

Why I Should Cooperate with the Missionary

I am a christian. I have been regenerated by the waters of Baptism. God could have created me a pagan as the Igorotes in the Mountain Province. In the world there are 1,000,000,000 people who have never been baptized and never will be. I could have been one of these many.

But God selected me from among so many millions to be baptized. And thru baptism I received sanctifying grace. I became a child of God. To be a child of God is worth infinitely more than to be an offspring of the richest and noblest family in the world.

A child of a rich powerful family may inherit the world's goods and honors. A child of God that is faithful to its heavenly dignity shall inherit eternal riches and infinite happiness. The child of the well to do may lose its whole inheritance, or, in the midst of wealth, lead the most unhappy life. But I, a child of God thru baptism, once in heaven, I shall never be despoiled of my inheritance

and I shall always enjoy the happiness of God Himself without even the slightest shadow or possibility of sorrow or pain.

All this I owe to the infinite goodness of my God and Creator. I did not do anything to merit these privileges. Quite the contrary: on account of my sins, I should have been punished for ever. But then again God's love stepped in and spared me from eternal chastisement. How God must love me! But as He loves me, so does He wish to love all people.

Did not Jesus the son of God die on the cross to save all people, to make them all christians? Did Jesus not shed His blood for each living soul on earth? Who then can describe the desire of God to have pagans baptized? What a pleasure it must be to Jesus to see the fruits of His passion and death applied to a pagan soul thru baptism.

And I, who received the benefit of that salutary desire and the bloody sacrifice of Jesus, what have I done till now to satisfy the heart of Jesus

in its desire for more and more souls? If Jesus asked me to suffer and die to confer baptism upon a poor pagan, perhaps thru want of faith I would refuse to do it. But what He asks of me, what gratitude for all the benefits I have received from heaven dictates to me, is at least to help to save souls, to make a little sacrifice now and then for the conversion of those, who can become, like me, children of God and heirs of heaven.

I admire the Missionary who says farewell to his family and all he loves on earth, to consecrate himself to the redemption of pagans. I avow it, I have not that courage. But, can I refuse to help the missionary in his noble task? Can I refuse to try by

the means I have at hand to help the missionary to bring souls to the cross of Calvary, to the heart of Jesus, to heavenly glory? And if I pray for the conversion of pagans if I offer my alms, am I not a missionary too? and shall I not receive the reward of a missionary?

Caritas Christi urget me: the love of Christ forces me: after all God has given me and sacrificed for my supreme happiness, yes, I too, I should and must become an apostle, a little apostle of the Mountain Province, by my daily prayers for the conversion of its pagans and by the little alms I can afford to help its Missionaries.

LETTER

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The Belgian Missionaries have their central house at Baguio, Governor Pack Road. It is the residence of the Provincial and of Father Schipman. Here the new missionaries come, when they arrive in the Islands, to begin their study of the dialect, and the older ones when they need a rest. It is an ideal place for a tropical country. In the center of the town Fathers Carlu and Wins are the happy possessors of a splendid, I may say cathedral. Part of it, not half as yet, is finished, but time and money will achieve it some day.

It is a gem, designed by Father Vendelmans and built by our laybrothers and Igorotes. Stately it rises on top of a hill above the many other surrounding hills of Baguio, and from its door one beholds the nicest panorama which can be seen at Baguio.

But we may not stay to enjoy it. Let us go to the north west for a distance of 7 kilometers and we shall arrive at the valley of Trinidad: where we have the mission of Fathers De Brabandere and David. Their house and chapel were built

with the gifts collected at a feast given by prominent Manilans for the benefit of our missions among the Igorotes. The simple style of both house and chapel are quite in harmony with the pine-covered mountains which engirdle the valley of Trinidad.

Going down from Baguio to the east for a distance of 16 kilometers, we come to the mission of Itogon. Here Father Quintelier, lately helped by two young missionaries, FF. Pelsers and Claerhoudt, has done wonderful work and, finding it necessary to extend his work, notwithstanding his continual lack of funds and support, he has sent Father Claerhoudt to Bokod far away north in the province of Benguet.

Travelling north from Baguio for two days and a half, we arrive at Cervantes an old spanish mission where at present Father Portelange directs the work helped by Father De Clercq. From Cervantes they visit regularly the mission of Loo, which connects the province of Benguet with the province of Lepanto. Besides, they administer the mission of Bauco, 25 kilometers north-east of Cervantes.

