

400 Years of Dominican Apostolate among the Chinese of Binondo

PEDRO G. TEJERO, O.P.*

The following pages are written with only one purpose in mind: to present in a simple and concise form the more salient features of the work of evangelization among the Chinese of Manila accomplished by the Dominican missionaries of the Holy Rosary Province throughout four hundred years of ministry. Such ministry presents aspects and undertakings worthy of note, admiration and emulation.

My second thought in writing this essay is to recall that the parish of Binondo shall commemorate in 1996 the Fourth Centennial of its foundation. An important event to be remembered. Binondo continues to be today, as it was in past, a challenge to the missionary work of the Church. The field and the harvest continue to be immense, virtually unexplored..., magnificent opportunity for apostolic action at the dawning of the year two thousand.

I frankly admit that this short treatise truly calls for another study, a longer and more comprehensive one, on the same topic. The chronology of the Binondo Chinese Parish, included at the end, clearly indicates this purpose.

Although I speak here of Dominican missionaries as the principal protagonists in an evangelizing project, it is far from my mind to discount the collaboration and help of other religious orders and of the secular clergy. Justice and charity dictate this recognition.

*Fr. Pedro G. Tejero, O.P., who for several years did pastoral work among the Chinese of Binondo, is a professor at the Ecclesiastical Faculties of the University of Santo Tomas, Manila.

I. MANILA (1587-1596)

The Dominicans in Manila

In 1587, a few months after the arrival in Manila of the founding fathers of the Holy Rosary Province, Bishop Domingo Salazar, O.P., proposed to them a new and ambitious apostolic project: the evangelization of the Chinese in Manila. The offer was accepted "at once, and gladly," for it jibed exactly with the plans and dreams they had – to go and implant the faith, as soon as possible, in the Empire of China. There were assuredly other reasons beside this in favor of the project, such as the golden opportunity for missionaries to learn while in the Philippines the Chinese language, and the possibility of later spreading the faith to the China mainland through the Chinese converts.

The Mission Starts

In 1587 the Chinese colony in Manila was very numerous, approaching 10,000. The increasing development of the city of Manila and the trade galleons coming from Mexico strongly attracted the attention of the Chinese merchants, who saw in this a propitious chance for a lucrative enterprise. Every year swarms of junks and sampans arrived in Manila bringing all sorts of merchandise and products, especially silk and porcelain. It was thus that the famous market of the Parian came into being and grew in the environs of Manila. The city of Manila always lived off the Parian. And as often as the market was destroyed and burned, it rose again to return to its former activity, always by Manila as its shadow.

Bishop Domingo Salazar has left us a detailed and graphic description of the Parian of his time. It was a motley market where one could buy "whatever people wanted," any artifact or product peculiar to the time. People of all sorts and trades could be found: fishermen, farmers, mechanics, physicians, pharmacists, silversmiths, ivory craftsmen, fortune-tellers, painters, gardeners, bakers, carpenters, cabinet-makers and house builders. In the very heart of this commercial hubbub, brimming with life, dynamism and vigorousness, Fathers Miguel de Benavides, later first Archbishop of Manila and founder of the University of Santo Tomas, and Juan Maldonado constructed "a small nipa house and a humble church," in a place which today can be located between the Central Post Office and the Wall in front of Jones Bridge as center and forward-post of their evangelizing mission. The first they did was to study the difficult Chinese language.

Of the two priests Father Benavides made quicker progress because, "since he was free of other occupations, he could give himself to the task with more concentration and interest." At the end of six months, "to everyone's surprise," he could preach to the Chinese in their own tongue. His first fruits were various Chinese catechumens who were baptized with appropriate solemnity in the church of Santo Domingo, Intramuros, on the feast of the Epiphany of the year 1588, with Governor Santiago de Vera as godfather.

New Missionaries in the Field

The years following saw the mission reinforced with new and zealous missionaries. These were Fathers Juan Cobo and Domingo de Nieva and Brother Pedro Rodríguez. Their presence in the mission field prompted the opening of new courses for action. Not far from the Parian, in the settlement of Baybay at the mouth of the Pasig River where the church of St. Nicholas stands today, a large Chinese population thrived. There the missionaries erected a small church under the patronage of Our lady of Purification. Masses were celebrated here each Sunday. The truths of religion were preached to the Chinese in their own language. Those who sought baptism were instructed accordingly. The team of these selfless and intrepid missionaries dared pioneer apostolic action in fields yet unexplored. Father Juan Cobo, who had acquired an exceptional grasp of the Chinese language, composed a vocabulary with the aim of facilitating the teaching of Chinese to other missionaries. He also found time to compose painstakingly a book, unknown until only recently, directed principally to the educated sectors of the Chinese, presenting to them the truths of the Christian faith. The title of the book is *Shih-Lu*, or *Dialogue on Reality*. With exceptional philosophical and theological ability it explains how the Christian religion is the only true one and how by considering the marvels of creation one can come to the knowledge of the true God. The book was published in Manila in 1593, a year after Father Cobo left on a diplomatic mission to the kingdom of Japan where he met his death. About this same time, a group of Dominican Fathers with the help of a convert translated into Chinese the book *Doctrina Christiana*, a catechism that explained briefly the fundamentals of the faith together with the Christian prayers. The work of these missionaries is so much the more meritorious when we consider that not only did they place the Christian Creed within the reach of the Chinese; but they also created equivalent concepts in the Chinese language with all the purity and fidelity that Catholic dogma

demands. Their theological formation and stature were the best guarantee for so delicate a task.

