

# **The Establishment of the Dominican Presence (1581-1631) in the Period of the First Evangelization of the Philippines**

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**Abstract:** The Dominican Mission in the Philippines has many facets in its establishment, animated by its first missionaries: from an arduous fighter for justice to a zealous preacher of the faith to a caring father to his spiritual children, among others. This article presents an overview of the first fifty years of the Dominican presence in the Philippines (1581-1631). It situates the mission as a response to the call of preaching, which the Dominicans hold as their dutiful task in the Church.

While the Dominicans officially started their missionary works in 1587, the study traces the development of the Dominican Mission from the arrival of the first Bishop of the Philippines and one of the first two Dominicans who set foot on the Philippine soil, Fray Domingo de Salazar. It specifically focuses on his stand on the state of affairs during the early years of the Spanish colonization of the islands, particularly on the issues of injustices.

Thereafter, the study addresses the questions about the birth of the Dominican missionary Province of the Holy Rosary, i.e. how it came about, who the first missionaries were, where the Dominicans' first mission stations in the Philippines were, etc. It gives particular attention to the Dominican pastoral labors during this period. It further indicates how the missionaries' renewed zeal and devoted practice of the religious life readied them to persevere in their precarious task of preaching the Gospel in hostile territories and endure the uncertainties of their circumstances.

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**Keywords:** Philippine Church History, Evangelization of the Philippines, Dominican Mission in the Philippines, Dominican Missionary Province

The *Prologue to the Primitive Constitutions* declared that the Order of Friars Preachers is specifically known to have been established, from the beginning, for “preaching and the salvation of souls.”<sup>1</sup> St. Dominic, the founder of the Order, prescribed that the friars “should everywhere behave uprightly and religiously, as men intent on procuring their own and other people’s salvation (...) (and) should behave as gospel men, following the footsteps of the Saviour, speaking to God or of God, among themselves or with their neighbours.”<sup>2</sup> This two-fold mission directs and determines the expression of the Dominican preaching of every age.

The name of the Order itself reminds us of “the essential nature of preaching to spread the Gospel.”<sup>3</sup> Not surprisingly, St. Mary Magdalene is an apparent choice as the first patroness of the Order, considering the fact that she was the first witness of the Risen Christ. She was, therefore, given the privilege to be the first preacher of the Resurrection. Moreover, the widespread practice of dedicating many Dominican convents to St. Paul the Apostle,<sup>4</sup> the eminent preacher of the early Church, was another indication in the historical development of the Order to imply its preference to be identified with the preaching mission of the Church.

In the Order, preaching and salvation of souls are always inseparable. Thereby, the founder’s three primary concerns had likewise been the vital subjects of the Dominican mission: the poor, the sinners, and the unevangelized.<sup>5</sup> These subjects gave birth to the charisms of every Dominican apostolic work. The diversity

<sup>1</sup> The text reads, “(...) *cum ordo noster specialiter ob predicationem et animarum salutem ab initio noscatur institutus fuisse (...)*.” *Constitutiones Antiquae Ordinis Fratrum Predicatorum*, Prologus, in A.H. Thomas, *De oudste constituties van de dominicanen. Voorgeschiedenis Tekst, Bronnen, Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling (1215-1237). Met uitgave van de tekst*, Leuven, Bibliothèque de la Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique, Fasc. 42, 1965, 309-369, here in 311.

<sup>2</sup> The text reads, “(...) *ubique, tamquam viri qui suam et aliorum salutem procurare desiderant, honeste et religiose se habeant, sicut viri evangelici, sui sequentes vestigia Salvatoris, cum Deo vel de Deo secum vel proximis loquendo (...)*.” *Constitutiones Antiquae Ordinis Fratrum Predicatorum*, II, 31, in THOMAS, *De oudste constituties*, 363. For this text, the author made use of the English translation published in *The Book of Constitutions and Ordinations of the Brothers of the Order of Preachers* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 2012), I, § II.

<sup>3</sup> D. Byrne, *The Dominicans’ Mission: The Message from Recent Congresses and Chapters*, in F. Gomez (ed.), *The Dominicans’ Mission Here and Now* (Manila: UST Press, 1988), 16.

<sup>4</sup> G. Huncaga, *Die deutschen Dominikaner und Dominikanerinnen im Mittelalter*, S. Heusinger-E.H. füllenbach – W. Senner- K. –B. Springer (Hrsg.) (*Quellen und Forschungen zur geschichte des Dominikanerordens. Neue Folge*, 21), Berlin-Boston, MA, W. de Gruyter, 2016, pp. xxvi+605-tavv. (review), in “Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum,” NS 3 (2018), 317-337, in particular 332-334.

<sup>5</sup> Byrne, *The Dominicans’ Mission: The Message from Recent Congresses and Chapters*, 17.

of charisms shared a common element in the Dominican spirituality and came as varied responses to St. Dominic's concerns. These were all forms of preaching. The Dominican mission in the Philippines, in particular, was a response to the call of preaching to the unevangelized.

Moreover, that enthusiasm to be associated with preaching was also conjoined with the subject of usefulness, as observed in many Dominican chronicles.<sup>6</sup> Anne Huijbers noted that the Dominicans "often emphasized that knowledge had to be useful, and that study had to serve a concrete goal, such as preaching, teaching, or defending the faith."<sup>7</sup> Underlined in the writings of many Dominican writers, like Fray Antoninus of Florence (1389-1459) and Fray Johannes Meyer (1422-85), was the orientation of such Dominican chronicles not to "serve vain and wicked curiosity" of the friars; instead, these chronicles served as guidelines "to correct themselves and to follow the perfect standard set by their predecessors."<sup>8</sup> Dominican historians consciously introduced the study of history as a moral compass; thus, historical works contained some of the standard and intrinsic structures for ethical instructions,<sup>9</sup> as demonstrated in the first history of the *Provincia del Santísimo Rosario de Filipinas* (Holy Rosary Province) written by Fray Diego Aduarte (1569-1636).<sup>10</sup>

All these elements had a significant impact in the way the Dominican missions were carried out in the Philippines taking many facets in different times and places.

### **Dawning of the Dominican Mission in the Philippines**

The story of the Dominican mission found its first concrete expression in the first Bishop of Manila, Fray Domingo de Salazar (1512-94)<sup>11</sup> and his companion

<sup>6</sup> A. Huijbers, *Zealots for Souls, Dominican Narratives between Observant Reform and Humanism, c. 1388-1517* (Enschede, Ipskamp Printing, 2015), 24.

<sup>7</sup> Huijbers, *Zealots for Souls*, 24.

<sup>8</sup> Huijbers, *Zealots for Souls*, 24-25.

<sup>9</sup> Huijbers, *Zealots for Souls*, 25.

<sup>10</sup> In 1640, Fray Aduarte, one of the missionaries that arrived in the Philippines during the fourth wave of the mission (1595), wrote the first written history of the province. He commenced his narrative from the approval of the establishment of a new Province (1582) until the accounts of martyrdom in Japan in 1633-1637. His work gives the earliest narrative of the Dominican mission, including the accounts of the early struggles in the evangelization process of the islands. Fray Aduarte also identified the desired and expected characteristics or virtues demanded from the missionaries. Generally, he made use of the typical literary genre of the early modern period in giving his narratives, like highlighting so much the exemplary characters of the missionaries. See D. Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores en Filipinas, Japón y China* (Manila: Colegio de Santo Thomas, 1640) [M. Ferrero (ed.), 2vv., Madrid: Departamento de Misionología Española, 1963]. For his biography, see H. Ocio-E. Neira, *Misioneros Dominicos en el Extremo Oriente 1587-1835*, vol. I (Manila: Misioneros Dominicos del Rosario, 2000), 64-65.

<sup>11</sup> See his biography in Ocio – E. Neira, *Misioneros Dominicos en el Extremo Oriente 1587-1835*, vol. I, 55-56. Fray Hilario Maria Ocio published a book in 1895 entitled *Compendio de la Reseña Biografica de los Religiosos de la Provincia del Santísimo Rosario de Filipinas*. As the title of the work

Fray Cristóbal de Salvatierra (1548-95).<sup>12</sup> When Fray Salazar arrived in Manila in September 1581, it was the tenth year when the Spaniards claimed the city for Spain and made it the capital of the new colony. The pacification of the islands was still ongoing in the many parts of the country, which consequently meant that the territory of the diocese was continuously expanding. At that time, he had become fully aware of the many problems confronting the young diocese. He knew that if he wanted the work of evangelization to succeed, he needed “coordination and unity in the methods of evangelization, as well as a common stand of the clergy in reference to the serious moral questions that faced them.”<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, the lingering disputes between the Spanish friars and *conquistadores* also required resolution as these hampered the achievement of good results in the Christian mission by causing scandals to the new converts to Christianity.<sup>14</sup> Fray Salazar saw the urgent need to discuss these problems and establish the norms of governance of his enormous diocese. He had this in mind when he summoned the synod to present all possible aspects of the problems to be discussed. But the main preoccupation of the Bishop was the questions of justice for the Filipinos,<sup>15</sup> which defined his entire episcopate, from the first day of his arrival in Manila up to his last breath in 1594 in Spain when he argued personally before King Philip II the cause of justice for Filipinos. No wonder, the questions of justice were the central agenda of the synod.

On the first day of the synod, on 16 October 1581, held at the Augustinian convent in Tondo,<sup>16</sup> the Bishop met the three superiors of the religious orders suggests, it is a compendium of all the submitted biographies taken from enormous documentation in the Archivo de la Provincia Dominicana de Nuestra Señora del Rosario in the Convento de Santo Domingo in Manila. The book provides general information, not only on the lives of the friars, but as well on the ministry of the province until 1700. The author divided the biographies according to the mission expedition that brought the friars to the Philippines. He also included in his listing those friars who volunteered for the mission but did not reach their destination. In the year 2000, Fray Eladio Niera republished his critical edition of the work, which he extended the published biographies until 1835, now under a new title *Misioneros Dominicos en el Extremo Oriente 1587-1835*.

