Bataan before the coming of the Dominicans, and had baptized many people; but with so little instruction and so precipitately that some of the baptized had returned right away to the practices of paganism, while others presented themselves as Christians when it suited their interests.<sup>1</sup> By the eighteenth century, certain abuses with regard to baptism had already crept in, such as delaying the ceremony for a long time in order to assure one of a good sponsor or *compadre*, or to accumulate funds for the baptismal banquet.

In this century certain errors were also widespread; e.g., the idea that baptism was a practice only of Spaniards; that of receiving the sacrament twice or thrice, thinking that the baptized would receive a greater increase of grace; that the grace of the sacrament was in proportion to the greater or lesser degree of virtue of the minister; the change or corruption of names, in the superstitious belief that the evil spirit would no longer recognize them if they assumed another name.

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<sup>1</sup> Aduarte, Diego, O.P. *Historia* (Zaragoza, 1693), 62, col. 1.

There were not lacking those who affirmed that the foetus was not yet endowed with a rational soul. These beliefs were born of ignorance and of deep-rooted habits of paganism.<sup>2</sup>

A practice incidentally connected with baptism preoccupied the clergy at the time: the custom quite universal in the Philippines of circumcision. Some natives, either for sexual reasons or to avoid sterility, submitted themselves to this Jewish custom probably brought to the islands by the Moslems in the south.<sup>3</sup> Another problem that demanded the attention of the Manila Council in 1771 was the rather widespread use of baptismal formulae in the native dialects, without the proper episcopal approval, so that the ceremony in certain cases was invalidated by a faulty translation. On this account, the council provided that the bishops in their diocesan synods should oversee the translation of the adopted formulae with the advice of experts in order to insert them in the catechisms and give them permanence.<sup>4</sup>

**II. Confirmation.** Because of long vacancies and poor means of transport especially in the rainy season, and, above all, the vast extent of the diocese, it was not normal for a bishop to visit the people of his bishopric to confer the sacrament of confirmation. And so, there were places, like the provinces of Laguna, Samar and Leyte, where, according to historians, there had been no confirmation for 20 years. The bishops of the nineteenth century, however, habitually made their pastoral visitation with more frequency than in the past.<sup>5</sup>

**III. Confession.** The administration of this sacrament did not cease being a problem to the first missionaries, who were faced, first, with the difficulty of the language and, second, with the repugnance of the natives.

<sup>2</sup> Barrion, *Religious Life of the Laity in Eighteenth-Century Philippines*, 167 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Bantigue, Pedro N., *The Provincial Council of Manila 1771* (Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America, 1957), 107.

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

<sup>5</sup> Phelan, John Leddy, *The Hispanization of the Philippines* (Madison, 1959), 69.

The first obstacle they quickly overcame by the composition of bilingual *Confesionarios*. These were a rather detailed list of the more common sins, followed by a brief exhortation. They also neutralized the native repugnance to confess by having the more experienced Christians in town to approach the confessional first and, of course through patience and prayer.<sup>6</sup>

If we have to take the word of the chroniclers as authoritative as Aduarte, Rivadeneira, the first Filipino Christians confessed their sins more correctly and exactly. Later, through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, one notes a definite decadence of the practice, as evidenced by the acts of the Manila Council and the Synod of Calasiao, and other documents. Doubtless this decadence was helped by the cooling off of the initial enthusiasm of the missionaries and the increase of population.

In the acts of the Dominican provincial chapters, the reader frequently finds a special enactment governing the confessions of women and encomenderos. In the mind of those religious, a certain maturity was needed for the confessions of the first penitents and special gifts of learning and virtue to hear those of the second. According to the *esquema preparatorio* of the Manila Council of 1771, the bishops had to assign prudent and experienced priests to hear the confession of lawyers and merchants, government officials and priests.<sup>7</sup>

In general, one notes in these conciliar acts, a tendency towards rigorism, contrary to the probabilism quite in vogue during that age. In a pastoral letter on confession written in 1776, Archbishop Sancho showed an inclination to rigorism also, especially since the Jesuits, considered by many as the defenders of the opposite moral views, had left the field open to him.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Aduarte, *Op. cit.*, 157-58.

<sup>7</sup> *Apparatus ad concilium manilanum, die xix Maii anni MDCCLXXI celebrandum*, Actio V, tit. II, cap. IV, Ms in APSR, Sección HEF (Manila), 1771, fol. 378v.