Hospital of San Gabriel

In those days many Chinese in the Parian and in Baybay lived in truly subhuman conditions. Sickness and misery were part of their daily fare. Many died in the streets, the fields and the port areas through the most appalling neglect. The problem increased to heart-rending proportions when the junks and sampans arrived and discarded the sick and the seriously wounded. This depressing scene moved the missionaries to go all-out and gather those unfortunates and bring them into their house where they attended to them with loving care and devotion. At times "they gave them their own beds, covered them with their *capas* and shared out their own meals." Such unheard-of acts of charity deeply touched the population of the Parian. Indeed never had they seen the like. This was how the idea was born in the mind of the missionaries to found a hospital for the care of the sick and the needy among the Chinese under the invocation of San Gabriel. For a start, a small and very simple structure was built in 1587. But as often as the hospital was destroyed by fires and other calamities that visited the Parian in various occasions, it rose again each time bigger and better constructed.

In 1598 the Manila city council ordered the transfer of the hospital of San Gabriel to the northern side of the Pasig River, in the district of Binondo, the place occupied today by the Hongkong-Shanghai Bank. Far from allowing this to dampen their spirit, the missionaries erected there in 1599 a beautiful edifice, which in time came to comprise three large wards, "one of which had eighty beds." The labor of socio-charitable promotion brought to fruition by this hospital in its one hundred and eighty seven years of existence is worthy of the highest praise and admiration. In those times statistical data on the sick treated there were not kept. But it is certain that they could have been counted by the thousands. Not a few of these sick people encountered God in their illness, going "from bed to heaven without passing through Purgatory," after having received baptism. To the Non-Christian Chinese the services rendered through this humanitarian work constituted the best and most convincing argument in favor of the Catholic religion. Regarding this hospital it was said that "it was one of the most illustrious accomplishments under the Spanish crown." But the truly outstanding figure of this hospital was the cooperator-

brother, Brother Pedro Rodriguez, who offered his whole self to the care of the sick. It was said that he "cured more through his prayers than through medication." The Holy Rosary Province regarded this work with special predilection, to which it had always assigned two priests and one or two cooperator-brothers. It was in this hospital, located in the Parian territory, where, after having completed well their mission the two founders of the Province of the Holy Rosary died: Father Juan Crisostomo in 1590 and Father Juan de Castro in 1592.

II. BINONDO (1596-1769)

Binondo: Center of Missionary Activity

In 1594 a devout gentleman and governor of the Philippines, Don Luis Perez Dasmariñas, purchased the island of Binondo and donated it to Chinese converts to the faith, with the intention of protecting them from upheavals or any other danger against the faith. Since by this time the hospital of San Gabriel was about to be moved to Binondo, and the church of Baybay was to be suppressed by 1613, Binondo rose to become the most important zone of the Chinese Christian community in Manila. In no time the missionaries erected on a strategic site a church and convent which in 1596 the Holy Rosary Province officially accepted under the name of Church and Convent of San Gabriel. This title was maintained until the year 1751 when it was changed to Our Lady of the Rosary. The first Vicar of this missionary post was Fr. Pedro de San Vicente. The church was successively enlarged and improved. Built "wholly of stone," it was the "largest and most sumptuous church in the entire district" – "most beautiful, very spacious, well lighted by its fifty windows, very pleasant, solid and impressive." "One of the finest example of Spanish colonial architecture in the Philippines."

From 1606 Binondo becomes the focal center of all missionary action among the Chinese of Manila. And this was such that the mere mention of Binondo, even today, brings at once to mind the cradle of Chinese Catholicism in the Philippines. Around its church grew a Christian community, composed not only of Chinese, but also mestizos and Filipinos. The Holy Rosary Province always maintained in this center from four to seven missionaries who took to heart the Christians entrusted to them.

We do not possess a detailed description of what life was like in Binondo at that time. Nevertheless, we can reconstruct its most salient

aspects. Foremost in importance was the Sunday Mass or Masses which all the parishioners attended. They had sermons preached to them in Chinese and had the fundamental truths of Christian faith and morals explained to them. The feasts of the Lord, of the Virgin and of some Saints were celebrated with great popular enthusiasm and acclaim. A must were the processions, for which the streets were adorned with arbors, torches and other curious ornaments and which ended in an explosive display of fireworks. The processions of Holy Week were held in an atmosphere of intense devotion and attention mixed occasionally with dramatic overtones. That of the "*Encuentro*" early on Easter Sunday drew an enormous crowd of the faithful to the spacious square in front of the church, where they witnessed the Virgin shed her mourning for the white of joy amidst canticles, poems and beautiful stage settings of exquisite popular tenderness and gusto. The various confraternities included almost all the faithful. Foremost was the Confraternity of the Rosary, established in 1587 in the church of Santo Domingo. Once the rainy season was over, in early evening groups of devotees proceeded from the church bearing images of the Virgin adorned with fanciful lanterns. They made their way through the streets chanting the mysteries of the Rosary.

But Binondo was, above all, a center of evangelical thrust. In the parish halls hundreds of neophytes received weekly instruction, and were prepared for baptism by means of a conscientious formation. It must be stated that the worries of those missionaries over the lot of their Christians were such that, according to their thinking, the Chinese Christians of Manila should not be allowed to leave for the Continent, lest they lose their Christian faith.

