

# Augustinian Recollect Legacy to the Church in Negros Island

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**ABSTRACT.** The Recollects' arrival in 1848 impacted every aspect of life in Negros. Their enthusiasm, supported by affluent immigrants, contributed decisively to a climate of optimism and progress, placing Negros at the forefront of colonial provinces. Their evangelization effort converted countless unbelievers, settled later in new parishes. The Christian heritage of faith is deeply etched in Negrenses and settlers. The building legacy of Mauricio Ferrero, Manuel Gómara, Felipe Lerena—the cathedrals of Bacolod, San Carlos, Kabankalan—lives on. The pastoral work of Gregorio Espiga, Fernando Cuenca, Mariano Bernad is indelible in the annals of history. The educational apostolate in Bacolod, San Carlos, Valencia, Bayawan is reflected in their alumni in public service, business, and religious or priestly ministry. Forever we cherish the sojourn of Saint Ezekiel Moreno, Blessed Martín de San Nicolás, and Blessed José Rada, who touched the lives of our forefathers in Talisay, Binalbagan, and La Carlota.

## 1.0. Early Years of Evangelization (1622)

Father Jacinto de San Fulgencio, Father Juan de San José, and Brother Francisco de San Nicolás were the Discalced Augustinian, or Augustinian Recollect pioneers in the evangelization of Negros in 1622. A total of 1,500 families were spiritually ministered to by the first Recollect missionaries. Father Jacinto constructed a lowly convent in Binalbagan.

The Calced Augustinians had first evangelized three missions: Binalbagan, Tanjay, and Ilog. The mission of Binalbagan was created in 1575, but three years later, it was abandoned for lack of priests. Under the patronage of *Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación* [Our Lady of the Incarnation], Ilog was made a mission by the Augustinian missionaries, as resolved by the provincial chapter of 1584. It was held for some years with "great hardship because of the wilderness of the people of the island," but by 1588, there was no missionary to take care of it, and it had to be handed over to the secular clergy of Cebu. Thus in that same year 1588, Bishop Domingo de Salazar lamented the spiritual neglect of Negros: "The [missions] have been abandoned, and the baptized Christians are neglected and have again become idolaters."<sup>1</sup> The first Augustinian missionary had left the mission of Ilog in 1586. The Jesuits reestablished the mission station of Ilog only in 1630.

Calced Augustinian missionaries founded Tanjay in 1580, but in 1583 the mission was completely abandoned. Fray Diego Ferreira was the first parish priest in 1599. Thereafter, the Jesuit missionaries from Bohol visited their Tanjay mission station intermittently. In March 1620, Dumaguete was created into a parish with Fr. Juan de Roa y Herrera appointed as parish priest (1620-1623).<sup>2</sup>

Ilog was under the care of the diocesan priests after 1600. The Jesuits took over in 1630. The foundation of Binalbagan must have been in early 1600s. The last secular priest Fr. Francisco Rodríguez ceded it to the Augustinian Recollects in 1626. Among the Recollects who served Binalbagan were Blessed Martín de San Nicolás, Fr. Lorenzo de San Facundo, Fr. Gaspar de Santa Mónica, Fr. Jacinto de San Fulgencio and Juan de San José. In 1638, Prior Provincial José de la Anunciación returned it to Fr. Francisco Rodríguez in exchange for Romblon.

In the 1580s, the Island of Negros had about 2,987 tributes, with each tribute representing five persons. Hence the estimate would be 15,000 inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> In 1606, the population had dropped to an estimated 13,500. Encomenderos had produced a census in 1660, and the population estimate was 12,655.<sup>4</sup>

Negros historian Ángel Martínez Cuesta names five villages in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which became towns in the future: Ilog,<sup>5</sup> Kabankalan, Binalbagan, Dumaguete, and Tanjay. He cites further the sitios of Inauanan, Manapla, Bago, Siaton, Bayawan, Sipalay, Marayo (Pontevedra), Manalongon (Sta. Catalina), Pandan (Pulupandan), and Dauin. Towns took long to exist for the following reasons:

<sup>1</sup> Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros* (Manila, 1980) 35.

<sup>2</sup> MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, 70-71.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 60. Martínez Cuesta believes that Ilog had an old name, and it was Jima, found at the banks of Ilog River. It was not the town of Jimamaylan or Himamaylan.

distance from the source of livelihood, the opposition of *encomenderos* to have their tributes lessened, and most of all, Moro piratical raids.

## 2.0. Immediately Prior to the Recollects' evangelization

The island of Negros had "fertile lands in greatest abandon."<sup>6</sup> The native sowed and planted a little of palay, corn, camote, etc., just enough to satisfy the needs for survival. There was no such thing as agriculture, which was the chief means of progress elsewhere. There was no commerce and industry in the place which lay "in the most scandalous misery."

The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed the lamentable decrease of the population and the rampant piratical raids and plunder by Moros from Mindanao and Sulu. The pirates razed the churches and rectories to the ground. Palay harvests were carted off to Moro lairs in the southern Philippines. Defenseless inhabitants were either slaughtered or captured and later sold in slave markets. Domestic animals they could not take with them, as well as farms, were mercilessly set afire. Missionaries and parishioners fled to the safety of the mountains and hinterlands. Often without arms and ammunition, the parish priests were left to their fate; they had to fend for themselves and seek shelter in the wilderness. Furthermore, the decades rolled on into centuries in barrenness and stagnancy.

The population increased notably prior to the Recollects' return. The causes were the continuous migration of people from neighboring islands, especially Panay. The war against piracies gained ground. Forts strategically located served as an early-warning system against piratical invasions. The introduction of the smallpox vaccine aided in no small degree the reduction of mortality rate during a viral epidemic. Thus from a few thousands of scattered residents in the early years of mission work to 4,438 tributes (25,879 souls) in 1794 to 7,356 tributes (42,914) in 1818 and 94,692 souls in 1846.<sup>7</sup>

## 3.0. Results

The arrival of the Recollects in Negros in 1848 is a major event in the history of the island. According to Ángel Martínez Cuesta, "their arrival would soon come to bear on all the aspects of her life. The enthusiasm of the Recollects would contribute decisively toward the creation of a climate of optimism and progress that would soon place Negros at the forefront of the Philippine provinces."

Martínez Cuesta goes on:

One fact suffices to show how quickly the island developed. Whereas in 1848, it was a semi-abandoned island with no bearing on the country's economic context, in 1892, hardly 44 years later, it came to hold the first place in the country's exports. The exports of Negros sugar amounted in that year to 20% of the total value of the Philippine exports. Simultaneously and strongly intertwined with this fact, other factors came up, such as the multiplication of the population by four times, the massive foundation of new towns and parishes, the immigration of Spanish and Ilongo farmers and Chinese traders, and the improvement of the primary schools, health and communications. In 1896, the Recollects even were able to open a high school in Bacolod for the children of the emerging middle class of the island.

These changes were the happy result of a combination of circumstances, each of them contributing in its own way: The fertility of the soil and the mildness of the climate laid the foundation. Then came high prices for sugar in the world market, the liberalization of trade, the opening of the port of Iloilo to foreign shipping, technical progress, peace and order, the insight and tenacity of a handful of men, such as Fr. Fernando Cuenca, the English merchant Nicholas Loney, and the *hacenderos* Eusebio Ruiz de Luzuriaga, Agustín Montilla, Leopoldo Gastón, Miguel Pérez, and Diego de la Viña; the abundance and cheapness of land and labor, the incentives given by some provincial governors and the enthusiasm and experience of several parish priests.

