

A Short History of the *Pontificio Collegio Filipino, 1961–2001*

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Part I: A GLASS FRAME ON THE WALL

Hanging at the center on the right wall of the Rector's office is a huge and impressive 87 by 68 inch-glass frame. Inside it are a white stole, three coins and a caption. The white stole, embroidered in gold and silver thread, has emblazoned on its middle portion a papal coat of arms, cross with IHS at the bottom center and two deer gazing at the foot of the cross. A vine with grapes is encircled around the cross while a stalk of wheat lies along the papal emblem.

The coins are gold, silver and bronze. The gold and bronze coins bear the image of then Pope IOHANNES XXIII and the year of his pontificate: MCMLX.¹ The silver coin shows what is imprinted on the other side, the Pope's Latin motto OBEDIENTIA ET PAX (obedience and peace), with an olive branch at the background.

The caption at the bottom of the glass frame testifies to its importance. What is written points out to a historical moment: the

¹ He was Angelo Guiseppe Roncalli who took the name Pope Giovanni XXXIII (who had been antipope). He was born on November 25, 1888 in Sotto il Monte, Bergamo. As patriarch of Venice in 1953, he was raised to the papal throne on October 28, 1958. On January 25, 1959 Pope John XXXIII announced the opening of an ecumenical Vatican Council II. The council was opened on October 11, 1962. He was the author of the important encyclicals "Mater et Magistra" (1961) and "Pacem in Terris" (1962). Pope John XXXIII died on June 03, 1963 and was laid to rest in Saint Peter's crypt. During the great jubilee year 2000 of September 03, Pope John XXXIII was beatified by Pope John Paul II. See Giuseppe Fabiani, *All Popes in History: from Peter to John Paul II* (Imola: Edizioni Bologna, 2000), p. 266.

inauguration of the *Pontificio Collegio Filipino*. The caption has the following inscription:

Insignia of Office
personally bestowed
by
His Holiness Pope John XXIII
on the
First Rector
of
Pontificio Collegio Filipino
at its inauguration on October 07, 1961.

Admiring the glass frame, my thoughts go back to that memorable event. It started during the meeting of the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines on January 26-31, 1959 when the late Archbishop of Manila, Rufino Cardinal Santos, proposed a resolution to the Philippine bishops and which they approved: the establishment of a Pontifical Philippine College in Rome.

A. *An Idea*

What was the reason for its construction? The then bishop of Lingayen-Dagupan, Mariano Madriaga, expounded on this in his writings,

We need a College in Rome so that Filipino seminarians and priest-students can maintain a better health with a building accommodated to their accustomed temperature, with food prepared according to their taste and with a program accommodated to the peculiar Filipino need. We need leaders completely permeated, saturated with genuine Catholic spirit so that they will always, truly and thoroughly think, feel and work with the Church. This can be realized more perfectly when our seminarians and priests study at the shadow of Saint Peter's by the tombs of the Princes of the Apostles and the other Apostles and with frequent contact with the Holy Father.²

² Letter of Bishop Mariano Madriaga to the Filipino Catholic faithful, June 01, 1960. This letter is included among the Administrative Letters of the Rectors of the Pontificio Collegio Filipino. All reference to these administrative letters shall henceforth be cited as AL-PCF. Cited also in "A Filipino Seminary in Rome" in *Philippine Graphic*, 31 December 1961, p. 30.

From thereon, it was firmly established that the Collegio would exist primarily for the good of the Church in the Philippines. Bishop Emilio Cinense, of San Fernando, Pampanga, strongly pointed out the contribution of Collegio to the local Church,

The proposed 'Collegio-Filippino' to be constructed in Rome will give prestige and honor to the only Christian nation in the Far East. It will be the font of wisdom and piety, where the youth of the land can draw the strength and the inspiration that will enrich our Faith. The 'Collegio-Filippino' will be the source of all goodness and wisdom under the benevolent guidance and watchful eyes of the Holy Father. In this College will nurture the future spiritual leaders of the Catholic Church in the Philippines.³

The over-all objective of Collegio-Filippino was clearly laid out. The College was to be established "to provide the facilities and environment suited principally to Filipino priests who have been carefully chosen and formally sent by their bishops for the pursuit of higher studies in Pontifical Universities in Rome, for their continuous priestly formation '*sub umbra Petri*' and for their subsequent ministry in the Homeland."

The resolution approved by the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines was sent to the Vatican. The prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities, His Eminence Giuseppe Cardinal Pizzardo, gave the subsequent *Nihil Obstat*. In approving the resolution, Cardinal Pizzardo said:

We are indeed glad to recall that there are many Filipino students who, chosen with care by their Most Reverend Ordinaries, desirous of fulfilling the wishes of the Supreme Pastor, under the protection of the Supreme Pontiff, study under the light of the vestiges of Christian antiquity, so that having been formed as true soldiers of Christ, they may serve the faith among their people in the most fruitful way.⁴

³ Letter of Bishop Emilio Cinense to the Filipino Catholic faithful, 6 June 1960, AL-PCF.

⁴ Address of Giuseppe Cardinal Pizzardo on the occasion of laying the cornerstone of Filipino Seminary in Rome, August 9, 1959. Cited in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* 33, n. 377 (October 1959), p. 586.

With the gracious consent of the Vatican authorities, a site was chosen. The proposed location of "Collegio-Filippino" was a 23,893.44 square meter lot situated at Via Aurelia, between the Collegio Pio Brasiliano and the Villa Pacelli, just beyond Piazza Irnerio. Via Aurelia is a beautiful suburb below the Vatican City. The lot belonged to the *Casa Generalizia dell'Istituto dei Fratelli delle Scuole Cristiane*.⁵

Upon the request of the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines, Rufino Cardinal Santos begun the negotiations for the acquisition of the lot. The transaction was conducted with the Superior General of the Brothers of Christian Schools (De La Salle Brothers), Pierre Paul Loubet and with Father Nicet Joseph. After much discussion, the lot was purchased for the amount of 120,000,00 Italian lire.⁶

B. The Cornerstone

With the acquisition secured, the next step was the laying of the cornerstone. His Holiness Pope John XXXIII personally blessed the cornerstone on August 08, 1959. The blessing of the cornerstone was held in the private study of the Pope in his summer residence at Castelgandolfo. Rufino Cardinal Santos and the Philippine Ambassador to the Holy See, Jose Ma. Delgado, witnessed the significant event.

A document deposited in the cylinder sealed by the cornerstone bears the names of those who graced the affair. The document also mentioned that

His Eminence, Guiseppe Cardinal Pizzardo, suburban Bishop of Albano and prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities, solemnly laid the cornerstone of the new College-Seminary, dedicated to our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage, destined to welcome the Filipino young men

⁵ Letter of Rufino Cardinal Santos to the Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (De La Salle Brothers), 9 August 1958. This letter is a part of the correspondence about the purchase of the lot of the De La Salle Brothers at Via Aurelia between the Archbishop of Manila and the Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools kept at the Casa Generalizia dell'Istituto dei Fratelli delle Scuole Cristiane.

⁶ Ibid.

who, endowed with science and strong faith, under the shadows of Peter and the tombs of the Martyrs, will one day go back to their country to diffuse this treasury of faith to those under their care.⁷

The following day, August 09 was the designated date for the laying of the cornerstone. The impressive ceremonies were officiated by His Eminence Cardinal Pizzardo in the presence of three cardinals, namely: Mimmi, Agagianian and Ciriaci. Among the guests were seven high ranking Diplomats; an array of Superior-Generals of religious orders and congregations; Rectors of seminaries and universities and other distinguished personalities numbering to no less than seventy. In his address, Cardinal Pizzardo cited the tender solicitude and ardent desire that made the Roman Pontiff establish the ecclesiastical colleges of different nations in Rome, which they enriched with countless privileges and advantages. He expressed the "wish that many Filipino students will avail of the opportunities with the aim of preparing wise and holy ministers of the Church"⁸ and exhorted the Most Reverend Archbishop of Manila

⁷ The Latin text says "Augustus Pontifex admodum gavisus quod solemniter in hac Urbe auspicalis ponitur lapis novi seminarii Philippinarum Insularum caelestis gratiae copiam invocat ut quod laetis inchoatur auspiciis cito ac feliciter perficiatur atque dum suavissima delectatur spe fore ut ex tanti momenti opere Philippinorum christifidelium fides novo fulgeat decore auctoribusque proficiat incrementis tibi illius dilectissimae sibi nationis sacris antistitibus ceterisque universis qui in idem opus quoquo modo auxiliatricem conferunt operam apostolicam benedictionem divinum munerum auspiciem effusa caritate impertit."

