

HISTORICAL SECTION

Notes on

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES* 1521-1898

(continued)

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Chapter Eight WORKS OF CHARITY

“The Church in the Philippines was admirably rich in works of mercy and in all kinds of institutions of charity. Long before that unbridled thirst for material pleasures and joys, which today eats our society, had spread . . . even then, there was scarcely a Catholic of average means who did not care to perpetuate his memory after his death by leaving some pious legacy for the satisfaction somehow of the many needs of his equals. The Philippines and Manila, its capital city especially, could boast of being one of the cities in the world better provided with all kinds of charitable institutions: hospitals, orphanages, asylums, leprosaria, etc. No material or spiritual need was hidden to the generous charity of those people, Christians in heart and soul.”¹ This was the observation of Fr. Tamayo. But let us begin with the hospitals.

A. Hospitals

In this work of charity, none surpassed the Franciscan fathers who, carried by the wings of love for God and for neighbor, founded or ad-

* An essay towards a history of the Church in the Philippines during the Spanish period 1521-1898, translated by Jose Arcilla, S.J., faculty member of Ateneo University, Department of History.

¹ Tamayo, Serapio. O.P., *Idea general de la disciplina eclesiástica durante la dominación española*, Manila: Establ. tip. del colegio de Santo Tomas, 1906, pp. 99-100.

ministered as many, if not perhaps more, hospitals as all the other groups together.

1. *The Royal Hospital.* When they arrived in Manila in 1577, they already found in operation the Royal Hospital, which was opened to care for the sick among the Spanish soldiers and sailors. Such was the love for the sick of these religious that the Spaniards themselves petitioned the Government to entrust them the administration of the hospital. And so, its first Administrator-Chaplain, Fr. Agustín de Tordeillas († 1629), assumed its direction in 1578. The building which was of light materials at first, disappeared in the fire of 1583. Built anew, thanks to the support of charitable persons and of Governor Santiago Vera, it had to be raised again after the earthquake of 1603. To support this work, Dasmariñas, in a notarized act dated 6 May 1593, ceded a fairly extensive property which he owned in San Francisco del Monte.

The continued interference of the civil authorities in the spiritual and temporal progress of the hospital, especially during Governor Corcuera's time who, against the express will of the monarch, ended Franciscan control in 1640, forced the Franciscan to give it up definitely in 1704, never again to assume charge, despite the repeated invitations of the insular government. On 21 August 1862, the Daughters of Charity accepted it.²

2. *San Juan de Dios Hospital.* The hospital owes its foundation to a Franciscan lay brother, Fray Juan Clemente. In 1577, Fray Juan began to aid the poor and the sick who gathered at the doors of the poor convent of Saint Francis, asking food and medicine. Because the place was not suitable for so great a demand, the good brother thought of building a hospital. In a short time, aided by the poor themselves, he raised two spacious halls on the site now occupied in Intramuros by the José Laurel Lyceum. Destroyed during the fire of 1583, he had to construct it again. Years later, the holy priest Juan Fernández de León, offered his services to the hospital. With his own means and the alms solicited from charitable people, he constructed a third hall in 1593. But everything went down during the earthquake of 1603. The greatest aid this virtuous priest gave to the hospital was the establish-

² Marin y Morales, Valentin, O.P., *Ensayo de una síntesis*, II, 293-96.

ment on his own initiative of the *Mesa de la Misericordia* in 1594. In the future, it would take care of providing the means of support for the wing which he had built.

