

BRO. AUGUSTO GUISALA MIER

Builder of Credit Unions and Cooperatives

The void that was left by someone in the ranks of the Knights of Columbus in the Philippines, his family and friends, is still felt since the passing away of a brother Knight just a few months ago. The hollowness is even more vivid in those places where his person strode, at times in haste, while in the performance of his apostolate for the good of his brethren.

This man was the late Bro. Augusto Guisala Mier, member of Manila Council 100, who once again comes to our memory as we stand witness to the present visit of Pope John Paul II who, a year ago (Dec. 21, 1979), granted the "Pro Ecclesia Et Pontifice" award to Bro. Mier.

In the ranks of the KCs in the Philippines, this coveted award shines and comes to the fore as Pope John Paul lingers in this land where not a few KCs are now keepers of the award, including those now resting in peace, one of them the late Rev. Fr. George J. Willmann.

Pope John Paul II, who has gained the distinction the world over as the "traveling Pope" is here on another

pastoral visit to his flock -- a personal service to his sons and daughters in these parts of the world and which he brings to their doorsteps.

Providentially, it is along this style of apostolicity that the KCs in the Philippines exercise service towards their fellowmen -- always extending a helping hand, especially to the needy, in the manner of the apostolate.

Bro. Mier's mode of service towards his fellow men was natural -- a way of life -- all those who had occasion to have their paths cross his and even the people who had the least chance of knowing him, remember and speak of him as a man who gained numerous friends and never lost anyone of them.

Bro. Mier is remembered most as a man who was sincerely dedicated to his job; who walked along with a likeable personality. These traits spelled out the success of the movements he ably steered into motion until they



gained permanence and stability.

This refers specifically to the establishment and promotion of credit unions and cooperatives which the K of C in the Philippines spearheaded under the Knights of Columbus Community Services (KCCS) in cooperation with the different parishes in many parts of the country. With the principal objective of setting up an organization that would help small commu-

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nities and the needy, through the promotion of thrift, honesty, frugality and cooperation among the parishioners, the late Fr. George J. Willmann could not have made a better choice in the selection of a man to go forth and implant the need for credit unions and cooperatives in the people's hearts and to cultivate the desirability of these benefits among them.

Thus in 1965, Bro. Mier was appointed by Fr. Willmann as field secretary of the KCCS, charged with the mission of organizing more credit unions and cooperatives in different parishes. By then, he was a freshman member of the K of C, Manila Council 1000 but had long been associated with Fr. Willmann in community participation of KC projects.

Not a few people who knew Bro. Mier have told this writer they truly have fond memories of him and that other stories related about him were similarly told by others in different places.

During those times when most of the existing 250 credit unions and cooperatives were still in the process of organization, Bro. Mier literally wove his way and his mission into the people's hearts. Patiently he got them to know the rudiments of a credit union or a consumers cooperative and how it would affect their lives socially and economically. Because of

his common touch approach and down to earth style in driving home his message, he was always accredited with avid listeners in the community assemblies he had convened.

Msgr. Francisco G. Tantoco, Jr., KC national secretary, who recommended him for the distinguished Papal award, said of Bro. Mier: "In his work, he has had to travel throughout the length and breadth of the Archipelago, braving all kinds of weather and roads, availing himself of the cheapest means of transportation and staying with parish priests most of the time. He has wanted it this way for he is a man of simple ways and manners. Thus, his job has taken him away from his home for weeks on end, yet he remained devoted to his family."

As a family man, Bro. Mier's cohesive force in his home circle is summed up by what a family friend said of him: "Even if he is in the field doing his job and is away for weeks, his family never seemed to miss him - there was decorum in the household as if he was there guiding everyone, as they knew he would be back anytime. The entire household would be relaxed, and each time he returned, the warmth of the family affection shared by each other became a stronger bond that held them together."

A brother Knight in the national headquarters of the K of C also tells

of Bro. Mier: "There's no dull moment here if he's around. We have truly missed his jokes." Bro. Mier was born in Buian, Sorsogon on December 13, 1909. He obtained his Bachelor of Science in Commerce degree at the Far Eastern University and was a Dale Carnegie Course graduate.

He was married to the former Francisca Jazmin and had four children: Sister Zenaida Mier (Sis of St.

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Paul de Chartres), Milagros, Augusto, Jr. and Demetrio.

Bro. Mier's exemplary life of service and simplicity will always stand as a model to every Christian who wishes to lead a life of fulfillment. He proved without doubt that one does not need to do great or heroic deeds in order to be of service to people. What is important, as his life demonstrated, is to love one's fellowmen deeply, to love one's country sincerely, and to love God devoutly. ●

-- BEN S. DE CASTRO

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