The English translation is "The venerable Pontiff, very much pleased that in this City (of Rome) in a solemn rite the first stone of the new seminary of the Philippine Islands has been laid, implores copious heavenly grace so that what has been started with celestial joy may quickly and happily be brought to completion, and while he is with a most sweet hope delighted in what it will be in the future so that from such an important task of the faithful of the Philippines the faith may shine with new splendor and that it progresses with greater increase, he, with outpouring of charity, imparts to you and to the bishops of that nation very dear to himself and to all those who contribute whatever help to the work, the propitious apostolic blessing of heavenly favors." "Stato della Citta del Vaticano, Telegramma," in *Boletin Ecclesiastico de Filipinas* 33, n. 377 (October 1959), p. 569.

⁸ "Laying of the Cornerstone" in *Boletin Ecclesiastico de Filipinas* 33, n. 377 (October 1959), p. 586.

and the other Ordinaries “to send the promising young men of their 28 dioceses to Rome for their formation.”⁹

The Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, Archbishop Salvatore Siino, predicted that the establishment of a Filipino Seminary in Rome will mark a memorable milestone in the history of Catholic life in the Philippines. He admitted that

there is no doubt that the realization of their worthy project will entail much courageous endeavor, calling for generous cooperation and effective coordination. But the enterprise is a glorious one, and the distinction of providing Filipino ecclesiastical students with their own seminary in the Eternal City will be worth any effort.¹⁰

The former Apostolic Nuncio foresaw concrete advantages and lasting positive contributions of a Filipino seminary in Rome as he gave his encouragement.

I am sure that this laudable proposal will meet with a whole-hearted nationwide response, for its achievement will certainly bring forth great spiritual benefits for the Church in the Philippines, and will give new strength to the loving bonds which link this great catholic nation to the Vicar of Christ and the Apostolic See.¹¹

Pope John XXXIII through Cardinal Tardini sent a cabled message. The Supreme Pontiff known to the Italians as ‘Papa Buono’ rejoiced on the said occasion. In his letter, the good Pope invoked “abundant heavenly graces so that, what is auspiciously and promisingly begun, may be happily concluded and come to a glorious fulfillment.”¹²

Considering that at that time there were only 12 Colleges including those of Spain and France and the entire Latin America (which only had one College), thus the construction of Philippine

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Letter of Archbishop Salvatore Siino to the Catholic Hierarchy, August 9, 1959. AL-PCF.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Op. cit., in *Boletin Ecclesiastico de Filipinas* 33, n. 377 (October 1959), p. 586.

College in Rome redounded not only to the prestige and pastoral formation of the Filipino clergy, but also enhanced honor and greater affirmative diffusion of the name of our beloved country in the land of the Popes and of the Martyrs of the Faith.

The construction of the 'Collegio-Filippino' was the first institution initiated and undertaken by an Asian country in the Eternal City. The Philippines, in establishing it, was pioneering a significant precedent that was traditionally yet historically expected from her not only because of being the only Catholic nation in Asia but much more because of her role as a pillar of the faith in that emerging part of the world.

C. The Construction

With the laying of the cornerstone, the task of constructing the Collegio-Seminario began in earnest. The proposed Collegio-Seminario was designed by Engineer Edoardo Cherubini with an estimated cost of 800,000 US dollars.¹³ The building had three floors and a basement. The basement featured the usual services: kitchen, laundry room and crypta. The first floor included the chapel and sacristy, the reception, refectory, lobby and recreation room. The second and third floors were divided into classrooms and dormitory spaces. A separate house was also set up for the Sisters.

The building of the Collegio Filippino in Rome became a symbol of the generosity of the Filipino people. Every diocese willingly pledged to support and to share their resources in pro rata basis. During the national Educational Fund Drive for "Collegio-Seminario Filippino in Rome" which took place from June 1 to May 21, 1960, a member of the Executive Committee, Bishop of San Fernando, Pampanga, Emilio Cinense, issued an appeal to the Filipino faithful:

The Collegio is the dream and project of the first Filipino Cardinal, His Eminence Rufino Santos, backed up and supported by the whole catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines. If we can start and finish this important undertaking it will be a mani-

¹³ Op. cit., *Philippine Graphic*, p. 34.

festation of our great love for our beloved Cardinal and a living symbol of our capacity to unite together – rich or poor – behind this movement to build the Collegio-Seminario Filipino in Rome.¹⁴

Archbishop Luis del Rosario of Zamboanga issued a similar appeal:

This (Collegio-Seminario) will be the Filipino Seminary in the capital of the catholic world. This is the joint project of all the members of the Philippine Hierarchy for the training of Filipino young men, who are called by God to the sacred priesthood. I wish to make an earnest appeal to all of you to help in this noble work, with spiritual and material support.¹⁵

Archbishop Juan Sison of Nueva Segovia pointed out the necessity of the project:

The different nations like America, Spain, Brazil and others have their own Colleges in Rome. Our beloved Philippines has no College of her own as yet. Let us therefore be one in helping to build a College which is solely our own. This Filipino College will rise with the help of all the Catholics in the different dioceses of the Philippines. The National Committee of Catholic Action supervises the campaign of soliciting the help of all our brothers here in the Philippines. Give your wholehearted help since it will be our mutual happiness to see a Filipino College in Rome rise a short a while and we can show the other nations the true and living faith of the Filipinos.¹⁶

Everybody heeded the summons and appeals of their Bishops and committed and wholeheartedly cooperated in the project, pooling their resources for its realization. Every Filipino did his part and contributed to the project.

¹⁴ Pontificio Collegio Filipino, *National Educational Fund Drive for Collegio Seminario in Rome* (Manila: Cacho Hermanos, 1959), p. 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, page 5.

D. The Building

Rising to the challenges, the Filipinos showed their faith in action. The difficult task was made easy. The help and selfless efforts of all bore fruit. Less than a year after the start of construction, the people's untiring labor and unwavering sacrifices led them to the zenith of achievement. The dream became a reality. The day came when passerby admiringly gazed at a marble edifice in Via Aurelia, 490. Filipinos were filled with pride when their new home was finally erected in Rome. From its beginnings as recorded in the minutes of the meeting of the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines to the drawing board of the builders, Collegio-Seminario Filipino rose to take its place in Rome as an impressive building not only because of its formidable structures but more so because it was the product of faith and love.

The 'Collegio-Seminario' was the gift of the Filipinos to the Philippine Church, and in turn became the Philippine Church's gift to the Holy See. The 'gift' was fully appreciated and graciously received. The Pope, His Holiness John XXIII, instituted the *Collegium Clericorum Philippinorum in Urbe* with his Apostolic Letter *Sancta Mater Ecclesia*.¹⁷ He vested it with the title 'Pontificium.' Hereby the 'Collegio-Seminario' was later known as *Pontificio Collegio Semi-*

¹⁷ Apostolic Letter on the erection of the Pontificio Collegio-Seminario Filipino in Urbe, June 29, 1961. Cited in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, December 1961, volume 35, number 401, page 748. The original document is in the Rector's office. AL-PCF. The Latin text is as follows: Ad perpetuam rei memoriam – Sancta Mater Ecclesia, quae, divino impulsa mandato, sacri ordinis alumnorum nullam non curam semper habuit, sacra Seminaria excitare et ubique terrarum condere satagit. Attamen, ad eosdem sacrarum alumnos romano spiritu recte imbuendos, exterarum Nationum Collegia in hac quoque Alma Urbe instituere, data occasione, numquam destitit. Quapropter, Decessorum Nostrorum Romanorum Pontificum vestigiis inhaerentes, opportunam duximus supplicationem Nobisque periucundam, qua Dilectus Filius Noster Rufinus I. Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae Presbyter Cardinalis Santos, Archiepiscopus Manilensis, nomine quoque omnium insularum Philippinarum Episcoporum, Nos rogavit, ut, ope ac sumptibus omnium eiusdem Nationis dioecesium, novum pro sacrorum alumnis Philippinis instituendis Ephemum in hac Alma Urbe aperire posset. Nos autem, haud immemores Epistulae qua Decessor Noster, fec. Rec., Pius Pp. XI, die XVIII mensis Ianuarii anno MCMXXXIX, doctrinae ac vitae praecepta, inter quae de alumnis in spem Ecclesiae instituendis tractantia, earundem Insularum Ordinariis sapienter prudenterque dedit, congruens tantae Episcoporum et sacerdotum nec non fidelium liberalitati tantaeque in Petri Cathedram observantiae praemium conferre volentes atque ad divinas fovendas

nario Filipino. Notwithstanding the heavy rain that day, Pope John XXIII inaugurated the Collegio on October 07, 1961 during the Feast of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary and dedicated it under the maternal protection of the Nuestra Señora de la Paz y Buen Viaje (Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage).