After 1603, the Franciscan fathers decided to build a lepro-sarium for the lepers they had already sheltered, in the outskirts of Manila. They also donated the site of the ruined hospital to the *Mesa de la Misericordia*. Although this entity built a new edifice and was charged with its administration, the spiritual care of the sick continued in the hands of the Franciscans. On 13 May 1656, the Confraternity entrusted the direction of the hospital, since then called San Juan de Dios Hospital, to the Religious Hospitallers, from whose hands it passed in 1865, by express will of Queen Isabel II to the care of the Daughters of Charity. From this date, the Spanish government which enjoyed higher supervisory powers over it because of the *Patronato Real*, decided, in agreement with the ecclesiastical authority, to name a Board of Inspectors to oversee the proper functioning of this charitable institution. The presidency of the Board was given to the Franciscan Order through Royal Order in 1891. Immediate direction and supervision had been in the charge of the Daughters of Charity since 1869, in virtue of a decree of the Governor General dated 17 August 1865. In the second half of the last century, the buildings of San Juan de Dios suffered much damage from the earthquakes of 1863 and 1882.³

3. *Holy Spirit Hospital in Cavite*. In Cavite port, on the site donated by the Spaniard, Don Felipe Correo, the Franciscans built a second hospital in 1591, under the patronage of the Holy Spirit. It was intended to provide rest for the sailors and the laborers of the arsenal there.

³ Un sacerdote de la Congregación de la Misión, *Los PP. Paúles y las Hijas de la Caridad en Filipinas*, Manila, Imprenta de Santos y Bernal, 1912, pp. 159-67; Marín, *op. cit.*, pp. 297-302; Sanchez, Giner, Gregorio, *Memoria-Histórico-administrativa del hospital de San Juan de Dios*, Malabon, tipo-litogr. del asilo de huérfanos de Ntra. Sta. de la Consolación, 1897, pp. 4-25. "In 1726, Fr. Antonio de Arce began the reconstruction *a fundamentis* of the church, the hospital and the residence of the Brothers, which had sadly fallen and deteriorated in the preceding years, with the aid of the residents of Manila." (Cfr. Delgado, Juan, S.J., *Historia general sacro-profana, política y natural de las Islas del Poniente, llamadas Filipinas*, Manila, Imp. de El Eco de Filipinas, 1892, p. 154.)

In 1610, through a deed signed that year, two pious men donated to it a piece of land in Santa Ana, which henceforth would be the basis of its income. In 1640, Governor Corcuera removed the Franciscans from the hospital and in 1662, the building was demolished on orders of Don Sabiniano Manrique de Lara, as a defense measure against the threatening Chinese pirate, Kuesing.⁴

4. *Saint James Hospital in Naga.* Before the city of Naga was raised to the rank of city and head of the diocese, the Franciscan missionaries had already opened a hospital there which they named Saint James Hospital, although the people used to call it Saint Lazarus. In time, this charitable institution fell away. Its administration, by royal disposition, passed from the hands of the religious to those of lay supervisors, and in 1691, it folded up completely. Various bishops, like Bishops Andres González, Felipe de Molina and Domingo Collantes, strove in later years to have it reopened, but in vain. This resurrection was reserved to Bishop Francisco Gainza, who, with the aid of the Franciscans, had the satisfaction of inaugurating it, amid great difficulties, on 12 May 1873. And in a magnanimous act of detachment, he handed it over to the Franciscans. This new hospital was located in a spot near Naga called Palestina.⁵

5. *Holy Waters Hospital in Los Baños.* The foundation of this hospital, due to the initiative by St. Peter Baptist, goes back to 1590. The discovery of thermal springs on the site was what led this sainted martyr to open the hospital, for the hot springs were known to cure certain illnesses. But the soul of this foundation in its early years was the lay brother Fray Diego de Santa Maria, who, besides his evangelical charity, possessed no mean knowledge of medicine and surgery. By a decree of 21 July 1602, confirmed some time later by the government, the Cabildo authorized Fray Diego to open a hospital there. And putting hands to the task, a building of light materials was constructed out of nothing, which he named Holy Waters Hospital of Mainit. In 1608, some rich natives made a donation of lands to the hospital. With this and other donations, with the work of the religious, and with the aid of the government, the Holy Waters Hospital quickly reached a high level

⁴ Marin y Morales, *op. cit.*, II, p. 326.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 313-18.