<sup>8</sup> *Carta pastoral que dividida en Cuatro Partes dirige a los sacerdotes, predicadores, confesores y parrocos de su diocesi el Ilustrisimo y Reverendisimo señor Arzobispo de Manila. Tercera Parte. En la Impoenta del Seminario Ecclesiastico, Manila, 1771.*

Quite common in the past was the practice of distributing cedulas of confession to the penitents, so that, duly certified and signed, they could be presented for reception of the paschal communion. And yet, some were able to arrange to obtain false certificates, despite the vigilance of the parish priests and with these they received communion in another parish.<sup>9</sup> Another abuse helped to deter the natives from lenten confessions. They had to pay, when they confessed, three reals of the *Sanctorium*, known as *Ambagan*. Unfortunately, this abuse seems to have been limited to Manila only and the suburbs, while in the provinces this collection was the charge of the *gobernadorcillos* and *cabezas de barangay*.<sup>10</sup>

In the Philippines, the time to fulfill the paschal precept was ordinarily from Septuagesima Sunday to the feast of Corpus Christi. In the nineteenth century, the parish priests, especially in the archdiocese of Manila, were permitted to extend the period if necessary.<sup>11</sup>

**IV. The Holy Eucharist.** If the first missionaries proceeded with extreme caution in admitting neophytes to baptism and confession, we may be excused if we say that they would exercise even greater care before allowing them to receive holy communion, since this is a mystery so sublime and so far above human understanding. They were guided by the following words of the provincial council of Lima: "The Holy Synod commands the parish priests and the other preachers of the Indios that they instruct them seriously and frequently in the faith of this mystery . . . But to those whom the parish priest shall judge to be properly taught and are ready by a reform of their lives, he shall not omit to minister the Eucharist at least during the paschal season."<sup>12</sup>

The method which the missionaries in Cagayan province followed was this: They gathered the better Christians of the town and eight

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pags. 235-236.

<sup>10</sup> *Reales ordenanzas formadas por el superior gobierno y real audiencia de estas islas en 26 de febrero de 1768* (Manila: Imprenta del pueblo de Sampaloc 1801), Ordenanza 46, pp. 40-42.

<sup>11</sup> Fuixa, José, O.P., *Respuestas a varias consultas*. Ms in AUST, tomo 203, pp. 470-471.

<sup>12</sup> Aduarte, *Op. cit.*, 158, col. 2

days before communion, they gave them a kind of a retreat. There were daily conferences and they rose at midnight for the discipline and mental prayer. During this time some lived in their houses, others in the convento. When communion day came, they went to confession quite early; then they returned home to take a bath and put on their best clothes. It is not surprising, then, that these small groups, carefully chosen and trained, matured into souls of deep interior life, especially the women, to the great joy and wonder of the missionaries.<sup>13</sup>

This fervor cooled off much later. Furthermore, certain errors in the 18th century, according to the evidence from the Manila council, sprang up which tainted the faith of the Filipino people in this principal sacrament; e.g., no one may spit or bathe himself or eat meat for three days before holy communion, or one must fast the day before taking the eucharistic bread. Others, on the other hand, believed that no one could fast on the day of communion itself, even if it was a prescribed fast day, lest Jesus Christ might suffer hunger. The same council called attention to the excessive display in dress and jewelry of certain women when they received communion.<sup>14</sup>

**V. Viaticum and Extreme Unction for the Sick.** By the end of the 18th century, there was no lack of the faithful who departed this world without the last sacraments, as is noted by the Synod of Calasiao.<sup>15</sup>

Another problem, doubtless serious, preoccupied for a long time the governors, bishops, provincials and missionaries in the *doctrinas*: this was the custom of carrying the sick to the churches to have the viaticum ministered to them. Anda listed this as the 16th of the friars' abuses.<sup>16</sup> The Council of Manila<sup>17</sup> and the Synod of Calasiao<sup>18</sup> raised

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 159 ff.

<sup>14</sup> Bantigue, *op. cit.*, 114-115.

<sup>15</sup> *Del sacramento de la extrema-unción*, Ms in APSR, Sección HEF (Nueva Segovia), 1773, fol. 221.

<sup>16</sup> *Abusos que se han fomentado en las islas Filipinas, etc.*, Madrid 13 de abril de 1768, Ms in APSR, Sección de "Comunicaciones oficiales," tomo 2, fol. 412.