E. The Blessing

The blessing of the College was held amid a refreshing down-pour which made Pope John XXIII express *multae aquae non potuerunt extinguere caritatem*¹⁸ (much water will not extinguish

in Sacerdotium vocationes, huiusmodi votis obsecundare libenti statuimus animo. Itaque, collatis consiliis cum Venerabili Fratrem Nostro Iosepho Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae Cardinali Pizzardo, Episcopo Albanensi atque Sacrae Congregationis de Seminariis et Studiorum Universitatibus Praefecto, ad maiorem Dei gloriam, ad honorem Beatae Mariae Virginis ab origine Immaculatae, praecipuae Insularum Philippinarum Patronae, ad catholicae religionis incrementum, ad decus utilitatemque memoratae Nationis, hisce Litteris Nostrae auctoritate, certa scientia ac matura deliberatione Nostra deque Apostolicae potestatis plenitudine, *Collegium Clericorum Philippinorum in Urbe condimus et constituimus*, eiusdemque iuris esse volumus quo clericorum Collegio urbana utuntur, fruuntur. "In hoc enimvero quasi perfructus (ut amplissimis Leonis Pp. XIII, Decessoris Nostri, iim. Mem., verbis utamur), prope veneranda sepulcra Apostolorum Principum augustamque Petri Cathedram, multo licet plenius saluberrimam haurire doctrinam, quae Dei ministros deceat; hic ad probatissimae disciplinae solidaeque pietatis consuetudinem sanctius adduci; hic multiplici rerum ope ea arma expeditius instruere, quibus muniti, boni Christi milites perutile religioni neque minus civitati exhibeant ministerium." Quo insuper Nostra in gentem Philippinam benevolentiae apertis pateat, statuimus ut memoratum Urbanum Collegium Philippinum, cui nomen vulgare 'Colegio-Seminario de Nuestra Señora de la Paz y Buen Viaje' inditum est, titulo et honoribus ac privilegiis 'Pontificii' Apostolica auctoritate Nostra augeatur, cuius statuta, hispanico conscripta sermone, auctoritate item Nostra *approbamus* et observare mandamus, Postremo legem, qua sacrorum alumni Philippini, in Urbe studiorum causa degentes, in Pontificio Collegio Pio Latino-Americano commorare olim tenebantur, in Pontificiis ad novas Dioeceses vel Praelaturas nullius ibidem condendas spectantibus Decretis praetermitti iubemus. Contrariis quibusvis minime obstantibus. Haec edicimus, statuimus, decernentes praesentes Litteras firmas, validas atque efficaces iugiter exstare ac permanere; suosque plenos atque integros effectus sortiri et obtinere; illisque ad quos spectant seu spectare poterunt, nunc et inane fieri, si quidquam secus, super his, a quovis, auctoritate qualibet, scienter sive ignoranter contigerit attentari.

Datum Romae, apud Sanctum Petrum, sub anulo Piscatoris, die XXIX mensis Iunii, in festo SS. Apostolorum Petri et Pauli, anno MCMLXI, Pontificatus Nostri tertio.

¹⁸ Canticle of Canticles, 8:9.

love). The Pope affirmed the important role and mission of the College as he said:

This Pontifical Seminary therefore is both a Roman and Philippine College; for here, that is, near the Seat of Peter and the summit of the Church, your young ones divinely called to take on sacred functions, will draw faith and science from the genuine and rich font. Fully imbued with this they shall return to their people as beloved heralds of truth. That is why these buildings destined for the formation of your students of sacred sciences will be like channels by which the catholic life will be promoted among you and the bond by which the Philippines, a Nation so very dear to us, will more intensely be linked with the supreme magisterium of the Church.¹⁹

At the culmination of the religious inaugural ceremony, Pope John XXIII gave to Collegio a white stole, the insignia of office of the Rector and three (3) commemorative coins in gold, silver and bronze of his pontificate.

Since then, the white stole and the three coins have been placed in a glass frame and hung in the Rector's office, bearing quiet witness to the long, interesting history of Collegio Filipino which is celebrating its ruby anniversary this year. The glass frame with the insignia of office clearly mirrors through the years the affection of the Holy Father towards the Collegio Filipino and his continuing paternal guidance *sub umbra Petri* (under the guidance of Saint Peter). The 40 years of its existence reflect the united efforts of the Philippine clergy and laity to turn love into action: a gift to grace and a blessing especially for those who are away from home and needing the welcome and warmth that only home can give.

Part II: LIFE BEGINS AT FORTY

Life begins at forty. At least, that is how the old adage goes. But for the Pontificio Collegio Filipino, the saying is an understatement. For the past forty years, the Collegio Filipino has taken under its wing hundreds of Filipino diocesan priests, including

¹⁹ The opening address of Pope John XXXIII during the blessing of Pontificio Collegio-Seminario Filipino in Urbe, October 7, 1961. AL-PCF.

foreigners, who have been sent by their bishops to undertake advanced ecclesiastical studies in Rome, so steeped in apostolic tradition and so near the Holy See. It has long been their shelter and refuge in a foreign land.

Much more than a house for Filipino priests in Rome, Italy, the Collegio Filipino has been a veritable home, a spiritual training ground, and a springboard for the diverse pastoral and religious works that these priests undertake after going back to their homeland. For many visiting Filipino religious and Catholic pilgrims in Rome, the Collegio Filipino has also been a welcome home. To the many Filipino migrant communities in Italy, the Collegio Filipino has been a source of hope and spiritual nourishment through the apostolic and pastoral activities of its student-priests. And significantly, it has produced priests who became bishops, doctors and licentiates in different fields of theology who have become luminaries in the Catholic Church of the Philippines.

The Pontificio Collegio Filipino is a living testimony to the generosity of the Filipino people who willingly gave contributions so that this Collegio could be realized. It is also a symbol of God's grace, love and blessing and of Mother Mary's protection for the Filipino people and its priests.

Sub Umbra Petri, the Pontificio Collegio Filipino on its fortieth year once more affirms its role in the formation of Filipino priests as veritably their home away from home.

A. Everything is prepared and ready ...

On October 07, 1961, the Pontificio Collegio Filipino was formally opened. On that special day, it accommodated eighteen student-priests and four seminarians. The student-priests and their respective dioceses were:²⁰

1. Ruben Abaya (Laoag)
2. Patricio Alo (Cebu)
3. Cecilio Acasio (Davao)

²⁰ Pontificio Collegio-Seminario Filipino, *Catalogus Alumnorum*, 1961, pages 1-3. This *Catalogus Alumnorum* is a ledger provided by the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries and Universities to officially register all student-priests in Rome.

4. Benjamin Almoneda (Caceres)
5. Teodoro Buhain (Manila)
6. Achilles Dakay (Cebu)
7. Angel Hobayan (Borongan)
8. Rafael Lim (Lucena)
9. Benjamin Paredes (Nueva Segovia)
10. Cornelio Parado (Palo)
11. Alberto Piamonte (Jaro)
12. Miguel Purruganan (Tuguegarao)
13. Vicente Quintia (Capiz)
14. Apolinario Saligumba (Ozamiz)
15. Edmundo Surban (Dumaguete)
16. Nemesio Tan (Laoag)
17. Antonio Unson (Manila)
18. Toribio Villacastin, Jr. (Tagbilaran)

The seminarians were:²¹

1. Daniel Fuentespin (Cotabato)
2. Reynaldo Masiglat
3. Constantino Nieva (Lucena)
4. Gabriel Reyes (Manila)

They were administered and guided by Rector, Vice-Rector and Prefect of Discipline, Spiritual Director and Economist.²² The Collegio began to function with governing house rules and statutes.