<sup>12</sup> See his biography in Ocio – E. Neira, *Misioneros Dominicos en el Extremo Oriente 1587-1835*, vol. I, 56.

<sup>13</sup> J. Schumacher, *Growth and Decline Essays on Philippine Church History* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>14</sup> L. Gutierrez, *The Archdiocese of Manila: A Pilgrimage in Time (1565-1999)*, vol. 1 (Manila: The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Manila, 1999), 42.

<sup>15</sup> J. Schumacher, *Readings in Philippine Church History* (Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology, 1979), 3.

<sup>16</sup> Barely a month after he arrived in Manila, the bishop assembled this meeting so as not to waste time in confronting the problems besetting his diocese. He did it with a great sense of duty with respect to the stipulation expressed in the Council of Trent (Session XXIV, Decree on Reform, canon 2) that diocesan synods be summoned by the bishops every year. The treatment of important pastoral topics in a synodal assembly could be almost self-evident to him as a Dominican. He was formed in the Dominican tradition of general, provincial, and conventual chapters, where important matters

and the other prominent ecclesiastics and some invited laymen<sup>17</sup> to gather their opinions concerning the royal decree on prohibiting slavery after Governor Gonzalo Ronquillo de Peñalosa (†1583) conferred it with the Bishop upon receipt from the Augustinians.<sup>18</sup> He opened the table for discussions of which three declarations were made, i.e.,<sup>19</sup>

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were discussed and decided together. For the Dominicans, their system was based not on the majority rule. Instead, it flowed from the rule of consensus, which demanded a great deal of information from all levels enabling the community to make a decision that could be accepted by all and then could be implemented communally. Their Constitutions established a strong but limited government, where their organs of government were balanced and checked against one another. In practice, there was a descending chain of command – the Master, the Prior Provincials, the Priors – that exercised executive power over the friars while maintaining an ascending line of control by the community – election, representation, chapters – that tempered the very real power of the superiors. See Byrne, *The Dominicans' Mission: The Message from Recent Congresses and Chapters*, 25; W. Hinnebusche, *The History of the Dominican Order. Origins and Growth to 1500*, vol. I (New York: Alba House, 1965), 169-216.

<sup>17</sup> Those present in the meeting were Fray Pablo de Jesus (1533-1610), the Franciscan Custodian, Fray Andres de Aguirre (†1593), the Augustinian Provincial, Father Antonio Sedeño (1532/33-95), Jesuit Rector, Fray Francisco Manrique (†1588), the Prior of the Augustinian convent in Manila, Fray Diego de Múxica (†1584), the Prior of the Augustinian convent of Tondo, together with the secretaries, the Jesuit Father Alonso Sánchez and Dominican Fray Cristobal de Salvatierra, along with, the Franciscan Fray Juan de Plasencia (†1590), and the Augustinians Fray Alonso de Castro (†1587) and Fray Juan Pimentel (†1586). Though it was not mentioned in the official document, the dean of the cathedral, Don Diego Vasquez de Mercado, a secular priest, was also present. See «Resolution of the Synod sent to Governor Ronquillo de Peñalosa on 17 October 1581», in E. H. Blair-J. A. Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493 – 1898: explorations by early navigators, descriptions of the Islands and their history and records of the Catholic missions, as related in contemporaneous books and manuscripts, showing the political, economic, commercial and religious conditions of those Islands from their earliest relations with European nations to the beginning of the 19th century*, (Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1903 – 1909, vol. XXXIV), 325-327; L. Gutierrez, “Opinion of Fr. Domingo de Salazar, O.P., First Bishop of the Philippines and of the Major Religious Superiors regarding Slaves,” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 22, 64 (January-April 1987): 150-164, in particular, 152-153, 160-161.

<sup>18</sup> “To our Governor of the Philippine Islands: We have been informed that Spaniards residing in those islands claim to hold as slaves Indios from there. It is my will that they not be allowed to make slaves of these Indios. I, therefore, command you to see to it that no Spaniard have any Indio as a slave in any way, even if such an Indio slave has been formerly a slave of other Indios and has been made such in a just war. If there are any slaves whom the Spaniards have captured in just war, you will have them give them back their liberty, as we by the present cedula free them. We command that the above be observed and executed and that no one go against it or evade it in any way, (Madrid, 7 November 1574. I, the King.” “Royal Decree of Philip II, 7 November 1574,” quoted in Schumacher, *Readings in Philippine Church History*, 28). This 1574 decree was unfortunately lost in the shipwreck that also caused the life of Fray Diego de Herrera (1525-76) just off the coast of Catanduanes. Fray Herrera personally presented his Memorial to the king, or at least to the Council of the Indies, resulting in the issuance of five royal decrees in favor of the Filipinos, two of them touched directly on slavery. The first decree commanded Governor Guido Lavezaris (ca. 1512-1581) to free the slaves held by the Spaniards, and the other was addressed to the Augustinians to urge them to see to it that the Governor enforced the royal decree. But, since these royal decrees were not executed, the Augustinians petitioned the king and the Council of the Indies to reissue them, which Fray Salazar came to know about since these royal decrees issued on 1 April 1580 arrived together with him in the Philippines, carried by the Augustinians. (See Gutierrez, *Opinion of Fr. Domingo de Salazar, O.P.*, 151, 161-162).

<sup>19</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. XXXIV, 328-330.

1. They declared that his Majesty's decree is no new law or order, but a declaration of the justice that the matter of the Indians has of itself, and a reply and resolution of the petitions and reports that have been made from here.
2. They declared that it is clearly inferred from the answer to the first article that the governor cannot conscientiously neglect to follow up the liberty of the said Indians, even though their masters appeal from the decree.
3. They declared that the freedom of the Indians could not be deferred as it was a matter of natural and divine right and clear justice, just as he who has anything belonging to another is obliged instantly to restore it, as soon as he knows it, and the judge who tries the case is bound to order the restoration.

After hearing their opinions and the assembly's approval of the final resolution, the Bishop confirmed that these declarations were "in harmony with the law of God, and with natural, divine, and human law, and to be established on entire truth and justice."<sup>20</sup> He likewise approved and confirmed those opinions, and affirmed that his opinion was the same as theirs.<sup>21</sup> This opinion came with the episcopal seal, and it was sent to the Governor for his approval as a consensual declaration signed by all those present in the said meeting. The Bishop and his associates decided that no objection would be entertained regarding slavery as the laws had to be enforced immediately. The only concession they gave was to allow the Spaniards a month to make the necessary adjustments to dispose of the slaves.<sup>22</sup>

This move was viewed as a political maneuvering of the Bishop to commence his episcopate as this resolution created an uproar among the Spanish government officials and *encomenderos*. They demanded that the said resolution be appealed before the King for a formal and definitive decision, which the Church accepted as a good compromise in such situation. From the perspective of the Spanish colonial bureaucrats, the existing labor regime, which used slavery, was a necessary part of the colonization process in order to support the growing number of territories. They argued that slavery kept the indigenous economy working, which relied on this type of labor practice for its basic operation. Furthermore, they believed that the

<sup>20</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. XXXIV, 331.

<sup>21</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. XXXIV, 331.

<sup>22</sup> L. Gutierrez, *Domingo de Salazar, O.P., "First Bishop of the Philippines (1512-1594): Defender of the Rights of the Filipinos at the Spanish Contact,"* in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 20, 58 (January-April 1985): 68.

Spaniards should take advantage of this preexisting institution as they recognized that “the greatest property and wealth of the natives of these islands are slaves,” and likewise advocated to legalize such practice of enslavement of natives as they deemed it right “to be served by the same slaves that serve the natives.”<sup>23</sup>

This state of affairs justified the observation of the Bishop in his Memorial of 1582 when he blamed the inadequate resolve of the governors in enforcing the prescriptions of the royal decree against slavery, which consequently allowed this practice to continue, notwithstanding that the King had long issued such a decree. He reiterated his firm belief against any form of slavery, “in whatever manner they may have obtained them, whether they obtained them in just war, or if the Indians themselves may have sold them to the Spaniards, saying that they are slaves, or even if among them they are slaves.”<sup>24</sup> The Bishop showed his great concern by the lack of interest from the part of the colonial government to implement such prescripts forcing confessors to continue denying sacramental absolution to those Spanish perpetrators,<sup>25</sup> which for a 16th century Spaniard, of whatever status, was a worse punishment than death.<sup>26</sup> Fray Salazar was also aware of the plight of his fellow Spaniards, especially the low-rank soldiers, that they, too, were in dire situation. Thus, he encouraged the King to make generous intervention to alleviate them from their circumstances. However, he disagreed that it had to be at the expense of the Filipinos.<sup>27</sup>

Fray Salazar’s agenda for justice covered many other issues, which the Bishop assumed as his own interests, as witnessed by the many correspondences he sent to the King. He chronicled them as a primary eyewitness and did not hesitate to voice his opposition even if it meant, many times, a severe threat to his life. However, his struggle to end slavery, which outlived him, added to the foundation of further denunciations and placed significant pressures on the Spanish Crown to make more resolute prohibitions to all forms of slavery. According to Dominican historian Fray

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<sup>23</sup> T. Seijas , *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico. From Chinos to Indians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 40, 45. This book of Seijas contains a comprehensive overview of the Manila slave market of the 16th-18th centuries. The second chapter of the book (32-72) is particularly helpful in understanding the development of discussions on the question of slavery between the colonial masters, who advocated for the continuance of the indigenous slave trade, and the friars, who were fiercely critical of such practice.