Illustrious Names

It is not possible to name here the whole great number of missionaries who ennobled the mission of Binondo with the example of their virtues and the zeal of their apostolate. Some of the names of the early missionaries have already been mentioned. To these must be added the names of Fathers Pedro de San Vicente, Francisco Blancas de San José, Francisco Herrera, Tomas Mayor, Domingo González, Ildefonso Collar, Diego Aduarte, Saint Domingo de Erquicia, Saint Jordan de San Esteban, Blessed Juan Martinez de Santo Domingo, Blessed Juan Alcocer, Domingo Perez, Jose Rodriguez, Fernando Sanz, Francisco Gaínza and Jose Hevia Campomanes. We have omitted those of many of the former provincials and of distinguished

theologians who, residing in the hospital of San Gabriel, exercised the office of Commissary of the Holy Office.

The First Printing Press and the First Books

A chapter of no mean importance and interest and, if we may so call it, of a truly revolutionary impact in the life of the nation and of the Church in the Philippines is that touching on the creation of the first printing press and publication of the first books in the Philippines, thanks to the missionaries of the Parian and Binondo with the helpful collaboration of a Chinese named Keng Yong. In 1593 the first three books saw the light of day: the *SHIH LU* of Father Juan Cobo; *Doctrina Christiana*, in Spanish and Tagalog, of Father Juan Plasencia, O.F.M., and *Doctrina Christiana*, in Chinese, of a group of Dominican Fathers. All three were printed in the Parian by xylography, an art in which the Chinese excelled. In the following years other books issued by the same process: *Memomorial de la Vida Christiana* of Father Domingo de Nieva, and *Símbolo de la Fe* of Father Tomas Mayor.

Starting from 1604 the printing of books acquired a new and revolutionary technique. Movable type began to be used. The glory of having introduced printing into the Philippines goes to Father Blancas de San Jose, in collaboration with the Chinese Juan de Vera and the Filipino Tomas Pinpin. The following titles were published using the new process from 1604 to 1607: *Libro de la Quatro Postrimerías*, in Tagalog, by Father Blancas de San Jose; *Ordenaciones de la Provincia de Nuestra Señora del Rosario*, in Latin; *Memorial de la Vida Christiana*, in Tagalog, by Father Blancas de San Jose, and *Tratado del Sacramento de la Confesión*, in Tagalog, also by the same Father Blancas de San Jose.

Other Glories of Binondo

There are, besides, other claims to distinction for the parish of Binondo. It was a Chinese native sculptor from Binondo, whose name is unknown, who carved in ivory, with great originality and artistic delicateness, the beautiful and revered image of Our Lady of the Rosary enthroned for centuries in the church of the convent of Santo Domingo in Manila. This miraculous image has always been held in deep veneration by the entire Filipino people. It is popularly known as "*La Naval*" because on various occasions through her intercession

astounding naval victories were won against the Dutch, who had attempted to conquer the Philippines and introduce their religion. Each year from the defeat of the Dutch onward the Filipino people have commemorated the event with a solemn procession in the month of October and render thanks to the Virgin for this singular favor. The commemoration has endured to the present times. After the Second World War during which the temple of Santo Domingo in Intramuros was totally destroyed, the image of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary (La Naval) was solemnly enthroned at the new church of Santo Domingo in Quezon City in 1954.

San Lorenzo Ruiz

However, the crowning glory of the mission of Binondo is, without doubt, the beatification and canonization of the first ever Filipino saint and martyr, San Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila. San Lorenzo Ruiz was born in Binondo around the year 1600 of a Chinese father and a Filipino mother. "In the catechetical school of the Dominican Fathers in Binondo he received his Christian formation," as John Paul II stressed in his homily of the beatification on February 17, 1981, before a gathering of more than a million faithful in Luneta Park. Later on in Japan he would give witness to his faith. Before his judges Lorenzo Ruiz professed that he was a Christian and that "he was ready to give his life, even had he a thousand lives, for Christ." Taking cognizance of this exceptional spirit of martyrdom, and acquiescing to the petitions and prayers of the Filipino people, John Paul II raised Lorenzo Ruiz to the honors of the altar on October 18, 1987, at the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome, before an immense multitude of the faithful from all over the world. San Lorenzo de Manila, a simple layman, but one of profound faith and trust in God, emerges as the best testimony and symbol of what Binondo has meant through its history of evangelization. Holiness and martyrdom are the two most precious gifts that the Lord can grant to his Church.

Mother Ignacia del Espiritu Santo

We should not overlook the fact that the parish of Binondo has also been the cradle of a number of women known for their holiness and apostolic endeavours. To cite one example only, we mention here the name of Mother Ignacia del Espiritu Santo whose process of beatification by the church is now underway.

Mother Ignacia del Espiritu Santo was born in Binondo, Manila, in the year 1663. Thanks to her baptismal certificate, newly discovered, we have come to know important data about her family. Her father was Jusepe Iuco, a Chinese from Amoy, and her mother was Maria Geronima, a native Filipina. Mother Ignacia had two sisters and one brother. All of them died at an early age.

Mother Ignacia was baptized by Father Alberto Collares, O.P., on March 4, 1663, at the church of *Tres Santos Reyes* of Parian.