The Rector was Father Reginald Arliss, an American Passionist missionary in the Philippines. He first came to the Philippines in 1958 with the first group of Passionist missionaries. He had served in China for 16 years until his expulsion in 1952 after house arrest by the Communists. Immediately thereafter he was appointed Master of Novices of the Mission Society of the Sons of Mary, Health of the Sick in Massachusetts. Father Arliss served there for five years. The Vice-Rector and Prefect of Discipline was Father Alfredo Rodriguez from the Archdiocese of Manila. Father Jesus Ma.

²¹ Ibid.

²² "Three priests assigned in Pontificio Collegio-Seminario in Urbe" in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* 35, no. 401 (September 1961): 581.

Cavanna, a Vincentian, was the spiritual director. Father Carmelo Morelos was the economo.

The rain poured heavily on that day. At seven in the morning, after blessing the seminary chapel, His Eminence Rufino Cardinal Santos celebrated a Pontifical Low Mass before a crowd of almost 300 Filipino and foreign guests. The Committee on Inauguration of the Bishops in the Philippines organized a "fly now, pay later plan"²³ so that as many Filipino faithful as possible could attend the solemn opening of Collegio Filipino. The pilgrimage tours also included holy sites in Europe as added attractions.

During breakfast, they were greeted with the wonderful news that His Holiness Pope John XXIII would attend the formal inauguration rites in the afternoon. By 3:30 in the afternoon, the ground floor of the Collegio Filipino was teeming with distinguished guests: ten cardinals and archbishops and bishops from different dioceses in the world. At around 5:00, Rufino Cardinal Santos led a procession into the chapel. It was beautifully decorated for the occasion. The altar was bedecked with white roses. Before the altar a red papal chair was set and a pre-dieu.

The ceremony began with the playing of the national anthems of Italy and of the Philippines. Archbishop Julio Rosales, archbishop of Cebu and dean of the Church Hierarchy of the Philippines, gave the welcome address. Father Antonio Unson and Guiseppe Cardinal Pizzardo, prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities followed with salutary speeches. The papal chamberlain then announced that Pope John XXIII had left the Vatican for the Philippine College to bestow his special apostolic blessing in person to the Filipino people. After fifteen minutes, the expectant visitors, among whom was no less than the Philippine President Diosdado Macapagal, greeted the Holy Father. A processional was played as the Pope, amidst his entourage of chamberlains and secretaries, walked from the Collegio's atrium into the seminary chapel to his place of honor at the altar. All the time, his smiling face nodded slightly every now and then to bestow his benediction to the throng of guests:

²³ Ibid., p. 448.

After a welcome speech in Italian by Cardinal Rufino Santos, the Holy Father read his speech in Latin, saying: "The official speeches have to be given in Latin to preserve a common language, but when one wants to express what is dear to one's heart, one must speak in his national tongue, so I speak to you in Italian."²⁴ The Holy Father explained that in spite of a cold and being advised not to proceed because of the bad weather, he nevertheless came to rejoice with the Filipino people on that memorable event: "But I came anyway because I know that many of you have traveled thousands of miles to be present in this joyous occasion."²⁵ Then the Holy Father mentioned the heavy but refreshing downpour during the day, quoting from the Song of Songs: *multae aquae non potuerunt extinguere caritatem* (8:9).

He welcomed the many Filipino pilgrims and exhorted them to unity: "You are a people divided geographically, but the unity of your faith is a shining beam in that part of the world."²⁶ He then congratulated them for building the Collegio, "But your work does not stop here, for you must nurture within your families the Christian spirit so that you will be able to send your sons to be priests of God."²⁷ Pope John XXIII said that a nation's salvation depended mainly on the holiness of its priests. He praised the generosity and spirit of sacrifice of the Filipino bishops, priests and laymen who made possible the fulfillment of this dream of constructing a Filipino College in Rome. He concluded his address with his apostolic blessing.

Also on that day, the Collegio Filippino was lovingly dedicated under the maternal protection of the *Nuestra Señora de la Paz y Buen Viaje*. It is but fitting that the Collegio Filippino was to be under the patronage of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage because the Filipino priests and seminarians of the College are in fact on a voyage, both spiritually and physically, and who need to be under the maternal care of Mary, our Mother. It is a grace that the Collegio

²⁴ The opening address of Pope John XXXIII on the blessing of Pontificio Collegio-Seminario Filippino, October 7, 1961. AL-PCF.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Filipino came to be dedicated to Mother Mary in keeping with its mission to physically take care and spiritually guide the priests in their ecclesiastical studies and furtherance of their religious formation.

B. The journey begins ...

A journey begins with a single step. That step is taken with serious care and consideration. The life of the student-priests and seminarians in Collegio Filipino consisted of many steps towards a direction, a goal. The opening words of the Rules set the tone for the student-priests and seminarians. By his admission, "every student (in Collegio Seminario Filipino) undertakes to keep these Rules faithfully and he must consider their contents as the expression of God's will and a sure means of corresponding to his priestly vocation."²⁸

The Rules challenged the students to see in all and each of the prescriptions of the Rules, even in the least important ones, incentives for priestly formation and sanctification and as such as worthy of great respect, obedience, and fidelity. By the constant, faithful and determined observance of little things, they will acquire day by day the heroic virtues with which every well-trained priest must be adorned.²⁹

The 1961 Rules of Collegio Seminario Filipino revolved around piety, study and silence, recreation and walks, personal rooms and visits, communications with outside and vacations. On piety, the Rules maintained that "since learning without holiness is not only useless but very often dangerous for the priest, all should strive to acquire spiritual perfection and sanctification by means of daily acts of piety."³⁰

Student-priests and seminarians were asked to make a spiritual retreat of three days at the beginning of the school year aside from the annual six-day Spiritual Exercises and monthly recollection.

²⁸ Pontificio Collegio-Seminario Filipino, "Regula," (privately printed, 1961), p. 1.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

After the daily lauds, the students-priests and seminarians were to have a 30- minute meditation. They had to go together to the chapel to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament after the two principal meals. They prayed the five decades of the Rosary and the *Angelus* or *Regina Coeli* together everyday. And every night before retiring, they all gathered in the chapel to prepare the points for meditation and to make the examination of conscience. They had a Holy Hour on the eve of every First Friday and during the three days of the 'Carnivale.'³¹

The student-priests and seminarians were constantly reminded that they had been sent by their Ordinaries to the Eternal City in order to be duly trained in piety and in science through a more solid and profound intellectual education from the very source of ecclesiastical sciences. Thus, "they should be faithful in attending classes and in going to examinations from which they may not absent themselves without Father Rector's permission."³² They could only possess and keep books, magazines and pamphlets related to their studies or that might help in their scientific formation.

Collegio Seminario Filippino valued the importance of silence as an indispensable aid for study and interior recollection. Thus, silence was strongly observed from the end of evening recreation until breakfast of the following day; during all the periods of study; in going to and coming from the rooms, chapel, and the refectory from the ringing of the bell to the time for recreation; inside the rooms; and in the corridors and stairways, bathrooms and toilets.³³

Recreation as a community act helped not only in getting rest from work and study. It also fostered family spirit. Student-priests and seminarians were obliged to take a walk in groups at least thrice a week.³⁴ The groupings and the route were determined by the Father Rector. The composition of the groupings was changed weekly. The walks began and ended with a brief prayer said in common at the entrance of the Collegio but they were not allowed to enter restaurants, bars, cafes and stores other than bookstores and religious shops.

³¹ Ibid., p. 4.

³² Ibid., p. 5.

³³ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 8-9.

Since the formation of the candidates to the priesthood demands neatness in one's own person and care of things, avoiding such was not in keeping with ecclesiastical propriety. Bishop Benjamin Almendra admitted that during their time,

it was not allowed to have more furniture in one's own room than what was provided to each one. No one was allowed to put up photographs, pictures and paintings which did not speak well of good seminarians. A limited number of statuettes, holy pictures and photographs were allowed. Alcoholic drinks were never be kept in one's room, neither to have a radio.³⁵

The mornings of Thursday and Sundays were for the cleaning of the individual rooms. The prefect of discipline had the right to inspect the rooms to see if the proper cleanliness and care of the furniture were being observed.

Student-priests and seminarians were not allowed to visit lay people in their houses or hotels. A permission stating a full explanation of the nature of such a visit had first to be obtained in order to visit someone outside the Collegio. No outsiders could be invited to programs and entertainment held in the Collegio. Regarding visitors, they were allowed to visit once a week and have to be received in the visiting rooms and not in the private rooms.

