



THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES*

(Continued)

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Chapter 18

OTHER RELIGIOUS AND LITURGICAL PRACTICES

Fast and Abstinence. Since there was such a variety of races in the Philippines, there was likewise a difference in the observance of the law of fast and abstinence. For the present, we are interested only in the native-born Filipinos, the mestizos and the Europeans or their descendants in the Philippines.

With regard to the Filipinos, suffice it to say that during the Spanish regime, they enjoyed a special indult granted to all the natives of the West and the East Indies through the bull of Pope Paul III, *Altitudo divini consilii* of 1 June 1537. According to this bull, the law of fast was binding on the vigils of Christmas and Easter and the seven Fridays of Lent; the law of abstinence obliged on Ash Wednesday, the following six Fridays of Lent, Spy Wednesday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, the vigils of Pentecost Sunday, Ascension Thursday, Assumption of the blessed Virgin Mary, Christmas and the feasts of Saints Peter and Paul.

Paul III did not include the mestizos in the indult. Doubts naturally came up in time regarding their obligation to fast and abstain. Until 1852, then, they did not enjoy the privilege granted to the *indios*; but on 3 March of this year, on the petition of Fr. Francisco Gainza, the above indult was granted to them too. Only meztizos who were half-indio or more, according to weighty authors, enjoyed this extension. It was thus not applicable in the case of the children of a European father and a mestizo mother, or vice-versa.

Philippine residents not included in these categories had to follow the common law of the Church until 1865, when Archbishop Gregorio Melitón of Manila obtained from the Holy See the faculty to extend to all the inhabitants of the country regardless of race or nationality, the privilege granted by Paul III to the indios, but only with regard to the law of fasting. This extension had to be renewed after a certain number of years. Furthermore, the clergy had to observe eight additional days of fasting to be designated by the Metropolitan of the Islands.

Long before this extension of Paul's III's privilege, those who had obtained the bull of the Crusade enjoyed the privileges with regard to fast and abstinence granted by the Holy See in this bull to Spanish subjects.

By papal dispensation, military personnel and their families likewise enjoyed certain added privileges in this matter.¹

The "Sanctorum" From the first years of the preaching of the gospel in this country, a religious contribution known as the "Sanctorum" was approved on the advice and consent of both civil and ecclesiastical authorities. Each tribute-paying individual was obliged to give one and a half *reales* when he made his annual confession. The fund thus collected was set aside for the solemn celebration of the major feasts of Holy Thursday, Corpus Christi and that of the Patron Saint of each town. This money paid for the wax and the singers, with the remainder being set aside to cover the deficit of the priest's stipends and the building expenses of the church.

In the course of time, some abuses must have crept in, for in 1755, Archbishop Pedro Martínez de Arizala provided in the *arancel* he issued, with the approval of the Audiencia, that the money remaining after liquidating the expenses of the fiesta should be set aside for the construction of the church. The Royal Ordinance of 1768 arranged that the collection be in the charge of the Alcalde mayor, while the money was to

¹ J.A.R., S.J. *Explicación razonada que sobre ayunos y abstinencias obligatorios a los habitantes de Filipinas dedica a los PP. Misioneros de Mindanao* (Manila: Imprenta de Santa Cruz, 2-Carriedo-20, 1892), 10-30.

be deposited in a safe under a triple key: one in the hands of the alcalde, the other in the minister's, and the third in the custody of the gobernadorcillo. Previously, the cabeza de barangay made the collection.²

For the sake of truth, we must say that abuses were committed only in the areas around Manila. In the dioceses of Cebu and Nueva Segovia, the cabezas de barangay, shortly before or after the fiesta, went around for the collection, which they left with the gobernadorcillo, who, in turn, brought it to the parish priest. The collectors were exempt from paying, while the gobernadorcillo received some compensation.³

This arrangement lasted until the decree of the Superior Government, dated 13 January 1836, which ordered that in the archdiocese of Manila, cabazas de barangay would be charged with the collection of the "Sanctorum" and directly bring it to the alcalde mayor, without the priest's intervention. As compensation, they were to receive 5% of the amount collected, and another 5% went to the alcaldes and governors in their capacity as sub-collectors. On 23 August 1843, Governor Francisco de Paula sought to extend this arrangement, already in force in Manila and Nueva Cáceres, to the dioceses of Cebu and Nueva Segovia. But the bishops begged to leave things in their traditional set-up. Finally, however, on 13 January 1847, these two dioceses had to follow the system of collecting the "Sanctorum" practiced all over the rest of the islands.⁴

Feast Days of Obligation. In his bull *Altitudo divini consilii*, Pope Paul III arranged that, besides Sunday, the natives were obliged to observe the following feast days: Christmas, the Circumcision, Epiphany, Ascension, Corpus Christi, the Nativity of our Lady, the Anuntiation, Purification, Assumption, and the feast of Saints Peter and Paul. The holy Father Pius IX, in his brief *Quam pluris* (2 May 1867) promulgated in the Philippines by royal order of 13 August 1877, reduced the number of obligatory feasts

