

HISTORICAL SECTION

Notes on

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES*

1521-1898

(continued)

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Chapter Three

THE APOSTOLIC WORK OF THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS

NOTE: We would like to make a prenote at the start of this chapter by saying that we shall treat only the missionary activity of the religious orders in the Philippines, leaving for a later discussion their work in education and their role in the wider socio-economic field. It might be good to point out that many of the ministries established or maintained by the orders went from the care of one to that of another order, or transferred from a religious order to the diocesan clergy and vice-versa. We shall mention only the more important of these changes for it would be too long and tedious to list them all. We shall discuss the orders according to the date of their arrival in the Philippines: the Augustinians first, then the Franciscans, followed by the Jesuits, the Dominicans and the Recollects.

A. The Augustinians.

The Augustinians came to the Philippines with Legazpi's expedition. There were five of them, eminently apostolic men: Andrés de Urdaneta,

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Martin de Rada, Andrés de Aguirre, Diego de Herrera and Pedro de Gamboa. After Legazpi took possession of Cebu City, he allotted a piece of land to them where they later erected a church and convent dedicated to the Holy Infant. This foundation was the center of their apostolic journeys throughout the Visayas and Mindanao in the years that followed.

Soon they began to administer baptism to the natives, infrequently at first and with caution. The first to accept baptism was a niece of Tupas who received the name Isabel. Tupas himself obtained the same grace on 21 March 1568. From Cebú, the Augustinians went on to Panay (Iloilo), Masbate and Camarines.

When Legazpi founded Manila in 1571, he gave them an extensive lot there beside the sea. Here they raised the beginning in bamboo, wood and nipa of what would be the church and convent of Saint Paul, popularly known by the name "San Agustín."

From this mother house and center of their Apostolate they went forth to several provinces in Luzon and the Visayas. But in the beginning they had no seat or permanent basis of work since they were too few for so many towns. And thus in the first years of their missionary activity we find them preaching in Tondo and around Manila, in Batangas, Laguna, Pampanga, Pangasinan, Ilocos and Cagayan.

After the official division of the provinces among the religious orders working in the Philippines at the time (*Royal Cedula*, 27 April 1594),¹ the Augustinians were engaged more or less permanently in the following missions: the surrounding area of Manila, Tondo, Tambobong, Tinajeros, Navotas, Novaliches, Malate, Parañaque, Pasig, Cainta, Caloocan and others. These provinces in Luzon were allotted to them: Batangas, north Bulacan, all of Pampanga, some towns in east Tarlac, a good part of Nueva Ecija, La Union, Ilocos Sur, Ilocos Norte, Abra; and in the nineteenth century, the districts of Lepanto, Bontoc, Benguet, the military post at Amburayan. In the Visayas they evangelized Cebu island, some towns in Negros which they later handed over to the secular clergy, Iloilo, Capiz, Antique. In 1768 when the Jesuits

¹ de la Guardia Miguel, *Las Leyes de Indias*, Madrid, Establecimiento tipográfico de Pedro Nuñez, 1889, page 267.

were expelled, they administered some of the towns in Leyte, which in 1804 passed on to the secular clergy and later to the Franciscans. At the outbreak of the revolution in 1898 the Augustinians had under their care 2,320,667 souls, distributed among 231 parishes and missions in 22 provinces.

In 333 years of Spanish rule in the islands a total of 2830 Augustinian friars came to the Philippines. Besides being emissaries of the gospel — the common task of the five religious families — they distinguished themselves in erecting magnificent churches, as the church of San Agustin in Intramuros, Manila, that of Taal, Batangas, of Oton, Iloilo, as well as in the literary endeavours and programs of material improvement.²

B. The Franciscans.

The Franciscans arrived in Manila on 24 June 1577. They were housed with the Augustinians for a while until they finished a convent of light materials dedicated to our Lady of the Angels. From here they spread around Mánila and the provinces. Among others, they either established or received the missions around the capital — Santa Ana, Paco, Sampaloc, San Juan del Monte, San Francisco del Monte and Pandacan. They also evangelized the province of Laguna Bay and the towns east and south of the lake which formerly belonged to the district of Morong. Further south they were entrusted with the provinces of Quezon, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Albay and Sorsogon. East of Quezon province, they evangelized certain regions along the coast — the ancient districts of Infanta and Principe, extending as far as Palanan, Isabela. Likewise, they founded some towns in Mindoro and Marinduque. In 1768 the government assigned to them the Jesuit missions in Samar and, in 1843, they took care of certain towns in Leyte.³

² Galende, Pedro G., O.S.A., "The Augustinians in the Philippines, 1665-1890." *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, Enero-Febrero, 1965, page 35 ff.

³ Pastrana, Apolinar, O.F.M., "The Franciscans and the Evangelization of the Philippines." *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, Enero-Febrero 1965, page 80 ff.; De Huerta, Felix, O.F.M., *Estado geográfico, topográfico, estadístico, historia-religioso de la santa y apostólica provincia de San Gregorio Magno de Filipinas*. Binondo, 1865.