Also prohibited in the Collegio were worldly newspapers. The correspondence of the student-priests, except those carried on with their respective Ordinaries and higher superiors, were inspected by the Administrators. They were highly encouraged to be faithful in writing to their families and respective Ordinaries. They could write letters, however, only on Thursdays, Sundays and holidays.

Student-priests and seminarians had to spend their summer vacation together like a family and the trips had to be done in group of three. They could return to Collegio after vacation on the date set by the Father Rector and no one could return later than the date specified by the Father Rector.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

The best way to get an idea of what their everyday life was like, was to know their daily schedules. Their time order, as they called it, then, was divided into two parts: one for student-priests and another for seminarians. They were as follows:

A. Morning Schedule for both student-priests and seminarians:³⁶

5:30	Rise
5:55	Lauds, Meditation
6:30	Holy Mass
7:10	Breakfast
7:45	Leave for School

B. Afternoon Schedule for seminarians:

1:00	Lunch
2:00	Siesta
3:15	End of Siesta
3:30	Pastoral Talks
4:30	Spiritual Reading
5:10	Study
7:00	Homiletics
8:00	Supper
11:00	Lights Out

C. Afternoon Schedules for student-priests:

1:00	Lunch
4:15	Merienda
7:45	Rosary
8:00	Supper
9:15	Compline, Pointers for Reflections
11:00	Lights Out

The Father Rector, Reginald Arliss in his 1963 annual report to the Philippine bishops mentioned that

³⁶ Report of Father Reginald Arliss to Rufino Cardinal Santos and members of the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines, January 12, 1966. This report is included among the compiled administrative reports of the rectors of Pontificio Collegio-Seminario Filipino: 1960 – 1980. All references to these reports shall henceforth be indicated as AR-PCF.

all students try to comply to the requirements of the Rules. Yet, he admitted that there could be greater fidelity to some points especially silence, wearing their cassocks in their rooms and etiquette. They maintained a solid spirit of piety, availing themselves of the many opportunities afforded to them for the advancement in virtue.³⁷

Rules are means for growth, for order, for stability. Their success depends on the implementation of those in authority and also on the observance of those rules by those concerned. Father Alfredo Rodriguez, the vice-rector and prefect of discipline, commented in the 1965 annual report, "Much of our success in the training and formation depends on the proper and wise choice of the candidates sent here."³⁸

True enough, we have to pick up the good seeds and plant them in good soil. We have to choose a strong and sturdy pair of shoes for a long and tedious journey.

C. Provisions along the way...³⁹

The manner of payment for a stay at the Collegio was in US dollars. The annual contribution of student-priests and seminarians was 750 US dollars. The exchange rate at that time was 62.50 Italian lira to 1.00 US dollar. The annual contribution was insufficient to meet the needs of the student-priests and seminarians. It cost much to maintain the Collegio Seminario Filipino. The average monthly expenses of Collegio for wages and salaries in Italian Lire was 828,621; for basic utilities such as water, electricity, gas, 772,098; and for food and marketing, 2.161,814.⁴⁰

To support the Collegio, the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines mandated that each diocese without students in Collegio was

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Report of Father Alfredo Rodriguez to Rufino Cardinal Santos and members of the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines, January 17, 1966. AR-PCF.

³⁹ This section is based mainly on the financial report of Father Carmelo Morelos to Rufino Cardinal Santos and members of the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines, October 10, 1963. AR-PCF.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

to give 375 US dollars annually. Article 8, II of the Statutes of the Bishops on Collegio Seminario Filippino declared,

Las Archidiócesis, las diócesis y las demás jurisdicciones eclesiásticas que por cualquier motivo no tienen alumnos en el Collegio Seminario Filipino en Roma, están obligadas a dar a la Comisión Episcopal, cada año, el 50% de los gastos que importa el mantenimiento anual de un seminarista.

The Catholic Hierarchy was truly interested with the welfare of Collegio. The bishops were concerned about the well-being of the students and seminarians. They even contributed to the purchase a school bus for the use of the Collegio. And so, thirty bishops gave one hundred dollars each and one bishop added fifty dollars for the procurement of an "Alfa Romeo 2" bus.⁴¹ The cost of the bus was 1,842,400 Italian lire (\$3,050.00).

It was truly difficult to maintain a College in Rome. There were needs to be met. There demands to be settled. Yet, Collegio was not found lacking. The fraternal concern and communal charity of the bishops were welcome relief.

D. They came to help...

The *Congregazione delle Suore Serve di Maria di Ravenna* (with the mother house in Via Giorgio Ghiselli, 51 Ravenna 48100) came to the assistance of the Collegio by sending a number of its sisters to handle the upkeep of Collegio and to take charge in preparing the food and clothes of the students and seminarians. They were also the source of prayers and exemplary models as witnesses of silent service. A detailed agreement between the Collegio Seminario Filippino and the *Congregazione "Serve di Maria" 'Ghiselli'* was signed by Father Reginald Arliss, Rector, and Maria Angela dalla Via, mother superior of the Congregation.⁴²

The economo, Father Carmelo Morelos, in his February 14, 1963 report said, "The Sisters have been very cooperative, and have

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Final agreement between Pontificio Collegio-Seminario Filippino and Congregazione 'Serve di Maria,' October 01, 1961. AR-PCF.

spared no efforts to keep the community well fed at moderate expenditures."⁴³

The Diocese of Regensburg in Bavaria provided a house, Schloss Spindhof for the six-week use of the student-priests and seminarians during the summer months. They enjoyed a very restful diversion. There were outdoor recreation, whole day hikes, weekly bus excursions to industrial centers. "All these," according to the recollection of Father Rector, Reginald Arliss, "provided us with an interesting and instructive sojourn in Germany. Some of us became quite proficient in the language."⁴⁴

Life begins with renewed freshness at forty. The early years of Collegio Seminario Filipino were an impetus for a great start. They paved the way for the long journey. They laid a strong foundation on which to build the community in the years to come. For forty years Collegio had existed for priests. For forty years priests have always found a home there. Collegio continues to open its arms wide to Filipino diocesan priests filled with the mind and heart of the Church, helping and guiding them to know her more, to love her more and give witness to her teachings as laid down by the life and word of Jesus Christ.

Through the years, Collegio has welcomed priests warmly as their home away from home. In doing so, the Collegio also constantly reminds them of their calling and duty as underscored by the biblical verse inscribed at the Collegio's entrance: "*You will be called priests of the Lord!*" (Isaiah 61:6).

Life begins at forty. Nowhere do these words ring more true than here at the Collegio Filipino!

Part III: *DUC IN ALTUM* (Luke 5,4)

The Collegio Filipino is shaped like a boat, and it was really intended to look like one. The One who commanded his apostles

⁴³ Financial report of Father Carmelo Morelos to Rufino Cardinal Santos and members of the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines, February 14, 1964.

⁴⁴ Report of Father Reginald Arliss to Rufino Cardinal Santos and members of the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines, January 12, 1966. AR-PCF.

“*put into the deep*” (Luke 5:4), is the captain of this boat. Coming from an archipelago of 7,100 islands, the commanding words of Jesus hold dearly for the Collegio resident-priests a familiar ring. They have to put into the deep to catch a great number of fish. Yet, it is not enough to spread the net. They have to venture into the deep waters of a foreign land.

The Collegio Filippino has welcomed “*fishers of men*” (Matthew 4:19) aboard and on the instruction of its captain, has put out into the deep. The Collegio Filippino has gone fishing and will continue fishing...

A. “**I am going fishing.**” (John 21:3)

A reading of Church History, particularly of the section on the Filipino clergy, shows that Filipinos have distinguished themselves in the ordained ministry. Many of the pioneer Filipino clerics were able to reach the summit of educational achievement, chalking up doctorate degrees from the leading universities of that time. The desire to continue and enhance this great tradition of learned Filipino priests served as the impetus to establish the Collegio Filippino in Rome. The vision was a home which would combine the spiritual and intellectual ambiance of a seminary and a college for Filipino priests aspiring to higher learning. It was to be a home what would reflect the warmth of Filipino hospitality, and at the same time stimulate the acquisition of valuable knowledge in the various theological fields.

It is in this manner that the Collegio Seminario Filippino, located at 490 Via Aurelia – a quick 15-minute ride by bus from Saint Peter’s Basilica – houses Filipino diocesan priests who ‘*put into the deep*’ of higher theological studies in the different pontifical universities in the Eternal City.

Nonetheless, it is not only a base for ecclesiastical studies, but also a community, which provides a special type of priestly formation characterized by the cultural diversity and proximity to the Supreme Pontiff, which only Rome can provide.