² *Reales ordenanzas formadas por el superior gobierno y real acuerdo de estas islas, en 26 de Febrero de 1768, etc.* (Manila: La Imprenta de Sampaloc, 1801), Ordenanza 46, p. 40.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ APSR (Ciudad de Quezon), Sección "Ordenes religiosas," (Nueva Segovia), 1848.

for the Spaniards and the other Europeans, while the Filipinos continued to enjoy the indult of Paul III. Because of this varied arrangement which prescribed as obligatory for Spaniards and not for natives the feasts of Saint James the Apostle, All Saints, the Immaculate Conception; and obligatory for the natives, but not for the Spaniards, the feast of the Nativity of our Lady — the archbishop of Manila presented through Governor-General Domingo Moriones a petition before the peninsular government on 17 October 1877 to equalize the number of feasts for which was granted on 1 January 1678.⁵

On 23 November of this year, the archbishop published a decree announcing that, despite the reduction by papal brief of the number of feasts, the feast of Saint Andrew Apostle, 30 November, was still obligatory in the city of Manila, but not in the suburbs. Pope Leo XIII proclaimed in his brief *Annus iam quintus*, dated 5 December 1879, the Immaculate Conception as the patron of the Manila archdiocese. The same pontiff, in his brief *Quod paucis*, dated 28 January 1896, made the feast of Saint Joseph obligatory in Spain and in her overseas dominions.⁶

Decrees of Festal Solemnity. The feasts of obligation during the Spanish regime were classed according to their "number of crosses." Feasts of greater solemnity were feasts of "three crosses." These were, aside from Sunday, the feast days already cited as obligatory on Spaniards and natives alike, according to a privilege of Paul III. But there were other obligatory feasts for the Spaniards, as those of Saint John the Baptist, the Apostles and Evangelists, Monday and Tuesday of Easter week, Pentecost, the Transfiguration of our Lord, Saint Lawrence, Saint Michael, All Saints, Saint Martin, Saint Stephen, and the Holy Innocents. On these days, the Spaniards could not force the natives under obligation to serve them to go to work, nor could they be hindered from hearing mass, even though by disposition of the Church, the natives were not dispensed from work or obliged to hear mass.

⁵ *Boletín eclesiástico del arzobispado de Manila*, No. 52, 11 de Noviembre de 1877, pp. 501-507.

⁶ Tamayo, P. Serapio, O. P., *Idea general de la disciplina eclesiástica en Filipinas durante la dominación española* (Manila: Est. Tip. del Colegio de Santo Tomás, 1906), 75-76.

In feasts of "one cross," however, like that of the Immaculate Conception and that of Saint Joseph, the Spaniards could oblige the natives to work.⁷

In eighteenth-century Manila, people venerated with special devotion the Apostle Andrew, patron saint of the city; Saint Potenciana, patroness of the Islands; Saint Anthony Abbot, Manila's protector from fires; and Saint Polycarp, helper against earthquakes.⁸ But the feasts which without question stood out above the rest in solemnity and in the enthusiasm with which the Filipinos celebrated them, were the "three feasts" of Holy Thursday, Corpus Christi, and the titular feast of each town church. The religious celebration of the feast day used to include solemn vespers, mass and sermon, and a procession.⁹

The Bull of the Crusade. The Filipino shared in the privileges granted in the bull of the Crusade, consisting of the opportunity to win indulgencies, plenary and partial, on fulfillment of certain conditions, besides enjoying a dispensation from abstinence and from fast on certain days. In return for these privileges, the faithful gave some small alms, which the Church used for works of charity.¹⁰

The Use of the Discipline. Chirino relates that around the years 1596-97, a canon named Diego de León who was studying in the Jesuit college, introduced the practice of inviting to the Jesuit church men of different social standing, in order to take the discipline three times a week, especially during Lent. The natives, attracted by the penitential practice, lost no time imitating the Spaniards. In time, this spirit of penance lost its appeal, becoming in many places, according to the Jesuit historian Pedro Murillo Velarde,

⁷ Serrano, Miguel García, *Casos morales* (Manila, 1629), 101.

⁸ Barrion, Sister M. Caridad, O.S.B., *Religious Life of the Laity the Eighteenth-Century Philippines* (typewritten doctoral dissertation), 326-327.

⁹ Del Río, Manuel, O.P., *Instrucciones morales y religiosas para el gobierno, dirección y acierto en la práctica de nuestros ministerios que deben observar todos los religiosos de esta nuestra provincia del Santo Rosario de Filipinas del Orden de Predicadores* (Manila, en el Colegio y Universidad del Señor Santo Tomás, 1739), 18v.

