

The Sacred Heart Seminary of Palo: The First Twenty-Five Years (1944 - 1969)

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Palo is the name of a town in the island of Leyte. It is also the present Metropolitan See, and its ecclesiastical province covers the diocese of Naval and the three dioceses in the island of Samar,¹ namely, Calbayog, Catarman and Borongan. Just outside the hub of this town and a few minutes walk from the historic MacArthur Park and Red Beach² is the "heart" of the archdiocese, the Sacred Heart Seminary.

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation, a grand homecoming of its alumni – priests and laymen alike – took place three years ago, on September 12-16, 1994. Hundreds

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¹ From 1910 to 1937, Palo belonged to the diocese of Calbayog. In 1937, by virtue of Apostolic Constitution by Pope Pius XI, *Si Qua in Orbe*, Palo became a separate diocese. It was in 1968 when it "gave birth" to the Diocese of Maasin; cf. Paul VI, Apost. Const. *Dei Filium Adorandum* (23.III.1968), in AAS 61 (1969) 5-7. In 1989, another ecclesiastical see was created – Naval – which is at the small island of Biliran. This latter diocese comprises the whole island of Biliran and three parishes at the northernmost tip of Leyte; cf. John Paul II, Apost. Const. *Singulari Qui Dei* (29.XI.1988), in AAS 81 (1989) 523-525. Brief historical accounts of each of these dioceses may be taken from A. A. LINSANGAN (ed.), Catholic Bishops' Conference. 1945-1995, CBCP, Manila, 1995, under the following headings: "Archdiocese of Palo," pp. 114-115; "Diocese of Calbayog," pp. 87-89; "Diocese of Maasin," pp. 186-188; "Diocese of Naval," pp. 260-262.

² Site of the famous "Leyte Landing" by Douglas McArthur and his American forces; cf. A. M. MOLINA, *Historia de Filipinas*, II, Instituto Cooperación Ibero-Americana, Madrid, 1984, pp. 641-644.

of former students trekked back to their Alma Mater, if only to recall fond remembrances and memories of their bygone days inside its walls.

Yes, "home" they went. And if "home" is where the "heart" is, no doubt, it was Sacred Heart Seminary they were coming home to.

In this article we attempt to put into writing some slices of those remembered events during the seminary's first twenty-five years.³ This does not intend to narrate an exhaustive history of this half-a-century old institution in *all* aspects. While allusions are made to some activities related to prayer and discipline, it confines itself to aspects related to seminary education – how it developed, or underwent changes through the years.

During the first twenty-five years the seminary found itself in three various locations at one time or the other. It had its origins in Tacloban in 1944. Then in the school year of 1945-1946 it moved to Tanauan and remained there until 1956. It was in June of 1956 that the seminary was transferred to Palo, its present site.

These local transfers have been considered as the three significant milestones in the seminary's founding years. We take into account these historic landmarks as reference points as we "journey" back through the first twenty-five years. It was in this period that the seminary struggled from bare scratch (*Tacloban phase*), lived a "spartan and teutonic" lifestyle (*Tanauan phase*), and has been enjoying a certain degree of permanency at its present site (*Palo phase*).

³ The author gratefully acknowledges three articles that touch on the history of Sacred Heart Seminary: (1) M. L. PANTA, "A Short History of Sacred Heart Seminary, Palo, Leyte," in *Stella Maris* (1970) 5-6 [From hereon "*Stella Maris*" will be abbreviated as "*StM*"]; (2) A. VILLARANTE, "Historical Survey of the Sacred Heart Seminary, Archdiocese of Palo," in *StM* (1983) 6-9; (3) E. JUSTIMBASTE - J. V. ARUTA, "Sacred Heart Seminary: Fifty Years of Grace," in J. V. ARUTA, (ed.), *Jubilate! Sacred Heart Seminary, 50 Years of Grace*, PLEASE Foundation, Manila 1994, pp. 6-41. Panta's article was written on the occasion of the Seminary's 25th anniversary celebration in 1969-1970; Villarante's write-up appeared in the seminary annual in 1983, the year the Diocese of Palo was canonically erected as archdiocese; the Justimbaste-Aruta historical account was the "banner article" published in the souvenir book, *Jubilate*, to commemorate the seminary's fiftieth anniversary of its foundation.

The author likewise appreciates the cooperation shown to him by other priests-alumni of SHS who willingly put their memoirs to writing and sent the same to him.

The Beginnings: Tacloban 1944-1945

If one were to judge from a human viewpoint, 1944 would not have been the best time to found institutions and erect structures. For the Philippines and the Filipinos it was the worst period in contemporary history. World War II was at its savage and ravaging height. In the words of Justimbaste and Aruta, "The Japanese Imperial Army was holding sway over the archipelago, presiding over a reign of terror, and leaving no Filipino family without a victim."⁴

The Church, which was already showing vigor and promise before the Japanese invasion, was now feeling that those promised hopes were about to be destroyed. There were many foreign priests and religious who belonged to nationalities with whom the Japanese were at war and, as a result, were victims of Japanese atrocities.

The Diocese of Palo was facing a similar predicament. Canonically erected on November 28, 1937,⁵ she was barely severed of her umbilical chord from her mother diocese, Calbayog, and was only beginning to make her first wobbly steps as an independent ecclesiastical jurisdiction. With the country at war, all that was needed was the very same idealism and sacrifice that made the apostles of the primitive church risk their lives in the name of Christ. Msgr. Manuel Mascariñas,⁶ Palo's first bishop, knew that all odds were against the newly created diocese. The Calbayog seminary, then run by the Vincentian Fathers, could no longer supply enough priests even for Samar. This was not to mention the acutely rough roads, and the long trips from Calbayog to the nearest town in Leyte, a travel that took days, even a week, by boat.

⁴ E. JUSTIMBASTE - J. V. ARUTA, *o. c.*, p. 8.

⁵ See PIUS XI, Ap. Const. *Si Qua in Orbe* (28.XI.1937), AAS 30 (1938) 245-248.

⁶ Msgr. Mascariñas was born on January 17, 1897 in Antequera, Cebu; ordained priest on June 14, 1924; appointed first Bishop of Palo on December 16, 1937, consecrated on March 25, 1938 (See *Annuario Pontificio Per L'Anno 1948*, Typis Polyglottis Vaticani (from hereon "TPV"), Vaticano 1948, p. 283). [From hereon "*Annuario Pontificio*" will be written as "*AnPont*". Also see AAS 29 (1937) 460. More data about Msgr. Mascariñas is offered by Charles Bransom on his extensive research about the Philippine Hierarchy see C. BRANSOM ET AL, "Philippine Episcopology II," in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* [or "*BEF*") 65 (1989) 232.

The good bishop knew the solution all along. The war notwithstanding, he needed to establish a seminary for the diocese.

The Divine Word Missionaries in Tacloban

The Missionaries of the Divine Word (better known simply as "SVD Fathers") were then administering the Tacloban Catholic Institute, a diocesan catholic school.⁷ Founded in 1929, this school was run by the diocesan clergy, until the bishop turned it over to these missionaries in 1940. When the World War II broke out, two missionary Fathers who could have been on the opposite sides of the war poles were the ones running the school: the American Father Eugene Stoll, and the German Father Aloysius Paulsen.⁸ Nevertheless, it was the under stewardship and the good blessings of these two pioneering missionaries that this institute earned a reputation for academic excellence.

As Bishop Mascariñas needed men experienced in the rigors of discipline to train young boys and men for the priesthood, he turned to these Fathers for help. So in the summer of 1944, Father Paulsen campaigned for vocations. Of the boys who turned up, twenty decided to enroll in the seminary.⁹

Since it was in the time of war, the fledgling seminary was temporarily, and quite appropriately, named, *Regina Pacis Seminary* dedicated to Our Lady Queen of Peace.

The First School Year

The seminary was formally opened on June 1, 1944. A Mass was said by Msgr. Mascariñas, and assisting him were Fathers Lino Gonzaga and Julio Rosales, parish priests of Palo and Tacloban, respectively, Father Paulsen, another Divine Word

⁷ At the time of this institute's foundation Palo still belonged to the Diocese of Calbayog. "TCI" – thus it was called – became a diocesan school when Palo became a diocese, in 1937.