The Filipino diocesan priests who have been duly sent by their bishops to pursue advanced ecclesiastical studies in Rome

spend two to three years working for a Licentiate, and another two years for a Doctorate in different fields of theology, such as Biblical Theology, Canon Law, Church History, Dogmatic Theology, Liturgy, Mariology, Missiology, Moral Theology, Pastoral Theology, Philosophy, Sacred Scriptures, Social Communications and Spiritual Theology. The Collegio Filipino priests undergo studies and specialization at the pontifical universities around Rome run by different religious congregations; such as *Alfonsianum*, of the Redemptorist Fathers (noted for Moral Theology); the Dominicans' *Angelicum*; the Jesuits' *Gregorianum*; the Lateran University; the *Marianum* (for Mariology); the Benedictines' *San'Anselmo*, well known for studies in the Liturgy and the *Santa Croce* of the Opus Dei.

Who are those being sent? The 1987 Statutes of the Episcopal Commission for the Pontificio Collegio Filippino states that

Bishops shall send to the College only those priests who, after careful consideration of their fitness or aptitude, such as good health, intellectual ability, proven virtue and pastoral experience:

1. manifest a ready willingness to undergo an ongoing spiritual formation hand in hand with higher academic pursuit,
2. demonstrate the sound disposition of observing norms of individual and corporate discipline,
3. give promise of success in their studies and demonstrate their disposition to go back thereafter to their respective ecclesiastical jurisdiction for ministry therein (VI,2).⁴⁵

As a "home for priestly studying in Rome," the College has been mindful of the obligations and directives binding upon all priests in the diocese of Rome. Thus, the student-priests inturn help in building up an authentic presbyterium, a genuine priestly community, a true sacramental brotherhood.

Yet in her early existence till 1967, the College housed seminarians. A reference is from the statistical report of Father Alfredo

⁴⁵ Pontificio Collegio-Seminario Filippino, "Statuta" (privately printed, April 30, 1987), p. 2.

Rodriguez, the then vice-rector and prefect of discipline. The figures are as follows:⁴⁶

- (1) Number of Newcomers: Priests, 4; Seminarians, 1; *Total*, 5.
- (2) Number of Students: Priests, 10; Seminarians, 16; *Total*, 26.
- (3) Seminarians in Theology: First Year, 1; Second Year, 3; Third Year, 8; Fourth Year, 4; *Total*, 16. (4) Priests taking: Canon Law, 3; Theology, 3; Pastoral, 2, Sociology, 2, *Total*, 10. (5) Schools attended: Gregorian, 15, Angelicum, 6; Lateran, 3; CISIC, 2; *Total*, 4. (6) Dioceses represented: Cabanatuan, 1; Capiz, 1; Cebu, 2; Dumaguete, 1; Laoag, 1; Lingayen-Dagupan, 3; Lipa, 1; Lucena, 3; Jaro, 2; Malolos, 1; Nueva Segovia, 1; Sorsogon, 1; Tarlac, 1; *Total*, 17.

The College as also a seedbed of vocation, she prepared and formed seminarians to be 'alter Christus.' The January 12, 1966 report of the Rector, Father Reginald Arliss, CP, to Rufino Cardinal Santos and the members of the episcopal committee said

... and incidentally what concerns the present: His Eminence Ildebrando C. Antoniutti has cordially consented to confer the Sacred Priesthood on three deacons of this College on the morning of February 20 in our chapel. The Deacons are: Rev. Sergio Pablo of Tarlac, Rev. Osbaldo Padilla of Cebu, and Rev. Alfredo Madlangbayan of Lipa. It is expected that Rev. Marcial Juan will be ordained Priest in June next.⁴⁷

Thus, we can conclude that from the sixth year of her existence, the College has certainly made progress especially with regard to giving more opportunities to the seminarians in growing in self-responsibility. The closer contact of superiors with students through informal dialogues and individual talks and the presence of zealous and cooperative students resulted in a notable increase in the spirit of charity, goodwill and cooperation among the students and better observance of seminary rules and practices.

⁴⁶ Letter of Father Alfredo Rodriguez to Rufino Cardinal Santos and members of the Episcopal committee on Pontificio Collegio-Seminario Filipino, January 17, 1967. AL-PCF.

⁴⁷ Letter of Father Reginald Arliss to Rufino Cardinal Santos and members of the Episcopal committee on Pontificio Collegio-Seminario Filipino, January 12, 1966. AL-PCF.

Now, on her fortieth year, five hundred twenty-two (522) priests and seminarians lived under the roof and *'fished'* for Licentiates and Doctoral degrees with greater success.⁴⁸

B. "Throw the net on the right side" (John 21:6).

*1. Finances:*⁴⁹

The quota of 375.00 US dollars for Dioceses unrepresented in the Collegio-Seminario was suggested to be stopped. An amendment about diocesan annual quota of dioceses without a seminarian or priest in Collegio-Seminario was introduced during the plenary meeting of the Bishops and subsequently applied in the Statutes. The implementation was carried out upon the approval of the Holy See.

And so, for the future maintenance of the Collegio-Seminario, the Bishops agreed to adopt the following measures:

1. a national or diocesan collection,
2. observance of the Statutes requiring at least two students from every Archdiocese and one from every Diocese,
3. the mass stipend allowed by the Holy See regarding Masses *'pro populo,'* Binational and Trinational Masses on Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation, the Binational masses other than Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, and
4. the mass stipends offered by the College-Seminary.

Aside from these measures, the Administrative staff proposed other suggestions for savings and additional income.⁵⁰

It was also observed by the Administrative staff that it would be of great help to uplift the finances if the College was full house. So, they appealed to the Bishops to send two priests and one priest from their Archdioceses and Dioceses respectively. From the 1967

⁴⁸ Pontificio Collegio Filipino, *2001 Directory of Pontificio Collegio Filipino Alumni* (privately printed, May 03, 2001).

⁴⁹ Minutes of the Catholic Bishops' of the Philippines annual meeting, January 31-February, 1966, pp. 10-11.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

letter of Father Rector, Reginald Arliss to Rufino Cardinal Santos, stated that

“were our Collegio filled to capacity, we would be economically sound each year, since the tuition fee from all would be sufficient for the ordinary maintenance of our Institute. Accordingly we respectfully and urgently beg of the Bishops, in their charity, to continue to patronize the Philippine College by sending priests for higher studies.”⁵¹

2. *Discipline and External Order:*

The Administrative staff concluded the need of training and practice of priests and seminarians in pastoral activities, e.g. helping in parish work, visiting the poor and the sick, on Sundays. They also admitted that priests and seminarians should also be given opportunity and encouragement to develop their artistic and cultural knowledge.

Even if there has been much improvement in the spirit shown by the students with regard to the observance of seminary regulations and practices, changes have been applied on these important matters.⁵²

1. *Radio, Television and Reading Materials.* Greater freedom is now given to the students with regard to the magazines, periodicals and other reading matter they may have. The prudent use of the radio, record players and tape recorders has been generally allowed, also to the seminarians, for the purpose especially of learning languages and of developing their artistic tastes. The student-priest may now go to watch television anytime they wish, provided it is outside the time for common community duties. Each seminarian, however, besides the nightly news telecast after suppertime, is still limited to only one program of his choice once a week after night prayers. The seminarians are encouraged and thus

⁵¹ Report of Father Reginald Arliss to Rufino Cardinal Santos and members of the Episcopal committee on Pontificio Collegio-Seminario Filipino, January 12, 1967. AR-PCF.

⁵² Report of Father Alfredo Rodriguez to Rufino Cardinal Santos and members of the Episcopal committee, January 18, 1967. AR-PCF.

allowed to see television programs of cultural and educational value.

2. *Outing, Walks, Movies and Games.* The students, both seminarians and priests, have the opportunity to go out for a whole day's outing at least once a month, either all together or in little groups of three. The obligatory walk for the seminarians is done at least once a month. Whereas the priests are left on their own good judgment with regard to going to movies under ecclesiastic auspices shown outside, the seminarians have a general permission to attend the '*cineforum*' films shown at the Collegio Pio-Latino Americano every other Thursday. Regarding outdoor games, it is still generally not so easy for our priests to go out and play. The seminarians, however, participate in the various sports activities sponsored by the student organizations. Moderate smoking is allowed to seminarians inside their rooms.