From Bauco we go to Bontoc, visiting on our way the school, established by the missionaries of Bontoc, at Sabangan. Bontoc is our most northern mission.

FF. Billiet, Anseeuw, Ghysebrechts and brother Cools give us here a most hearty welcome, and give us the most consoling news about their success in the mission and their plans

for the future. At Tucucan, two miles farther, where the same Fathers have a school, there exists a grotto erected to Our Lady of Lourdes. Later they will open a school at Teteapan.

Let me here say something of the inauguration of the above mentioned grotto. On my last visit Father Billiet came to me and said: "Father Provincial, one of these days we will bless the new grotto of Lourdes at Tucucan. We must go there all together with the children of our schools of Bontoc." You must know that the Bontoc and Kalinga peoples are not on very friendly terms with each other. Peace among them has yet to be established on christian principles of real charity. How could these two tribes be linked together better than by a common devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the Queen of peace? So to Tucucan we must all go.

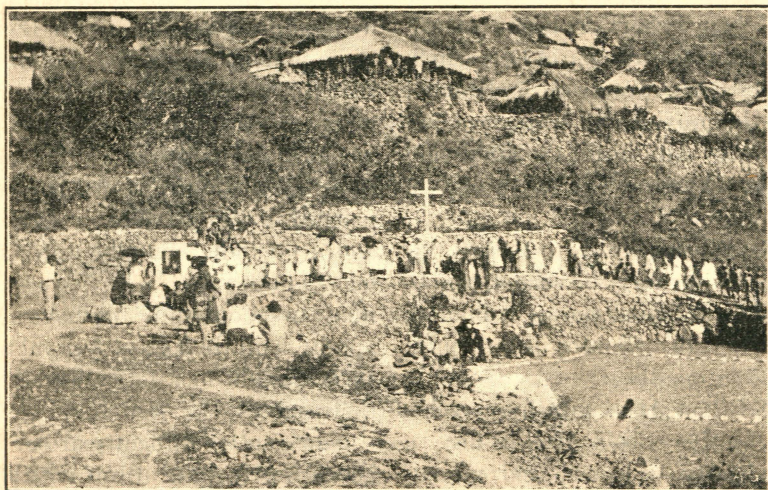
But we cannot go on a pilgrimage without a big candle: and in Bontoc there is not a single big candle. All that it can produce is a tiny wax taper. Brother Cools however helped us out of our perplexity. He got a stick, a big stick, rounded it nicely, painted it in imitation of a richly adorned candle, put the wax taper on top under such nice flowers that many first Communicants have never appeared on their great festival with such a bright-looking big candle in their hand.

Now another difficulty arose. Tucucan was in state of war with Bontoc. That means, so they say, that every child of Bontoc caught in Tu-

cucan territory is in danger of being cut to pieces without much ceremony. Hence on the eve of the inauguration many pagan parents of the children to go to Tucucan, came in dire alarm to us, begging us not to take their children along for the excursion, saying that if they went and escaped alive (a thing they seemed to doubt seriously) they would nevertheless return possessed by a bad "anito" which would drag them to the grave for having passed thru an enemy territory. To reason with most of them, would have been to lose time. Therefore children of our Bontoc schools did not accompany us. In spite of this, however, on the morning of February the 11th we saw that a long procession of children had come and were following us on the narrow mountain road towards Tucucan. We felt sure no evil would befall them. Nobody would kill them

for the Igorotes respect the missionary. And just to show how even our unknown religion would extinguish Tucucan hatred and how no anito would injure those who violated the superstitious laws of war between these two towns, we were indeed glad to have with us at least some children in fact we had many from Bontoc. The kindness of the Tucucan people towards the children of Bontoc during a time of war would in turn induce the people of Bontoc to behave in the same way towards their Tucucan neighbors.

Preceded by a number of flag-bearers, behind the mysterious big or small (as you like) candle, the pilgrims followed in two lines with the rosary in hand, four missionaries closing the procession. Now we sang, then we prayed: such was the first pilgrimage ever seen in the wild mountains of Bontoc.



The Procession on its Way to the Sanctuary of Lourdes at Tucucan