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A BISHOP IS CONSECRATED

By Amado Ballesteros

ON JULY 24, 1947 just as the sun cast its first rays on the dewy Agno Valley, a young priest set forth from Mangaldan, Pangasinan and headed for Vigan. The bells from his parish church pealed a solemn farewell as his people, flocking together from their homes, said good-bye to this young man who had worked among them for years.

He stopped for a moment at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Manaoag to say a last prayer before the Virgin to whose throne he had brought his people so many times during ten fruitful years.

He was not alone. With him were three Dominicans, one of them a professor of his during his student days at the Central Seminary at Santo Tomas Universi-

ty. Monsignor Guglielmo Piani, Philippine Apostolic Delegate, Bishop Verzosa of Lipa and the Most Reverend Olano, just arrived from Guam, followed in another car.

As the car bearing the young priest rolled through Ilocos Sur, it passed under arches of triumph, arches of welcome. Tagudin, Santa Cruz, Santa Lucia, Candon, Santiago, San Esteban, Narvacan, Santa Maria, the whole province up to the banks of the Agno River, turned out to meet him.

In town after town, he was greeted by the ringing of bells as old and young alike lined the streets to hail him as his car sped along. By the time he has passed through the last town, he had a collection of floral offerings

which, in number and beauty, would have pleased the Virgin herself.

Later he was to bring these flowers back to Mangaldan and place them before the altar at which he had offered so many Masses as a parish priest.

At the banks of the Abra River, the motor procession paused to rest. Perhaps, as he gazed at the slowly flowing waters, the young man wondered at the sudden turn of events that had made him a prince of the Church. For his name was Juan Sison, and in a few hours he was to become the youngest bishop in the Philippines, perhaps in the entire Far East.

Here on the Abra river decorated barges were waiting to carry the new bishop-elect and his party across. Waiting on the other side of the river was a welcoming party, headed by Monsignor Fortuna, the Vicar General of the diocese, and the Very Reverend Fr. Hettiger, Rector of the Diocesan Seminary in Vigan.

Triumphal Entry

The entry of the Fr. Sison into Vigan was scheduled for 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Before that hour the flimsy clouds sailing overhead had broken apart and

were falling down in a strong drizzle. But the rain did not dampen the enthusiasm of those who were to participate in the colorful consecration ceremonies.

Men and women, coeds from the schools, children in their Sunday clothes moved as one under the arches that had been erected along the entire route of the triumphant procession. School bands blared forth their martial music, leading the crowds on to the bishop-elect's hour of triumph.

Te Deum

Then the "Te Deum" was intoned. By 6 o'clock an enormous crowd of delegates and pilgrims had assembled, eagerly awaiting the consecration ceremonies that were to take place the next day.

Fateful Day

The dawn of the 25th was greeted by a band reveille that echoed down the quickly-filling streets. As early as 3:30 A.M. the tremendous number of priests had already started saying the chain of Masses that would continue until the consecration actually began.

At six o'clock the procession moved out of the episcopal palace and headed towards the cathedral. Preceding the bishops in the pro-

cession was the select group of sponsors, headed by Chief Justice Manuel V. Moran of the Supreme Court and Mrs. Aurora de Quizon, widow of the late President. Long before the hour of consecration the cathedral had already been filled with people who had pushed their way into the church to witness a ceremony to which centuries of tradition had added their splendor.

At seven o'clock the ceremony began, with the Apostolic Delegate acting as consecrating bishop. Assisting him were Bishop Constancio Jurgens of Tuguegarao and Bishop Pedro Santos of Bicolandia. Bishop Jose Maria Cuenco preached the sermon, and after him Bishop Mariano Madriaga explained the ceremonies from the pulpit.

The ceremonies went on as three hours ticked past. And as the ceremonies came to an end, the new Prince approached his mother, who had come despite age and ailment, to kiss her hand and to give her the privilege of bes-

towing the first kiss on his pastoral ring. And people who looked on saw the bishop try to hold back the tears that rimmed his eyes.

Thus was a bishop made, and thus did a humble parish priest become a prince of the Church.

Note: His Excellency, the Most Reverend Juan C. Sison, S.T.D., is the Titular Bishop of Limata, Numidia and Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Nueva Segovia. He is a native of Villasis, Pangasinan where he first saw the light of day on August 8, 1912. Prior to his elevation, he had been parish priest of Mangaldan, Pangasinan for ten years. He finished his Classical and Philosophical studies at the Immaculate Conception Seminary in Vigan. Because of his exceptional talent, he was sent to the Central Seminary of the University of Santo Tomas where he was ordained priest in March, 1935. He obtained his Doctorate in Sacred Theology from the same University in 1942. At 35, he is the youngest of all Philippine bishops.

PRACTICAL ETHICS.

Boswell told Sam Johnson that a guest denied there was any difference between Virtue and Vice. Said Johnson: "If he says that and doesn't believe it, he is a liar; if he does believe it, we had better count the spoons."

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Nine times out of ten it isn't the child that needs correction. It's the parent.

—Father Flanagan