3. *College uniform.* The students are now generally dispensed from wearing Roman hat. The priests, moreover, may wear a black sash instead of the distinctive collegio sash when going out. The seminarians are still supposed to wear the hat and *sotana* when going out except during the hot summer months.

Furthermore the Administrative staff concluded that "much of our success in the training and formation depends on the proper and wise choice of the candidates sent here."

3. *Priests and Seminarians:*

Since, it was impossible to apply the 1961 rule on the separation of priests and seminarians, the Administrative staff were no longer to enforce it. A further step was taken by the Administrative staff. They arrived to a conclusion that only priests should be sent to study in Rome after having had two or three years of experience in parish works on the homefront. Philippine major seminaries do a far better job in preparing their students in ecclesiastical science and in orientating them for pastoral work for the ministry.⁵³

⁵³ Op. cit., Report of Father Reginald Arliss, January 12, 1967. AR-PCF.

The 1966 report of the Spiritual Director, Father Jesus Cavanna, admitted with painful regret that the spiritual direction of seminarians passed through a serious crisis. To paraphrase the standing problem was simply this:

my ideas on the spiritual life and many parts of theological disciplines I have acquired during some thirty years, seem not to fit any more to the ideas that our seminarians assimilate from the lectures they hear in the University or from the novelties they read in reference books and in all kinds of publications or from their contact with fellow students in the Universities. I have tried – if I am not mistaken – in the years of my priestly life to keep up to date with anything of authentic and sane progress in ecclesiastical sciences; but seemingly my efforts have not been successful enough to satisfy the prurency for new ('modern' is the word) ideas that is the fashion nowadays.⁵⁴

Father Jesus Cavanna made it clear that he did not mean to blame the seminarians whom according to him were "very good, still respect and has esteem of him,"⁵⁵ but simply the victims of the confusion of our day and of the environment of most Universities abroad which seem to be intended for mature minds and chosen priests, and not precisely for ordinary seminarians who have not yet the sufficient background and knowledge to assimilate properly and to discern rightly what they listen to, hear or read.

By the year 1967 and after housing and forming 22 seminarians in Collegio-Seminario, the Bishops desisted in sending seminarians to Rome. The Administrative staff recommended that sending priests for higher studies in Rome, mature consideration be given in favor of those who are possessed not only of a superior intellectual ability but also of a definitive spiritual stability. The Father Rector, Reginald Arliss, also requested the concerned Bishops for their consent and for the sake of the Dioceses to stipulate from the beginning a limited time which the student is expected to com-

⁵⁴ Report of Father Jesus Cavanna to Rufino Cardinal Santos and members of the Episcopal committee on Pontificio Collegio-Seminario Filipino, January 18, 1966. AR-PCF.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

plete his studies and return home.⁵⁶ This would help the student to implement his time and talent to the best of his ability.

From that time on, it was suggested to send priests best known for "solid and proven maturity of body and spirit, tested wholesome spiritual life."⁵⁷

4. *The Religious Sisters*

The 1972 General Chapter of the *Congregazione Suore Serve di Maria* decided for the reason of the scarcity of manpower to withdraw their religious Sisters from the Collegio and to terminate their services at the end of the school year 1972-1973. The letter of the *Priora Generale*, Sor Guiliana Morigi, OSM dated October 10, 1972 with protocol number 20/72 to Rufino Cardinal Santos said

abbiamo da poco terminato il Capitolo Generale che ha fatto una verifica delle nostre attività in rapporto al personale disponibile nella Congregazione. Dopo un attento esame della situazione, per quanto riguarda il nostro servizio presso il Collegio Filippino di Roma, il Capitolo ha riscontrato l'impossibilità di continuare detto servizio per mancanza di personale e ha perciò deciso di *ritirare le suore alla fine del corrente anno scolastico 1972/73*.⁵⁸

It was indeed a sad event for Collegio that better service and pleasant rapport had come to an end. The religious Sisters of the Congregation of the Servants of Mary had truly shown true devotion and sincere dedication to their assigned works at the Collegio. The Father Rector, Reginald Arliss, in his September 03, 1968 letter to the Superior General, Sor Maria Angela della Via, complimented the assigned Sisters in Collegio with these beautiful words, "sempre piu devote al suo impegno di servirci."⁵⁹ Sor Guiliana Morigi described

⁵⁶ Op. cit., Report of Father Reginald Arliss, January 12, 1967. AR-PCF.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Letter of Suor Guiliana Morigi to Father Reginald Arliss, June 06, 1973. AR-PCF.

⁵⁹ Letter of Father Reginald Arliss to Suor Guiliana Morigi, September 03, 1968. AR-PCF.

the witnessing of the Congregation that “le nostre Suore hanno prestato con vera dedicazione il loro servizio presso il Collegio Filippino.”⁶⁰ The following is a list of these hardworking nuns who silently served in maintaining Collegio and the needs of the seminarians and priests:

Ecco l'elenco delle suore che hanno costituito la comunità di lavoro per il Collegio, avvicinandosi negli anni 1961-1973:

Sr. Bernardina Carlassare, Sr. Nazarena Placuzzi, Sr. Bertilla Faedo (Queste sono le prime tre, che vi sono anche state più a lungo.)

Poi: Sr. Alessia Furia, Sr. Rosaria Vanzi, Sr. Margherita Casadei, Sr. Rafaella Grimaldi, Sr. Rita Beccaro, Sr. Chiara Boscolo.

Di queste, sono decedute: Sr. Rosaria il 15.8.1995 e Sr. Bertilla il 18.12.1999.

Negli anni 1961-1973 si sono pure avvicinate, prevalentemente per frequentare corsi di studio, ma anche per aiutare le Suore della comunità nel loro lavoro, specialmente nel periodo del Concilio Vaticano II:

Sr. Giuliana Morigi, Sr. M. Grazia Gaddoni, Sr. M. Letizia Arco, Sr. Graziella Grazian, Sr. Margherita Casadei, Sr. M. Teresa Ricci, Sr. Vincenza Martignago, Sr. Antonietta Garavini, Sr. Ornella Marconati, Sr. Luisella Pinton.⁶¹

In the spirit of obedience and humble service, the *Congregazione delle Suore Missionarie di Santo Domingo* responsibly answered the call to serve and help at the Collegio. For the reason of familiarization of the place, as a preparation for works ahead and as a transition period, Sor Guiliana Morigi consented to extend the assignment of her two religious Sisters. In her letter dated June 06, 1973 with protocol number 14/73 to Father Reginald Arliss, the Piora Generale relayed

⁶⁰ Letter of Suor Guiliana Morigi to Father Reginald Arliss, June 08, 1973. AR-PCF.

⁶¹ Letter of Sr. M. Grazia Gaddoni, Secretary-General of the Congregation of the Servants of Mary to Msgr. Ruperto Santos, Rector of Collegio Filippino, 18 May 2001. AR-PCF.

Le comunico l'esito positivo con cui il consiglio generalizio del 2.6.73. ha accolto la sua proposta. Esso accetta che, come situazione provvisoria, le nostre due Sorelle lavorano presso codesto Collegio, continuino il loro servizio insieme con le Suore Dominicane che si assumono la responsabilità del servizio al Collegio. Sono lieta di aver potuto accondiscendere alla sua richiesta. Nel frattempo stiamo cercando altra sistemazione per le Suore studenti.⁶²

True to their missionary spirit and prayerful disposition, through Sor Maria Joaquina Diaz, the *Congregazione delle Suore Missionarie di Santo Domingo* agreed on October 01, 1973 to assign four (4) Filipino Sisters at the Collegio. They were Sor Clara Arandela, the superior of the community, Sor Marta Aman, Jesus Ledesma and Bibiana Hontomin. On October 01, 1973 Collegio Filippino headed by the new Rector, Father Alfredo Rodriguez and the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters represented by Sor Joaquina Díaz, signed the statement of agreements.

From 1973 until today, the Congregazione delle Suore Missionarie di Santo Domingo has provided Collegio Filippino with 19 committed and caring Sisters who selflessly and untiringly labored for the upkeep of the house. When they celebrated their 25th years in Collegio Filippino, the present superior of the Dominican community, Mother Antonette Lobetos remarked, "our 25 years in Collegio Filippino are years of loving service, service done with humility and service characterized with smile."

C. "Lower your nets for a catch" (Luke 5:4)

During its years as a college seminary and formation house, the Collegio has operated under the supervision of Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, Episcopal Commission and administered by a Rector and his staff backed by then the Servants of Mary Sisters and now by the Dominican Sisters who see through the basic housekeeping and some lay personnel assigned with specific tasks.