By the end of the past century, the Franciscans were ministering to 1,096,659 souls in 103 towns of 15 provinces.

The Franciscans were noted above all for many outstanding institutions of charity which they founded or administered. They were strict observants of the religious vow of poverty and, in contrast to other religious orders, they did not acquire property.

C. The Jesuits.

The first Jesuits who arrived in Manila on 17 September 1581 were Fathers Antonio Sedeño and Alonso Sanchez, and Brother Nicolás Gallardo. At first they lived in a temporary residence at Lagyo, the section between the present districts of Ermita and Malate. Later they moved to Intramuros, in a house near the southeast gate, the Royal Gate (*Puerta real*). Their first missions, Tavyay and Antipolo of the modern province of Rizal, date from 1593. About this time too, they included Panay Island (Tibauan) in their apostolate. During the next years they set up fixed residences in Leyte and Samar, while Father Chirino opened a central mission house in Cebu (1595). Before the end of the sixteenth century, they had established permanent missions in Bohol. They also took charge of some towns in Negros, besides starting or accepting other ministries near Manila, like San Miguel, Santa Cruz, Quiapo and, in the province of Cavite, Silang, Maragondong and Kawit.

Raised to a province in 1605 the Jesuits could look with confidence to the future. And so, we find them in the seventeenth century opening the missions of Mindanao which caused them so much difficulty. They first founded Dapitan mission in the north coast; next, in 1635, Zamboanga and, finally, in 1639, Jolo, under the shadow of a Hispano-Filipino military garrison whose job it was to keep the Moslems in check. In general, these missions shared the good or the bad fate of the garrisons that shielded them. The garrison at Zamboanga, recalled by Governor Manrique de Lara in 1635, was not reestablished until 1718. It was in the eighteenth century that the sons of Saint Ignatius, unabating in their missionary effort reached the present site of Cotabato City. Unfortunately everything came to a stop when the Jesuits were expelled from the Philippines in 1768, and their missions were transferred to other hands: those in central Luzon to the diocesan clergy; Samar and

and in 1843 Leyte to the Franciscans; Bohol, with some centers in Cebu, Negros, Panay and all of Mindanao to the Recollects; four missions in Negros and four others in Panay to the Dominicans.

The Society of Jesus, restored in 1814, did not return to the Philippines until 1859. The bishop of Cebu petitioned the Spanish government for them to work in the Mindanao missions. And so, from 1860 on the Jesuits established their missions, first in Cotabato, then in Zamboanga, and finally in Basilan island.

Meanwhile the Recollect fathers, through government intervention, handed over to them all their missions, except seven. In 1896, the number of Christians ministered to by the Jesuits totalled 213,065 in 36 mission parishes in Mindanao.

However, despite the efforts exerted by the Jesuits in Mindanao, despite their excellent missionary methods, progress was slow, because of the stubborn resistance of the Moslems to Christianity. Nonetheless, their zeal won over to the Faith sizable communities of natives in the north-western coast of the island.¹ Not only this, but the Jesuits spared no efforts in the educational apostolate, where they won here and elsewhere much renown. In this aspect, they distinguished themselves from the other orders, except the Dominican.

D. The Dominicans.

On 21 July 1587 the first Dominicans, the founding fathers of the Religious Province of the Most Holy Rosary of the Philippines, arrived in Cavite. Of these, five stayed in the Manila residence that would be called the Convento of Santo Domingo. Four left for Bataan, and the remaining six took the trail to Pangasinan. The missions that the Dominicans established or administered were: Baybay, Binondo, and the Parian located near Manila for the Chinese; almost the whole province of Bataan; the province of Pangasinan; some towns in north Tarlac; the entire Cagayan Valley, i.e., the present provinces of Cagayan, Isabela,

¹ de la Costa, Horacio, S.J. *The Jesuits in the Philippines 1581-1768*, Cambridge, 1961, page 116 ff.; Saderra-Masó, Miguel, S.J., *Misiones Jesuíticas de Filipinas*, Manila, Tip. Pontificia de la Universidad de Santo Tomas, 1924.

and Nueva Vizcaya, including the eastern slopes of Central Cordillera and the western side of Sierra Madre mountain range, the Babuyan Islands, with interruptions from 1619 on; and the Batanes Islands, a permanent mission since 1783.

After initial difficulties, the missions near Manila and those in Bataan and Pangasinan flourished peacefully with only a slight interruption, as Binondo, Parian, and Bataan, which were under the care of the secular clergy for about seventy years, from 1768 until the middle of the nineteenth century more or less. In Pangasinan, we might mention among other events, the uprising of 1763 which cost so much blood, destruction and hatred. The Cagayan Valley missions were dearly paid for in human life, money and sacrifice, mainly because of 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 escorts.

The Dominicans conquered for Christ practically all of Cagayan and north Isabela towards the last years of the sixteenth, and the beginning of the seventeenth, century. The conversion of south Isabela took several long years, from 1673 to about the middle of the eighteenth century. It was much harder bringing into the fold of the Church Nueva Vizcaya province; but it was done finally about the middle of the eighteenth century, thanks in great part to the aid of the Augustinians who, starting from the south, had preached and spread the good news until Bayombong from 1716 to 1740. The missions on the eastern slopes of Central Cordillera were established — with scant success — in the second half of the nineteenth century. By the end of this century the evangelization of the Ilongots began.