Little is known about her childhood and early youth. We can reasonably believe that she received the education given to the girls of her own time. Gifted with a keen sensitivity for spiritual things, Mother Ignacia frequented the religious services and made use of the spiritual guidance offered by the Dominican missionaries at the church of San Gabriel of Binondo. The fact that she wanted to become one of the nuns at the Beaterio de Santa Catalina in Intramuros proves sufficiently her relationship to the church of Binondo.

At the age of 21, her parents begged her to get married. But Ignacia's decision at this crucial moment of her life was to be done in the light of her faith. She attended a retreat given by a Jesuit Father Pablo Clain, and arrived at the conclusion that God was calling her to religious life. Moved then by her special charism and properly guided by her spiritual directors, she thought of the possibility of creating a new religious institution for Filipina girls regardless of their color and race. To achieve this aim she had to overcome unsurmountable obstacles and trials. But Mother Ignacia was a woman of strong character and deep faith. History shows her fully convinced of her vocation dedicated to prayer, penance, retirement from the world and the exercise of works of mercy.

Her great personality attracted many young women to this type of life. Those who followed her were called "*beatas*," and the place where they lived "*beaterio*."

Mother Ignacia submitted the first set of "Rules and Constitutions" in 1732, and these writings stand as the best testimony of her teachings and virtues.

When Mother Ignacia died on September 10, 1748, there were already fifty professed sisters and thirteen novices. She was given a solemn burial and her remains were laid to rest in the church of San Ignacio in Intramuros.

Mother Ignacia's spirit lives on in the apostolic life of some six hundred Sisters spread across the Philippines, Indonesia, Papua, Taiwan, Africa, Nepal, United States of America and Italy. Prayers are constantly offered to God that Mother Ignacia may be elevated soon to the glory of the altars.

Restoration of the Parian Mission

The old mission of Parian founded by Fathers Miguel de Benavides and Juan Maldonado in 1587, experienced serious setbacks in the course of history. When the Chinese Christians were grouped on the island of Binondo for safety reasons, the Mission of Parian was practically abandoned. The Parian market, nevertheless, continued being the most important center of trade and commerce in the city of Manila. There thousands of people were living in dire need of the Gospel. For this reason the Dominican missionaries thought of restoring the old mission to its pristine apostolate. To this effect a new *convento* and a new church were erected in 1619 under the patronage of the *Tres Santos Reyes*, as the Magi of the gospel of St. Mathew are known in Spanish. Unfortunately, a Chinese uprising took place in 1639 bringing destruction and flames to the market, the *convento* and the church. Of the few things that could be saved, there was a large Crucifix which later was enshrined in the church of San Juan del Monte where it is held in great devotion and veneration by the people up to the present time.

When life again took its normal course a new *convento* and a church were built to the wonder and admiration of the people of Parian. And this occurred several times whenever the church happened to be destroyed by fire or earthquakes. Regarding the last church it was said to have been the "most beautiful in the Philippines." Its interior was decorated with paintings explicative of the Old and New Testaments.

A string of events followed in the life and history of the Parian market that culminated in 1754 with the expulsion of the Non-Christian Chinese from the Philippines. As a result the Chinese population in the country remained relatively small as compared with those of the earlier periods. The impact that these happenings effected in the life and activities of Parian parish is evident. In 1769 the church of Parian was entrusted to the care and jurisdiction of the secular clergy by an order of the Spanish civil authority of the Philippines accompanied by force and constraint. And only in 1884 the parish was restored again to the Dominican missionaries who continued in the post until

1898 when both Binondo and Parian were definitely given to the secular clergy.

III. BINONDO (1769-1923)

Difficult Times

The Binondo Mission did not always enjoy a tranquil and comfortable existence. There were difficult times due to the frequent riots, uprisings, expulsions, killings and other evils that beset the Chinese population of Manila. This makes us admire all the more the constancy, dedication and fidelity of the missionaries who never for a moment forsook the faithful committed to their charge. Their work on many occasions was to act as arbitrators of peace and order so as to avert greater evils.

Mention should be made here that on October 5, 1762, the English troops conquered the city of Manila. The following days after the capture the British soldiers robbed, sacked and desecrated most of the churches and conventos located in Intramuros. The church of Binondo could not escape this fate. Thus, when the English left the city of Manila, two years later, the Binondo church had to undergo a major architectural restoration both in the facade and in the bell tower.

1769 marks one of those years qualified as "ill-fated" in the history of Philippine institutions in Spanish times. The Holy Rosary Province vehemently opposed the excessive encroachment on church affairs undertaken by the civil power of the so called *Patronato Real*. As a result of this abuse of power the Province was dispossessed of eight parishes throughout the Philippines, among which figured those of Binondo and the Parian, both of which had been run by the Dominicans for so many years. These two parishes were placed in the hands of the secular clergy. Needless to say, the outcome of such an unjust and preposterous decision can easily be imagined. Once the parish became the responsibility of someone who was totally (if pardonably), ignorant of the Chinese language and pattern of life, the faithful that made up that parish were left at the mercy of the circumstances.

Since no one was on hand directly to guide and care for them, there began little by little the "*diaspora*" of Chinese Christians to other areas of Manila and to the provinces. For want of proper Christian instruction, the practice of the Sacraments lost its genuine sense and was debased into a mere ritual of social custom and convenience. Not a few

of the recently-baptized reverted to their old superstitions and some even abandoned their faith. Thus the parish of Binondo slowly came to lose its identity as a genuinely Chinese parish.