of prosperity. A big building of stone was constructed in 1671. But, with the years, after the Franciscans had surrendered its supervision to the *Patronato*, it began to decline visibly until, in 1727, it disappeared completely in a fire. Initiated by Governor Domingo Moriones, the Franciscans rebuilt it in 1877; but they did not bind themselves to take charge of its administration, although the government had offered it to them.⁶

6. *Other Hospitals.* There were other hospitals not founded by the Franciscans, although they had helped much to make them prosper. Such, for example, were Saint Joseph Hospital in Cebu, founded in 1864 by Señor Romualdo Jimeno; the *Casa de Socorro* established in 1884 by Bishop Martín Garcia Alcocer, and the Lucena Hospital (1892) which was administered by the Franciscan tertiaries.⁷

Here we mention just in passing the unstinting labors of the Dominican Fathers in Batáan and Pangasinan, the Jesuits in Antipolo. They founded hospitals in these places, but these must have been quite poor, judging from the inadequate means at hand. But it is good to put it on record, so that the initiative and the spirit of love of these heroic missionaries may be seen.⁸

7. *Saint Gabriel's Hospital.* The Dominicans founded only one hospital, but it was of first magnitude. We refer to Saint Gabriel's Hospital which, a few days after his arrival in the Philippines in 1587, Fr. Miguel Benavides opened to succor the sick Chinese. In the beginning it was located on the site where the present ruins of the old *baluarte de San Gabriel* now rise in front of Letran College. Moved in 1598 across to the north bank of Pasig (the site now occupied by the Hong-kong-Shanghai Bank), it continued there until its closure in 1774. In its better days, the hospital counted three big wings with a capacity for more than 70 patients. According to a Memorial of Fr. Francisco Herrera to the king in 1571, Chinese baptisms had totalled by this time 30,212.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 318-26.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 326-28.

⁸ Aduarte, pp. 93, col. 2; 114, col. 2; Chirino, Pedro, S.J. *Relación de las Islas Filipinas*, Manila, Historical Conservation Society, 1969, p. 174.

B. Leprosaria

One leprosarium worth mentioning, because of its brilliant history through the centuries, is that of San Lazaro. Here, as in so many other works of charity, the Franciscans took the lead. As we have already said, it began in 1578, near the door of the convent of San Francisco. In 1632, the Emperor of Japan expelled 130 poor lepers criminally guilty because they were Christians. Their arrival in the Philippines won the compassion of the Franciscans and the attention of the government. The former sheltered them in a house they had built in Dilao right after the destruction of their building in Intramuros during the earthquake of 1603. The secular government aided them with generous alm. Years later, Corcuera removed the Franciscans from administering this institution of charity. But the king, in answer to their justified complaints, restored them in 1641.

A decree signed by Governor Basco in 1784 and approved by the king in 1785 transferred the leprosarium to Mayhaligue, the site it now occupies on Rizal Avenue. In the succeeding years, this institution had to pass through difficult periods due to lack of funds. The building was not sufficient and the hacienda, mismanaged, did not provide enough to support the sick. From these straits, the energetic Fr. Felix Huertas came in 1859 to rescue the hospital. He improved the buildings and rectified the administration, so much so that by the end of the nineteenth century, San Lázaro was well established and had adequate means of support. This was the situation when the Archbishop of Manila, who had succeeded to the Spanish Government as Patron of the hospital, removed it from the administration of the Franciscans in 1907 and ceded it to the American government which, in exchange, had given up its pretensions to the other pious foundations.⁹

His Excellency, Bishop Joaquin Encabo of Cebu, founded a hospital in his diocese to succor those afflicted with the sickness of Saint Lazarus. To support it, he established an *Obra Pía* (pious trust fund) with a capital of P6,500.00. Unfortunately, this sum sustained several losses and deficits, so that the hospital would have floundered had aid not been forthcoming from the money of the provincial treasuries, the charity of the