For long, both the civil and ecclesiastical authorities had wanted to replace the secular clergy with a religious order. They believed that the regular clergy, being better trained and more zealous, would take the island out of its paralysis and stimulate its immense natural resources. This belief, plus the scarcity of priests in the Diocese of Cebu and a clear mistrust of the political loyalty of the native clergy, brought about the turnover of its spiritual administration to the Augustinian Recollects.

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<sup>6</sup> Licinio Ruiz, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas* II (Manila, 1925) 122.

<sup>7</sup> MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, 155-156.

On 15 April 1848, Bishop Romualdo Jimeno of Cebu wrote to Governor-General Narcisco Clavería about the dearth of native clergy for the curacies of Negros. On 27 May 1848, General Clavería passed to the Provincials of the four religious orders in Manila the Bishop's request that asked for the spiritual administration of the island by any of them. Two days later, the Recollect provincial replied and accepted the island, promising to send six priests within six months. On June 20, 1848, Clavería accepted the offering and entrusted "the spiritual administration of Negros to the Recollects that they may occupy those parishes and missions that may be vacant and those that as time goes on would become vacant."

Amlan and Siaton on the east coast and Kabankalan and Himamaylan on the west were the first four parishes turned over to the Recollects between 28 August and 28 October 1848. At that time, the first three were newly created parishes, separated from Tanjay, Dauin, and Himamaylan, respectively.

Himamaylan had a parish priest since 1842, the well-known peninsular priest Jose María Pavón who had been transferred to the nearby parish of Hinigaran, founded as a parish in the previous month of February.

In the following decades, the Recollects brought about an ambitious plan that changed the religious map of the island with the creation of a great number of new parishes and missions. From 1848 to 1861, no less than seventeen new parishes were created. After five years dedicated to their consolidation, in 1866 began what we may call the second chapter in the parochial organization of Negros, which could be extended until 1890. In these twenty-five years, eleven parishes came into being. The Recollects took over the five parishes that remained in the hands of the secular clergy. These were Tanjay (1866), Bacolod (1871), Silay (1881), Bago (1882), and Ilog (1889). All of them were ceded to the Recollects only when the diocesan parish priests passed away. In this way, the spiritual administration of the island became homogenous.

The third chapter of the pastoral organization of Negros goes back to 1889 when the Recollects submitted to the national government a missionary plan that foresaw the simultaneous opening of ten new missions. It did not begin until 1894-1895, when, in the wake of much debate and major changes, the colonial government approved the foundation of no less than twenty-nine missions, and the Recollect superiors began to appoint their respective pastors. This project was the most ambitious pastoral plan ever cast by the Recollects in the Philippines. In it, we can see summarized all their deep concern for the poor and abandoned people. The Recollects were aware of the difficulties the plan entailed. Most of the proposed missions would rise in regions still unexplored with hundreds of deserters, robbers, murderers, and every kind of undocumented people. The missionaries were also conscious that among them were also thousands of simple people deprived of any civil and church services. Some of them were still unbelievers, and the Recollects wanted to come to their help.

In five decades, the Recollect established in Negros no less than 56 parishes and missionary stations: 16 between 1848 and 1861; 11, from 1866 to 1889; and 29 in the last seven years. We must bear in mind that parishes held by diocesan priests were ceded to the Recollects on account of the resignation or transfer to another parish, like those of Dumaguete (1855) and Dauin (1857). The six ministries were given to the Recollect Order upon the death of the parish priests: Sibulan (1856), Bacolod (1871), Tanjay (1866), Silay (1881), Bago (1882), and Ilog (1889).<sup>8</sup>

#### 4.0. Negros Occidental

**Bacolod City.**<sup>9</sup> At the main entrance of San Sebastian Cathedral in Bacolod City, the whitened statues of two great Augustinian Recollect missionaries of Negros garbed in their white habits and black cinctures stand guard. They are Fr. Fernando Cuenca and Fr. Mauricio Ferrero. Cuenca is deemed as one of the makers of modern Negros Island.<sup>10</sup> Mauricio Ferrero is dubbed as the Father

<sup>8</sup> MARTINEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros*, see footnote 7, 212.

<sup>9</sup> Pablo PANEDAS, *Iglesias recoletas hoy en Filipinas*, in *Recollectio* 31-32 (2008-2009) 286.

<sup>10</sup> Born into a family of farmers in Zaragoza, Spain, the future Negrense missionary joined the Recollects in 1844. The month of January in 1850 found him as the first curate of Talisay, where he died forty-two years later. An assiduous community builder, Fr. Fernando Cuenca (1824-1902) proclaimed the Good News of Christ to northeastern Negrenses and laid the foundations of the towns of Victorias, Cadiz, Escalante, Manapla, Calatrava and E. B. Magalona. Through his efforts, Talisay—once a vast wasteland of cogon—was endowed with well-planned streets, aqueducts, edifices, sugar cane plantations, and a road to Bacolod. A hydraulic press for milling sugar—his invention—was first introduced to Negrense planters in 1873; so was abaca and coffee production. People from Negros and Iloilo profited much from his expertise in herbal medicine and hydrotherapy in his kumbento-*cum*-hospital. He typifies the dedicated friar whose countless contributions to Philippine society, education, culture, and economy are etched in the minds of grateful Filipinos.

of Bacolod City.<sup>11</sup> He was parish priest of the Negros Occidental capital for 33 years (1870-1894; 1897-1898; 1902-1909).

Besides making and executing the city plan of Bacolod, Fr. Ferrero constructed the strong church, big convent, cemetery, mortuary chapel, and schools.<sup>12</sup> He further built the jail noted for its fort-like characteristics. It took six years to finish the church, and in 1882, it was inaugurated. The temple has three naves with a gilded *retablo*. Isidro Maria Lago of Iloilo painted and decorated the interior of the house of God. He would do the same for many churches in Negros. On 15 July 1932, it became a cathedral, elegant, spacious, enduring tangible legacy of the Augustinian Recollects to the Church in Negros. Its two bell-towers reigns over the town square. His legacy to Bacolod was so great that he was free to go around free at the outset of the Revolution in Bacolod while doing his pastoral tasks.

**Kabankalan City.** In 1848, Kabankalan had a fertile plain and was given a parish priest at once. In 1905, Fr. Tiburcio Fernández had to start from scratch. Working in a hostile environment after the Revolution, the Recollects perseveringly exerted great effort in regaining the trust of the people. Fr. Felipe Lerena had the church in honor of Saint Francis Xavier inaugurated in 1935. With the creation of the Diocese of Kabankalan, the Recollect church became its cathedral on 30 March 1987. The sugar central and the hacenderos contributed sums of money and materials for the construction.

**San Carlos City.** The construction of what is now the cathedral church of San Carlos Borromeo was started in 1928 by Father Leoncio Reta.<sup>13</sup> The solid foundation and a few meters of the walls, all made of concrete, had been finished when lack of funds constrained the parish priest to suspend the works. Older people interviewed by this author averred that the Italian *contratista* had run off with the church funds to Australia.