⁸ *50 Years. A Commemorative Album*. Archdioc. of Palo, Palo, Leyte, 1987, 86.

⁹ E. JUSTIMBASTE – J. V. ARUTA, *o. c.*, p. 9.

missionary Father William Neuhoeffler, and some priests from nearby parishes.¹⁰

However, classes could not be held at the said institute. Japanese troops had occupied it. So the Fathers had to leave the school and transfer to the Holy Infant Academy, a school for girls which, at that time, was not in operation on account of the war. It was in that school that the first students of the seminary of Leyte began their studies.¹¹

The enrollment was recorded at twenty-five: eighteen in the first year and the remainder in the third year. Those in the third year were actually a mixture of boys with varying school year levels; some were already high school graduates; others had begun their studies outside but were required to study Latin. Joining them were those who had put in some years in another seminary.

Among the first enrollees were: Manuel Gomez, Antonio Almarines, Daniel Loteyro, Trofimo Bitangjol, Alberto Bitangjol, Filoteo Delfin, Aluino Estalilla, Andrés Villarante, Gil Dagami, Gil Díaz, Agapito Ortega, Cornelio Antonio and Rafael Montejo. When the enrollment became definite, the third year Latin class included Daniel Loteyro, Manuel Gómez, Antonio Almarines, Roman Villamor and Petronilo Chavez. The remainder were enrolled in the first year Latin.¹²

Due to the scarcity of teachers, the two SVD Fathers took turns in the teaching job. Writes Father Andrés Villarante, one of the pioneer students, "William Neuhoeffler, acting Rector, taught Latin and Religion, while Father Aloysius Paulsen taught English and Typing." He further adds, "There were no books available so we had to listen carefully to the lectures of the priests and write notes in our note-books as materials for study and memorization. Latin words had to be dictated to us..."¹³

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ M. L. PANTA, *o. c.*, p. 5.

¹² E. JUSTIMBASTE, J. V. ARUTA, *o. c.*, p. 9-10.

¹³ A. VILLARANTE, *o. c.*, p. 6.

Because of the unstable conditions, there was still no seminary that the students could call their "home." One of the boys, Alberto Bitangjol (who later became priest), recalls, "Having been deprived of our building, we could not live in a community to lead a real seminary life. We stayed at home and came to the Holy Infant only for classes."¹⁴

Classes had gone on smoothly for three months. Then in September of that year, American planes started to bomb Tacloban, so classes had to be disrupted. All the boys were sent home. Those in the third year, however, were made to come back three days later. One of them, Daniel Loteyro, recalls, "We were the only kids prowling the streets of Tacloban with our grammar lessons. We burned our midnight candles and studied Latin."¹⁵

Again, in October 20, classes were disrupted. The American forces, led by MacArthur, had landed Leyte and made their offensive attack against the Japanese. In November, when the war skies began to clear up, twelve boys – or all that was left of the original numbers – returned to the Holy Infant Academy building and took up quarters there. They had to put on extra speed in their studies to make up for the lost time during the bombing period. Two months later they shifted quarters to the institute. There classes were held until March 1945, the closing period of the school year. At the closing ceremonies, cards were handed out, and awards were given to some selected students. This bunch of boys wound up their first school year in a still unrecognized seminary.¹⁶

The Transfer: Tanauan 1945-1956

That summer, a team of priests went to Palo and Tanauan to scout for a place for the seminarians. An old *colegio* next to the parish church of Tanauan was chosen.¹⁷ In that school year (1945-1946) the seminarians moved in to this place. For several

¹⁴ M. PANTA, *o. c.*

¹⁵ E. JUSTIMBASTE – J. V. ARUTA, *o. c.*, p. 10.

¹⁶ M. PANTA, *o. c.*

¹⁷ E. JUSTIMBASTE – J. V. ARUTA, *o. c.*, p. 11.

years it would provide them community quarters, or better still, their "home," until a new seminary would have been built.

Harsh Conditions

Living and study conditions in Tanauan were yet far from comfortable. "Decent" living would have to be experienced "only after days and months of painting, scrubbing and sweeping the decrepit, filthy, almost tottering place."¹⁸ Groundwork meant waging war with the towering cogon grass and the savage "beasts" lurking behind them. Villarante vouches with a hair-raising description:

At the back of the building the grass was taller than the tallest seminarian. It was a good place for serpents to hide. In fact, there were times when seminarians caught as many as two dozens of snakes.¹⁹

With the primitive conditions set before their eyes, the seminarians put their hands into work doing all they could to render the place habitable. They had to haul in whatever they could salvage from the American soldiers all over Leyte and Samar.²⁰ They set up quonset huts and other facilities on the seminary grounds. Laboring under severe circumstances would have been normally unattractive for these young boys and men; but they did not mind at all since, as Villarante recounts, they saw that no less than their formators were jumping into their work clothes, then unpretentiously and industriously working under the heat of the sun:

One quality common to [the fathers] was [their] love for work. [...] The seminarians were amazed at their superiors' [physical] strength. [...] Father Rector could lift a big water pump from the cargo truck [single-handedly].²¹

The hard work notwithstanding, the seminarians were beginning to feel that they were slowly building a home for themselves.

¹⁸ M. L. PANTA, *o. c.*

¹⁹ A. VILLARANTE, *o. c.*, p. 7.

²⁰ E. JUSTIMBASTE – J. V. ARUTA, *o. c.*, p. 12. These authors quote Aluino Estalilla in the latter's article to the 1960 issue of *Stella Maris*.

²¹ A. VILLARANTE, *o. c.*

Soon, the Fathers and the seminarians were sharing a common lifestyle. A heart-tugging comment of Apolinario Olvis succinctly captures the whole picture of this incipient seminary life:

By some sort of law of compensation, the material privation and poor accommodations were richly made up for by a strong sense of unity and belongingness, charity and brotherly love. The Fathers and students shared the same deficiencies and hardships and in the same spirit.²²

By this time, too, there was a changing of guards. Father Pedro Kranewitter, former rector of the seminary in Pangasinan was appointed as the new rector. Father Bernard Topfer, flew in to be the seminary's prefect of studies.²³

By July 2, 1945, the Tanauan seminary was ready to open. That year, the enrollment rose to 45. Five belonged to the fourth year, seven in the second year, and 32 were newcomers.²⁴ The convent hall had now become congested that a quonset hut was turned into a study hall.

Amidst an austere and simple lifestyle, the community still found time to celebrate its first Seminary Day on September 8, 1945 – the same day the Divine Word fathers celebrate their foundation day. "It was just a simple affair," writes Andres Villarante. The rector declared it a "no-class day," and allowed the seminarians to play games the whole morning and afternoon. A special food was prepared at table. This September affair will from henceforth be a looked-forward-to event by the seminarians. In the years to come, it would eventually stretch out for days, even a week, and develop into a full-blown festivity complete with a display of fireworks, parlor games, ballgames, and literary-musical programs.

The Seminary Under a New Name; Early Stirrings of Academic Life

Up to this time the seminary was called, *Regina Pacis Seminary*. On July 28 1946, in a brief talk with the seminary fathers,

²² M. PANTA, *o. c.*, quoting Apolinario Olvis in the 1956 issue of *Stella Maris*.

²³ E. JUSTIMBASTE – J. V. ARUTA, *o. c.*, p. 12.

²⁴ A. VILLARANTE, *o. c.*, p. 7.

Father Gonzaga suggested a change of name. Two months later, the Apostolic Delegate, Msgr. William Piani, during an official visit to Tanauan, christened the school, *Sacred Heart Seminary*.²⁵

With the seminary now having a home of its own, the seminary fathers thought it was time to focus on the more important and integral aspect of formation, the academic training. It was along this line that Father Topfer, the prefect of studies, put himself to task.