¹⁰ Barrion, Sister M. Caridad, *Op. Cit.* 271.

a mere external ritual.¹¹ On the other hand, during the Holy Week processions, many impelled more by fanaticism than by true devotion, went to extremes of bloody penance.¹²

Department Inside the Church. In the churches in the Philippines, there was this laudable custom, taken doubtless from the primitive church, of separating the clergy from the laity, and the men from women. The school children were assigned a special place under the immediate supervision of their teacher.¹³ Sinibaldo de Mas relates that there were three separate sections in the churches. One side was for the men, the other for the women, and in the middle was the section for the *principales* and *gubernadocillos*.¹⁴ The preparatory *schema* for the Manila Council contains complaints against the lack of respect for the sacred places, like entering with arms or being followed by dogs, or with the head covered.¹⁵ Bishop Miguel Garcia for his part severely inveigled against the fact that the young girls in Pangasinan entered the church, their head covered only with a small handkerchief.

Mass Attendance. Because of the dispersion of the parishioners through their rice fields, attendance at Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation was not as satisfactory as desired. This neglect of the obligation to hear mass was helped by the fact that in many places Sunday was also market day. That is why Fr. Manuel del Rio could say that native apathy towards Sunday mass was notorious.¹⁶

¹¹ Blair and Robertson, XLIV, 111-112.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Apparatus ad concilium manilanum, die xix Maii anni MDCCLXXI celebrandum*: APSR, MSS, Sección "HEF" (NS), Actio IV, Titulus I, Caput VI: "In the church, let places with distinct sections be assigned for women, for virgins, for the married and for men, for the religious and the secular clergy, for children who will be in the charge of the school teacher lest they play or cause noise." (Folio 367)

¹⁴ Blair and Robertson, XL, 231.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ "The minister ought to exercise great care that all the faithful hear mass, reading carefully the padron to find out those who are absent and so punish them, for it is notoriously known how lazy the indios are on this matter. And, if someone excuse himself, saying that he has heard mass elsewhere, the minister should not easily believe him without the certification of the other priest, whose mass, he says, he heard." (*Op. cit.*, 16v-17)

In view of this, this same priest instructed the Dominican missionaries to arrange with the *gobrnadorcillos*, so that at the end of the mass, they might send officers of the law around to the houses to punish the guilty and negligent. In other places the *fiscalillos* were charged with seeing that the people in the town go to mass.¹⁷ If a town had an important *visita* more than a league away from the church, the parish Sundays and holy days of obligations, if the *visitas* were not too important, mass was said there during the week.¹⁸

After the mass and sermon, the people remained in the church to recite the rosary, repeat the Christian doctrine and pray the Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity.

Public Recitation of the Canonical Hours with the People.

The canonical hours were nothing strange to the Filipinos, for the missionaries had taught them to join the first and second vespers of Sundays and the more solemn feasts. In general, it was the chanters who sang them, while the people, especially the children, just listened. In certain areas, the school children recited or chanted the vespers of the Little Office.¹⁹ Matins were sung on Christmas eve, in the last three days of Holy Week and on Easter Sunday. For the greater solemnity of the liturgy, parishes with more than 500 tributes (about 2,000 souls) had eight *cantores* (chanters) paid by the government or from local church funds.²⁰ In parishes with less tributes, there were only four chanters.

Misa de Aguinaldo. The name "*misa de aguinaldo*" which is traditionally given to the mass said in many churches of the Philippines at dawn during the nine days previous to Christmas, was added, just like the Saturday votive mass in honor of the Virgin Mary, for the preservation of the Catholic Church in these Islands. Monsignor Felipe Pardo forbade them, in obedience to a decree of the Sacred Congregation dated 16 February 1677; but the same congregation approved it later in a decree of 24 January 1682 and since then this mass has continued to be said until now.²¹

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 21v.

¹⁹ Barrion, *Op. cit.*

²⁰ Del Rio, *Op. cit.*, 26.

²¹ Tamayo, *Op. cit.*, 78-79.

Holy Week Observance. The Holy Week liturgy was held in the town, or at least in a visita which was as big as a *población*, in which case it was alternately held first in one and then in the other. The liturgy that stands out especially is the solemn chanting of the *Tenebrae* (Matins and Lauds). On Holy Thursday, the parish priest prepared a dinner for 12 poor men, at the end of which he washed their feet, assisted by the *principales* and the officials of the town.

In some places, there was a tradition of staging the "descent from the cross," followed by solemn *Tenebrae* in the afternoon of Good Friday. Against this, however pious as it may seem, both the Manila Council and the Synod of Calasiao raised a voice of disapproval, because it occasioned for many of the faithful the erroneous belief that Christ really died each Good Friday.²² Instead the Synod suggested that the parish priest should preach a "fervent and touching" sermon, which was to be followed by the procession of sacred burial. In time certain abuses led to the diminishing of the solemnity and pomp of the Holy Week liturgy, as for example, the use of penitential garb, self-flagellation inside the church or in the streets, the presentation of profane dramas inside the church or in the cemeteries.²³ During the Easter Sunday procession, it was customary, at least in the diocese of Nueva Segovia, for the women to carry the image of the Blessed Virgin. Due to the difficulty in uprooting this custom, the Synod of Calasiao counselled that at least the bearers of the image should be satisfied with ordinary decent clothes.²⁴

²² Bantigue, Pedro N., *The Provincial Council of Manila of 1771* (Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America, 1957), 123.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ APSR, MSS, "Actas," *De la procesión*, folio 237v.