In May 1935, Fr. Manuel Gómara,<sup>14</sup> The builder of the church and convent in Lemery, Calatrava, wanted to continue with the construction. He sought the assistance of the hacenderos of San Carlos, the Menchacas, Llantadas, Broces, and Gamboas, who wholeheartedly contributed much to the project. The target amount of 12,000 pesos was not enough, and Don Julio Ledesma eventually donated the hefty sum of 20,000 pesos. The frenzied pace started immediately after and on 4 November 1935 was blessed and inaugurated. With the creation of the Diocese of San Carlos, the Recollect church became its cathedral on 30 March 1987. The church is 51 meters long and 22 meters wide. Its style is a happy marriage of Gothic, Byzantine, and Romanesque. The huge lateral windows

<sup>11</sup> The friar from Arnedo, la Rioja, Fr. Mauricio Ferrero (1844-1915) served the parish of the future capital of Negros Occidental for a total of 33 years, long enough to be deemed as the Father of Bacolod City. Fr. Mauricio Ferrero's arrival at Bacolod in 1871 signaled portents to come. Under his initiative and direction, the present magnificent cathedral and rectory—which was constructed in 1891-1894 and turned into the Bishop's house in 1941—were constructed. The cemetery, mortuary chapel, Puerto San Juan [headquarters of the *Guardia Civil* and later the provincial jail], and school edifices were likewise completed during his term. The two statues at the Bacolod cathedral are tokens of gratitude to the Recollect priests' works in the service of Bacolod and the whole Negros. See Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS. *Events in Bacolod, Negros Occidental in the Parish Chronicle (1871-1909) of Fr. Mauricio Ferrero OAR and other Essays*. Quezon City 2016; Dennis V. MADRIGAL, Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS. *Padre Mauricio Ferrero, OAR (1844-1915): Father and Builder of Bacolod*. Bacolod City, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> L. Ruiz, *Sinopsis*, 172-173.

<sup>13</sup> Born to José María Reta and Claudia Unzué, Fr. Leoncio saw the light of day on 20 March 1893 in San Martín de Unx, Navarra. He entered the Recollect Order at its priory of Monteagudo and professed his simple vows in 1909. After his sacerdotal ordination in 1916 in Marcilla, he set sail for Manila in September of that year. The Recollect's first pastoral responsibility was San Carlos, for which he received his *patente* as an assistant priest on 6 May 1917. Under Padre Francisco E. Echanojáuregui, curate since May 1909, he studied the Cebuano language. On 11 November 1917, Fr. Leoncio was named parish curate of Lemery. At this curacy, he exercised his ministry until 31 July 1921. On 3 August, he took over Old Escalante. Fr. Leoncio, however, could not bring the church of San Carlos to completion because in May 1928, he had to leave the parish for a foreign assignment. At the provincial chapter of that year, he was elected vice superior of Marcilla, Navarra. In subsequent years, he would return to San Carlos for his canonical visits, first as vicar provincial (1931-1934), then as prior provincial (1934-1938), and later as prior general (1938-1944). See Miguel AVELLANEDA, *Continuación del Padre Sádaba o Segunda parte del 'Catálogo de los Religiosos de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos' (1906-1936)* (Rome 1938) 575.

<sup>14</sup> Fr. Manuel Gómara was born in Cascante, Navarre, Spain, on 3 May 1895, the same year San Carlos was founded as a parish. In October 1911, he joined the Recollect Order at Monteagudo. Soon after philosophy and theology in Spain, he was sent to Manila, where Archbishop Michael O'Doherty ordained him as a priest in December 1919. In May 1920, the parishioners of Bacolod welcomed Padre Manuel as assistant priest. He received his *patente* as curate of Lemery in early July 1921. However, he had to delay his departure until 12 July when he bade good-bye to his parishioners. After seven years in Lemery and Calatrava, the 33-year-old Padre Manuel was assigned to San Carlos in 1928. Here he remained eight years until 1936. Furthermore, here he returned as parish priest twice: 1937-1940 and 1949-1951. In 1941 he finished the construction of the high school for boys in San Carlos—Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute. After his appointments as provincial counselor (1938-1944), as superior of the mission, vicar forane and diocesan consultant of Bacolod diocese (1938-1943), or as prior of San Nicolás convent at Intramuros (1944-1946), provincial procurator (1945-1946), he would always retrace his steps to his beloved San Carlos where he had spent thirteen years of his life as curate. The 1950s found him as a school administrator of Colegio de Santo Tomas. In the 1960s, he was the seminary procurator and a confessor of the young seminarians. The well-loved Padre Manuel's last years were spent with the religious community of Colegio San Agustín in Valladolid, Spain. He was noted for his witness, congeniality, dedication to prayer, and love for things of the Order. Padre Manuel died of lung cancer on 4 September 1979, Feast of Our Lady of Consolation. He was 84. For more of his life, see Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *San Carlos Parish Yesterday and Today*. Quezon City, 1995.

provided fine light and ventilation. The temple of God followed the blueprints drawn by Dr. Cereceda, and it was built under the supervision of Angel Locsin Yulo, a Bacolod architect.<sup>15</sup>

**La Carlota City.**<sup>16</sup> La Carlota became an independent town in 1869. The Recollects sought for its creation as a parish in 1876, separate from San Enrique, and put it under the spiritual patronage of Our Lady of Peace. It was an important center of sugar since the beginning. The sugar cane plantation reached the foot of Mount Kanlaon.

The first parish priest was Fr. Andrés Torres, who administered La Carlota for almost twenty years (1877-1888, 1891-1898). He constructed a church with grandiose dimensions: 75 meters high, 14 meters high, 24 meters wide, and 40 meters in the transept. It was unfortunate that he could not bring the enormous temple of God to its happy conclusion. The Revolution in Negros caught up with him in 1898.

The future Blessed José Rada, one of the Martyrs of Motril at the onset of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, was arrested in this town with four other confreres, and all suffered indignities at the hands of the revolutionaries. Thirty-five Augustinian Recollect curates were held captive in La Granja, forced to work in the fields. After the Revolution, Fr. Pedro Pérez returned to La Carlota only to discover that the church edifice had been taken over by the schismatic Aglipayan sect. The Recollects fought hard to recover the parish church, which they eventually did.

The church project was continued, and in 1925 Fr. Leandro Nieto, the future apostolic prefect of Palawan, could put the roofing of the church and embellish its interior. Lack of funds forced the delay in the construction. Came Fr. Santiago Vilda, who urged his parishioners to work hard for the church construction. The church was finally blest on 23 January 1936.

**Calatrava.**<sup>17</sup> Calatrava became an independent parish in 1870. Formerly a barrio of Escalante in 1860, the new parish of Saint Peter and Saint Paul had the villages of San Carlos, Guadalupe, Zaragoza, San Isidro, Lemery, and Norzagaray under its extensive jurisdiction.

A church of *mampostería* (rubblework), 47 meters long by 14 meters wide, had been built by Fr. Ángel Maestro. The Revolution left Calatrava without priests, and the town fell under the Aglipayan sect until 1910. Fr. Manuel Gómara built a new church shortly before 1930. The actual parish church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul was the work of Fr. Facundo Valgañón, who administered Calatrava for twenty-six years (1938-1964).