Meantime, in 1946, five pioneering students became the seminary's first high school graduates. They were the boys who were classified as third year students even if some of them were already high school graduates at the time they came in, while others had studied in other seminaries prior to their entrance to Sacred Heart Seminary. Justimbaste and Aruta report,

[These boys] had to make do without any diploma bearing the mark of government recognition. Nevertheless, the first graduation exercises were memorable. Msgr. Mascariñas himself handed the report cards, in the presence of several major seminarians from Cebu and Calbayog.²⁶

July 1, 1947 became a significant date for the seminary's academic history. The Bureau of Private Schools approved the seminary's high school curriculum.

Fathers Kranewitter and Topfer, rector and prefect of studies respectively, formed a two-men team in plotting out the academic program of the seminarians. With the government recognition now in effect, several subjects prescribed by the government for Philippine high schools had to be added: History, Physics, English Literature and Composition, Tagalog, Biology and Mathematics. Strong emphasis, however, was laid on Latin. The minor seminary of the diocese was beginning to take shape!

It was at this time that a joint commission of experts for minor seminaries in the Philippines, composed of representatives

²⁵ M. PANTA, *o. c.*; also A. VILLARANTE, *o. c.*

²⁶ E. JUSTIMBASTE – J. V. ARUTA, *o. c.*, pp. 13-14. The first graduates are recorded as follows: Manuel Gómez, Antonio Almarines, Daniel Loteyro, Ricardo Collantes and Trofimo Bitangjol.

from the secular clergy, the Jesuits, Vincentians and the Divine Word Fathers, came to the seminary. The team proposed eight periods of Latin weekly lasting forty minutes each. To implement this imperative, the seminary fathers reasoned out that the classical course of the seminary was not easy to master. They expected seminarians to perform way above the ordinary student outside to be able to tackle deeper and harder demands in the philosophate and theologate. Thus, a final grade of 70 in Latin meant that a whole year be repeated without any advance credits in other subjects taken that year.²⁷ "The study of its [i.e. Latin's] rules and syntax is a great factor in the development of mental discipline," one seminarian wrote. "[It] presupposes a good grasp of grammar and a knowledge of diagramming," says Fr. Aurelio Crisólogo, "so, already in high school the intellectual training was good."²⁸

The discipline demanded in the study of this language left many a seminarian in throes. Many of them found it too tough to tackle, and so had to leave the seminary and enrolled in schools outside. Seminary studies, or so they seemed, were a case of "survival of the fittest." Even the words of Estalilla seem to imply that, because many of those who enrolled in the seminary belonged to the upper crust of their classes in their schools of origin, the academic profile in the seminary during their time was way above the median:

The seminary prides itself in having within her protective walls many seminarians who graduated with honors from their respective schools. . . It is high time for people to realize that the seminary is not a place for those who have no place in the world. The seminary is for the cream of the crop – *God's crop*.²⁹

In March 1948, the seminarians who enrolled in the First Year Latin in 1944 became the first batch of high graduates to have completed a full four-year length course in the already government-

²⁷ *Ibidem.*, p. 15.

²⁸ *Letter of Father Aurelio Crisologo to this author*, dated November 11, 1994, p. 1, Ms. 1.2.1.4 (Note: these manuscript numbers have been arbitrarily assigned by the author for organizing and filing purposes).

²⁹ E. JUSTIMBASTE – J. V. ARUTA, *o. c.*, p. 16.

recognized seminary. In the following school year, 1948-1949, these seminarians were in their first year in college. Two years later, in 1950, they – or all that was left of the original bunch of boys – became the first batch to receive the title, *Associate in Arts*.³⁰

Meanwhile two seminarians, Estanislao Abarca and Porfirio Suarez, were sent for philosophical studies at the University of Santo Tomas [UST] Central Seminary, in Manila.³¹

An important event capped the life of the first seminarians of Sacred Heart Seminary – their solemn investiture. During the school year 1949-1950, at the Tanauan Parish Church, sixteen college seminarians – nine from the third and seven from the second year – marched forward in procession to receive their cassock from Bishop Mascariñas. The occasion meant a lot for these young men. Not only were they permitted to put on the clerical garb in public; they were obliged to wear it at all times, even when they were on *paseo* outside the seminary premises. Villarante records the first major seminarians of Sacred Heart Seminary as follows: Alberto Bitangjol, Felicísimo Eloja, Aluino Estalilla, Pio Gobenciong, Miguel Logronio, Leonardo Mateo, Manuel Ocaña, Filemon Quianzon, Andres Villarante – all from the second year; and Adan Apostol, Vicente Avendula, Melecio Figuracion, Pablo Melangco, Sebastian Navarro, Generoso Nielo and Licerio Oledan – of the first year.³²

At the end of the school year 1951-1952 the diocesan seminary produced its first batch of graduates in Bachelor of Arts. Although it could not be ascertained at the time of writing, it is assumed that their college curriculum had civil recognition by the fact that the seminarians were already studying courses required by the government.³³

³⁰ A. VILLARANTE, *o. c.*

³¹ These seminarians would later earn an ecclesiastical degree in Philosophy in this Pontifical Seminary. They would also be joined in UST by Estalilla, Villarante and Quianzon; cf. *Ibidem.*, p. 16.

³² A. VILLARANTE, *o. c.*

³³ What is known per record is the date of the government recognition, which was on March 26, 1953, by Act 1459, as amended by Commonwealth Act 180, Republic Act 74. Data was taken from the Seminary Registrar's Office.

College also meant a change of patterns in the academic life. Following the standards set by the Bureau of Education, the seminarians, like any other students outside, were to reckon their classes by semesters. At the end of the first semester – which was usually towards the latter part of October— there was a brief break, only to resume classes on the first week of November for the second semester. The second semester wound up in March, followed by a summer vacation –or, to be exact, a long period of “non-classdays,” since they remained in the seminary during summer.

College Academic Curriculum

The course of studies in the college department led to a degree in Liberal Arts, major in Philosophy. The basic disciplines in Thomistic scholasticism comprised the core subjects: *Logic, Epistemology, Ontology, Cosmology, Psychology, Theodicy, History of Philosophy* and *Ethics*. Ancillary to these areas were *Problems in Sociology, Educational Psychology, Social Problems* and *History of the Far East*.

English was taught for four years, or eight semesters. While the study of the English language was in keeping with the government's requirement to make it the medium of instruction in all Philippine schools, the seminary, in turn, made some few strides more by including in its curriculum a sufficient dose of both English and American literature. As a result, the seminarians became familiar with authors from these parts of the world, even more than they were with many Filipino authors in English. Moreover, with their professors who were either Europeans or Americans, who did not speak any of the Leyte's native dialects,³⁴ learning the English language became even more necessary. English was a language to be spoken within the seminary campus, especially when communicating with the formators; so it was not only a required subject that one ought to pass, but one that must be learned by heart.

³⁴ There are two dialects spoken in Leyte: *Waray-waray*, or *Lineyte-Samarnon* (spoken in the towns comprising the eastern part of the island, or the towns facing the island of Samar), and *Cebuano* (towns facing Cebu and the island of Mindanao, or the southern and western part).

Latin, too, covered the whole four-year course, in answer to the repeated exhortations of the Church authorities. The boys started studying the language even as early as high school; so, by the time the seminarians had reached college, Latin had seemed to become a part of their "academic routine," however hard and difficult it was.

Three years, or six semesters, were allotted for the study of Spanish. At this time even while English was fast becoming the language of the *literati* and of the businessmen, nevertheless Spanish continued to be taught formally in schools. Students learned classroom and "textbook" Spanish even as they mimicked the American accents and slangs. In the seminary, thanks to a professor or two who spoke the language as their native tongue, they (the professors) had succeeded in enforcing the language to be spoken at one time or the other within the premises. The seminary quarterly, the *Stella Maris*, even had a *Sección castellana* for those interested in the Castilian language.

Government-required fields also included *Mathematics* and *Physical Education*. *Religion* as propaedeutic to Theology was also a required subject.

Study Imperatives

Study hours occupied most of the waking hours of the seminarians. During classdays, they stayed in the classrooms at least five hours during the day, with an intermission of five minutes between periods. For the minors one class recitation lasted forty minutes, while it was one hour for the majors.