<sup>24</sup> L. Gutierrez (ed.), “Memorial de las cosas que en estas Islas Filipinas de poniente pasan y del estado de ellas, y de lo que hay que remediar. Hecho por Fray Domingo de Salazar, Obispo de las dichas islas, para que lo vea su Magestad y los Señores de su Real Consejo de Indias,” in *Philippiniana Sacra*, 21, 63 (September-December 1986): 453.

<sup>25</sup> Gutierrez, “Memorial de las cosas,” 455.

<sup>26</sup> Gutierrez, “Memorial de las cosas,” 478.

<sup>27</sup> Gutierrez, “Memorial de las cosas,” 456-459.

Lucio Gutiérrez, when seen from hindsight, this is “one of the most outstanding achievements of the first missionaries and Spaniards of the Philippines. In Christian Europe, nothing similar could be found.”<sup>28</sup>

Some sectors of the clergy did not wholly agree to insist on these prescriptions of “pure justice” as they would antagonize more the colonial government, which already had a precarious relationship with the Church. They believed that these prescriptions on justice were unrealistic in their volatile situation as a newly established diocese that needed protection from the colonial government. The Bishop did not accede to such a dissenting opinion as he insisted that “if the Spanish sovereignty could only exist by injustice to the Filipinos, it had no right to exist at all.”<sup>29</sup>

His agenda on justice took a confessional form as the acts of the synod were compiled in a confessor’s handbook. The full synodal proceedings were burned in the fire that destroyed Manila in 1583. The surviving two manuscripts of the synod, the *Suma de Una Junta* was kept in the Dominican archives in Manila, and the *Junta y Congregación*, which can be found in the Jesuit archives in Rome, are merely a summary that represented only the first part of the intended confessors’ handbook.<sup>30</sup> The discussions revolved mainly on the question of the legitimacy of the Spanish conquest of the Philippines and the best means to administer the spread of the faith.<sup>31</sup> As these problems touched the lives and consciences of all segments of the society, the acts came in the form of a confessor’s handbook that was intended “to remove the scruples of the confessors regarding serious matters, which rightly should be settled in confession, and for the peace of conscience of the penitents.”<sup>32</sup> The synod encouraged the confessors not to be intimidated in performing their task by declaring that “it is necessary to break with all human considerations, and even to die for it if that should be necessary, as did the prophets, the apostles, and holy martyrs, to whom the priest should look for consolation in persecutions, which may come to him in these matters of justice.”<sup>33</sup> Father John Schumacher assessed that the

<sup>28</sup> Gutiérrez, *Archdiocese of Manila*, 63.

<sup>29</sup> Schumacher, *Growth and Decline Essays on Philippine Church History*, 4.

<sup>30</sup> S. Vengco, “The Manila Synod of 1582: The Draft of Its Handbook for Confessors by Paul Arvisu Dumol (review),” in *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* 65, 3 (September 2017): 399.

<sup>31</sup> P. Fernandez, *History of the Church in the Philippines (1521-1898)* (Navotas: National Book Store, Inc., 1979), 89. See also Gutiérrez, *Archdiocese of Manila*, 42-43.

<sup>32</sup> Gutiérrez, *Archdiocese of Manila*, 91.

<sup>33</sup> *Prologus*, II, 6; “Suma de Una Junta,” quoted in Schumacher, *Growth and Decline Essays on Philippine Church History*, 4. See the original text in “Suma de Una Junta que se hizo à manera de Concilio el año de 1582, para dar asiento a las cosas tocantes al aumento de la Fe y justificación de las Conquistas hechas y que adelante se hiciesen por los Españoles,” in *Philippiniana Sacra* 4, 12 (September-December 1969): 433-434.



summoning of the synod was “above all necessary at (that) time to make clear what the norms of justice were; it might be true that they would be disobeyed, but it was important for the Church to declare what was morally right or wrong, just or unjust, or she would be failing her duty.”<sup>34</sup>

### **Birth of the Dominican Missionary Province**

The idea of establishing a Dominican presence in the East started with Fray Salazar and the voyage that brought him to the Philippines in 1581. However, out of the eighteen Dominican brothers that accompanied the Bishop from Sevilla in 1580, only one was able to join the final leap of voyage, his private secretary, Fray Salvatierra, as most of them died during the trans-Atlantic crossing and soon after when they arrived in Mexico. Nevertheless, the hope did not vanish with such loss. In pursuance with such desire, the Dominican Province of Santiago (Mexico) initiated the motion for the mission. After many deliberations, it was decided to send Fray Juan Crisóstomo (1525-90),<sup>35</sup> a friar known for his impeccable prudence and exemplary life, to Rome in 1581. He had to secure the permission of the Master of the Order, Fray Paolo Constabile (1520-82),<sup>36</sup> for the establishment of a mission in the Philippines and the eventual foundation of a new province. In the history of the Province of *Santísimo Rosario*, Fray Crisóstomo was considered to be the founder of this first missionary province of the Order.

The confirmation of the request finally came on 14 July 1582 at the Convento di San Domenico in Bologna.<sup>37</sup> In his rescript, the Master permitted the gathering of friars to labor for the conversion of the infidels in the Orient and encouraged them in advance to courageously face the difficulties and dangers of establishing a new mission in such unchartered lands. He reminded them to be faithful in their religious observance and penance that these elements of the Dominican life might become the sacred light against the enemies, and the words that accompanied them might resound the victory of the glorious reign of Christ. The decree gave the entire territorial jurisdiction of the Orient to the mission to be founded, which included the Philippine Islands, and the kingdoms of China and Japan.<sup>38</sup> He likewise appointed

<sup>34</sup> Schumacher, *Growth and Decline Essays on Philippine Church History*, 4.

<sup>35</sup> See his biography in Ocio-Niera, *Misioneros Dominicanos en el Extremo Oriente 1587-1835*, vol. I, 60-61.

<sup>36</sup> D. Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores en Filipinas, Japón y China*, Manila, Colegio de Santo Thomas, 1640 [M. Ferrero (ed.), (Madrid: Departamento de Misionología Española, 1963), vol. I, xv, 12-13].

<sup>37</sup> The original text of the rescript was printed in full in Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 14-16.

<sup>38</sup> Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 15.

Fray Crisóstomo as the Vicar General for the new mission to better facilitate the completion of such endeavor. The rescript also granted the congregation the same privileges given to the Province of Mexico by the previous Masters.

After he had secured the authorization from the Master, Fray Crisóstomo went to the Holy See to obtain the papal approval of the desired mission in the Orient. He received in that same year, 1582, two papal decrees, dated 15 September (*Cum sicut acceptimus*) and 20 October (*Exponi nobis nuper*), that confirmed the permission of the Master.<sup>39</sup> In the September decree, Pope Gregory XIII (1502-85) granted a plenary indulgence to all the Dominican friars who would set out for the Philippines to spread the Christian faith. He commended their “pious and religious endeavors,” which came at the price, according to the Pope, of “their abandonment of fatherland and their self-denial of comfort (...) now exposing themselves to the dangers of land and sea for the sake of spreading the name of Christ.”<sup>40</sup> The second decree released in October lifted from any sort of excommunication the friars being gathered for the mission: the forty friars from the Provinces of Castile, Aragon, and Andalusia, and the ten friars from Province of Mexico and Chiapa (Guatemala).<sup>41</sup>

Having secured the papal authorization and the Master’s permission, Fray Crisóstomo departed for Madrid to procure the last approbation he needed, that of the Council of the Indies since any work of evangelization required its endorsement in all of Spain’s overseas territories. He presented himself before the Council to gain for the Dominican mission the royal approval, which unfortunately the Council gave an unfavorable response in 1582 and halted any plan to start it. Disheartened by the negative backlash, he retired at the Convento de San Pablo de Sevilla for a time. It took three years for a royal endorsement to be issued for the Dominicans. On 20 September 1585 in Tortosa, King Philip II gave the consent to dispatch twenty-three friars for the Philippines.<sup>42</sup> After obtaining the said decree, Fray Crisóstomo did not intend to lose more time. In 1586, he immediately sent a letter of invitation to prospective missionaries from the Provinces of Castile, Aragon, and Andalusia. Forty friars responded to the call to mission a few months after the letter was released.

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<sup>39</sup> See Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 17-19.

<sup>40</sup> Gregory XIII, *Cum sicut acceptimus*, 15 September 1582, in Blair-Robertson, ed., *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. V, 199-200.

<sup>41</sup> See Gregory XIII, *Exponi nobis nuper*, 20 October 1582, in Blair-Robertson, ed., *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. V, 200-201.

<sup>42</sup> P. Fernandez, *Dominicos Donde Nace el Sole* (Manila: Provincia del Santísimo Rosario, 1958), 25-26.

This letter of Fray Crisóstomo held a historical significance in the history of the Province as it detailed the expectations and desires for the first Dominican missionaries and projected the first impressions of the mission in the Orient, where they were expected to be sent. It did not hide the challenges and dangers that awaited them in the mission.<sup>43</sup> It literally gave flesh to the expected hardships of the missionary life and left no room for imagination. In the chronicled description of the voyage, Fray Crisóstomo employed forceful images, which might discourage the fainthearted but would provoke more those with ardent desires of selflessness. He wrote,

In the first place, the voyage is difficult: one has to go to many hardships; the food and drinks rot; the ship gets dirty and stinking. The voyage by the sea from Spain to Mexico lasts three months and a half, at times four months. Once in Mexico, the sufferings continue: the inconveniences of traveling on horseback, of beds and of the meals, and even of risking one's health. From Mexico to the other port, that is, to the Philippines, there is also a long voyage: it takes, at least two months and a half.<sup>44</sup>

This kind of semantics was well spread throughout the letter. Fray Crisóstomo was not afraid to admit that there were more uncertainties in their destination rather than any security at all. He pointed out that there were no assurances that they would find any of their usual comforts once they arrived, or to the other places where they would be sent by the Governor or by the Bishop. In their missionary work, he said that they had to bear with learning the native languages in order to teach catechism and be prepared to endure every hardship in teaching the faith. He particularly emphasized that they were missionaries and not simply priests; thus, the spirit of being sent to another place or being replaced by secular clergy after establishing a community should always be clear to them.