**La Castellana.**<sup>18</sup> An independent town from Pontevedra since 1894, La Castellana had its church razed to the ground by the American soldiers. The rectory was further damaged by the soldiers who made it unfit for habitation for the returning Recollect priest Fr. Pedro Pérez. It was aggravated by the eruption of the Kanlaon Volcano in 1904. The present church was commenced by the Recollect parish priest Fr. Juan Lavaca in 1920 with the help of the hacenderos and American benefactors. It was once more burned to the ground by a conflagration in 1949, which left only the walls standing. Again, with the financial assistance of the hacenderos, Fr. Francisco Azcárate repaired the church, and in July 1950, the Recollects ceded it to the Columban priests.

**Talisay City.**<sup>19</sup> The parochial church of Talisay City was initiated by Fr. Fernando Cuenca, who was parish priest from 1851 until his death in 1902. It was constructed and dedicated to the Augustinian Saint Nicholas of Tolentino and finished by Fr. Miguel García in the 1920s. Fr. Cuenca's rectory-*cum*-hospital admitted as patients prominent persons, military personnel, diocesan clergy, and Recollect confreres, including Saint Ezekiel Moreno.<sup>20</sup> Prominent people from all over the Spanish colony trooped to Minuluan to undergo a hydrotherapeutic cure.

Another church edifice was constructed in 1936 by Fr. Luis Álvarez. The construction stopped as Fr. Álvarez needed the sum of 80,000 pesos to finish the work. It was his successor, Fr. Santiago Vilda, who finished the church construction, and the temple was finally blest by the papal nuncio Msgr. Guglielmo Piani on 9 September 1939.<sup>21</sup>

**Valladolid.** Erected in 1852, the parish of Valladolid was put under the spiritual patronage of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Quiapo, Manila-born Fray Celestino Romero was its first parish priest, and he designed the layout of the town. The new stone church was begun by Fr. Carlos Úbeda in 1877,

<sup>15</sup> Rafael GARCÍA, *Inauguración de la Nueva Iglesia de San Carlos, I. F.*, in BPSN 27 (1936) 80-81.

<sup>16</sup> Pablo PANEDAS, *Iglesias recoletas*, 333.

<sup>17</sup> Pablo PANEDAS, 331-332.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 334-335.

<sup>19</sup> PANEDAS, 335-336; Marcelino SIMONENA. Fr. *Fernando Cuenca of St. Joseph Augustinian Recollect*. Bacolod City 1974.

<sup>20</sup> Chapter 9 (Convalescence in Talisay, Negros Occidental) in Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *Bishop Ezekiel Moreno, an Augustinian Recollect Saint Among Filipinos* (Quezon City 1993) wholly deals with Fr. Cuenca's hydrotherapy in his Talisay rectory-*cum*-hospital.

<sup>21</sup> Dennis V. MADRIGAL [ed.], *Handurawan. Visita Iglesia Negros y Recoletos* (Bacolod City 2006) 45.

but he could not finish it because of the revolutionary upheaval in 1898. The Revolution erupted in Negros in November 1898, and the Aglipayans occupied the churches, including that of Valladolid. The Mill Hill missionaries served Valladolid parish from 1909 to 1917 and ceded it to the diocesan clergy.<sup>22</sup> By 1925, this town was under Bago's parish administration, which likewise took care of San Enrique, Pontevedra, and Zaragoza.

A zealous and much-revered Recollect parish priest for over fourteen years—Julián Miguel de San Antonio de Padua—traveled to Iloilo City for treatment but passed away there in August 1872. His mortal remains were requested by the town authorities. From Iloilo, the remains were transported by ship to Pulupandan, wherefrom the grieving parishioners walked with lighted candles in procession to Valladolid, where they arrived at ten o'clock at night. Fray Julián was interred two days after in the parish church.<sup>23</sup>

**Old Escalante.**<sup>24</sup> The huge Silay parish jurisdiction had two of its barrios made into parishes: Nueva Sevilla or Escalante and Tugagauan or Saravia. Escalante became a town in 1861 and it had Calatrava, Toboso, Salamanca, Bontoc and Arguelles as barrios.<sup>25</sup> Fr. Cipriano Navarro was its first parish priest of Saint Francis of Assisi Parish and served its parishioners in 1860-1867. Fr. Gregorio Aperte built the old parish church. In 1901, Fr. Eusebio Valderrama was put in charge of the parish after the Revolution. On the night of 15 May 1909, Fr. Víctor Baltanás was murdered in the rectory by an Aglipayan follower. He was a "person of peaceful disposition, ...incapable of harming anyone intentionally," a victim of vilest sectarian Aglipayan conspiracy.<sup>26</sup>

**Saravia.** Formerly known as Tugaguan [or Tukgawan], the new parish was set up in 1860 and was renamed Saravia after Negros Politico-Military Governor Emilio Saravia. The parish jurisdiction included Marianas (Himogoan), Valdivieso (now Cadiz), Columela, Sicaba, Manapla, and Torenos (Victorias). Saravia was renamed Enrique B. Magalona in 1967 in honor of a senator.

After his pastoral assignments in Liloan (Cebu), Dumaguete, and Siaton, Fr. Pedro Lago administered the parish of Saravia in 1861-1872. His successors, Fr. Lorenzo Cordon and Fr. Francisco Rada, built a bigger church that existed until 1951. Fr. Inocente Lamata was the last parish priest in 1921-1922.<sup>27</sup>

## 5.0. Negros Oriental

**Bacong.**<sup>28</sup> A town since 1837, Bacong was separated from its matrix Dumaguete. It became a parish with former Prior Provincial Fr. Joaquín Soriano as its first parish priest in 1849-1858.<sup>29</sup> He first constructed provisional quarters and a chapel. He then built the convent made of strong materials in 1856. The church dedicated to Saint Augustine of Hippo is attributed wholly to its hardworking parish priest Fr. Leandro Arrué.<sup>30</sup> He laid its cornerstone in 1866. During his second term that started in 1882, he finished the exterior of the temple. He was busy with the embellishment of the church interior when he was elevated to the see of Jaro in Iloilo in 1885. Fr. Laureano Navarro started the belfry. Fr. Jorge Carcavilla purchased the pipe organ from the Roqués Brothers of Zaragoza, Spain, installed in his church in 1894. The Recollects left Bacong during the Revolution and returned to the town in 1907. They finally ceded it to the diocesan clergy in 1965.

**Sibulan.**<sup>31</sup> The parish of Sibulan was established in 1838 and was put under the religious patronage of the Lisbon-born Franciscan miracle-worker San Antonio de Padua.<sup>32</sup> The civil town had been founded a year earlier, *i.e.*, 1837.<sup>33</sup> The parish of Sibulan was ceded by the diocesan clergy to the

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>23</sup> SÁDABA, 472-472.

<sup>24</sup> MADRIGAL, 77.

<sup>25</sup> MARTINEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros*, 175.

<sup>26</sup> The whole chapter *Padre Victor Baltanás, Martyr of Escalante* († 1909) deals with the murder and subsequent trial in Bacolod, see Emmanuel Luis A. ROMANILLOS, *The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines. Hagiography and History* (Quezon City 2001) 89-98.