Even the periods in-between classes were devoted to study. At evening time, from six to eight, seminarians went down to their study halls for another two-hour period of study in preparation for their classes the next day.³⁵

In an interval of two months at the most, grading periods were held. Those were times when major examinations were given to assess and evaluate the seminarians' academic performance. For the high

³⁵ E. JUSTIMBASTE - J. V. ARUTA, o. c., p. 17. This was being narrated by one Antonio Borneo, who entered the seminary in 1949.

school there were six grading periods during the entire academic year; the sixth one, being the final examination, which partly —albeit strongly— determined the seminarian's readmission to the seminary in the next school year. In college each semester had three examination periods. For Latin classes, seminarians wrote their exams in a *pensum*,³⁶ which enabled the Fathers to check how much each seminarian learned every week. Aurelio Crisologo, who entered the seminary in 1948, recalls that there was not much difference between the method of instruction used in the seminary and that of outside schools. "[It] was the usual method any catholic institution was using. We had textbooks, and assignments were given to us for the next class."³⁷

Learning Aids and Techniques

While classroom instruction was the ordinary method of the teaching-learning experience, the seminarians, even as early as 1948, were already exposed to slide presentations to facilitate their learning process. These consisted of travelogues, scientific documents and features on churches. "Lessons were enlivened and enriched," reminisces Aresio Astorga, "by digressions into the history, ethos and culture of other lands. Our rudimentary knowledge of foreign lands was further augmented with slide presentations of their (meaning the fathers') homelands . . ."³⁸

They also experimented with radio plays, using loudspeakers and microphones, as someone wrote in their seminary quarterly.³⁹

Movies provided by the United States Information Service came to Tanauan regularly. Justimbaste and Aruta opine that these movies were not intended simply for entertainment; it was part of the US' cold war propaganda. "With China turning communist in the post-war era and North Korea inevitably becoming a Red

³⁶ A workbook in Latin.

³⁷ *Father Crisologo's letter*, cit.

³⁸ A. ASTORGA, "1953... Memoires du Temps Perdu," in J. V. V. ARUTA (ed.). *Jubilate!* cit. pp. 45-46.

³⁹ E. JUSTIMBASTE – J. V. ARUTA, *o. c.*, p. 19.

satellite," they surmise, "the United States had to wage a new kind of war to preserve her territories 'for democracy'."⁴⁰ Slowly, the seminarians were taking the bait. Right within the seminary walls, and even during their leisure hours, they were imbibing lessons that illustrated the evils of communism.

The library of the seminary augmented as the seminary fathers acquired volumes from the US Navy supplies in Guian, Samar. By 1949, the seminary could boast of some 3,000 volumes. "We had the best textbooks at that time," writes Msgr. Filemon Quianzon, one of the pioneer students.⁴¹ Reading for seminarians was graduated. Freshmen, for instance could not read books reserved for those in the senior years. Every Sunday and Thursday, forty-five minutes were set aside for "library hour" to cultivate the habit of reading. A survey conducted in 1949 indicated that seminarians on the average read twelve to thirteen books a year.⁴²

Stella Maris, the present yearbook, started as a class newsletter by the pioneering class on July 17, 1946.⁴³ Then it developed into a literary medium for the seminary's budding poets, essayists and short story writers. It was published quarterly and, since then, has become the official organ of the seminary.⁴⁴

Prayer Life

"The seminary without activities related to prayer would have been just an ordinary boarding school for boys," write Justimbaste and Aruta.⁴⁵ On this vein, the SVD Fathers expended all efforts to develop the boys' spiritual life through prayers, meditations, spiritual conferences and the celebration of the sacraments, especially Mass. Thus, while an average of seven hours were allotted for study and classes, at least two hours were devoted to spiritual activities.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ *Letter of Msgr. Filemon. Quianzon to this author*, dated October 26, 1994, Ms. 1.2.1.8.

⁴² E. JUSTIMBASTE – J. V. ARUTA, *o. c.*, p. 20.

⁴³ Cf. A. VILLARANTE, *o. c.*, p. 8.

⁴⁴ By 1966 the publication of *Stella Maris* became annual.

⁴⁵ E. JUSTIMBASTE – J. V. ARUTA, *o. c.*, pp. 20-22.

Spiritual activities were not limited to prayers recited in the chapel. They permeated the entire seminary premises to wherever there were seminarians in session. This "prayer routine" started right at dawn, during the rising hour. At the strike of the clock to begin the day, a morning greeting, "Praised be Jesus Christ" woke the seminarians up and they answered, "Now and forever, Amen." After changing into their uniforms – black coat and tie with white shirts and pants—the seminarians proceeded to the chapel. Minors had a 25-minute meditation, and the majors 35 minutes. Then the *Veni Creator* would be intoned, followed by the celebration of the Mass. After the Mass, the "Prayer before the Crucifix" was said, followed by a prayer to the poor souls in purgatory. The seminarians then proceed in silence to the dining room for breakfast. There were prayers before and after meals, at the start of the class, study period, choir practice and spiritual conference – even, say Justimbaste and Aruta, "before a basketball game." Visits to the Blessed Sacrament likewise formed part of the daily schedule. In the evening shortly before retiring, *De Profundis* was said. A hymn to Our Lady, the *Salve*, capped the activities of the day. Then followed the *magnum silentium* – the great silence— which lasted till the breakfast of the following day.

Justimbaste and Aruta describe the report made by an ex-seminarian, Agaton Cruzada:

On Sundays and big feast days, we hear two Masses, one in our chapel and the other in the parish church. . . In the afternoon, we say the Rosary and attend the benediction in the church. On Thursdays before First Friday (of the month), we make the holy hour devotion in church, too. On Fridays and Saturdays, we have benediction after the Mass. We say an act of consecration to the Lady of Lourdes. On certain occasions, we have novenas, vespers and complines.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 21. Msgr. Adan Apostol, now retired, wrote to this author describing his own experiences during his life in Tanauan. Writing in Spanish, he says: "El día en el seminario estaba lleno de actividades. La oración era el primer acto por la mañana (morning prayers), i.e., meditación sacada de un libro espiritual, unos treinta minutos. Seguía la misa con himnos numerados en la pizarra. . . Los domingos, asistíamos a la Misa en la iglesia parroquial. En días de clase, después del desayuno, hay [sic] un rato de tiempo libre, y en seguida al salón de estudio para estudiar las lecciones en silencio. Por la tarde, después de las clases, limpiábamos la casa, unos jugaban (basketball, volleyball, pingpong, etc.), otros practicaban música. . . Por la noche, otra vez al salón de estudio, antes de cenar. Después había tiempo libre para conversaciones y pasear

The seminarians recited the Holy Rosary every afternoon, except on Fridays when they did the Stations of the Cross. Fridays, too, were set aside for confessions. On the first month of every school year retreat was conducted —three days for the minors and five days for the majors.

Other Policies on Discipline

The norms on discipline, study and prayer instituted by the SVD Fathers in Tanauan had the force of law, and seminarians had to follow them rigorously. Grades in conduct were either A, B, C or D. Infraction of rules was dealt with in proportion to the gravity of the offense. A grade of C was a severe warning; D merited outright expulsion.⁴⁷

The First Plenary Council of the Philippines convoked in January of 1953 put more teeth into the already existing strict seminary policies.⁴⁸ True to its normative nature, the council imposed guidelines on seminaries aimed at safeguarding the seminarians' isolation from the world: "During the school year no seminarians will be absent from the seminary except in case of sickness. They are not permitted to visit private families for any reason. . ."⁴⁹

To comply with the decree seminarians were required to spend Christmas and Easter in the seminary. Summer vacations lasted a month, but spent only in the seminary. Visits by parents and relatives were strictly regulated.

Vacation time in the seminary was far from boring, however. Says Fr. Astorga, who entered the seminary in 1953 and was one of those who were in the Tanauan seminary until its last days:

cerca del seminario. Terminábamos el día con la oración nocturna y, finalmente, cantábamos la 'Salve'." See *Letter of Msgr. Adan Apostol to this author*, dated December 15, 1994, p. 2, Ms. 1.2.1.1.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem.*, p. 26.