However, the essential part of the letter was when he reminded the brothers that, "we must preach, moreover, through our lifestyle so that, if our teaching of the doctrine does not move hearts, our lives will move all those who see us: this is the best way of teaching."<sup>45</sup> There he identified how they were to live exemplary lives by their strict observance of the Constitutions, by faithful adherence to personal and communal poverty, and by the rigorous practice of the religious disciplines similar

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<sup>43</sup> J. Crisostomo, "The First Call to Dominicans to the East: Letter to Prospective Missionaries, Spain, 1586," in Gomez (ed.), *The Dominicans' Mission Here and Now*, 135-140.

<sup>44</sup> Crisostomo, "The First Call to Dominicans," 136.

<sup>45</sup> Crisostomo, "The First Call to Dominicans," 138.

to the examples in Mexico and Chiapa. The content of the letter of Fray Crisóstomo proved the strong movement of the observant branch of the Order in the Spanish Church. It implicitly spoke, too, of the characters of the first missionaries that volunteered for the mission in the East.

On 17 July 1586, the first group of missionaries left the port of Cadiz for Mexico led by the new Vicar General, Fray Juan de Castro (1527-92), as Fray Crisóstomo relinquished it in his favor, hence Fray Castro was counted as the first and only Vicar General of the new Dominican province.<sup>46</sup> Upon their arrival in Mexico on 17 December 1586, they stayed at the Convento de Santo Domingo de México. On the same day, Fray Castro promulgated the *Ordinationes Generales*,<sup>47</sup> which enumerated the sixteen prescriptions intended to govern the lives of missionaries, which urged them:

(...) to live in utter poverty, keep uniformity in dress, prayer, teaching, and apostolate, recite in common the divine office at midnight, surrender in complete obedience to their superiors, avoid familiarity with lay persons, live in simple houses and avoid excessive expenditures, place everything they had, including books, at the disposal of their superior, observe two hours of mental prayer daily, practice various forms of penitence like self-flagellation, and rest at night on simple mats made of animal skin.<sup>48</sup>

These ordinations reechoed the letter of Fray Crisóstomo and mentally prepared the missionary friars for the inconvenience in the missions. They provided ways to establish the Dominican mission undertaking the work of evangelization in the Philippines.

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<sup>46</sup> Fernandez, *Dominicos Donde Nace el Sole*, 26. Fray Crisóstomo, himself, did not reach the destination of the first mission that he had planned as he got sick in Mexico. However, he later joined the third *barcada* that arrived in the Philippines in 1589, where his first assignment was in the Hospital de San Gabriel.

<sup>47</sup> See “Ordinationes Generales,” in *Acta Capitulum Provincialium Provinciae Sanctissimi Rosarii Philippinarum Ordinis Praedicatorum Ab Anno 1588*, vol. I, Manilae, Typis Collegii Sancti Thomae, 1874, 1-6. The Holy Rosary Province decided to publish in three (3) volumes the compilation of all the Acts of the Provincial Chapters for the period of almost three hundred years in 1874. It provides the information of the life and ministries of the brothers, including the fundamental statutes of the province, its *Ordinationes Generales*, which direct the objectives of the mission. This work gives light to the desired expression of Dominican life as lived in the mission. It also shows the gradual development of the mission and contains the listings of the missionaries arriving in the Philippines. The provided data from these Acts help in the reconstruction of the elements of the Dominican religious life in the Philippines.

<sup>48</sup> F. Villarroel, *A History of the University of Santo Tomas: Four Centuries of Higher Education in the Philippines, 1611-2011*, vol. I (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2012), 22.

However, it was during this stop in Mexico that the dream for a Dominican mission in the Philippines was almost shattered. Many of the friars, fifteen of them, felt discouraged and decided to abandon the project when they heard the news from the former secretary of the Synod of Manila, the Jesuit priest Father Alonso Sánchez, that the doors to China were closed.<sup>49</sup> The news exposed one of the hard realities of the Christian mission in the Philippines that most of the early missionaries had China as their primary aim. They were only thinking of the Philippines as the port of entry to the Chinese mission. Thus, only twenty friars continued their journey to Acapulco. On 6 April 1587, fifteen friars left the port of Acapulco for the Philippines, two decided to remain in Mexico to wait for the next ship, while three left straight for Macao, a Portuguese colony in mainland China that became a territorial possession of the Spanish empire when the two crowns were united in King Philip II in 1580.

On the feast of St. Mary Magdalene, 22 July 1587, the first batch of Dominican missionaries disembarked at the port of Cavite. On 25 July, they entered Manila on the feast of St. James the Apostle, the Patron of Spain. The founding members of the province were called the *barcada* of 1587, as it would be the so-called name of every Dominican mission, which was in reference to their means of transportation. Today, such a word means one's circle of friends, which could probably trace its origin to this term. The group consisted of fifteen friars,<sup>50</sup> namely,

1. Fray Juan de Castro, a son of the Convento de San Pablo de Burgos, who was the Vicar General;
2. Fray Miguel Benavides de Santa Maria (1550-1605), a son of the Convento de San Pablo de Valladolid, who would someday be the first Bishop of Nueva Segovia and as well succeeded Fray Salazar as the third Bishop of Manila;
3. Fray Diego de Soria (1558-1608), a son of the Convento de Santo Domingo de Ocaña, who succeeded Benavides as the second Bishop of Nueva Segovia;
4. Fray Alonzo Jimenez (1518-1599), a son of the Convento de San Esteban de Salamanca, who was elected Prior Provincial in the 1592 Provincial Chapter;

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<sup>49</sup> Gutierrez, *Archdiocese of Manila*, 28-29.

<sup>50</sup> See their individual biographies in Ocio-Neira, *Misioneros Dominicanos en el Extremo Oriente 1587-1835*, vol. I, 42-50.

5. Fray Bernardo Navarro de Santa Catalina (+1616), a son of the Convento de la Santa Cruz de Villaescusa, who got elected as Prior Provincial for two non-consecutive terms in the 1596 and 1616 Provincial Chapters, respectively;
6. Fray Juan Ormaza de Santo Tomas (1548-1638), a son of the Convento de San Pablo de Valladolid, who was elected Prior Provincial in the 1600 Provincial Chapter;
7. Fray Juan Maldonado de San Pedro Martir (+1598), a son of the Convento de San Pablo de Valladolid;
8. Fray Pedro Bolaños (1527-88), a son of the Convento de Nuestra Señora de la Peña de Francia (Salamanca);
9. Fray Pedro de Soto (+1599), a son of the Convento de San Andrés de Medina del Campo (Valladolid);
10. Fray Juan de la Cruz (1535-1605), a son of the Convento de San Pablo de Sevilla;
11. Fray Juan de Castro (1540-94), a son of the Convento de Santa Catalina de Barcelona, who was the nephew of the Vicar General;
12. Fray Marcos de San Antonio (1558-91), a son of the Convento de la Santa Cruz de Segovia;
13. Fray Gregorio Ochoa de San Vicente (+1588), a son of the Convento de San Pablo de Valladolid;
14. Fray Domingo de Nieva (1562-1607), a son of the Convento de San Pablo de Valladolid; and
15. Fray Pedro Rodriguez (+1609), a lay brother and son of the Convento de San Pedro de las Dueñas.

Fray Salazar received them in his episcopal residence until 5 August of that year, while their temporary quarters were being arranged in Manila with the Franciscans. They were also waiting for their dispatched order from the Governor for their first mission posts in Bataan and Pangasinan. Once they had received the authorization

from Governor Santiago de Vera (1584-90) in his capacity as the vice patron,<sup>51</sup> Fray Castro sent four friars to Bataan, while he assigned six friars to Pangasinan. The Vicar General remained in Manila, together with the other four friars.

Preparations were also being arranged for the foundation of the Convento de Santo Domingo de Manila, the motherhouse of the mission. The Bishop was able to secure for them a land near the Pasig River, in a marshy place on the border of Manila, between its northern and southern sides.<sup>52</sup> The church and convent were inaugurated on 1 January 1588. The first church edifice was made from lightweight materials of bamboo and *nipa*, which accordingly reflect the poverty of the beginnings of the mission. The first Vicar of the community was Fray Soria. For three centuries, the Convento de Santo Domingo de Manila was the only convent the Dominicans had in the Philippines.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Provincial Chapter (1588)<sup>53</sup> was celebrated at the Convento de Santo Domingo de Manila, where the Vicar General, Fray Juan de Castro, was elected as the first Prior Provincial of the missionary province. This Provincial Chapter also accepted the *Ordinationes Generales* promulgated in Mexico and confirmed the name of the province as the *Provincia del Santísimo Rosario de Filipinas*, in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary to whom the friars primarily entrusted the mission in the Orient, and to St. Mary Magdalene, whom they considered as the secondary Patron of the province. However, the retroactive confirmation of the General Chapter for both the erection of the province and the election of Fray Castro as Prior Provincial took place four years after in the General Chapter of Diffinitors held in Venice in 1592.<sup>54</sup>

### **General Overview of the Dominican Missionary Province**

During the celebration of the 1<sup>st</sup> Provincial Chapter in 1588, there were twenty friars in the Philippines, distributed in four places: one convent in Manila (Santo Domingo) and three houses, located in Bataan (present-day town of Abucay), Binalatongan, Pangasinan (present-day city of San Carlos), and Gabon, Pangasinan

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<sup>51</sup> No other data were found regarding the dates of birth and death, except the years of service as the sixth Spanish Governor-General.