<sup>27</sup> MADRIGAL, 83; SÁDABA, 462; AVELLANEDA, 85.

<sup>28</sup> PANEDAS, 33.; MADRIGAL, 65

<sup>29</sup> SÁDABA, 393.

<sup>30</sup> SÁDABA, 506-508.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 34

<sup>32</sup> MARCELLÁN, 143.

<sup>33</sup> *Parroquia de San Antonio, Sibulan, Negros Oriental*, in Jesús SOBEJANO, *Los Agustinos Recoletos. 375 años en las Islas Filipinas. 1606-1981* (Quezon City 1981) 48.

Augustinian Recollects in February 1856<sup>34</sup> After the death of its unnamed diocesan priest.<sup>35</sup>

Sibulan was ceded to the Recollects in 1856 with Fr. Tomás Mezquita as a first parish priest. He found his curacy bereft of church and rectory, which had been razed to the ground in 1854. The construction of the parochial church with three naves was started by his successor Fr. José María Cabañas. It was continued and finished by Fr. Pedro Echevarría. The church edifice had *harigues* [posts] made of sturdy wood, and its walls were *cotta*.<sup>36</sup> Subsequent parish priests made great improvements to the edifice. Fr. Pedro Echevarría's successor, Fr. Eugenio Sola, who would become prior general of the Recollect Order in 1918-1920, constructed the retablos. The construction of the church atrium was done during the term of Fr. Manuel Clemente, who fenced it with wood and *cotta*. Every hardworking parish priest of Sibulan did not stop doing projects for the embellishment of the divine temple.<sup>37</sup>

In the wake of his 1904 pastoral visit in 1904, Bishop Frederick Rooker of Jaro assigned a Recollect priest to Sibulan as requested by the parishioners. With the prior provincial's consent, Fr. Nemesio Llorente was sent from Manila in August 1904 to San Antonio de Padua Parish in the wake of the Revolution in Negros Island in 1898 had expelled almost all the Recollects from the parishes.<sup>38</sup> Recollect biographer Francis Sádaba wrote that Fr. Llorente "was welcomed by the residents of this town, where he continues until now [1906] with extraordinary displays of joy."<sup>39</sup> It was Fr. Llorente's collaborative effort, the town leaders, and parishioners that the attempts of revolutionary leaders and arsonists were frustrated from their church-burning activities in Sibulan. Fortunately, their church edifices were preserved from destruction, unlike those of Valencia, Bais, and Amlan.

The end of World War II found the church in ruins, as the Japanese Imperial Army made it their garrison, and the Liberation forces bombarded it. The convent was likewise ruined. Fr. José Lizárraga rebuilt the church—63 meters by fourteen meters—in 1949. Fr. Fermín Samanes finished its construction in the 1950s. Sibulan was ceded to the diocese of Dumaguete in 1984.

**Dauin.** In 1857, Dauin was ceded to the Recollect Province of Saint Nicholas, whose superiors assigned Fr. Manuel Navarro as the parish priest. He laid the foundations of the solid church, but it was Fr. Manuel Cabriada who finished it. Fr. Tomás Gonzáles endowed the parish with its convent.

**Valencia.** Luzuriaga or Nueva Valencia had Fr. Tomás Mezquita as its pioneering parish priest. It was his good fortune to erect the provisional church, convent, and school buildings. Fr. Eladio Logroño erected the solid convent between 1869 and 1875. He then went on to build a strong church in 1886. He brought a potable water source to the town. The Recollects left the parish during the Revolution only to return to it in 1904 in the wake of repeated requests. In their effort to scare and drive away the parish priest, some malcontents burned the convent and church of Valencia. However, the undaunted Fr. Paulino Jiménez built another very strong church and convent with the willing cooperation of the whole parish population.

Nueva Valencia was created into a parish in 1854. The church collapsed during the year.<sup>40</sup> Fr. Eladio Logroño built another edifice. The revolutionaries razed it to the ground. They did the same to the churches in Amlan and Bais. Fr. Paulino Jiménez reconstructed the church in record time. It was made of *mampostería* and a façade that provided the church with fine ventilation.

**Zamboanguita.**<sup>41</sup> Zamboanguita was separated from Dauin in 1866. Fr. Faustino Sánchez was assigned as its first parish priest. The church construction began in the following year. The temple took so long until it was finished in 1890. Fr. Alejandro Osés covered the roof with galvanized iron in 1923. World War II demolished the church. Father Leandro Palacios celebrated masses, and others

<sup>34</sup> Licinio RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de las Islas Filipinas de la Orden de Agustinos Descalzos II* (Manila 1925) 157, specified the month and year: February 1856. Other authors like FIDEL DE BLAS, 44; SOBEJANO, 48; MARTÍNEZ CUESTA in *History of Negros*, 212, and *Historia de los Agustinos Recoletos II*, 157, all affirm that the Recollects started in Sibulan in 1856.

<sup>35</sup> MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros*, 122. Five more parishes in Negros Island were likewise ceded to the Recollects after the demise of their respective parish priests: Tanjay (1866), Bacolod (1871), Silay (1881), Bago (1882), and Ilog (1889). The foremost Negros historian reiterates that Sibulan was put under Recollect jurisdiction only after the diocesan priest had died. See MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Historia de los Agustinos Recoletos II*, 784.

<sup>36</sup> Also *cota* or *kutà*. It is made of masonry, customarily built to enclose the churchyard and the cemetery.

<sup>37</sup> RUIZ II, 157.

<sup>38</sup> The author of the article in *Handurawan. Visita Iglesia Negros y Recoletos*, 69, is wrong when he claims that Fr. Licinio Ruiz was the first Recollect priest to return to this parish in May 1906 after the Revolution. Fr. Llorente was the parish priest of Sibulan, as affirmed by Fr. Licinio Ruiz himself in the memoir of his visits to Negros parishes, cf. RUIZ, *Correspondencia de Nuestros misioneros*, 829-839. Fr. Ruiz served the parishes of Siaton, Zamboanguita, Bacolod, and in the curacies of Lazi and Maria in Siquijor Island, cf. AVELLANEDA, 77.

<sup>39</sup> SÁDABA, 594-595.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Ricardo JARAUTA, *Album de la Orden de los Agustinos Recoletos*, 46.

administered the sacraments in a chapel made of bamboo and nipa. A new church rose in 1948 under the able aegis of Fr. Fermín Samanes, who finished it in 1950. His own brother Fr. Gregorio Samanes built the convent. The church was begun and continued by the following Recollects: Tomás González, Laureano Navarro, Matías Villamayor, Lorenzón Cordón, Manuel Gamboa, and Alejandro Osés.

**Manjuyod.** Once a part of Tanjay, Manjuyod was placed under Recollect administration as early 1849 and under Saint Francis of Assisi's spiritual patronage. When it became a parish in 1854, a Recollect priest was assigned to it.<sup>42</sup> It was the hardworking Fr. Antonio Moreno who planned the streets, tribunal buildings, and bridges, enough to make it a decent town. The tribute population increased. The people who once inhabited the uplands decided to construct their houses in the town and settle in it. Fr. Moreno further built the church that he blest in 1850. Manjuyod had four barangays, namely, Ayungon, Panabon, Malaga, and San Antonio, where new Christian and upland families resided. In a span of four years (1850-1854), Fr. Moreno could baptize four hundred adults of both sexes. This admirable achievement was not left unnoticed by Governor-General Marqués de Novaliches, who gave him additional financial support from government coffers.