<sup>18</sup> Bantigue, *op. cit.*, 115.

their authoritative voice against a similar practice. The religious, for their part, were not totally wrong when they alleged in their defense the fact that given the great distances and the minimal and inefficient means of transportation in those days, it would soon exhaust the few missionaries then available if it was the latter who went out to administer the sacrament to the sick. Such a practice, which we could call a necessary evil, began in the 17th century, lasted through the 18th and died out in the 19th, when there was an increase of missionary personnel and roads and other means of travel improved somewhat.<sup>19</sup>

**VI. Matrimony. 1. Engagement.** There were two kinds of engagement among the Filipinos in the eighteenth century: private and public. The first consisted in a mutual pledge between the future spouses made secretly and without witnesses. To enter an engagement publicly, the father of the groom, accompanied by his son and invited guests, went to the girl's house and, in the presence of the young couple who sat in silence, the fathers of both parties closed the agreement. If the future couple presented no difficulty, they were considered in agreement and the formalized engagement was considered obligatory in conscience.<sup>21</sup>

**2. Bride Service and Dowry.** It was a pre-Christian custom in the Philippines for the groom to buy his future wife; but despite the efforts of both civil and ecclesiastical authorities, once they realized its malice, they were able to do practically nothing against it.

Bride service meant for the suitor working for the parents of the bride for a certain time, sometimes for years, in order to obtain their consent to espouse her. On occasion the prospective groom lived and slept in the house of his fiancée. With this freedom quite frequently not disapproved by the parents, it happened that the boy could have, and actually had in some cases, illicit relations with the girl, and some times with her sisters, cousins, nieces. From these relations with the

<sup>19</sup> Fuixa, *op. cit.*, 479-480.

<sup>20</sup> Bantigue, *op. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> Díaz, Casimiro, *El párroco de indios instruido* (Manila 1751, 1745), fols. 201v-202.

girl's proximate relatives the impediment of affinity, resulted, which occasioned invalid marriages if not discovered on time.

Another bad effect was this: tired of the services of the young man, the girl's parents just dismissed him without any recompense for the work he had done. And so, it frequently happened that the woman lost her virginity, and her suitor the fruit of his efforts.<sup>22</sup>

About a hundred years after the conquest, Archbishop Camacho stood up against this abuse, with all the characteristic energy in him. But, even with the backing of Governor Fausto Cruzat who forbade it in Ordinance 46 of the *Ordenanzas de buen gobierno* and of Governor Domingo Zabáburu who decreed a penalty of 50 lashes for *timauas* (commoners) and social ostracism for the upper classes, nothing was accomplished in their time.<sup>23</sup> In the middle of the 18th century, Archbishop Pedro de Arizala resumed the fight against the practice, with the same negative result.<sup>24</sup> This abuse, deeply rooted and as zealously combated, could not but call the attention of the fathers at the Manila Council. In the middle of the 19th century, some authors still wrote about it, as Father José Fuixa<sup>25</sup> and the English traveller John Bowring.<sup>26</sup>

3. **Consent.** In case the parents irrationally refused to consent to their children's marriage, the Governor General of the Philippines could supply for this defect and give his approval, provided the provincial or municipal magistrate of the interested party

<sup>22</sup> Arizala, Ilmo. Pedro Martínez, *Carta pastoral*, Manila 1751, 19-21.

<sup>23</sup> Perez, Angel, O.S.A., *Relaciones agustinianas de las razas del norte de Luzon* (Manila: Bureau of Public Printing, 1904), 284-286; Cfr. *Libros in AUST*, tomo 60, fols. 133-135.

<sup>24</sup> *Op. cit.*, 21-33.

<sup>25</sup> Fuixa, *Consultas y respuestas que el M.R.P. ... de a varias consultas*, Ms in AUST, Sección de Libros, tomo 203, 690-692.

<sup>26</sup> *Una visita a las islas Filipinas* (Manila: Impr. de Ramirez y Giaudier, 1786), p. 132: "If the suitor had money for the dowry (*Bigay caya*), he was excused from bride service. The service, fulfilled by personal service or by money, was intended, according to the strange mentality of those ages, to pay the milk with which the mother had nursed the bride, the expenses of the wedding, and, if something was left, which seldom happens, for the expenses of the newly-weds."

drew up the legal instrument at the instance of the latter of the parish priest. The Chinese mestizos, however, once they reached puberty, did not have to obtain parental consent to marry.<sup>27</sup>