<sup>52</sup> Ocio-Neira, *Misioneros Dominicos en el Extremo Oriente 1587-1835*, 223-224.

<sup>53</sup> See “Acta Capituli Provincialis 1588,” in *Acta Capitulorum Provincialium*, vol. I, 7-9.

<sup>54</sup> “Acta Capituli Generalis Venetiis 1592,” in B. M. Reichert (ed.), *Acta Capitulorum Generalium Ordinis Praedicatorum ab anno 1558 usque ad annum 1600*, vol. V (Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica, vol. X) (Romae: Typographia Polyglotta S. C. de Propaganda Fide, 1901), 326.

(present-day municipality of Calasiao).<sup>55</sup> Manila remained to be the hub of the missionary activities and its center of studies.

In its first forty years, the province grew gradually with the new arrivals of missionaries, almost exclusively from the convents of Spain and Mexico, but mostly, they were friars from Spain. They were to man its apostolic expansion, primarily in the northern territories of the island of Luzon, which covered the civil provinces of Pangasinan (including Tarlac), Bataan, and Cavite, and the region of Cagayan Valley (including the Babuyan Islands, Isabela, and Nueva Vizcaya). As a general rule, the province has set a high standard for the recruitment of missionaries, which had impeded the influx of huge number of religious in the mission. The friars being recruited had to be men known for their practice of teaching or exemplary in the exercise of their religious life, or at least, young men with a bright future.<sup>56</sup> In doing their ministry in the Philippines, these friars showed admirable discipline in the practice of their vowed life as manifested in their missionary works. The *Ordinationes Generales* took the prophetic role in the lives of these missionaries that spiritually sustained them in the most severe circumstances of their preaching ministries. They exhibited great virtues in their prayers and common life, in their practice of obedience and poverty, and in their penitential and regular observances.<sup>57</sup>

From 1587 to 1631, sixteen Dominican *barcadas* arrived in the Philippines, which brought a total number of 310 friar missionaries, under the auspices of the Spanish Crown.<sup>58</sup> The biggest *barcada* arrived on 30 April 1602, with 34 missionaries on board. In the same year, the province ventured into a new mission to Japan. However, unlike the other religious orders, the Dominicans had less parochial foundations in the Philippines. They also showed reservations in terms of accepting new missionary territories. This could be validated by the report of the French scientist, Guillaume Le Gentil (1725-92), contained in his work *Voyages dans les mers de l'Inde* (Paris, 1781), who did an ecclesiastical survey of the Philippines.<sup>59</sup>

In terms of the governance of the province, the Provincial Chapter held the same importance as the General Chapter was to the Order. It was the prime factor in the life and history of the province as the scope of its jurisdiction, the ranges of its decisions, and the frequency of its meetings underscored its crucial role. Since 1423,

<sup>55</sup> The province had its first recorded death in the person of Fray Pedro Bolaños in 1588. Since his death was not recorded in the *Acta*, it most likely happened after the 1588 Provincial Chapter.

<sup>56</sup> Fernandez, *Dominicos Donde Nace el Sole*, 43.

<sup>57</sup> Fernandez, *Dominicos Donde Nace el Sole*, 46-49. See also J. Delgado, *Historia General*, in Blaire Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. XXVIII, 173.

<sup>58</sup> See Ocio-Neira, *Misioneros Dominicos en el Extremo Oriente 1587-1835*, vol. I, 39-147.

<sup>59</sup> See G. Le Gentil, *Voyages dans les mers de l'Inde*, in Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. XXVIII, 192-225, in particular 209.



each of the Provincial Chapters was given the right to determine the regularity of its celebration, whether annually or every two years.<sup>60</sup> In the Holy Rosary Province, the Provincial Chapter met every two years, except after the 1<sup>st</sup> Provincial Chapter in 1588, when it waited for four years before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Provincial Chapter (1592) was convened. The province decided to have two forms of the Provincial Chapter: the elective and the biennial. The elective Provincial Chapter was being held every four years, while the biennial Provincial Chapter served as the intermediary chapter between two elective chapters (or held two years after an elective chapter). During the period of the initial foundation, twenty-two Provincial Chapters were celebrated, mostly in Manila at the Convento de Santo Domingo. Only two Provincial Chapters took place outside Manila, the 1619 Biennial Provincial Chapter (16<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter) held in Cagayan at the Casa de Santo Domingo - Nueva Segovia and the extraordinary 1617 Elective Provincial Chapter (15<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter) held in Pangasinan at the Casa de Santo Domingo - Binalatongan, which was necessitated after Fray Navarro de Santa Catalina died while in office, six months after the closing of the 1616 Provincial Chapter that elected him.

Moreover, the role of the Prior Provincial was essential in the life of the province as he directed it. The Constitutions presumed that he would have the same authority of the traditional monastic prelate, though his rights, powers, and privileges were not specified.<sup>61</sup> The documents stated that he had the same power in his province as the Master of the Order. His major preoccupations were the recruitment of members and the faithful keeping of the religious observance and discipline. He was obliged to visit every house annually and personally to ensure that the life and activity of each house of the province were following the norms of the Dominican life. In the Holy Rosary Province, the Prior Provincial was being assisted by his council and two Procurator Generals. The first Procurator General, who stayed in Madrid, had the responsibility for recruiting new friars to the mission and dealing with the businesses of the province with the Holy See, the General Curia, and the Royal Court. The other Procurator General remained in Manila and assumed lesser responsibilities.<sup>62</sup> The first Prior Provincials laid down the general direction of the missionary province as they governed during its infancy period. Thus, it is noteworthy to mention them:

1. Fray Juan de Castro was elected during the 1<sup>st</sup> Provincial Chapter (1588). He arrived with the first *barcada* (1587) and erected the first church and

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<sup>60</sup> Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order. Origins and Growth to 1500*, vol. I, 184-185.

<sup>61</sup> Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order. Origins and Growth to 1500*, 205-207.

<sup>62</sup> Fernandez, *Dominicos Donde Nace el Sole*, 46.

convent of Santo Domingo de Manila. He accepted the first missions in Bataan and Pangasinan, together with the Chinese ministry in Baybay (Binondo) and Parian.

2. Fray Alonso Jimenez was elected during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Provincial Chapter (1592). He likewise arrived together with the first *barcada* and was mainly responsible for the establishment of the uniform norms for the administration of the sacraments.
3. Fray Bernardo Navarro de Santa Catalina was first elected during the 4<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter (1596). He too arrived with the first *barcada*. During his term, he had accepted the Cagayan mission and built a guest house in Mexico that would receive the missionaries for the Philippines. He had also helped in the foundation of the Dominican college in Manila.
4. Fray Juan Ormaza de Santo Tomas was elected during the 6<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter (1600). He likewise arrived with the first *barcada*. He started the mission in Japan, which he later joined after his term as Prior Provincial.
5. Fray Miguel Martin de San Jacinto (1570-1625)<sup>63</sup> was elected during the 8<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter (1604). He came together with the fourth *barcada* (1595). He built the first Dominican residence in Japan.
6. Fray Baltasar Fort (1562-1640)<sup>64</sup> was elected during the 10<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter (1608). He arrived with the seventh *barcada* (1602) and established the houses in Macao and Japan. He approved the foundation of the Colegio de Nuestra Señora del Rosario (the future Universidad de Santo Tomás) in Manila, and the organization of the said college, including the *encomienda* that would support the institution.
7. Fray Miguel Martin de San Jacinto was elected for the second time during the 12<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter (1612). During his second term, the persecution of the Christians started in Japan.
8. Fray Bernardo Navarro de Santa Catalina was again elected during the 14<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter (1616), but unfortunately, he died during his canonical visit in Cagayan, six months after his election.

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<sup>63</sup> See his biography in Ocio-Neira, *Misioneros Dominicanos en el Extremo Oriente 1587-1835*, vol. I, 66-67.

<sup>64</sup> Ocio-Neira, *Misioneros Dominicanos en el Extremo Oriente 1587-1835*, 86-87.

9. Fray Melchor Manzano (+1630)<sup>65</sup> was elected during the extraordinary 15<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter (1617). He arrived with the ninth *barcada* (1606). He approved the creation of the Facultades de Artes y Teología in the Colegio de Santo Tomás.
10. Fray Miguel Ruiz (+1630)<sup>66</sup> was elected during the 17<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter (1621). He arrived with the seventh *barcada*. During his term, the province received the news concerning the new martyrs in Japan.
11. Fray Bartolomé Martínez (1548-1629)<sup>67</sup> was elected during the 19<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter (1625). He came together with the eleventh *barcada* (1611). He was the Prior Provincial during the Dutch invasion of Formosa (Taiwan) that passed through Cagayan.
12. Fray Francisco de Herrera (+1644)<sup>68</sup> was elected during the 21<sup>st</sup> Provincial Chapter (1629). He arrived with the seventh *barcada*. He initiated the consolidation of the missions in Cagayan.

By the time the province celebrated its 22<sup>nd</sup> Provincial Chapter in 1631, it already had three provincial vicariates in the Philippines, i.e., Manila, Pangasinan, and Cagayan, distributed into thirty-one Dominican communities.<sup>69</sup> The province maintained at least two missionaries to each of the established mission stations and at least three friars for new foundations, which ensured the common witnessing of a community.