⁴⁸ *Acta et Decreta Primi Concilii Plenarii Insularum Philippinarum. Manilae a die VII ad diem XXV Ianuarii Anno Domini MDCCCCLIII Celebrati*. Typis Pontificiae Universitatis Sancti Thomae, Manilae, nn. 652-656.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem.*, n. 660. Also cf. E. JUSTIMBASTE – J. V. ARUTA, o.c., p. 26.

To allay boredom and to liven up vacation life, the priests laid out for us a *smorgasbord* of activities which ran the gamut from sportsfest, Christmas *cantatas*, Passion plays *a la Oberammergau*, choral music and evening sing-alongs, orchestra, chamber and band music, dramas and playlets to *disputatio* in Latin.⁵⁰

Seminary Administration

With the number of seminarians growing each year, new SVD Fathers were continually added to the seminary roster as older ones were fielded to other places. Astorga makes a quite descriptive, detailed "profiling" of their formators:

We had two Argentinians, both of German extractions. But majority were Germans galore: a Tyrolese, a Bavarian, one from urban Hannover, and one from the Alsace-Lorraine region. Complementing them was an American and a Filipino.⁵¹

The SVD Fathers who were assigned to Tanuan are listed as follows: Fathers Jose Bette, Anselmo Bustos, Luis Kreder, Vicente Braganza, Charles Gries, Agustin Zmarsly, Josef Natter, Isidoro Kemerer, Dennis McKilipp, Gregorio Pizarro, Paul Kaiser, Henry Windges, Frederick Hulmmer, Delfin Taguinod and Stanislaus Plutz.⁵²

A strong indication that the seminary staff was "coming of age" was the entrance of lay male teachers handling government-required subjects. Listed as the first lay teachers were Jesus Basas (Physics), Jose Gomez (Tagalog), Alberto Niel (History)⁵³ and Albino Lumen (Mathematics).⁵⁴

⁵⁰ A. ASTORGA, *o. c.*, p. 47.

⁵¹ *Ibidem.*, p. 45. There were also SVD Fathers with Austrian and Polish nationalities; see A. APOSTOL, *cit.*

⁵² Based on the listing made by E. JUSTIMBASTE – J. V. ARUTA, *o. c.*, p. 27; also by Msgr. Quianzon's Letter, *cit.*; also see *Letter of Bishop Salvador Modesto to this author*, dated November 3, 1994, Ms.1.2.1.7. Many of the SVD Fathers, Quianzon writes, came from China, and who, during the Communist take-over, evacuated to the Philippines.

⁵³ E. JUSTIMBASTE – J. V. ARUTA, *o. c.*, p. 16.

⁵⁴ *Letter of Bishop Leonardo Medroso to this author*, dated November 14, 1994, p. 2, Ms. 1.2.1.6.

End of the Tanauan Phase; Seminary's First Fruits

In 1955, eleven years after the first seminarians set foot in the seminary, the bishop⁵⁵ of Palo and the seminary administration felt that the Tanauan seminary was getting too small for the growing student population. The seminary was being moved to Palo.

Life in Tanauan lasted twelve years. Astorga prefers to call that life as their "Nazareth period."

. . . despite the spartan surroundings, there was that feeling of warmth as in one closely-knit family due to the crowding —something that is hard to acquire inside expensive modern living quarters. . . Giving a touch of dignity to the poverty of our Nazareth, the whole seminary was kept scrupulously clean with teutonic vengeance. . . Complementing the external order was an inner decorum and sensitivity to others. . . There was a symbiotic sharing of the community life. . . Of such stuff are dreams and memories made. And such was our experience during the Nazareth period.⁵⁶

Capping the Tanauan years was a memorable event in the seminary: the ordination of the first fruits of Sacred Heart Seminary in Sto. Niño Parish, Tacloban City on March 17, 1956 —seven new priests! Their names go down in history as the pioneers of the seminary that was born during the war-torn years: Estanislao Abarca, Alberto Bitangjol, Aluino Estalilla, Miguel Logronio, Manuel Ocaña, Filemon Quianzon, and Andres Villarante. Their first mass was held in the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption in Tanauan two days later. A roll of ordinations would follow year after year, and as it would turn out, 53 more of those young men nurtured in the Tanauan seminary would follow them to the priesthood.⁵⁷ Of these 60 priests-alumni, two would become bishops.

⁵⁵ By this time, the bishop of Palo was Bishop Lino Gonzaga. Bishop Mascariñas was transferred to the Diocese of Tagbilaran on November 12, 1951, then resigned on July 10, 1976. He died on May 8, 1980.

⁵⁶ A. ASTORGA, *o. c.*, pp. 44, 45, 48.

⁵⁷ M. L. PANTA, *o. c.*

The Settlement: Palo Years, 1956 to 1969

While life went on in Tanauan until 1956, even as early as 1948, plans were already afloat for the construction of a new seminary in a different site. It went as far as laying the cornerstone in a site in Palo on June 29, 1948. But that was all that it had – the cornerstone. Lack of funds, the confusion ensuing from the recent war, and the pressing problems in the fledgling diocese accounted the impossibility of going on with the construction.

New Bishop; Revival of Seminary Plans

It was on January 28, 1952 that Lino Gonzaga⁵⁸ erstwhile parish priest of Tacloban, was elevated to the episcopacy, and was at the same time appointed Bishop of the Diocese of Palo. With those consecration oils hardly dry in his hands, Bishop Gonzaga immediately revived the plan of constructing the seminary. He called for contributions and donations from the diocese, the islands, and the United States.⁵⁹ He even went as far as to pegging priests a certain quota *sub poena suspensionis*. The gravity of the order was reflected on some priests who were meted out the censure for non-compliance.⁶⁰ Even as the plan was revived in 1952, however, it took three years before the actual construction took place. Meanwhile money came pouring in. It was reported that, aside from the fund that came from the parishes, the Apostolic Nuncio and the Elizalde Group of Companies gave substantial donations for the project.⁶¹ Construction started in 1955 and slowly but surely, the seminary was rising from its foundations, a dream before, now gradually becoming a reality.

Seminary Now Ready

The original plan was to construct five buildings on that 24-hectare lot: a church, a faculty house and three separate buildings

⁵⁸ Gonzaga was appointed bishop on November 12, 1951, and then consecrated on January 28, 1952. See *AnPont Per L'Anno 1960*, TPV, Vatican 1960, p. 376. The official announcement on Bishop Gonzaga's appointment as Bishop of Palo appears in AAS 45 (1953) 77.

⁵⁹ M. PANTA, *o. c.* p. 6.

⁶⁰ Cf. A. VILLARANTE, *o. c.*

⁶¹ E. JUSTIMBASTE – J. V. ARUTA, *o. c.*, p. 29.

for high school, philosophy and theology. But when the seminarians began to move in 1956, only the high school building and the faculty house stood for occupancy. There were still three buildings to be reckoned with: the chapel, which was in the process of construction, the philosophy and theology buildings.

In the summer of May, 1956, the major seminarians, who were kept in the seminary for the major portion of their vacation, moved into the new building. The minors came in shortly before the start of the school year, and occupied the second floor as their sleeping quarters. By June 11, classes were held for the first time in Palo.⁶²

The formal inauguration and blessing took place in August 6 of that year. Gracing the momentous event were the Archbishop of Cebu, Archbishop Julio Rosales, bishops of the suffragan dioceses, and "over a thousand guests," said the chronicler. A grand parade was held from the old Bishop's Palace, beside the Palo Cathedral, led by five bishops. Joining them were "St. Paul's College ROTC Cadet Corps and band, Catholic schools, civic and religious organizations, seminarians, public officials, the clergy, the prelates from Cebu archdiocese and the general public."⁶³ Archbishop Rosales delivered the allocution. Bishop Mascariñas, the first bishop of Palo, was given the honor of blessing the buildings, while Bishop Gonzaga officiated the Mass of Thanksgiving.