In the meanwhile, the affluence of the Filipino faithful grew, so that, by force of events, Binondo came to be a predominantly Filipino parish.

In 1829 the waters appeared to return to their old course. In the Acts of the Provincial Chapter of the Holy Rosary Province it is stated with joy how a royal ordinance from the King of Spain Ferdinand VII, was received, given at Aranjuez on the 8th of June, 1826, by which the eight parishes taken from the Province were to be restored to the Dominicans. Among them were Binondo and Parian.

Once more the Dominican missionaries assumed the spiritual charge of the faithful of Binondo. But they soon became aware that the situation was not the same as when they had left it fifty-four years before. The first thing they encountered was that they had on their hands two Christian communities markedly different in language and life style. To harmonize the management of the parish in these circumstances was a far from easy task. A thousand problems arose which could be solved only with tact and prudence. Since by that time the majority of the faithful were Filipinos, they had to be attended to in their own language. For the Chinese it was arranged that a priest who was knowledgeable in the Chinese language and with some experience in the mission of China should be assigned.

The Dominicans Leave Binondo

Things proceeded this wise until the advent of the year 1898, which marks the independence of the Philippines.

At the cessation of hostilities, the Holy Rosary Province formally ceded the parishes of Binondo and Parian to the Archbishop of Manila, Dr. Bernardino Nozaleda, O.P., who in turn handed its care and administration to the secular clergy. To judge from the twist taken by the historic happenings of that decisive moment, here seemed to end for good the apostolic mission that the Dominican Fathers started in 1587 for the benefit of the Chinese of Manila. This was most assuredly a moment of severe trial with no small suffering and heart-break. But in the face of historic situations of such nature, there was no other course but resignation and trust in God's loving Providence.

IV. BINONDO (1923-1993)

The Dominicans Return

In 1923 the Sacred Consistorial Congregation in Rome, conscious of the dire spiritual need suffered by the Chinese Catholics in the Philippines and giving ear to their insistent petitions, decided it was opportune to create a new parish for them in Manila under very exceptional conditions. This parish under the name of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary was entrusted to the Dominican Fathers of the Holy Rosary Province "*ad nutum Sanctae Sedis*," with the obligation of providing a sufficient number of priests who would work for the conversion to the faith of the many non-Christian Chinese living in Manila.

The following year Michael O'Doherty, Archbishop of Manila, put into effect the decree of the Holy See, formalizing at the same time an agreement, the parish priest for the Chinese would be able to use the old church of Binondo, as long as the Chinese lacked one of their own, for their religious functions. Likewise, the parish priest of the Chinese would have the right to a habitat and an appropriate locale for religious instructions and parochial gatherings. The use of the church would be by common agreement between the Chinese and Filipino pastors. Archbishop O'Doherty also made clear that under 'Chinese' were included all those domiciled in Manila as well as the offspring under the age of 21 even those of a Chinese father and a Filipina mother.

Once again the Dominican missionaries took up the pastoral and parental care of the Chinese of Binondo and other districts of Manila. The corresponding parish priest was appointed and the parish began to function along the lines of these novel and special circumstances. The first pastor was Father Eutimio Perez, followed by Fathers Avelino Vigil, David de Miguel, Angel María Rodríguez and Antonio García, this last assuming office in 1939 after a missionary stint in China.

In various documents written by Father Antonio García one can appreciate the enormous difficulties encountered by the Chinese parish, established as it was not only within the territorial boundaries of another parish, but also in the same church and the same locality. What seemed in theory easy to harmonize generated, in practice, situations that defied solution. Notwithstanding, the parish proceeded as best it could, though in Father Antonio García's view "the situation clamored for a quick and adequate solution."

Scourge of the war

On September 22, 1944, American bombers in their drive to free Manila from Japanese domination heavily bombed the entire city. One of the bombs fell near the church and convent of Binondo. In a few minutes, all was reduced to a heap of debris and ashes. Only the walls of rubble-masonry of the church were left standing. The fire destroyed the nine artistic and precious altars erected in ages past. Lost too were the rich and abundant treasures of the sacristy, and several images of renowned artistic value. The parish archives with their irreplaceable documents of past centuries were lost.¹

Father Antonio García

At this juncture, the great work of apostolic restoration begins, propelled by the dauntless and tireless Parish Priest Father Antonio García. Up to the end of the war, he held the most solemn religious functions for the Chinese in the chapel of the University of Santo Tomas. On all ordinary days and on Saturdays he celebrated mass and heard confessions at the house of Mr. Jose Co Ching Yan. Not for a moment did he leave his parishioners without his encouraging presence. Thus he managed to maintain both confidence and the sense of communion for so many Catholics in those dark days.

For Father Antonio García the end of the war and the normalization of life signaled the hour assigned by God for the full restoration of the Chinese parish of Binondo. Fired by this idea, he sought an interview with the Archbishop of Manila, Michael O'Doherty, to whom he opened his mind on how to organize the Chinese parish. The reply was quick and reassuring. A special document was issued setting aside 700 square meters, previously occupied by the convento of Binondo, for

¹The first to initiate the reconstruction of the almost totally destroyed church of Binondo was Msgr. Narciso Gatpayat during the years 1946 to 1971. Msgr. Guillermo S. Mendoza who succeeded him as parish priest continued the reconstruction from 1971 to 1976. Finally, in the period from 1977 to 1984, Msgr. Federico V. Navarro brought to completion the restoration of the church and convento thanks to the generous help of both the diocese and the parishioners.