**Tayasan.** In 1849, the superior government separated the Tanjay barrios of Manjuyod, Ayungon, Tayasan, and Jimalalud. All these four villages became the sole parish of Tayasan under the patronage of Saint Anthony of Padua. Fr. José María Ruiz came to Tayasan only in 1854. As soon as the parish priest took possession of the new parish, he transferred it to a better and healthful location where he erected his rectory. Little by little, the people followed suit and built their houses along the streets of the present site of the town of Tayasan, according to the plan prepared by Father Ruiz and approved by the provincial governor. Fr. Bernardino Ramirez constructed the church of Tayasan with half of its structure of stone materials. In 1894, the church buildings were all finished.

**Jimalalud.** In February 1886, the new curate Fr. Cándido Díez saw the extremely dilapidated condition of the church and rectory of Tayasan and decided to move the town to a barrio called Jimalalud. He constructed a sturdy temple of God in Jimalalud whose residents willingly offered their cooperation to him. The Bishop approved the plan but put the sole condition of preserving the buildings of Tayasan.<sup>43</sup> Fr. Bernardino Ramírez spent his energy in erecting the two school edifices. Another floor was added to the rectory of Jimalalud.

**Guihulgan.** Founded at the outset of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the parish of Guihulgan invoked *Nuestra Señora del Buen Suceso* as patroness.<sup>44</sup> Unbelievers and Negritos occupied the upland territories of Guihulgan and were uncivilized and resented baptism. Fr. Miguel Alvarez was parish priest when the town already enjoyed good, well-planned roads and a cluster of resettled inhabitants. In June 1860, Moro pirates sacked the town, razed the rectory, church, and houses to the ground. They carted off everything of value, including the four bells of the belfry. The mission had to be rebuilt. In 1874, a big fire gutted the new rectory and parochial church. Five years later, a very strong typhoon pulled down the new church edifices. Fr. Angel Martinez at the helm of the parish administration in 1892-1894<sup>45</sup> He started to erect a bigger, stronger, and more spacious temple of God, but the Philippine Revolution events interrupted his task and that of his successor.

**Vallehermoso.** The area between San Carlos and Guihulgan was a village named Vallehermoso, which was inhabited by upland unbelievers. It was a haven for malcontents, outlaws, and fugitives.<sup>46</sup> The Christians who lived in that village had completely forgotten about God, immersed in all kinds of vices, and totally ignorant of the teachings and precepts of the Catholic faith. Civil order was non-existent.

The first missionary in 1895 was Fr. Pedro Bengoa Cárcamo from La Rioja, Spain.<sup>47</sup> He had to teach the people again about the Christian doctrine and prepare them for the reception of the sacraments. When he left the place, Vallehermoso was a town and parish in every sense of the word. It is worthy of note that Fr. Bengoa joined the national upheaval in eastern Negros. The well-to-do *hacendero* and military general of the Revolution of Negros Don Diego de la Viña asked his Recollect friend to be the chaplain of the revolutionary forces. Thus in the history of our Philippine Revolution (1896-1901), there was the much-hated Spanish friar—vilified by the Propaganda Movement of Rizal and Marcelo H. del Pilar, the hapless victim of carnage by Bonifacio's Katipunan revolutionists, an

<sup>42</sup> MARCELLÁN, 146-147.

<sup>43</sup> L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis histórica* II, 164.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 165-166.

<sup>45</sup> SÁDABA, 646.

<sup>46</sup> L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis* II, 166-167.

<sup>47</sup> Padre Pedro Bengoa's interesting life, ministry and revolutionary activity are detailedly discussed in José Manuel Bengoa, *Un fraile riojano en la Revolución Filipina: Pedro Bengoa Cárcamo*, OAR. Zaragoza 1998.



easy target of hatred and violence by schismatic Aglipayans—who served as chaplain of Filipino revolutionaries!

**Dumaguete City.**<sup>48</sup> An age-old parish, Dumaguete was founded in 1620. A Spanish diocesan priest Father Jose Fernández de Septién, at the helm of the parish in 1754-1776, built a solid church. This church interior was totally burned down in 1846, and only the walls were left standing. The first Recollect Fr. Antonio Úbeda took charge of the parish in 1855. Subsequently, parish priests—Antonio Moreno, Juan Félix de la Encarnación, Mariano Bernad—rehabilitated the future cathedral and embellished the interior. Fr. Antonio Moreno endowed the church with precious ornaments, a silver altar, and processional candlesticks, and large finely crafted candlesticks for the main altar. It was during his term when the two *mampostería* school buildings were erected. He passed away in Dumaguete during the construction of the cemetery.

Fr. Juan Félix de la Encarnación replaced the primitive flooring of the church with durable wood. He subsidized the Manila artists to craft the magnificent *retablo*. He provided for all the needs of the church. Fr. Mariano Bernad had the interior decorated with oil paintings and finished the construction of the cemetery. He made important improvements in the church and rectory. He also supervised the construction of roads, bridges, and drainages.<sup>49</sup> After the Revolution, the Recollects returned to Dumaguete in 1909. Fr. Calixto Gaspar replaced the Filipino curate after his death. Fr. Melchor Ardanaz constructed a new rectory because the old one had been converted into a school for girls. The iconic belfry was constructed during the term of Fr. Francisco Ortuoste in 1925-1931. The last Recollect Fr. Alejandro Osés ceded the parish to the diocesan clergy in 1954.

**Siaton.** Historians Jarauta and Licinio Ruiz both declare that Siaton was handed over to the Recollects in 1848. Fr. Agustin Olmedillas took possession of the parish of San Nicolás de Bari. Fr. Tomás Mezquita succeeded him a few months after. He scoured mountains to convince the inhabitants to resettle in the lowlands. The missionary succeeded in baptizing a great number of unbelievers. Fr. Mezquita started constructing both rectory and church, which were completed in later years by Fr. Manuel Cabriada and Fr. Julián Adán. A violent typhoon ruined the church in 1875. An earthquake partially ruined the church in 1925 and brought down the bell. Succeeding curates took turns in rehabilitating the church. Fr. Gregorio Samanes, the parish priest in 1951-1958, finally reconstructed the church and the bell-tower. The last Recollect of Siaton was Fr. Esteban García when the parish was ceded to the diocesan clergy of Dumaguete in February 1960.<sup>50</sup>

## 6.0. Churches and Rectories

**A. Early churches.** In the Spanish times, the first church edifice was simply a “rectangular building with bamboo walls with a nipa or cogon roofing, often without doors or windows.”<sup>51</sup> Naturally, these were provisional temples found mostly in barrios. Later on, the parish priests built better churches. Nevertheless, it often happened that this type of church existed during the entire Spanish period. Martínez Cuesta enumerates them: Giligaon, Bombonon, Pamplona, Bais, Ayungon, Hibaiyo, Toboso, Honob-honob, Kabangkalan Norte, Concepcion, Alegria, Kumaliskis, Malibog, Guimbalaon, La Carlota, San Miguel, Magallon, Caron, Dancalan, Suay, Inawan, Sipalay, and Campomanes. The reason was that these were mission parishes created in 1894 or 1895. The convents were almost always of the same materials as those of the churches. Ayungon, Bais, and La Carlota had better convents, though.