That evening "Everyman," a fifteenth-century morality play, was staged by the seminarians before "1,200 spectators [who] were thrilled by the performance."⁶⁴

The plans for the philosophy and theology buildings were put on hold. Meanwhile, the collegians were housed at the third floor of the main building originally intended for the high school boys. And while the classes of the minors were held at the first floor of the main building, and the classes for the majors were conducted at the faculty building.⁶⁵

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 30.

⁶³ A. VILLARANTE, *o. c.* He cites these facts from a seminary chronicle.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁵ E. JUSTIMBASTE – J. V. ARUTA, *o. c.*, p. 31.

In the meantime, the bishop and the fathers thought that the diocese was not yet ready to open its theologate. So, those who were to study their theology were dispatched to other seminaries, i.e., to the *Seminario Mayor de San Carlos*, in Cebu, and the UST Central Seminary and San Jose Seminary, in Manila, to finish their courses.

Changes in Administration; Unchanged Policies

The early years in Palo were marked by the changes in the faculty and administration. Father Topfer took a two-year leave for further studies at the Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois (USA), and a vacation in his hometown in Germany. Father Vicente Braganza, a Filipino, fresh from his studies at the Gregorian University in Rome, became the rector. Father Geronimo Galvan, an Argentinian, became the prefect of discipline. Other members of the staff who came at varying periods of time were Father Delfin Taguinod, a Filipino, and two American Fathers: Stanislaus Plutz and Raymund Quetchenbach.⁶⁶

The turn-over-of a new set of faculty members and administration did not affect the policies and daily schedule of the seminary. The pattern of life that they had in Tanauan was essentially the same.⁶⁷ Leonardo Medroso, now Bishop of Borongan, still pictures the daily routine that they had in the early years of their life in Palo —something that was almost unchanged from the one they had during their Tanauan years:

It starts with the discipline of waking up very early in the morning (5:00 a.m.), wash up and dress for some minutes and reach in time for the place of community prayers, meditation and liturgical services. Seven o'clock brings the seminarians to the dining room for a rush breakfast of 30 minutes. By 7:30 they are in the classrooms preparing for classes of the day. In between are study periods. By 4:30 p.m. they ... go out to the playgrounds for games and other exercises. After that are two hours of studies in the study rooms. Late dinner follows, then recreation, and by

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 30.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*

9:30, taps. Others remain in the classrooms doing some more studies up to 10:00 in the evening. Great silence is observed for the whole night through.⁶⁸

Seminary policies were spelled out in the *Vade Mecum*,⁶⁹ a list of rules and regulations formulated by the seminary fathers and were regularly submitted to the bishop for approval. A retrieved mimeographed copy of the *Vade Mecum* contains a total of 116 rules and regulations that a seminarian had to follow, all grouped into the different areas of seminary training: religious exercises, studies, work, free times, the daily order, and what were referred to as "some special regulations".⁷⁰ "The Rules and Regulations here contained are wise guides for your seminary life," the handout begins, "They are not conceived as arbitrary measures to curtail your freedom, but as the minimum requirements indispensable in a community of young men who intend to prepare for the highest dignity ever granted to men, that of the priesthood." It says further, "Discipline is not acquired in a day," referring to the importance of seminary formation, not just only to learn the necessary sciences, as to the need of acquiring a well-disciplined life.

In this list rules regarding classroom behavior occupied the most number of items. Seminarians were encouraged to study faithfully. Apart from the prescribed studies, the students were required to enlarge their knowledge by reading and research (n. 21). During study periods strict silence was to be observed. Even leaving the study room was prohibited except for extreme and important reasons (n. 22). Novels, story books and magazines were not permitted during study time (n. 25). Even to write letters was done during free hours (n. 26), or during Sunday mornings before the Particular Examen at noon. During tests and examinations cheating was considered a strong breach of discipline, and when caught, the seminarian automatically received a grade of failure (n. 29).

⁶⁸ *Bishop Medroso's Letter*, cit.

⁶⁹ *Vade Mecum for Seminarians. Handbook of Seminary Rules and Regulations*, typescript, 7 pp.; Ms. 1.2.3.5; numbers following the text refer to the numbers of the items in the said handout.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 1.

Academic Curriculum; Continued Emphasis in Latin

Ever since its college department was recognized by the Department of Education in 1953, the seminary had been producing graduates whose academic degree, Bachelor of Liberal Arts, had civil effects. The academic curriculum had been designed to meet government requirements. Technically, though, the seminary could not confer an ecclesiastical degree in philosophy to its students. Nonetheless, the basic and ecclesiastically required classical courses in this field formed part of the curriculum.

While the curriculum of the college department from the school years 1959 to 1963 continued evolving, it was still substantially unchanged: it was a curriculum with its characteristically classical orientation, given to a large emphasis on languages and the still-pervading Thomistic philosophy.⁷¹

As expected, *English* was taught for the entire four years. *Spanish* already enjoyed a four-year course in the curriculum. *Greek*, which seemed absent in the early phase of the college's curriculum development, was now allotted a semester's work.

Philosophy, which was started in the second year, enjoyed 46 credit units all in all. Apart from the major disciplines, *Educational Psychology* continued being an allied course in philosophy, since it was meant to provide the students the experimental and the pedagogical dimension of the thomistic *Rational Psychology*.

Other fields taught were government-required courses like *Social Sciences*, *Natural Sciences*, *Mathematics* and *Physical Education*. Up until this time, the degree, Associate in Arts was granted to students after their second year, in consonance with government regulations.⁷²

⁷¹ A sample of a permanent record from school years 1959-1963, or Ms. 1.2.2.8, is the source for this discussion.

⁷² During the writing of this paper it could not be ascertained as to when the title of Associate in Arts was granted by the government. Suffice it to say, however, that by the mid-part of the sixties, it ceased to be an academic degree conferred to students after their first two years in college.

The same article written by Emil Justimbaste may well reflect a student's forthright, honest, natural – even understandable – attitude towards his studies. He confesses of having acquired a natural interest for the English language, even if he found it “academically difficult and laborious” at the beginning:

English? I had a 75 in Grammar, which I improved upon in later years. Literature we savored with gusto, starting with Evangeline [of Acadia] and going on to Shakespeare in the later years. Keats, Shelley, Byron and Poe, [the latter] with his drinking habits and all, made instant poets out of us. It had me secretly writing my own ‘classic’ in frayed notebooks, which I showed to a limited few who could appreciate my brilliance. But it took me awhile to muster enough courage to submit a piece to the *Stella Maris* for our graduation issue.”⁷³

This same ex-seminarian also has something to say of the government-required subjects they were studying: “Other secular subjects, like Math, Physics and Biology, had little following in my class, except for the ones who wanted to stay at the top,” he continues. If these words have any meaning at all, they seem to reveal of the minimal interest these seminarians were giving to their secular courses. They were inclined, instead, to subjects that had strong bearings to their classical academic formation, like languages and literature. It was enough that they learned and passed these subjects of exact sciences; but to put their heart and soul into them seemed to be the vocation of a few.

Latin was still taught for six semesters, or three years, and consisted in the study of syntax, stylistics, samples of classical works, like the orations of Cicero, the works of Vergil and the annals of Livy. This language-subject continued to be an emphasis in studies. Even as early as their first year in high school, seminarians were already poring their puerile minds into the rules of grammar and syntax; alongside these were stories about Roman and Greek life of the ancient past, or extracts from Roman and Greek mythologies. In their fourth year they were working with texts taken from Caesar's Gallic Wars, orations of Cicero, or the poetry of Ovid. Here is an account of his

⁷³ E. JUSTIMBASTE, “1959. . . Pieces from a Broken Glass,” in J. V. V. ARUTA (ed.). *Jubilate*, cit., p. 50-51.

seminary days by a high schooler from 1959 to 1963, Emil Justimbaste, whose bouts with his Latin subjects he relates with lightheartedness and charm:

Latin appeared simple enough at the start. *Agricola arat. Ancilla laborat. Puella cantat.* Every freshman went through the routine. No point racking one's brains on these. As one progressed through the years, however, Latin conjugations and declensions became more and more complex. Some of us preferred to escape into the world of Hardy Boys and Zane Gray which were a lot easier and more enjoyable. When the works of the Roman poet Ovid was offered in our fourth year, the silly adventure of Icarus flying with wings made of wax had us laughing. But in Cicero's kilometric statements, just locating the subject and predicates was a torment. . .⁷⁴

Methods of Learning

The seminary had been following the traditional approach of conducting classes, the usual being the lecture method. The professor expounded the topic of the day, and elaborated it with examples and analogies. In between lectures questions pertinent to the topic were asked. Some professors encouraged class participation through debates and discussions.⁷⁵

The basic textbook which had been used by the seminarians was the three-volume work in Thomistic philosophy by Francisco Calcagno, in Latin.⁷⁶ It consisted of one hundred philosophical theses divided into the main disciplines in scholastic philosophy: *Logic, Criteriology, Epistemology, Metaphysics, Rational Psychology, General and Special Ethics*. Each thesis was explained using the "deductive method," and in addition, a series of corollaries, explanation to objections, and several proofs and evidences "as criteria of truth." It was a Scholastic approach inside and out.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem.*, p. 51.