During the incumbency of Msgr. Josefino S. Ramírez as Parish Priest, on October 25, 1992, Jaime L. Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila, in the name of Pope John Paul II, raised the old church of Binondo to the rank of Minor Basilica in honor of San Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila taking into consideration the fact that Saint Lorenzo Ruiz had been baptized and educated in the life of the faith in this sacred place.

the erection therein of a chapel and parish rectory for the exclusive use of the Chinese of Manila. The document is dated April 27, 1945.

From this moment Father Antonio García acted as if impelled by the same spirit and vision as had the original founders of the Parian and Baybay missions. Nothing, no one, could stop him. As he himself wrote: "Closing my eyes to all difficulties, exerting my utmost possible effort and placing full confidence in God," he sallied forth in search of construction material in areas devastated by the blitz. From the ruins of the Colegio de San Juan de Letran he salvaged the wood that he needed. The framework of the structure, consisting of sixteen posts, each twenty-four feet long, was proffered by a Chinese, who, during the Japanese occupation, had hid them at the bottom of the Pasig River. Getting hold of these posts cost Father García "the earth," but there was no other way. He needed them badly. God rewarded his labors with abundant donations from the Chinese Catholics he approached, "going from house to house."

After six months of "continuous sweat and drudgery" he saw his work completed. He wrote: "It was an offspring of faith and sacrifice. Although lowly to an extreme, it has the honor of being the first chapel erected [after the war] in Manila, rising phoenix-like from the blackened and smoking ruins of a devastated city, rendering witness once more to the immortal spirit of Catholicism."

The blessing and inauguration of the Chinese parish complex took place on October 28, 1945, patronal feast of the parish. Father Antonio García had realized his golden dream. The restoration of the parish for the Chinese of Manila was now a reality. Fully independent, the parish could now move forward and program its life according to the plans of its pastor. The effects of this inauguration were immediately felt. The Catholics who were scattered in different parts of Manila, began little by little to group themselves and they were able to pray together in their own tongue. Masses were celebrated on Sundays, and confessions were heard regularly. A catechetical program was outlined for the conversion of Non-Christians, and proper dispositions were required from those who asked baptism or marriage.

If at one time, in 1898, historical events appeared to point to a final adieu of the Dominican missionaries in Binondo, the restoration initiated by Father Antonio Garcia, and backed by the Holy Rosary Province emerged to confirm the permanence and continuity of the Dominican apostolic labor in Binondo.

Crusader's Academy

Once parish life was organized, Father Antonio Garcia channeled his efforts towards reestablishing the Sunday catechesis, and the Confraternity of the Most Blessed Sacrament, geared this time to the youth under the title of "*Crusader of the Most Blessed Sacrament*." This immediate contact with the youth opened Father Antonio's eyes to the great difficulty they were going through after the war. They were in dire need of a good and robust Christian formation. It was then that the good Father envisaged opening a school to achieve this goal. The space he had was small, and the possibilities for expansion meager. Nevertheless, to his mind this need was paramount. When he first broached the idea he encountered stiff opposition. To all of which he replied: "If it is the will of God that this school materialize, nothing and no one can stop it." And so it came to be. On July 14, 1946, the Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, Guillermo Piani, inaugurated with all solemnity the new parochial school under the name of *Crusader's Academy*. It started with the first grades of instruction. One of the main preoccupations of Father Antonio García was the religious instruction of the students. He had a group of catechists, some brought in from China, assume this instruction, which would, in time bear fruit. History has borne out the providential foresight of Father Antonio in establishing this school, inasmuch as it has turned out to be the best complement of the parochial work and action of Binondo.

New Churches

In 1955 various events that have a direct bearing on the life and program of the parish of Binondo took place. The Holy See appointed Bishop Juan Bautista Velasco, O.P., director of the Chinese apostolate in the Philippines, shortly after his expulsion from the See of Amoy by the Chinese Communist government. By this time the Chinese immigrants, as well as the Chinese population already established in Manila, had formed an immense colony. Catholics were spread throughout all sectors of the city of Manila. It was evident that one parish was insufficient to give proper spiritual attention to so vast a number. Considering well all these points, it was concluded that three other parishes should be erected in order to care for all the Chinese in the Manila area. By decree of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation of Rome three more parishes were, therefore, erected. One, under the patronage of Mary the Queen, was entrusted to the Jesuit Fathers; another St. Jude Thaddeus, to the Divine Word Fathers, and the third, St. Peter the Apostle, to the Missionaries of the Immaculate Heart of

Mary (CICM). From this moment the apostolate among the Chinese that had been for so long in the hands of the Dominican Fathers was shared out to other religious institutes. However, the church of Binondo continued to be considered, and rightly so, the "Mother" of these new parishes.