The Provincial Vicariate of Manila (7) consisted of the Convento de Santo Domingo - Manila (1588), Casa de Santo Domingo - Bataan (1588), Casa de San Gabriel - Binondo (1596), Casa de San Juan del Monte – San Juan (1602), Colegio de Santo Tomás – Manila (1611), Casa de San Telmo - Cavite (1612), and Casa de la Santísima Trinidad - Parian (1619).

The Provincial Vicariate of Pangasinan (8) comprised of the Casa de Santo Domingo - Binalatongan (1588), Casa Ss. Pedro y Pablo - Calasiao (1588), Casa de Santo Tomas - Mangaldan (1600), Casa de Nstra. Sña. del Rosario - Manaoag (1608), Casa de la Santísima Trinidad - Lingayen (1614), Casa de Nuestra Señora

<sup>65</sup> Ocio-Neira, *Misioneros Dominicanos en el Extremo Oriente 1587-1835*, 99.

<sup>66</sup> Ocio-Neira, *Misioneros Dominicanos en el Extremo Oriente 1587-1835*, 90-91.

<sup>67</sup> Ocio-Neira, *Misioneros Dominicanos en el Extremo Oriente 1587-1835*, 107-108.

<sup>68</sup> Ocio-Neira, *Misioneros Dominicanos en el Extremo Oriente 1587-1835*, 85.

<sup>69</sup> "Acta Capituli Provincialis 1631," in *Acta Capitulum Provincialium*, vol. I, 158-160.

del Purificación - Binmaley (1614), Casa de San Vicente - Balunguey (1619), and Casa de San Pedro Mártir - Masi (1619).

The Provincial Vicariate of Cagayan (16) included the Casa de Santa Maria Magdalena - Pata (1596), Casa de Santo Domingo - Nueva Segovia (1596), Casa de San Jacinto - Camalanyugan (1596), Casa de Santo Tomas - Abulug (1596), Casa de Santa Catalina - Gattaran (1596), Casa de San Vicente - Tocolana (1604), Casa de San Miguel - Nassiping (1604), Casa de Santa Ines de Monte Politiano - Piat (1604), Casa SS. Apóstoles Pedro y Pablo - Maquila (1604), Casa de San Jaime - Iguig (1608), Casa de San Raimondo - Malaueg (1608), Casa de los Ss. Angeles - Tuao (1612), Casa de Santo Domingo - Fotol (1617), Casa de Santo Domingo - Piat (1619), Casa de Santa Ana - Buguey (1619), and Casa de Santa Ursula - Babuyan (1621).

### **Dominican Mission in the Philippines<sup>70</sup>**

By the time of its establishment, the Holy Rosary Province was present in two countries, the Philippines and China (Macao). It had a house in Macao under the patronage of Santa Maria del Rosario (1588). The three friars, who left together with the Philippine *barcada* in 1587 from Acapulco, were the first to be assigned there. In the Philippines, Governor Vera designated Bataan and Pangasinan as their first mission areas, while Fray Salazar transferred to their charge the Chinese of Manila. With the arrival of new missionaries, the province accepted in 1596 the region of Cagayan Valley. For the next fifty years, these mission areas remained unchanged, mostly parish-based ministries. It also followed the instruction of King Philip II in 1594 that geographically, the country was divided into respective missionary territories among the first religious orders, each with distinct jurisdiction.<sup>71</sup>

Proven to be a challenging province to convert was Bataan, one of the earliest missions of the Dominicans. By the time of missionaries' arrival, the reduction process in this province was just beginning. Thus, the majority of the population was unbaptized, and those baptized soon returned to their old ways after baptism, as most of the former missionaries of this place were transient, moving from one place to another, unable to give the proper care and devotion required for their conversion. In his account, Fray Aduarte recounted a particular case, he said,

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<sup>70</sup> See *Acta Capitulorum Provincialium*, vol. I, 7-161; Fernandez, *Dominicos Donde Nace el Sole*, 28-36, 43-52; Ocio-Neira, *Misioneros Dominicos en el Extremo Oriente 1587-1835*, vol. I, 41-147.

<sup>71</sup> "Royal Decree of Philip II, 27 April 1594," in Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. IX, 113-114.

There was even one priest who was so slothful in this duty that without teaching them what they were to believe, he baptized them by force, making them bring all the boys and girls together, though they had already reached adolescence, and gave them in writing the Christian names which they were to have. With no further preparation than this, he baptized on the second day those whom he had not scared away. These were not a few; for since the baptism was not voluntary, but by force, they ran away, because no great care was taken to keep them. To keep themselves from being annoyed in this way again, they kept their names and said they were Christians, so that in this way they might avoid baptism and those who baptized them.<sup>72</sup>

The territory was sparsely populated in an unfriendly terrain where most people lived in the mountainous areas of the region, therefore, adding more difficulty to their conversion to Christianity. Fray Aduarte further explained that the natives had a strong attachment to idols, including the firm grip of the *catalonans*, the local priestess, to their respective communities. The friars had to learn first the native language so that the catechism could be better understood and to convince the natives of the pre-eminence of the Christian faith. One of the methods employed showed vestiges of the Inquisition, which was the typical approach of the time, where the native converts, mostly children, were used to identify those suspected of idolatry and superstition. Fray Aduarte revealed that:

(...) soon after these religious learned their language, and began to give them instruction, the change which was to be seen in them was extraordinary; for the root of all these vices was plucked up, and that so completely that they themselves aided in their own reformation—for they gave the ministers information in regard to sins and idolatries by showing them who they were that committed them, and where they were committed. Thus it was easy to find some little idols that they kept hidden, which were handed over to the Christian boys to drag about through the whole village, and at last were burned. By this means and by the punishment of a few old women who acted as priestesses, and who were called *catalonans*, the idolatry of the whole region was brought to an end.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>72</sup> D. Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Sancto Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores*, in Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. XXX, 163-164. See the text in the original language in Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 116.

<sup>73</sup> See Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 120-121.

The Bataan mission took a slow pace among the mission works. It was not an easy feat. During the beginnings of the Holy Rosary Province, only one foundation was established in this place, the house and church in Bataan (Abucay). However, the foundation made good progress. The most critical method they employed in their mission work was the post-baptismal instruction that prevented the converts from forgetting what they have learned before the reception of the sacrament. Fray Aduarte pointed out that during the canonical visit of Fray Castro in Bataan, he saw the improvement in the mission as a result of the spiritual exercise introduced by the friars. The friars “had set up crosses at the intersections of the roads, and here the people of the neighborhood gathered every evening as they came in from their fields (...) Here they recited all of the doctrine [that they had received] in order that they might be more thoroughly acquainted with it, and from day to day, they became more tractable and devout, as being more fully instructed in the faith.”<sup>74</sup>

On the other hand, the mission in Pangasinan gained better results during the first years of the mission. Within eleven years since they arrived in the province, the Dominicans had almost Christianized the entire territory. Fray Aduarte attributed this success to the lives of the Dominicans that brought those conversions to the faith. The encounter between the natives of Pangasinan and the Dominicans started in hostility. The missionaries encountered the same problem of idolatry, and the people rejected any teaching that spoke otherwise. The natives practically hated the presence of the Dominicans in their place and refused the friars anything, including food, to force them to leave the site. During the first three years of the mission, life was challenging for them. Fray Salazar, upon hearing the news from the Spanish captains concerning the seriousness of the matter, planned to pull them out of the province.<sup>75</sup> He saw that there was a real danger to the lives of the missionaries. The natives of Pangasinan were known as head hunters, which could posit a grave threat to them. However, the Dominicans were obstinate to leave the place. In the words of their Vicar, Fray Navarro de Santa Catalina, he declared, “these Indios who are so evil are precisely the ones I wish my friars to convert.”<sup>76</sup> Besides, their patience had finally caught up with the stubbornness of the natives. In the narrative of Fray Aduarte, it pointed out one crucial element in the life of the friars that captured the attention of the natives. It was their consistency in their vowed life. He recounted,

After three years, during which they only baptized a few boys (for the natives were unwilling to give the girls), the Indians began to

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<sup>74</sup> See Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 183.

<sup>75</sup> Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 184.

<sup>76</sup> Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 131.

believe in the religious, and the beginning that the Lord chose for this was the following. When the Indians perceived the way in which the friars lived, the fasts and penances which they performed, their patience amid hardships, and the fact that the fathers not only did them no harm, but came to their aid in their necessities, they began to be mollified, and to believe what the friars said. The story is told that an Indian chief went one night to a religious and said to him: 'Father, you must know that I have been watching you for two years, and have carefully noted everything that you do; and I see that you all have one way of living. If one of you does not eat, no more do the others; if one of you rises at midnight to pray, so do the rest; if one of you avoids women, all the rest of you do so too. You all of you follow one rule and one road; you strive to obtain neither gold nor silver; you are ill-treated and yet patient; you do all things for our good. Hence I have resolved to believe you, since I am persuaded people who act like you will not deceive.' So high did the good opinion of these Dominican religious rise among those people (God having ordained it thus in His goodness and providence), that the Indians actually regarded those of this habit as sinless.<sup>77</sup>

The respect that they earned from the natives brought many leading men to consider becoming Christians, which consequently led to the encouragement of the rest to follow the same path. Despite this development, the friars were not in a hurry to do a mass conversion of the natives. They made meticulous preparations for the new converts, including the renouncement of unholy ties. Fray Aduarte explained:

When the leading men of the tribe began to consider becoming Christians— their headmen being already so, as well as some others — they came to the religious, and persuaded them that, in order that all of them might be converted together, they should first of all give up in a single day everything which they held in commission for the devil; these things were the instruments which they used for their sacrifices. The fathers accordingly did as they wished, and, with the assistance of these same governors of the country there were given up an infinite number of pieces of earthen ware and a great deal of very old wine—for this is regarded as the thing consecrated to the devil; and no one dares (to) touch or go near it except at the time of

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<sup>77</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. XXX, 185. See Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 131.

the sacrifice, and then only the minister who performs it. They are accustomed to keep this wine at the head of the bed in a little earthen jar, like holy water. When they had given all this up (which they did with very good will), they all proposed immediately to become Christians, and to know and learn the things of our holy Catholic religion. After they had learned them and been instructed in them, they were directed to fast for forty days, or one month; and general baptisms took place on the eve of the feasts of the Resurrection and Pentecost.<sup>78</sup>

The results of the conversions brought tremendous change in the lives of the new Christians. The converts emulated the lives of the friars as “they even go beyond things required (...) many of them rising at midnight to pray when the matin bell rings; they follow the fasts of the Dominican Order (...) whenever they begin an undertaking, they first offer it to God, with their minds, their hearts, and their hands in the work. Though poor, they give alms frequently.”<sup>79</sup> The story of the conversion of Pangasinan amazed those previous missionaries who went on earlier times as they described these natives as brute and fierce. Even the Dominicans themselves were surprised by these results.