4. **Dispensation from Consanguinity and Kinship to the 3rd or 4th Degree.** Among the various privileges which Rome granted to the natives of the Philippines, the most significant was the dispensation from the impediment of consanguinity and kinship in the 3rd or 4th degree, by which they could marry second cousins without any dispensation. Pope Paul III granted this favor in his famous bull *Altitudo divini consilii*, signed on 1 June 1537. Because doubts followed on the validity of this privilege due to the use by the Pontiff of the word "neophyte," other popes (Clement IX in 1669, Alexander VIII in 1690) extended it to Christians baptized in infancy. And yet, the sacred congregation had declared in 1618 that the privilege of Paul III did not include *cuarterones* or *puchueles*, that is, mestizos who were one fourth or one eighth indio. And so, the Spaniards or children of Spanish born in the Philippines, were held by the common law, just as the *cuarterones* or *puchueles*.<sup>28</sup>

5. **Solemnizing the Marriage.** On this matter there have been various abuses in the past. One was the afternoon celebration of marriage in church, behind closed doors, putting off till next morning the nuptial blessing. From this it happened that some lived as married persons before receiving the nuptial blessing. Embarrassment in affirming publicly the marriage contract led to this abuse. This also explains why ministers objected to the reception of communion by the couple at the time of the blessing next morning. The Manila council complained of other excesses against the sanctity of marriage, like wedding banquets, dancing and drinking to excess, which proved to be a seedground for sin, especially when these were in barrios or rural areas.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Tamayo, Serapio, O.P., *Idea general de la disciplina eclesiástica en Filipinas durante la dominación española* (Manila: Establecimiento tipográfico del colegio de Santo Tomás, 1960), 80-81.

<sup>28</sup> Tamayo, *op. cit.*, 85-86.

<sup>29</sup> Bantigue, *op. cit.*, 123.



**6. Marriage of the Chinese.** The marriage between the Chinese and the Filipinos was an occasion for unending problems for the church authorities in the Philippines. Since the Chinese had to be baptized as a prerequisite for marriage, they received the sacrament with mixed intentions. To obviate this, a royal decree in 1849 ordered the Chinese who wished to contract marriage in the Philippines to present before the government: a) his baptismal certificate; b) the written consent of the parents or guardians of his future wife; c) an affidavit that his name had been included in the *padron* or census list of Christians for more than two years. He also had to certify six years' residence in the country, his good conduct all this while, and a testimony from the parish priest that he had been instructed in Christian doctrine. Once married according to this form, the Chinese needed the express consent of his spouse in order to return to his country. It had frequently happened that once there, the husband did not return to the wife left in the Philippines. In view of so much difficulty, many unbaptized Chinese preferred to live in open concubinage with Filipino women, with no Church intervention. For this reason, Fr. Manuel de Rivas in the middle of the 19th century urged the patronato real to obtain from the Holy See a habitual dispensation for disparity of cult for the Chinese, who turned out to be good husbands, though remaining pagans, once they married in the eyes of the Church.<sup>30</sup>

**7. Marriage because of Piracy and To Convert Unbelievers.**

It often happened, especially in the second half of the 18th century that Moslems would carry off one or the other of a married couple and the remaining partner wanted to marry a second time. In this case, the church authorities, through the acts of the Manila council, warned the parish priests never to allow it before the death of the departed spouse had been proven beyond doubt.<sup>31</sup>

With regards to the pagans who had been baptized, the same council was urging the ministers, regular and secular, never in any way to at-

<sup>30</sup> "Los chinos en Filipinas," AUST, Sección de Libros, tomo 95, No. 3, fols. 93-97.

<sup>31</sup> Bantigue, *loc. cit.*

tempt, without previous investigation, to declare as invalid their marriage when still unbaptized. And if a pagan married to several wives was converted, he was to retain only the first wife, if he still remembered which of them he had married first. But if he could not recall who was first, he could contract marriage with any of the wives, provided there was no impediment. The question had already been settled by Paul III in the bull *Altitudo divini consilii*, with respect to the natives of the West and East Indies; but the missionaries, aware of the difficulties implied if the bull were obeyed to the letter, allowed some time to pass before they enforced on the neophytes the prescriptions of the Papal document on the matter.<sup>32</sup>

It is noteworthy, however, that polygamy was not widespread in the Philippines, although there were some instances among the rich and in the Visayas.

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<sup>32</sup> Velinchon, Julian, O.P., *Ritual conforme al Romano publicado por la Santidad de Paulo V, con algunas notas y privilegios relativos a los ministros de Indias*, etc. (Manila: Imprenta de los Amigos del País, 1856, 127).

#### THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

"What can the business community do for the Church? The business community can make available to church leaders the lessons and insights it has learned in the practice of management; in planning and setting objectives, in organizing material and human resources, in establishing norms and standards for self-measurement, in motivating managers and workers for performance and in developing human capabilities for the tasks of tomorrow." — *Consensus Statement of Bishops and Businessmen* February 13-14, 1971.