⁹ Marín y Morales, *op. cit.*, pp. 302-13.

faithful and, above all, the help extended by the Recollect Fathers who administered the hospital at the behest of the now deceased prelate. This help was just as much, if not more than the dividends from the *Obra Pía*, had this been successful.¹⁰

C. Asylums

Just as the Franciscans were outstanding in hospitals, so the Augustinian distinguished themselves in asylums. The first asylum that they opened was the *Beaterio* of Saint Rita in Pasig. The building which was constructed by Fr. Felix Trillo, goes back to 1740. It was planned to offer shelter and education to native orphan girls.¹¹

In 1882-1883, an epidemic broke out in Manila and the suburbs. With the lives of many parents snuffed out, many native boys and girls were left orphans. To help them, the Augustinians and some charitable ladies thought of opening two asylums, one for boys, and another one in Mandaluyong for girls. The first one, built in San Marcelino (Paco) in 1883, was transferred the following year to the magnificent convento of Guadalupe. From there, it was transferred to Malabon de Tambobong, where the Augustinians built two solid and commodious halls on an extensive piece of land, to serve at the same time as home and school of arts and trades for the inmates. When the revolutionaries pillaged it in 1898, there were well established printing shops, binderies, lithographies, etc., and it served as home for about 150 boys. When the boys left the asylum, they received a sum of money equivalent to the work they performed in the shops.¹²

The girls' asylum, under the Spanish Augustinian tertiaries, was transferred from Paco to the Casa-Hacienda of Mandaluyong. For some years, it admitted only orphans. But in 1895, Fr. Benito Ubierna enlarged the building in order to accommodate boarders too. When the Revolution occurred, this asylum supported some damage from the bombardment of the American warships in February 1899. The wards

¹⁰ Sabada, Francisco, O.R.S.A., *Catálogo de los religiosos agustinos recoletos de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas*, Madrid, 1906. pp. 314-16.

¹¹ Marín y Morales, *Op. cit.*, pp. 59-60, 165-167.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60, 164-166.

who reached the age of 20 years in the asylum, received, when they married, a gift of from ₱50 to ₱200 as her dowry. Those who left the asylum freely but were not married received a similar gift, as long as they had reached the age of 20 years and had lived there at least for 10 years.

Another asylum that deserves our notice is the one in Looban. It was founded in 1885 by a Daughter of Charity, a native of Pampanga. With her superiors' permission, she donated her property on behalf of neglected children. Its inauguration was held on 26 July 1885, and since then, the Daughters of Charity have been directing it.¹³

D. Hospices

In 1782, a pious couple, Don Francisco Gómez Enríquez and Doña Bárbara Verzosa, ceded to the Archbishop a great part of their property that might help found a hospice for the old, the demented, and the orphans. Three years later, Manila had the first foundation of its kind. At the first, it was located in Pandacan, then in Binondo, and later, on the left side of the descent of Ayala bridge in San Miguel. In 1895, the island which rises in the midst of the Pasig just below Ayala bridge was ceded by the administrators of San Juan de Dios Hospital. This island was formerly known as the "*isla de la convalecencia*" (island of recuperation), for the patients of San Juan de Dios used to go there to convalesce. That year, the Hospice transferred to the island. The Daughters of Charity have been in charge of this institution since 1865.¹⁴

As epilogue to this chapter, the following phrases which flowered from the pen of Rev. Mackinnon, chaplain of the American troops in Manila in 1898 are especially fitting: "Because in no other part of the world is Christian charity more in bloom and more wide-spread than in the Philippines; and the hospitals, the maternity houses, the industrial schools and other like institutions would bring honor to any nation. Enormous are the sums which each year are expended for charity."¹⁵

¹³ Un sacerdote de la Congregación de la Misión, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-87.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 125-31.

¹⁵ "Los frailes de Filipinas y el arzobispo de Manila juzgados por un vanqui," *El Santísimo Rosario*, Vergara, 1899, tomo 14, p. 253.