⁷⁵ *Bishop Medroso's Letter*, cit.

⁷⁶ F. CALCAGNO, *Philosophia Scholastica*, 3 Vols., Calata Trinita, Neapoli 1947.

The classes in philosophy were conducted in Latin, and examinations were made in Latin.⁷⁷ During classes in philosophy this classical language was encouraged as spoken. In their Spanish classes, the seminarians tried to speak the castillan tongue. But in all other classes, English was used in both lectures and discussions.

At the end of the four year course, a comprehensive examination covering the entire philosophy course, better known as, *Solemnis disputatio*, was given to the graduating students.⁷⁸

Vatican II's Initial Footprints

In the meantime, the Second Vatican Council was convoked in 1962. This epochal event would spell out changes in the church, and in them, significant, even fundamental, shifts in seminary policies. This would not be felt in Sacred Heart Seminary until years later. Again, Justimbaste says it all: “. . .we were practically unscathed in isolation from it. . . We had our books, our *Orate Fratres*, *Cantate*, and *Vade Mecum*.”⁷⁹ The only indication that the seminarians were aware of the current events occurring in the universal Church were the articles in the *Stella Maris* that carried themes along this line.⁸⁰ Then came passwords like “exposures” and “experimentations” even as the seminarians’ “naiveté seclusion from the outside world” was being challenged. But again, it would take time before these issues turned full blast in the seminary campus.

Administrative Changes

Quite incidentally, by this time, in 1967, the diocese of Palo had undergone administrative changes. Bishop Lino Gonzaga had been

⁷⁷ Letter of Father Oscar G. Lorenzo to this author, dated January 3, 1995, p.1, Ms. 1.2.1.5.

⁷⁸ Letter of Msgr. Pastor Cotiangco to this author, dated November 26, 1994, p. 1, Ms. 1.2.1.3.

⁷⁹ E. JUSTIMBASTE, o. c., p. 52. *Orate Fratres* was the title of the book containing selected prayers for seminarians. *Cantate Domino* was the name of a hymnal.

⁸⁰ Cf. E. JUSTIMBASTE – J. V. ARUTA, o. c., p. 32. The article quotes a line from a write-up written by Filomeno Bactol in the 1962 issue of *Stella Maris*.

appointed archbishop of the newly-created archdiocese of Zamboanga in 1967.⁸¹ His successor was Bishop Teotimo Pacis, a former rector of St. Gregory the Great Seminary in Legazpi City and a member of the Congregation of Missions, better known as, *Padres Paules*.⁸² It was in his two-year stint that the sudden turn towards liberalization in seminary policies began to show some definite signs.

For instance, during the school year 1967-1968, the upper three classes in college, that is, the sophomore, junior and senior seminarians, were made to study in Cebu at the Seminario Mayor de San Carlos. This seminary is the archdiocesan seminary of Cebu to which, at that time, Palo was a suffragan diocese. It was a belief of the seminary administrators of the metropolitan province that by combining the seminarians of the suffragan dioceses, it would be economically wholesome for the dioceses concerned. It was also thought that with one regional seminary alone, a pool of brilliant professors could be gathered from the mother diocese and the suffragan dioceses.⁸³ Whatever happened to this idea is not known. But in the succeeding three school years, the sending of seminarians to Cebu would not happen. The three-year levels left vacant by the seminarians who went to San Carlos would be filled up year after year until the school year 1970-1971 when the Sacred Heart Seminary experienced once again a full four-year complement in the college department.

It was also during the episcopacy of Bishop Pacis that Maasin became a separate diocese. The territorial limits of this new ecclesiastical jurisdiction comprise the entire southern province of which Maasin is the provincial capital, and some towns in the south-

⁸¹ The news regarding Bishop Gonzaga's transfer to the ecclesiastical see of Zamboanga appears in AAS 59 (1967) 721. Archbishop Gonzaga would resign from this see on August 25 1973. He moved quarters to the Archbishop's residence in Cebu where he died on August 15, 1981. Also see C. BRANSOM, "Philippine Episcopology III," in *BEF* 65 (1989) 581.

⁸² Bishop Pacis hailed from Tiwi, of the Diocese of Legazpi. He was appointed bishop of the diocese on November 18, 1966, and was consecrated on January 25, 1967; see *AnPont Per L'Anno 1969*, TPV, Vaticano 1969, p. 351. His appointment to the Diocese of Palo appears in AAS 59 (1967) 742.

⁸³ The other dioceses that comprised the metropolitan province of Cebu were Calbayog, Borongan, Dumaguete and Tagbilaran.

western part of the Leyte province.⁸⁴ From then on, seminarians belonging to the new diocese began setting their eyes more to Cebu than to Palo for their academic training. Maasin being a Cebuano-speaking area, it was logical for students to have close affinities with Cebu than the Waray-waray-speaking region like Palo. The Palo seminary continued welcoming seminarians from their daughter-diocese, but it would not be long before the number of Maasin seminarians enrolled in Sacred Heart Seminary would diminish.

Another indication of the new wave of changes was the presence of lay women as teachers in the both the high school and college departments. "The idea was not only to relieve the faculty problem," Justimbaste and Aruta write, "but also to give seminarians more exposures to members of the opposite sex, which was almost unthinkable just a few years earlier."⁸⁵

In the school year 1968-1969, the college seminarians – or all that was left of them when the upper classmen left for Cebu the previous school year – were enrolled at the Divine Word University of Tacloban. It was supposed to be an implementation of a previous plan thoroughly discussed by the Bishop and the seminary fathers as part of an experiment in socialization. Their full contact with the university students, so the seminary fathers thought, would improve their sociability.

At the end of the school year, an evaluation was made, and the conclusion drawn was, while there was a marked growth of the seminarians' social awareness, their intellectual and spiritual values were negatively affected. So, by the school year 19669-1970, college classes were back in the seminary. The experiment was deemed a failure.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Cf. AAS 61 (1969) 5-7, cit. Msgr. Vicente Ataviado, at the time parish priest of Masbate, Masbate, became Maasin's first bishop; cf. AAS 60 (1968) 762, and AAS 61 (1969) 5-7. The Diocese of Maasin has recently experienced the death of their first and, by far, only bishop. Bishop Ataviado died on March 4, 1997.

⁸⁵ E. JUSTIMBASTE – J. V. ARUTA, *o. c.*, p. 33. In the record provided by the seminary, the early lay women teachers were Ms. Severina de Veyra (Spanish), Ms. Loreto de Veyra (Social Science/English) and Ms. Rosario Zabala (Music); cf. Ms. 1.2. 2. 5.

⁸⁶ M. PANTA, *o. c.*

The Departure: SVD Fathers in Retrospect

At about the same time the SVD Fathers were being phased out of the seminary. In 1968, Father Adolf Baden, the seminary rector, received a simple plaque of appreciation from the diocese from the hands of Bishop Teotimo Pacis, who at that time, too, was leaving the diocese for a different pastoral assignment. In the following year, 1969, the SVD Fathers formally relinquished their charge over the seminary. During the graduation ceremonies of that school year, Msgr. Zenon Ocampo, Vicar Capitular of the Diocese, presented to the Society, represented by Father Benjamin Janea, former prefect of discipline, a bronze plaque as "token of deep gratitude for the society's generosity, and to the fathers who had toiled, sweated and sacrificed for the shaping of her seminary and for the molding of her sons into priests."⁸⁷

The diocesan priests, when asked about their life in the seminary, always recalled those years with sighs of affection from the training they received under the mentorship of these missionaries. Of the long line of SVD fathers some figures have stood out in the priests' memories.