Father Juan Fernández

Father Antonio García concluded his meritorious apostolic labors in Binondo in 1956.² Father Juan Fernández with a long missionary experience in China, took over the office of parish priest of Binondo in 1956, and for the space of twenty-one years carried on along the lines marked out by his predecessor. He concentrated on increasing and expanding the educational apostolate of the school. During his incumbency a High School was inaugurated, some of the structures of the old building were remodeled and new ones put up. About Father Fernandez it can also be affirmed that he was a very dedicated priest and with total commitment to the welfare of the parishioners and students. People will always remember him for his good deeds and apostolic dedication. Father Juan Fernandez died in San Juan del Monte on April 2, 1986.

New Buildings and New Church

As has been amply shown, how the Holy Rosary Province has always manifested a particular concern and predilection for the mis-

²Father Antonio García was born on June 13, 1901, in Villanueva de Abajo, Palencia, Spain. He began his early studies at La Mejorada, Valladolid, and he entered the Dominican Order in Avila in 1917. He was ordained to the priesthood on July 12, 1925 at Our Lady of the Holy Rosary church in Rosaryville, Louisiana, USA, where he finished his theological studies.

His ministry began on August 1925 when he was assigned to Santo Domingo Convent in Manila. Later on, on November 10, he was sent to Amoy, China, where he studied the Amoy dialect in preparation for his mission work among the Chinese. Among the places where he labored as a missionary were: Yeng Chun, Au Pao, and Chiang Chiu in the Fookien Province. He returned to Philippines to serve as Chaplain of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary (La Naval). He succeeded Father Angel Rodriguez as parish priest of the Binondo Chinese Parish in 1939. When the church of Binondo was destroyed during the Second World War, Father Antonio carried out the difficult task of restoring the life and activities of the Binondo Chinese Parish. He built a small church, a *convento* and a school for the Catholic education of the Chinese. Father Antonio Garcia tried to instill in the minds of all the faithful the sacredness of the sacraments, especially of baptism and marriage, together with the need of a well-founded formation in the faith. When he left Binondo in 1956, he continued his missionary work in Venezuela. Afflicted for several years with gradual blindness, he retired to the Convento of Santo Tomas, Avila, Spain, where he died on July 6, 1983.

sionary apostolate to the Chinese of Manila, with the fast-paced changes of modern times, the need became imperative for a practically total renovation of the school and church buildings. The Provincial Council of the Holy Rosary Province under Father Pedro San Segundo, Provincial, made in 1978 a close study of the project and decided, in the first place, that both the school and the church should continue in the same place allotted to by the Archbishop O'Doherty in 1923. Secondly, it approved tearing down more than half of the old edifice to erect, in its place, a modern structure that would adequately meet the needs of the school, and, at the same time, a new and more spacious church in consonance with the needs of the moment. Work started on May 26, 1979, with the blessing of the cornerstone by His Eminence Jaime L. Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila and was completed three years later. At the same time, bearing in mind that in the same place taken up by the school there had lived few centuries before one who was to become the very first Saint of the Philippines, it was further determined that the name of the school would be changed from *Crusader's Academy* into *Lorenzo Ruiz Academy*.

From that time Lorenzo Ruiz Academy has maintained constant updating and progress at all educational levels. The administration offices, faculty rooms and classrooms have been the object of important renovations. Particular care has been given to updating the teaching staff in line with the exigencies of the times. The Academy now counts a large number of alumni who occupy distinguished and important positions in professional, social and business levels. The school has certainly not forgotten the mission for which it exists: to give human, cultural, moral and Christian education to the Chinese youth in the Philippines.

Mission of Binondo Today

On April 12, 1982, the Provincial, Father Claudio Garcia elevated that which had simply been a residence of the parish priests and their assistants of Binondo to the rank of a house of the Order. It was placed under the patronage of Our Lady of the Rosary. From then on four Fathers regularly have made up the community which carries on the task of past centuries. The parish of the Chinese of Binondo possesses certain peculiarities which merit emphasizing here. All its parishioners reside or work within the territorial boundaries of other neighboring parishes. Moreover, many of its former parishioners have moved to less congested areas of Manila for greater living comfort. It can be said that

Binondo counts a reduced number of Chinese parishioners. Still, around it rise some of the most important commercial and banking centers of Manila. The situation obtaining in the Parian centuries earlier is repeated today, though in a different form.

The field of action of this very special parish and its possibilities are many: (1) Lorenzo Ruiz Academy with a student population of 1,200 who are taught and trained in the truths and practices of the Catholic faith. Every year sees a number of students asking to be baptized. (2) The creation and formation of a Christian community based on the various liturgical acts — Mass, homily, reception of the Sacraments, Bible study, apostolic projection in Christian life, catechetico-informative bulletins and various other activities. (3) Active participation and collaboration in parish associations, such as the Legion of Mary, Catholic Women's League, Knights of Columbus, and the Neo-Catechumenate Group. (4) Programmed catechesis for those seeking marriage and baptism, whether children or adults. (5) Seminars on various themes geared towards a deepening of the faith, and close collaboration with the apostolic plans and activities of the four Chinese parishes in Manila. (6) Maintenance of the Chinese language in the two of the Sunday Masses, as distinctive of this parish, for the benefit of grown-ups who do not know other languages. (7) Openness to every occasion and opportunity for apostolic action among the thousands and thousands of Chinese who still live in the shadows of paganism or of a syncretistic type of religion: in part superstition and in part an *ad hoc* mixture of Christianity and Buddhism.