Another region of utmost importance in the Dominican missionary map was the Cagayan Valley in the Northern Luzon, where the friars had the most extensive and arduous ministry. When the Dominicans began their mission in this region, the lands were consistently under local wars. Like most of the island of Luzon, the people were heavily attached to their idols and the services of their local priestesses, called *aniteras*. These *aniteras* performed many of their superstitious rites and sacrifices, which the people believed were necessary to appease the anger or obtain favors of the local gods, locally called *anitos*. Apart from that, they also served as native doctors. Therefore, their role in society was ingrained in the social system of the community. Since the people relied more on the divine services of these women, rather than on their male counterparts, the missionaries were in great difficulty to assume the role of the divine mediator. Fray Aduarte portrayed them as the primary obstacle to the Christianization as he narrated that,

(...) the devil entered these *aniteras* or sorceresses, and through them, and by their agency, he gave his answers. By these priestesses,

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<sup>78</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. XXX, 186; see also Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 132.

<sup>79</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. XXX, 187-188. See also Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 134.



the Indians performed their superstitious rites and sacrifices, when they wished to placate their *anitos* or obtain anything from them. If anyone fell sick, the *aniteras* immediately came, and with oils and a thousand performances they persuaded him that, if he would believe in what they did, they would cure him. Then in his sight they performed and displayed a thousand fantastic things; and the devil so earnestly strove to give them credit that at times he made the people believe that the soul had left the body, and that the *anitera* had restored it by the power of her prayers and her medicines. Whenever the sick man recovered, they attributed the recovery to their own efforts; while, if he died, they were plentifully supplied with excuses and reasons to avoid the blame and to throw the responsibility upon someone else (...).<sup>80</sup>

Fray Aduarte judged the work of these *aniteras* as “an old trick of the devil, with which he betrayed the heathens of antiquity.” He added that the priestesses projected their services as indispensable to the life of the natives. Thus, the natives sought their advice in almost everything that they did, from the big celebration of the harvest to a simple sneeze. All were being interpreted as omens from the *anitos*. Fray Aduarte indicated the ignorance of the natives as the main culprit in this servitude to the devil as it “likewise betrays this deluded and foolish people.” He further lamented that this wretched state “was the same with everything they did or thought of doing, in life and in death, in sickness and in health; and for this purpose, they had their houses full of devices and apparatus.”<sup>81</sup>

However, according to Fray Aduarte, the missionaries were not disheartened by this dire situation, instead, they offered praise to God for remembering these people by sending them to this place. As they set out their missionary plan for the spiritual conquest of the region, they were greatly determined to achieve their task. The first missionaries, led by Fray Diego de Soria, spent a month in prayers before the sending off in September 1595 to prepare themselves spiritually for the enormous undertaking ahead of them. Interestingly, Fray Aduarte noted that these missionaries had mentally readied themselves to be patient, courageous, and virtuous that they might “live and dwell in the midst of this barbarous and bloodthirsty race, with no other defense than the divine aid.” He said that the reputation of the natives as ‘barbarous

<sup>80</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. XXX, 286. See the text in the original language in Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 239.

<sup>81</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. XXX, 287-288. See Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 240.

and bloodthirsty' preceded their arrival. Stories had been told that "the Spaniards dared not go out of their city unless they were well armed and went in numbers." However, he reported that "the friars were obliged to go, as indeed they did go, into the Indian villages unarmed and alone, except for the divine companionship."<sup>82</sup> The Dominicans were confident that with divine aid, accompanied by fasting and prayer, and strengthened by extreme penance, they would overcome any danger and difficulty. When they were casting lots for the distribution of work, Fray Aduarte marked in his accounts an essential Dominican character of the early missionaries, the sense of obedience, which they had professed with the greatest diligence.<sup>83</sup> He recounted,

Fray Diego held a council of the religious and said to them: "It would be well to cast lots, to see to which of each of these four villages your Reverences are to go." They answered: "There is no reason for depending on uncertain lots, for he is always sure of a happy lot who is under the rule of obedience. Dispose of us, your Reverence, as seems best to you; for without any reply, we will each of us go very contentedly wherever the direction of our superior bids us go." Father Fray Diego was pleased to hear so wise a response, and one so proper from vowed religious.<sup>84</sup>

The first church they built in Cagayan was in Pata under the patronage of St. Mary Magdalene. Though they were received amicably in this place, there was a particular mistrust and prejudice against them in other areas as they "feared that the religious would be like the other Christians whom they had seen, who came to try to get away from them their gold and everything that they prized."<sup>85</sup> In some places, some locals refused to let them in or give them something to eat. Without proper nutrition, some of the missionaries got sick. Notwithstanding their deteriorating health, they still did not force the natives to provide them with anything that would make them do something against their will. The other difficulty cited in Fray Aduarte's accounts was the language, as the friars had no interpreters to help them communicate their message. However, their patience paid off. Soon after they learned the language, the missionaries were able to teach the people in their native tongue.

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<sup>82</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. XXX, 299. See Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 245-246.

<sup>83</sup> *Constitutiones Antiquae Ordinis Fratrum Predicatorum*, I, 16, in Thomas, *De oudste constituties*, 326-327; "Ordinationes Generales," in *Acta Capitulum Provincialium*, vol. I, 4.

<sup>84</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. XXX, 301. See the text in the original language in Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 246-247.

<sup>85</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. XXX, 304. See Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 248.

These religious instructions in the local language yielded good results, but their issue with the *aniteras* remained. There was one *anitera*, called Cabacungan, who greatly opposed the friars, her hatred was not a secret among the missionaries. She prevented people from believing in the Christian faith by instilling the fear of retributions from the *anitos* in the minds of the highly superstitious people. How they resolved their issue with her remained to be a mystery, but for Fray Aduarte, he attributed it as a miracle since conversions happened among people after she was gone. He detailed what had happened in this way,

The religious endeavored to frighten her, and several times threatened her that if she did not cease they would have her punished in the Spanish city or would send her to Manila; but she, egged on by him who inspired her, pretended that she did not understand, and continued in her wickedness. The religious, as a last resort, thought it best to send an Indian chief who had become a good Christian to talk with her. His name was Don Francisco Yringan. They hoped that he would be able to bring her over, or at least to prevent her from perverting the people. If they failed in this, they determined to bring her to justice. Yringan did not dare to carry this message to this she-devil without stronger weapons than hers and asked the fathers for a cross. The religious, who had nothing better at hand, painted one on a cloth that Yringan had tied on his head and used nothing but pen and ink. This was so easy that he made or painted not one only, but several. This one thing terrified the devil so greatly that, without daring to stand before the Indian armed with crosses, he caught up his priestess, and she disappeared. Neither he nor she ever appeared again, nor was it ever known where he took her or what he did with her. As a result of this miracle and many others with which the Lord gave credit to His gospel, the Indians began to feel respect for the law that the religious preached to them. The latter were much encouraged when they saw that the Lord favored them, and father Fray Diego de Soria determined to undertake a very difficult and dangerous enterprise, which, if successful, would greatly aid in this conversion.<sup>86</sup>

After this initial success in Pata and its neighboring villages, the missionaries received new energy to expand their missionary work further by establishing new

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<sup>86</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. XXX, 307-308. See Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 250.

foundations in other territories of Cagayan. However, they made sure that their missionary expansion would not compromise what they had accomplished so far. They did not overly extend their presence as they feared that once they left these places, people would return to their old ways, as seen in the previous mission work by the other religious orders.

Finally, the Chinese mission was one of the goals of the Dominican missionaries in the Orient. Fray Salazar was no different. He did not keep it a secret that one of the reasons he accepted the See of Manila was because of the proximity of the Philippines to China and the existence of many Chinese settlers in the country.<sup>87</sup> Not surprisingly, in his Memorial of 1582, the Bishop was not only defending the rights of Filipinos, but he was also advocating for a peaceful co-existence with the Chinese settlers in the Philippines. Fray Salazar condemned to the highest degree the abuses against them by the Spanish *conquistadores*.<sup>88</sup> He saw the potential of the Chinese settlements, not only in terms of economics since they were “good craftsmen in Spanish fashion, and make everything at a very low cost,”<sup>89</sup> but also because they could be of potential help to the evangelization of China. Their settlements would be a good training ground for the Chinese mission, where missionaries could learn the Chinese language and customs since he had heard from the Franciscans, who came from China, that the kingdom did not totally close its doors to Christianity.