Father Bernard Topfer, for example, was one of the early seminary fathers who, with his characteristic dedication as an administrator and disciplinarian, had dealt so much influence in the lives of the seminarians. He was an all-around person: a professor of sciences, literature, music and Latin, Msgr. Pastor Cotiangco recalls. Father Topfer is remembered as one who always went to class prepared (*No preparation, no class*, the monsignor says). He was their prefect of studies, prefect of discipline, music director and vice-rector all rolled into one. He would later become the seminary rector.⁸⁸

A classroom experience is recalled by Msgr. Ben Sabillo about this well-respected German father:

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*

⁸⁸ Cf. *Letters from Msgr. Quianzon, Bishop Modesto, Bishop Medroso, Msgr. Cotiangco, Msgr. Apostol*, cit.

One time we had this exam on weather forecasting. We did a lot of preparation, doing some serious research, memorizing some scientific principles as was his wont, only to find out later on that his exam was with open notes and books! He was unpredictable as the weather. Well, I did my own forecast, backed up by own research: cloudy but *no rain in the afternoon*. Unfortunately, there was a heavy downpour in the afternoon! But still, he accepted my analysis, and I passed, even if my forecasting was wrong. [As a] lesson: in life, he said, we sometimes miscalculate; what is more important is to find out the reason why we do so at times.⁸⁹

This same priest also has good remembrances of Father Stanley Plutz, an American, whose saintly and ascetic lifestyle many a seminarian tried to emulate. Aside from being their Spiritual Director, he, too, was their professor in English. He encouraged seminarians to contribute articles to the *Stella Maris*, and included in his class syllabus a lesson in journalistic and newspaper writing.

There was Father Charles Gries, another professor in English. His good, spoken English had encouraged a lot of seminarians to learn to speak the language with interest. "His teaching method included private tutoring so that no student failed in his subject," wrote Msgr. Cotiangco.⁹⁰

Still etched in the seminarians' memories was a Filipino from Alaminos, Pangasinan, Father Vicente Braganza. After his studies at the Gregorian University in Rome, he became the first Filipino rector in Sacred Heart Seminary. He taught philosophy and dramatics, even as he encouraged seminarians to read books and to write baby theses.⁹¹

There are some remembrances that smack of adolescent effervescence, as that of Emil Justimbaste's. He recalls a scenario during his first year in high school:

⁸⁹ Letter of Msgr. Benjamin Sabillo to this author, dated November 9, 1994, Ms. 1.2.1.9.

⁹⁰ Cf. Msgr. Cotiangco's Letter, cit., p. 2.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*.

There was this tall, husky Argentinian whose room was right above the old seminary store. . . [He] used to take out his comics (English Classics) for freshies. Maybe that was his way of consoling kids pining for mamas and papas and home. Those comics were supposed to put us to sleep on siesta time, but we managed to exchange copies with our classmates till the bell rang for the study period. Geronimo Galvan his name was. That fitted a stern countenance that struck terror among us little tots, enough to make us obedient and submissive to the *Vade Mecum*.⁹²

Father Gil Cañete's description of his encounter with his seminary superior provides us a picture of a typical young lad's life, and his ways at challenging, even beating all odds in, a rather strict atmosphere:

Who can forget 'Jane', Father [Benjamin] Janea, the stealthy sleuth who had eyes the number of stars? He of the soundless footsteps and laser vision who uncovered plots and blew the whistle on misdemeanors, trespasses and transgressions. I was once caught about to commit one. I had a supplement food stuff in my cabinet in the dorm. All of a sudden, Father Janea came my way while reading his breviary — and possibly my thoughts. I got my towel instead and pretended to go to the lavatory. I got out safe clean as good Father Janea went on his way. I was not fortunate the next time though. At 5:30 p.m. of every Saturday the *Silentium Magnum* commenced. A monastic stillness would descend on the whole campus. I was caught in the baths chatting with somebody as I waited my turn. As penance, I was suspended from playing basketball for a whole week. . . Imagine what punishment it was not to be allowed to play for a whole week [!]. Anyway, it was a time when even corporal punishment was taken as a 'corporal work of mercy'.⁹³

In a typescript list provided by the seminary the other SVD Missionaries who worked in the seminary from 1961 to 1969 were: Fathers, Jesus del Rosario, Wenceslao Fernan, Pedro Kraniwitter, Adolf Baden, Quintin Terrenal, Helmuth Peter, Maurice Spieker,

⁹² E. JUSTIMBASTE, *o. c.*, p. 49.

⁹³ G. CAÑETE, 1968. . . *Backward Glances*, in J. V. V. ARUTA (ed.). *Jubilate!* cit., pp. 58-59.

Leo Muehl, Leonardo Mercado, Macario Magboo, Cornelio Alpuerto, Leo Valera, Herman Wijtten, Leonardo Mercado, Fermin Dichoso, Edmund Weiss and Victor Drewes, the latter being the last SVD Rector of Sacred Heart Seminary.⁹⁴

With the departure of the SVD Fathers a significant epoch in the history of the Sacred Heart Seminary is ended. In 1972, Father Bactol, already a member of the administration and faculty, wrote a postscript to that bygone era, and tried to put into words his great respect and reverence for the missionaries:

Twenty-five years have passed. In terms of priestly graduates, Leyte (now Palo and Maasin dioceses) is richer, out of the undying labors of the SVD Fathers. . . Some 25 years ago the Divine Word Fathers came to the Leyte seminary to impart the truth of faith which guided the priestly vocations of both dioceses. Under their mentorship, the Sacred Heart Seminary produced leaders in the Church and even those who did not make it to the priesthood distinguish themselves in the service of the Church in the outside world. The education they imparted is an heirloom like precious rubies. The teaching they gave us did not only prepare us for citizenship and life, but also left us a sound academic foundations (I hope!).⁹⁵

Conclusion

During the silver anniversary of the seminary's foundation in 1969, there was nothing of the usual funfare associated with every commemorative celebration: no fireworks, no parade, nor long speeches.⁹⁶ All that they had was the 1970 issue of the *Stella Maris* dedicated to the Divine Word Fathers in recognition of their undying labor for the growth of the clergy in the diocese.

⁹⁴ *Seminary Administrators, 1961-1994*, no. 1.2.2.5.

⁹⁵ F. G. BACTOL, "Postscript," in *StM* (1972) 10. Fr. Bactol, in writing this article, was then the prefect of discipline of the seminary. Three years later in 1975, he would be its Rector until 1985. On October 15 1981, he was consecrated Titular of Germanicana and Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Palo.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*.

Yet, even the issue was devoid of encomiums and panegyrics. In all probability, the seminarians knew all along that the fathers themselves, in all their modesty, preferred it that way. At twenty-five years, the seminary was still too young to be wrestling on laurels and achievements. The work was yet far from accomplished.

What mattered most was that the dream of Bishop Mascariñas, the clergy and the people of Leyte had thrived into a reality. The Sacred Heart Seminary was established.

Says the 1970 *Stella Maris* editorial:

Profuse setbacks and problems characterized her early years that her continuity to some was a dim vision; to others, more optimistic, a gleaming light. Oddly enough, she braved all the barriers, survived all the problems that now in her 25th year of existence she looks back to all those years of trial as something of the past.⁹⁷

By 1969 that "past" already belonged to a bygone era. All there was to do was to get back into the road and proceed with the journey. "Ahead," continues the editorial, "are the unforeseen events of thousand guises, generating ill or well results so that the morrow is a guess." □

⁹⁷ [P. TRISTE], "Editorial. Footnote to Her Silver Anniversary," in *StM* (1970) p. 3.