Conclusion

As we conclude this panoramic sight of the work accomplished by the Dominican missionaries among the Chinese across four hundred years, many things stand out worthy of the highest admiration and praise notwithstanding human mistakes and flaws. The missionary action which brought countless thousands of souls to the Gospel and made them sharers of the saving inheritance of Christ takes priority over all else. It is next to impossible to count the number of conversions. Only God knows. But we most certainly know that the seed planted by the missionaries has sprouted and gradually grown through the course of centuries until it has born the fruits which we reap today with immense joy and consolation.

Another point that merits highlighting is the providential act behind the permanence of the Dominican missionaries in this apostolic

labor, despite social ups and downs, changes and revolutions. If there are miracles in the life of the Church that overawe us, surely this is one of them. With their sights ever set on Christ and on His Blessed Mother, Virgin Mary, the Dominicans of today strive to continue being faithful to the missionary charism and historic trajectory marked by the founders of the Holy Rosary Province four hundred years ago. q

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CHRONOLOGY OF THE BINONDO CHINESE PARISH

- 1587 Dominican missionaries arrived in Manila, and Bishop Domingo Salazar, O.P. entrusted them with the evangelization of the Chinese who lived in "El Parian" and Baybay (Tondo). They soon built a small church and a hospital under the patronage of Saint Gabriel.
- 1588 The first group of Chinese converts to the faith was baptized at Santo Domingo church with Governor Santiago de Vera as godfather.
- 1593 The first books ever printed in the Philippines were published at the Parian by the process of xilography developed in China centuries before. These are the books: *Shih-Lu, Doctrina Christiana in Chinese, and Doctrina Christiana in Tagalog and Spanish*.
- 1594 Governor Luis Perez Dasmariñas bought the island of Binondo and gave it to the newly baptized Christians as a safe place to live and to practice their faith.
- 1596 The Dominican Fathers built a church and a convento in a central site of Binondo as the kernel of their missionary activities. The church was at first under the patronage of Saint Gabriel Archangel.
- 1598 By official order of the Manila authorities, the Hospital of Saint Gabriel located at "El Parian" had to be transferred to the district of Binondo.
- 1600 Lorenzo Ruiz was born in Binondo and baptized in the church of San Gabriel. He served as an altar boy, and later, as an escribano.
- 1607 A series of religious books was published in Binondo and Parian, this time, by the process of movable type introduced in the Philippines by Fr. Blancas de San José, in collaboration with the Chinese Juan de Vera and the Filipino Tomas Pinpin.
- 1613 The missionary post of Baybay (Tondo) was incorporated to the church and convent of Binondo.
- 1619 The Mission of "El Parian," which on various occasions had suffered serious setbacks, came back to life again and resumed activity with a newly-built church dedicated to the "Three Kings."

- 1636 Lorenzo Ruiz leaves the Philippines in the company of a group of Dominican Fathers en route to Japan.
- 1637 Lorenzo Ruiz and his companions offered their lives in martyrdom.
- 1762 After the occupation of Manila by the British troops, the church of Binondo, now under the name of "Our Lady of the Holy Rosary," underwent extensive repair.
- 1769 The civil authorities of Manila dispossessed the Holy Rosary Province of eight parishes in the islands included the parishes of Binondo and "El Parian."
- 1826 By the royal order of the King of Spain the eight parishes which had been taken away from the Holy Rosary Province were to be returned to the Dominican missionaries.
- 1898 When the Philippines attained her independence from Spain, the Holy Rosary Province ceded the two parishes of "El Parian" and Binondo to the Archbishop of Manila, Dr. Bernardino Nozaleda, O.P., who, in turn, entrusted them to the care and administration of the secular clergy.
- 1923 After 25 years of absence from missionary work among the Chinese of Binondo, the Dominican Fathers came back to this ministry since the Sacred Consistorial Congregation had created a new parish for the Chinese in Manila under the care and administration of the Dominican Fathers of the Holy Rosary Province. The newly-erected parish was to be housed temporarily in the old church of Binondo, until a new church could be built for the Chinese faithful.
- 1944 The church of Binondo was totally destroyed and burned down when the Americans bombed the city of Manila during the Second World War.
- 1945 Father Antonio García started the work of restoration of the Binondo Chinese Parish by building a new church in a small space given to him by the Archbishop of Manila, Dr. Michael O'Doherty.
- 1946 In his love and dedication to the youth, Father Antonio García built and organized the "Crusader's Academy."
- 1955 Four new parishes were created in order to attend to the spiritual needs of the Chinese Catholics now spread out all over the area of Manila.
- 1956 Father Juan Fernández establishes the high school called *Crusader's Academy*.
- 1979 The Holy Rosary Province launches a program of remodeling and updating the parish church and the school. The school takes the new name of *Lorenzo Ruiz Academy*.
- 1981 John Paul II beatifies Lorenzo Ruiz and Companion Martyrs at the Luneta Park, Manila, before a million faithful.

- 1982 Father Provincial, Claudio García, O.P., raises the residence of the Fathers of Binondo to the rank of a house of the Dominican Order under the name of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary.
- 1987 Lorenzo Ruiz and Companion Martyrs of Nagasaki were proclaimed by John Paul II *Saints and Martyrs* of the Church at the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome.
- 1993 The Dominican Fathers of the Holy Rosary Province vow today to continue the missionary work which was entrusted to them centuries ago at the Parian and Baybay.

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