The Bishop would like to take advantage of this opportunity. From the beginning of his episcopate, he saw that the Chinese were neglected because of the difficulty in learning their language, and the first missionaries were occupied with the conversion of the natives. According to the report sent by the Bishop to the King, the Augustinians started their ministry with them in Tondo, but the Chinese were instructed not in their language but that of the natives’. Consequently, those baptized Chinese, in the opinion of the Bishop, were only Christians by name, not exactly knowing what they had received.<sup>90</sup> To address this concern, he requested Governor Ronquillo de Peñalosa to arrange a special place in the Chinese settlement where priests could stay and learn the language. After this arrangement was approved and prepared, Fray Salazar appealed to the different religious orders to send one of their religious to obtain proficiency in the Chinese language. Though they responded to the invitation, no one succeeded. When the Dominicans arrived, Fray Salazar made known his intention to entrust to them a permanent ministry to the Chinese.

<sup>87</sup> See “Letter of Salazar to Philip II, 24 June 1590,” in Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. VII, 212-238, in particular 213.

<sup>88</sup> See Gutierrez (ed.), *Memorial de las cosas que en estas Islas Filipinas*, 444-451.

<sup>89</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. VII, 226.

<sup>90</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. VII, 222-223.

The Bishop took it providential that when he was looking for a place where his religious brothers could settle, almost all the lot was occupied, except for a lot that was adjacent to the Chinese settlement, the Parian. He took it as a divine sign, which ended favorably to both parties. The proximity of the convent and church of Santo Domingo to Parian brought about close encounters between the Dominicans and the Chinese. The Bishop informed the King in his letter dated 24 June 1590 that:

(...) whenever the Sangleys come and go from the Parían, they pass by the church of Santo Domingo, and, being a very inquisitive people, they often stop and watch what is taking place there. When the confraternities of the Rosary and of the Oaths, which are founded in that house, hold their processions, a great many Sangleys come out to watch them. They live so near the monastery that in the night they hear the religious sing matins (...) and there are among them religious men who lead a very austere life and claim to live in profound meditation. When it shall please God to enlighten them, Christianity will undoubtedly profit much by this characteristic.<sup>91</sup>

The Dominicans took the Chinese ministry as their contribution to the apostolic work in Manila since all the adjacent areas near the city were already ministered by the other religious orders that had arrived first in the Philippines. The Dominicans erected two communities for this ministry, the one in the original district for the Chinese, Parian, which was rebuilt by Governor Vera, adjacent to the walled city of *Intramuros*. The other was in the new area, Binondo, which was created by Governor Luis Pérez Dasmariñas (1593-1596)<sup>92</sup> in 1594, across the Pasig River from the walled city, intended primarily for the Chinese converts. The Bishop noted the difference of disposition and attitudes of the Chinese since the Dominicans made permanent ministry with them. They started to open themselves willingly to Christianity. The Dominican missionaries also had great success in learning the language. With this language barrier resolved, within months after they started their mission in Parian, series of baptisms took place. According to Fray Aduarte, these conversions happened not only in the cases of those who came primarily for religious instruction, but also among those who merely heard about the faith from those receiving Christian teachings. He

<sup>91</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. VII, 223-224.

<sup>92</sup> No other data were found regarding the dates of birth and death, except the years of service as the seventh Spanish Governor-General.

cited this particular case of a sick man, who one day called for a friar in order to receive religious instruction:

The convert spoken of lived in the Parian, where all were heathen; and he understood nothing of what they had heard but that there were religious who taught the law of God in the Chinese language. This man lay sick and was seized with a great desire to speak with these fathers, wishing to accept the law that they preached. The religious went to see him; and, when he came in, the sick man exhibited such fervent desire to become a Christian that the religious in wonder asked him the reason. He replied that he had seen in a vision a most beautiful lady, who had told him that he must become a Christian in order to see the glory of heaven. When the father questioned him, he already showed considerable knowledge of the mysteries of the faith. He was baptized immediately and died soon after. A number of similar cases followed, some Chinese being converted by happy visions, some by dreadful ones.<sup>93</sup>

Likewise, in order to take care of the sick Chinese, the Dominicans built a hospital, the Hospital de San Gabriel (previously known as San Pedro Mártir), this became a great advantage to earn them more endearment from the Chinese. Fray Aduarte explained the reason why the said hospital was established. Accordingly, “many of the sick were in the greatest poverty, and lacked the necessaries of life; for the Chinese in Manila show each other very little charity, being heathens, and, like all the rest of their nation, extremely avaricious—a quality not very consistent with caring for the sick poor. Thus the religious were obliged to show compassion upon the sick.”<sup>94</sup> This generous act created multiple effects among the Chinese themselves. The kindness showed by the friars built up the generosity of the Chinese as the hospital only subsisted on the charity gathered by the friars and the contributions of the Chinese themselves. The rumor concerning this hospital reached mainland China, and according to the assessment of the Bishop, it preceded them with good impressions.<sup>95</sup>

As the number of converts increased, the ministry to the Chinese proved beneficial to the province. The Chinese Christians became the generous benefactors

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<sup>93</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. XXX, 218. See the text in the original language in Riel.

<sup>94</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. VII, 219. See Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 171.

<sup>95</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. VII, 237.

of the Dominicans. Fray Aduarte recalled that “throughout the year the divine offices are performed in this church with great solemnity and grandeur, many of these Chinese affording their assistance, with very large contributions toward everything necessary for the adornment of the church and the divine services.”<sup>96</sup> He particularly mentioned a certain Chinese convert named Don Juan de Vera, a very devout man, and a regular attendee in the Mass, who handsomely adorned the Dominican church with Christian paintings. He likewise helped the Dominicans introduce printing in the Philippines as Don Vera also believed in “the great results to be attained by means of holy and devout books.”<sup>97</sup> It is not surprising that the Chinese catechism book was the first book to be printed in the Philippines in 1593, the *Doctrina Christiana en letra y lengua China* (aka Shih-lu), before its Filipino version, the *Doctrina Christiana, en lengua española y tagala*, which was also printed in the same year.

Fray Benavides, who was now the Archbishop of Manila in 1603, gave his honest opinion about the state of affairs of the ecclesiastical province of Manila in his letter to King Philip III (1578-1621).<sup>98</sup> He assessed every religious order according to their performance of their ministry. In his assessment, the Dominicans, together with the Franciscans, had maintained strict discipline among themselves, particularly in their regular observance and penitential practice. In terms of providing instructions to the natives, the Prelate commended the excellent results of their teachings, whether by word or by deed.

However, there was one thing that the Fray Benavides observed, which he considered as their failure. He wrote, “in the matter I mention, of leaving some missions, and abandoning them to perdition, those fathers are the most lacking, which is a very serious evil.”<sup>99</sup>

He confirmed that this situation was one of the things that gave him sorrow as he compared it to a father abandoning his children. When this report was made, it was when the province decided to send missionaries to Japan in 1602 after the arrival of a significant number of friars, which might have directly affected some missions in the Philippines, considering the number of deaths that they were also having among their ranks.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. XXX, 230-231. See the text in the original language in Aduarte, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, vol. I, 176.

<sup>97</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. VII, 230-231.

<sup>98</sup> See “Letter of Benavides to Philip III, 6 July 1603,” in Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. XII, 112-125.

<sup>99</sup> Blair-Robertson (ed.), *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. VII, 118.

<sup>100</sup> See Ocio-Niera, *Misioneros Dominicanos en el Extremo Oriente 1587-1835*, vol. I, 41-147.

## Conclusion

History breathes life to the past, the here and now, and the time to come. The ancients regarded the study of history as a spring that waters the "life of the memory" by assuming the role of "light of truth ( ... ) teacher of life."<sup>101</sup> Hence, studying history keeps us on track and reminds us not to lose sight of what we have started.

The birth of the missionary province opened the door for the Order to enjoin the spiritual conquest of the East. The Dominicans initially considered the Philippines only as an entry point to the other Asian countries, particularly China. However, the study established that such mission was the starting point of their generous contribution to the evangelization of the Philippines. They directed the attention of the works of evangelization not merely on the number of baptisms made but more on the fruits of the witnessing of the life of the Christian converts.

To pursue these pious and religious endeavors, the first missionaries needed to endure the labors of abandoning their homeland and expose themselves to the discomforts and risks of these new unchartered lands. The establishment of the mission in the Philippines came like birth pangs to these Dominican missionaries. However, their faithful and steadfast witnessing to their Christian and religious vocation prepared them to counter the difficulty of giving birth to a new province.

Moreover, there was no doubt in the caliber of the first Dominican missionaries. They were men of high learning and exemplary in the practice of religious virtues. The diligent recruitment process for possible candidates for the mission showed how important it was to the province to maintain and reinforce the expected human and religious values from its friar missionaries. But as men of their time, they were limited by what methods were currently available in that period. The inquisitorial institution was the primary instrument in dealing with divergences in religious beliefs and cultural nuisances. We should not take this method out of the context of its time.

Lastly, though this knowledge of history does not propose a dogmatic proposition and certainty, it would help in avoiding another tower of Babel, which according to the words of Fray Thomas Lopez Francisco, OP, the second Prior Provincial of the Philippine Province, had "lost sight of what they started in the first place ( ... ) (and) ended up in ridicule."<sup>102</sup> As the country celebrates the fifth centenary of Christianity's arrival on the Philippine shores, the study on a specific period in

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<sup>101</sup> See Cicero, *De Oratore*, Book II, Chapter IX, section 36.

<sup>102</sup> ACP 2021 Calamba City, 147.



evangelization history attempts to provide a relevant historical reassessment to the many existing discourses of appraisal of the Christian Mission.**PS**

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