**B. Durable and spacious churches.** The second type of church in Negros comprises first-class wood like ipil, molave, or narra, and their roof was made of nipa or, oftentimes, galvanized iron. The churches of this second type were as follows: Ayuquitan, Amlan, Basay, Bayawan, Guihulgan, Vallehermoso, Manjuyod, Tayasan, Valencia, Cadiz, Sicaba, Manapla, Victorias, Silay, Talisay, Sum-ag, Bago, Binalbagan, La Castellana, Ilog, Calatrava, San Carlos, and Cauayan. Most churches had sturdy concrete or stone foundations, like the twenty-one convents of Negros, their upper floors were usually made of wood.<sup>52</sup>

Stone churches comprise the third type. A priest who stayed long in a parish was wont to construct a strong temple of God, to last a long time, barring, of course, natural disasters like earthquakes, typhoons, or conflagration. The list of sturdy cathedrals and strong stone churches and their Recollect builders found in Appendix 2 of this research work.

<sup>48</sup> L. RUIZ II, 143-144; MADRIGAL, 68.

<sup>49</sup> R. JARAUTA, 40.

<sup>50</sup> MADRIGAL, 63.

<sup>51</sup> MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros*, 192.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

## 7.0. Writers and Lexicographers

**Fr. Juan Félix de la Encarnación (1806-1879).** A missionary from Valladolid, Spain, Fr. Juan Félix de la Encarnación spent long years in the parish ministry in Zamboanga, Bislig, Siquijor, and Dumaguete. He was elected to the highest position of Saint Nicholas Province for two triennia, after having been appointed procurator general and provincial councilor. He penned several devotional works, translations, census, book with geographical and historical accounts of parishes and convents (1851), and studies on Filipino surnames and improvements for Negros Island. Fr. Juan Félix, an expert in the Visayan language and an accomplished writer, authored the two voluminous books of the unparalleled *Diccionario bisaya-español, español-bisaya*, "acclaimed by leading Filipinologists as having no rival in their class." The first volume *Diccionario bisaya-español* has 388 pages and was published in 1851, while the second volume *Diccionario español-bisaya* has 364 pages, which saw print a year later. In 1885, his confreres cooperated in the augmented third edition of the two *Diccionarios* still in use by lexicographers, historians, Visayan writers, and teachers.

**Fr. Manuel Cabriada (1830-1905).** To help the newly-ordained confreres and other priests, Fr. Manuel Cabriada de la Birgen del Carmen compiled and published, together with other Recollect ministers, the *Colección de sermones en idioma bisaya de los misterios de nuestra Religión, de las festividades de la Virgen Santísima y de algunos santos y de otros varios asuntos* [Collection of sermons in Bisayan language about the mysteries of our Religion, about the feasts of Most Holy Virgin and about some saint and other various topics] in 1881. He started working in the parishes of Bohol in 1852. He spent many years in Siaton and Tolong. In Dauin, he stayed longest: 1874- 1897.<sup>53</sup>

**Fr. Pedro Sanz de la Virgen de la Paz (1837-1888).** He was the parish priest of Himamaylan for twenty-seven years.<sup>54</sup> He had a short stint in Bacong and Hinigaran. He wrote the *Plan de Misiones para Isla de Negros* which had two editions (1881, 1883) with four pages, including twenty-one pages census and maps. He authored two devotionary books—*Día diez y nueve* [The nineteenth day] (1883) and *Culto perpetuo* [Perpetual worship] (1885)—in honor of Saint Joseph in Visaya Ilongo language, both published in Manila.

**Fr. Mauricio Ferrero.** He is the author of *Proyecto de misiones en la isla de Negros y ligera reseña de la isla al hacerse cargo de ella los PP. Recoletos y su estado en la actualidad* [Mission Project in Negros Island, Brief Review of the Island when the Recollect Fathers took charge of it and its Actual State], published in Iloilo in 1889.<sup>55</sup>

## 8.0. Education apostolate

**Colegio de San José, Bacolod City.** The first formal experience of the Augustinian Recollects in the systematic education of young Filipinos was a resounding success. Their administration of the diocesan seminary in Vigan, Ilocos Sur, started when Msgr. Mariano Cuartero (1830-1887), Bishop of Nueva Segovia (1874-1887), invited them to Vigan. Prior Provincial Fr. Juan Cruz Gómez (1835-1912) accepted the administration of the seminary. Fr. Toribio Moreno (1857-1896) and Fr. Luis Cabello (1858-1926) took charge of the seminary.<sup>56</sup> In 1883 Fr. Celedonio Mateo (1857-1941) was the seminary rector and stayed there until 1895 with a total of eleven friars in the faculty during the thirteen-year administration (1882-1995). New subjects were added to the curricular requirements of Philosophy, Dogmatic Theology, and Moral Theology, to wit: Catechism, Geography, Sacred History, Grammar, World History, Philippine History, and History of Spain.<sup>57</sup>

Despite the positive evaluation of the Recollect seminary administrators made by the new Dominican Bishop José Hevia de Campomanes, the decision to pull out the Recollects from Vigan was firmed up in 1895 by the prior provincial Andrés Ferrero in order to set up their own school. Soon enough, government recognition was acquired in February 1896. The permit was issued to put up a school "under the protection of Saint Joseph, affiliated to the Royal and Pontifical University of Santo Tomas of this capital."

The prior provincial and his council favored Bacolod as the site of the new high school. Pedro

<sup>53</sup> Francisco SÁDABA, *CATÁLOGO de los religiosos agustinos recoletos de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas desde el año 1606, en que llegó la primera misión a Manila, hasta nuestros días*, (Madrid 1906) 459-460.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 493.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 532-533.

<sup>56</sup> Manuel CARCELLER, *HISTORIA general de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos XII* (Madrid 1974) 440-442.

<sup>57</sup> José Luis SÁENZ, *Actividad pastoral, social y cultural de los agustinos recoletos en Filipinas*, in *Los agustinos recoletos ante la nueva evangelización* (Madrid 1995) 246-306. Our quote is on page 295. The article was earlier published in *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino [BPSN]* 82 (1992) 21-84 and in *Recollectio* 16 (1993) 299-300.

