

CHRISTIANIZATION OF THE PHILIPPINES

THE SOCIETY OF ST. PAUL (S.S.P.) IN THE PHILIPPINES

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The Philippines, the only predominantly Catholic country in the Far East, has always been regarded as the center of apostolic irradiation to its neighbouring peoples by the founder of the Society of St. Paul, the Very Rev. James Alberione.

Occasion to the establishment of the Society of St. Paul in the Philippines was the visit to the Motherhouse of the Society in Alba, Italy in 1935 by the late His Excellency Guglielmo Piani, then Apostolic Delegate in this country.

The Reverend Fathers Bernardo Borgogno and Marco Grossi landed at Manila on July 7, 1935. On their arrival to the Philippines a lot of difficulties prevented the Fathers from sowing the first seed of the Society of St. Paul in the Archdiocese of Manila. For several months they availed themselves of the fatherly hospitality of the Apostolic Delegate, till the time when the late Most Rev. Alfredo Verzosa, Bishop of Lipa Batangas welcomed the two Pauline Fathers to his Diocese upon the mediation of the Apostolic Delegate himself.

Over a property of nearly 3,000 sqm, in an old house, the Fathers recruited some generous young boys to share with them a pioneer life of missionary work, and set up a mean printing press to get a start in the specific apostolates of the Society of St. Paul (press, movie), radio and television, the so called Mass Media of Communication, or Instruments of Social Communication.

Later, when more Fathers and a Brother arrived from Italy, the number of aspirants was increased, new typographic equipment purchased,

more religious literature printed and a religious bookstore was made available to the public.

It was the year 1941 when the Society was allowed to establish at Pasay City, in the Archdiocese of Manila, through the untiring efforts and tactful ways of the Apostolic Delegate. However, there was a condition to be accepted by the Pauline Fathers, namely, the engagement in parish work. The Fathers graciously agreed on the condition, glad as they were to bring their zealous and direct cooperation into that pastoral field. On the 10th of August, 1941 the Pauline community left Lipa City for Pasay City.

The Paulines bought here a property of nearly 4,000 sqm with a house standing in the middle. Here they attended to the training of the aspirants, to the spiritual needs of their people, and published many religious books.

At this time the work was solidly getting established when it was struck by the days of World War II with its tale of human sufferings and wanton destruction of property. The Pauline house was levelled to the ground. When the smoke of battle subsided, the Paulines took up the tedious work of material reconstruction and spiritual revival among the emancipated population. They started from scratch.

In 1949 an additional lot was purchased. On it a house for the increasing number of aspirants had to be constructed. The growing population of the city and suburbs compelled the Society to provide an ample, simple yet attractive parish church. It was dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows.

In 1950 a larger printing press became imperative to meet the demands of religious literature. In the same year a Libreria San Pablo was put up annexed to the church.

In 1951 the laborious zeal of the Pauline Fathers and Brothers was crowned with the ordination of the first two Filipino priests.

At the outset of the year 1954 the monthly family magazine HOME LIFE had its first issue. Now it is read all over the Philippines. In 1956 THE YOUNGSTER began its publication in comics form. Young and old alike enjoy its reading. In the same year the Society started

the radio apostolate with a weekly broadcast under the "Voice of St. Paul" in both Tagalog and English. Later, another well supplied Libreria San Pablo opened its doors in Azcarraga St., Manila. It was a welcomed location. But unavoidable circumstances forced the Libreria to move to one of the busiest centers of Manila, Mabini St. Here the Libreria San Pablo is well furnished with valuable religious books, articles and recordings.

Knowing the relevancy of the visual pictures as a means of apostolate, the Society started the distribution of religious and educational 16mm films in 1955. The St. Paul Films made a slow but steady progress as to have reached a considerable number of families, schools, orphanages and parishes in various parts of the Philippines.

The need for a more spacious estate, an edifice more suitable to the training of our aspirants, and a wider apostolate of the press was being strongly felt. To solve it, a property of more than 41,000 sqm was bought in San Antonio Village, Makati, Rizal in the year 1955. This town is both a residential and highly commercial spot. While being located in a quiet and neat district, the Society was able to make easy contacts for its fast growing apostolate of the press. The Pauline Fathers too contribute their own share in the spiritual care of the surrounding population.

In 1958-1960 a two-story building, 75 m. long and 15 m. wide, with two adjacent houses was constructed. It was solemnly blessed by the Archbishop of Manila, His Eminence Rufino J. Card. Santos. The Society of St. Paul in the Philippines is now looking forward to another imposing building to be soon erected on the same compound. It will house all the departments of a modern and complete printing press.

In the year 1965-1967 the Society's complete Classical Secondary Course and four-year Classical Liberal Arts Course have been granted the Government recognition. This offers a great help to a better humanistic and scientific training of the members of the Society, enabling them to undertake higher studies for a more dedicated service to the souls, the Church and the country.

At present, the Society in the Philippines has 64 High School and 12 Collegiate seminarians, 7 Filipino priests, 5 Filipino professed brothers and 5 Filipino students of Theology in the International House of Studies of the Society of St. Paul in Rome.

Here is compendious survey of the pertinent factors showing the persevering efforts of the Society of St. Paul in the Philippines to contribute in building up and strengthening the kingdom of God in this missionary country, especially with the aid of the instruments of social communication—press, movie, radio and television.

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