The Babuyan and Batanes missions proved to be the grave of several Dominicans, due to the deadly climate of the islands.

These were the provinces that the Dominicans evangelized and administered as their specific section in the Philippines. For various reasons they had to assume charge of Zambales province for a while (1678-1712).

• Fernandez, Pablo, O.P., "Dominican Apostolate in the Philippines." *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, Enero-Febrero, 1965, page 149 ff.

eight towns briefly in the Visayas, as we have already noted, and some towns in Cavite and Laguna during the second half of the nineteenth century. When the revolution forced the Dominicans to abandon their parishes and mission centers, they were caring for 735,396 souls in 73 parishes and 36 missions in 10 provinces. The Dominicans also excelled principally in their educational endeavors and famous missions abroad.

E. The Recollects.

In May 1606, the first Recollect mission of ten priests and four lay brothers disembarked at Cebu. The following June they proceeded to Manila. They lived for a few days in Santo Domingo, then in San Agustín, until they had their own house in Bagumbayan (the present Luneta: Rizal Park) near Intramuros. Finally they transferred to the walled city. The next year, three Recollect fathers left to open the Zambales mission which they administered until the end of the nineteenth century, with the interruption noted and another from 1754 to 1837. During this interregnum, they took charge of the towns of Mabalacat, Capas, Bamban, and laid the foundations of the missions of O'Donnell and Moriones in central Luzon.

In 1622 the Recollect fathers were charged with Palawan and Calamianes, and Caraga district in eastern Mindanao, where they often had to erect forts and arm the Christians for defense against the Moro depredations. But repeated Moro assaults forced them to give up these missions. However, on petition by the Royal Audencia, they had to stay put. Palawan entered a period of peace and prosperity in the second half of the nineteenth century. The mission and subsequent town of Puerto Princesa date from 1881. After the revolution, the Recollects returned to Palawan. They still administer it as an Apostolic Vicariate.

The evangelization of Romblon by the Recollects began in 1635. Besides Moro hostility, they met with other difficulties, as the isolation of one island from another and the poverty of the soil. But all this was overcome by those brave and long-suffering missionaries.

In 1679 they took charge of Mindoro in exchange for the loss of Zambales which had passed to the hands of the Dominicans, as was said. In Mindoro they met the same difficulties they found elsewhere which

had tested their patience and heroism, especially the attacks of the devotees of Mohammed. However, it must be admitted that other religious groups, including the diocesan clergy, helped evangelize this island; but none persevered with the firmness and permanence of the Recollects.

They also evangelized, with the labor that it demanded, the islands of Ticao, Masbate and Burias from 1688. But in 1791 they abandoned these to strengthen the ministries in Bohol, Mindanao and the Marianas Islands which the government had entrusted to them after the expulsion of the Jesuit fathers.

Their residence in Cebu, the central house of their Visayan missions, was founded in 1621. However, the Recollect missions in this island date from a much later period, from 1744. They gradually spread along the coast from the city of Cebu until Catmon.

In 1768, because of the expulsion of the Society of Jesus, the Recollects had to assume charge of Bohol. At that time, it had practically separated itself from Spain after an internal uprising. In the end, after long years of laborious negotiation, they were able to pacify the island and initiate its progress in all aspects.

But the Order of Augustinian Recollects showed its truly remarkable and fruitful zeal especially in the island of Negros, which the government had entrusted to it in 1848. Suffice it to say that from this date until 1896, the population increased from 30,000 inhabitants to 363,255, and the centers of ministerial work from 11 to 77. The parish and missionary work of the Recollects reached out in 1896 to 1,249,399 souls in 203 towns of 20 provinces.

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 so 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.⁶

⁶ Herce, Pedro. O.R.S.A., "The Recollects in the Philippines." *Ibid.*, page 200 ff.; Marin y Morales Valentin, O.P., *Ensayo de una síntesis de los*

These five religious orders which for the duration of three centuries carried the brunt of the task of evangelizing the Philippines, drew their mission personnel and their teachers from Spain and elsewhere. But, beginning with the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, they had to seriously consider ways and means to avail themselves of their own resources, inasmuch as it had become harder and harder to recruit personnel from other religious provinces of Europe and America. And so, we find the Augustinians founding the Colegio de la Vid (1743); the Recollects, the Colleges of Alfaro (1824), Monteagudo (1829) and San Millan de la Cogulla (1878); the Dominicans, the Colleges of Ocaña (1830) and Santo Tomás de Avila (1876); and the Franciscans, the Colleges of Pastrana (1855) and Consuegra (1867).

Let us mention here, otherwise this chapter will be incomplete, the arrival of the Fathers of San Juan de Dios in 1641, of the Vincentians (*Paúles*) in 1862, and at the eleventh hour, of the Capuchins and Benedictines in 1886 and 1895 respectively.

(to be continued)