The Collegio has its own rules of discipline and mentorship to ensure that it operates smoothly according to the goals set by the

⁶² Ibid.

Church hierarchy and to see to it that the priests are guided and assisted in their studies and spiritual formation. Through the years, this set of rules of discipline and mentorship has evolved into the Collegio's four-point objective which can be summarized by CASA, an acronym which stands not only for the Collegio's being literally a house but also for its Communitarian, Academic, Spiritual and Apostolic programs.⁶³

Since 1987, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines has approved the statutes of the Collegio Filipino which has reviewed and formulated its main objective and goals, the norms of conduct and rule of life of the Collegio. The vision of Collegio Filipino for renewal, both externally and internally, has evolved into the gradual implementation of its priestly formation program, composed of four aspects and now considered to be the four pillars of the Collegio. The four-point program of Collegio Filipino or CASA keeps the community well grounded on community living, academic pursuits, spiritual formation and apostolic activities. Under its *Communitarian* program, the Collegio Filipino aims to build a unique family of priests, religious and laity based on participation and co-responsibility. Its *Academic* program hopes to provide an atmosphere conducive to intense intellectual endeavor. On the other hand, its *Spiritual* program intends to provide on-going spiritual formation, and lastly its *Apostolic* program tries to instill a continuing apostolic ministry, usually to Filipino migrants in and outside Rome.

Through the CASA, the Collegio Filipino has served not only as a Filipino diocesan home in Rome but a house of renewal for its many student-priests and the pilgrims in Rome who come to stay in the College for some time.⁶⁴

D. "Caught such a large number of fish" (Luke 5:6)

Throughout the past 40 years, the Collegio has been home to 522 seminarians and priests. The Collegio alumni have been assigned

⁶³ *The 1999 Catholic Directory of the Philippines* (Quezon City: Claretians Publications, 1999), p. 433.

⁶⁴ Op. cit., "Statuta," p. 10.

to and involved in seminary formation, in the administration of diocesan chanceries and matrimonial tribunals. These '*priest-graduates*' of the Collegio Filipino have returned to their roots to commit themselves to the service of the Philippine Church and to the growth and enhancement of the faith of the Filipinos. The knowledge and experience they have gained in Rome have served as fodder for a revitalized ministry in their homeland. Learning '*under the shadow of Saint Peter*', their hearts have become attuned to the yearnings and needs of their fellowmen back home, while at the same time growing in knowledge and esteem of the Universal Church to which all the faithful belong. The Collegio was their *pontifex* (bridge) between the Philippines and the Vatican.

The success of the student-priests is due to the sound decision of the Bishops in sending their priests who are disposed and docile to undergo ongoing priestly formation *sub umbra Petri*. The progress of the Collegio Filipino is credited to the paternal support and caring assistance of the Bishops whose words, works and ways are all in the likeness of the FATHER.

The Collegio is always honored when her '*priests-graduates*' are raised to the dignity of the episcopacy. Thirty-eight alumni priests have been elevated to become bishops,⁶⁵ but four (4) of them have gone to merit their eternal reward. They are the following:

1. Most Rev. Guillermo Afable – Auxiliary Bishop of Davao
2. Most Rev. Benjamin Almoneda – Bishop of Daet
3. Most Rev. Patricio Alo – Bishop of Mati
4. Most Rev. Ramon Arguelles – Military Ordinary of the
Philippines
5. Most Rev. Teodoro Bacani – Auxiliary Bishop of Manila
6. Most Rev. Sofio Balce – Bishop of Cabanatuan
7. Most Rev. Teodoro Buhain – Auxiliary Bishop of Manila
8. Most Rev. Antonieto Cabajog – Bishop of Surigao
9. Most Rev. Gervase Chisendera – Bishop of Dedza, Malawi
10. Most Rev. Florentino Cinense – Bishop of Tarlac
11. Most Rev. Maximiano Cruz – Bishop emeritus of Calbayog
12. Most Rev. Oscar Cruz – Archbishop of Lingayen-Dagupan
13. Most Rev. John Martin Darko – Bishop of Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana

⁶⁵ *Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines Directory for the year 2000* (Manila: Jardi Press, 2000), p. 9-37.

14. Most Rev. Manolo delos Santos – Bishop of Virac
15. Most Rev. Camilo Gregorio – Bishop emeritus of Bacolod
16. Most Rev. Dinualdo Gutierrez – Bishop Marbel
17. Most Rev. Angel Hobayan – Bishop of Catarman
18. Most Rev. Alonso Llano-Uiz – Bishop of Ismina-Tado, Colombia
19. Most Rev. Wilfredo Manlapaz – Bishop of Tagum
20. Most Rev. Emilio Marquez – Bishop of Gumaca
21. Most Rev. Raul Jose Martinez – Bishop of San Jose de Antique
22. Most Rev. Jesse Mercado – Auxiliary Bishop of Manila
23. Most Rev. Joseph Serge Miot – Coadjutor, Apos. Administrator
of Port-au-Prince
24. Most Rev. Jose Oliveros – Bishop of Boac
25. Most Rev. Honesto Ongtioco – Bishop of Bataan
26. Most Rev. Osbaldo Padilla – Apostolic Nuncio in Nigeria
27. Most Rev. Jose Palma – Bishop of Calbayog
28. Most Rev. Miguel Purugganan – Bishop emeritus of Ilagan
29. Most Rev. Gabriel Reyes – Bishop of Kalibo
30. Most Rev. Ernesto Salgado – Bishop of Laoag
31. Most Rev. Sergio Utleg – Bishop of Ilagan
32. Most Rev. Romulo Valles – Bishop of Kidapawan
33. Most Rev. Ramon Villena – Bishop of Bayombong
34. Most Rev. Crisostomo Yalung – Auxiliary Bishop of Manila

Deceased Alumni Bishops:

35. Most Rev. Rafael Lim
36. Most Rev. Severino Pelayo
37. Most Rev. Archbishop Alberto Piamonte
38. Most Rev. Bienvenido Tutud

The Holy Father has likewise found a home in the Collegio. Pope John Paul II reminisced about his memorable and spirit-filled visit to the Philippines during a Holy Mass at the Collegio Filipino. On this occasion, the Holy Father referred to the immense contribution of the Collegio when he said, “here by the grace of God, the ideals of the priesthood are to be lived by individual priests, who are supported by a community which corporately embraces and promotes the same ideals.”⁶⁶

⁶⁶ The 1981 visit of the Pope John Paul II to Pontificio Collegio Filipino. AL-PCF.

E. "It is the Lord" (John 21:7)

From its early years, the Collegio stands and strives through the test of times. From its existence, the Collegio grows from its humble beginning and from the scarcity of resident-priests. What the Collegio Filipino is now, it is because of the Lord.

The Collegio welcomes and nourishes Filipino priests under her care. She sends them back home fully prepared, more formed and well equipped for a heavier work, for better service and for bigger responsibility. What Collegio Filipino has been doing, it is because of the Lord.

The Collegio Filipino priests struggle in their studies and from separation from their loved ones. Collegio Filipino suffices what is lacking, provides the warmth of a family, and a hospitality of a home away from home. The Collegio Filipino priests lived up to their calling and to the trust of their bishops. They worked hard to earn their Doctorates and Licentiate degrees with highest honors. They made their bishops proud and their family happy. How they did that? The answer is "*It is the Lord.*"

The Collegio Filipino priests applied at home what they learned in Rome. They showed what they acquired. They returned home to serve their dioceses. They came back to obey their bishops and to work with their flock. Why? It is for the Lord.

The Bishops rely so much on Collegio Filipino. They believe in Collegio Filipino. They hope in Collegio Filipino. They help Collegio. They send their best priests at Collegio. What the bishops did for Collegio is out of love for the Church. Collegio Filipino for them is for the Lord.

The forty years of Collegio Filipino is an affirmation that everything, no matter what and no matter how is because "*It is the Lord.*" The achievements of Collegio Filipino and the accomplishments of her student-priests are open acceptance that "*It is the Lord.*"

Collegio Filipino patterned after a boat continues to sail and to cast its net into the deep water of the *Tertio Anno Ineunte*. Collegio Filipino will surely brave the storms of life, for her captain is the Lord. The student-priests know that their casting of nets, their sojourn in Rome will be a safe sailing, with so much fish to catch, just because "IT IS THE LORD" (John 21:7). □