Corro (1864-1934), the first rector, was joined by Francisco Sádaba (1871-1925), Benito Gabasa, former faculty members in Vigan. Other Recollect faculty members were Juan Briones, Juan Lapardina, Gerardo Larrondo, Juan Benito Cañas, León Ochoa, and León Galdeano.<sup>58</sup> On 29 June 1896, the school was inaugurated with a Holy Mass. The building temporarily occupied by the Recollect school was owned by Doña Carmen Cañete. The Recollects had grandiose plans to erect their own school edifice. About a hundred students were enrolled in the first months of the pioneering school. However, the first Recollect-owned school did not last long: two years later, on 5 September 1898, it closed its portals owing to the Philippine Revolution and the Spanish-American War.<sup>59</sup>

**Colegio de Santa Rita, San Carlos City.** It was another Recollect priest who commenced the first-ever Catholic school in Negros. Fr. Manuel Gómara fetched the three Augustinian Recollect sisters from Manila to establish Colegio de Santa Rita in San Carlos City. A leading citizen of San Carlos Don Silverio Vicente and Fr. Leoncio Reta planned this project in the mid-1920s, and it was Fr. Manuel who carried out their plan in 1933.<sup>60</sup>

The first sisters were Sister Asunción de San José, Sister Pilar Lucero de San José,<sup>61</sup> Sister Mercedes Jayme de la Sagrada Familia.<sup>62</sup> As declared by Fr. Gómara, the objectives of the new school have been that the religious sisters were not solely to manage a school where they could educate girls of more or less upper-class families. In addition, they were to cooperate actively and effectively with the parish priest, heeding his supervision and initiatives: Teaching the Christian doctrine to children in public schools, barrios, and haciendas, and preparing them for the First Holy Communion; attending to the adornment, neatness, and embellishment of the church and its sacred ornaments; promoting the growth and progress of religious organizations, like that of the Sacred Heart, Daughters of Mary, Catholic Action, etc. The whole thing seemed to conform very befittingly to their institution's spirit and name *Augustinian Recollect Missionaries*.<sup>63</sup> Don Silverio Vicente's widow Doña Eusebia Broce assisted the pioneering sisters, even temporarily lodging them at her own residence and later having Colegio de Santa Rita building constructed on a church property donated by the Broce family.

**Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos, San Carlos City.** The prior provincial of Saint Nicholas de Tolentino Province Fr. Pedro García de Galdiano (1897-1969) followed up the thirteenth ordinance of the provincial chapter held at Recoletos church with his salutatory circular on 14 April 1940 to all religious priests and brothers of Saint Nicholas province that then included the Philippines, Spain, England, Venezuela, Brazil, and China. In it, the prior provincial disclosed the true motives behind the Augustinian Recollect Order's decision to establish Catholic schools:

In Christian towns where people have known the Maker of their souls, [Saint Nicholas Province] wants those beliefs to strike deep roots through education by opening schools that—together with the knowledge that constitutes the fountainhead of human science—aim to further deepen the Christian roots of all those who attend their classes. Let us now tread this new path with resolve and enterprising spirit, hoping that—if it is for the greater honor and glory of God—He may bless our efforts and sacrifices.<sup>2</sup>

The provincial council with the prior provincial and his four councilors—Manuel S. Gómara, Aurelio E. Lacruz, Pedro I. Moreno, Domingo G. Carceller—and provincial secretary Martín T. Legarra met in session on 19 April 1940. The council members unanimously decided to establish two schools. One of them was to bear the name *Colegio Fray Luis de León*, which was to be set up at Caracas, Venezuela. The other was to be called *Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute* at San Carlos. This name would be altered to *Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos* in the postwar years.

Why put up the school at San Carlos? Among the reasons cited were: they took into account the ideal geographical location of San Carlos—being the focal point of the cities of Dumaguete, Cebu, and Bacolod. They pointed out San Carlos' great potential for rapid development and economic progress with the presence of the sugar centrifugal mill built in 1912. They were likewise aware of the

<sup>58</sup> MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros*, 356, footnote 201.

<sup>59</sup> L. RUIZ, *Sinopsis II*, 322; MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *History of Negros*, 322.

<sup>60</sup> Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos, *The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines. Hagiography and History* (Quezon City, 2001) 203-221.

<sup>61</sup> Sister Pilar Lucero was directress of Saint Rita College-Manila in 1924-1929. She served as directress of Colegio de Santa Rita in 1933.

<sup>62</sup> Sister Mercedes Jayme was born in 1906 to Antonio Jayme and Firmata Tijing of Bacolod City. Through the Recollect priests' example, she entered the religious life in 1931. She was sent to various communities either as directress, principal, or superior. He was named superior before World War II until 1942. In 1964, she was elected the third councilor of the congregation. She retraced her steps to San Carlos as superior of the community in 1965-1970. See Bernardita VILLAMOR, *The Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters, Past and Present* (Manila 1991) 21, 136.

<sup>63</sup> ROMANILLOS, *The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines*, 209.

success of the girls' school owned and administered by Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters. They could not find any reason why a similar private Catholic school exclusively for boys would not succeed.

In June 1940, the Recollect school started as Boys' Department, affiliated to Colegio de Santa Rita. Its first rector Fr. Pedro I. Zunzarren de la Inmaculada Concepción (1898-1950), employed four teachers at the start of the School Year 1940-1941. The construction of the new building was supervised by Fr. Tirso Ruana, the parish priest of San Carlos. He had worked for over twenty years in such Negros Occidental curacies as Kabankalan, Isabela, Bacolod, and Vito, Sagay.<sup>15</sup> The construction started in December 1940. Fr. Ruana did not live to see the inauguration, for he passed away in May 1941. His successor Fr. Manuel Gómara, finished it on time for the school year 1941-1942, which was unfortunately interrupted by World War II. A total of 153 students—including eleven in their fourth year—commenced the new academic year of Santo Tomas de Villanueva Institute. The new building was blessed by Msgr. Casimiro Lladoc, the first bishop of Bacolod, in July 1941. Twenty-four Recollect parish priests of Negros had pitched in their monetary contributions to construct the school edifice.

**University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos.** Occidental Negros Institute was the original name of what is now the University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos.<sup>64</sup> Founded in Talisay in 1941 by Antonio Lizares and Francisco Kilayko, it opened to students in the first and second-year high school. The Second World War temporarily closed the budding school. The institute reopened in 1946 in Bacolod with basic and secondary education and secretarial, liberal arts, normal education. In 1950 the colleges and other departments were transferred to the present site at Lupit Subdivision. Seven years later, in 1957, it became the first university of Negros Occidental. On 25 May 1962, the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino bought the University of Negros Occidental now in an extensive piece of land of fifteen hectares.<sup>65</sup> Fr. Federico Terradillos was the first rector. Since then, twelve university presidents have followed in his footsteps. The three-story administration building that later became a most visible landmark in the city was inaugurated in 1968.

### 9.0. Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity (SARF)

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Recollects missionaries accepted tertiaries or members of the Third Order, whose members in the 1970s were either called tertiaries or Secular Augustinian Recollects.<sup>66</sup> In Butuan, the Recollect chronicler highlighted the collaborative efforts in the ministry of two local women named Clara Calima and Isabel in 1623.<sup>67</sup> In 1650, a community of tertiaries lived in the mission of Bolinao in what is now Pangasinan. In 1670 a Third Order existed in Taytay, Palawan, and a few years later, another in Casiguran in actual Aurora province. They had produced wonderful fruits as cooperators in the Recollect mission work, living lives of prayer and generously devoting themselves to the apostolate. The present OAR Constitutions refer to them as members of Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity who, "remaining in the world, pursue evangelical perfection according to the charism of the Order."

The SARF is relatively new in Negros Island. The first chapter in Negros started at Colegio de Santo Tomas-Recoletos. Their members were mostly faculty members initially when Fray Rafael Cabarles, CST-R director/principal, wrote to Vicar Provincial Victor Lluch asking for the establishment of SARF. Forty-one interested persons signed the petition letter. In 1991-1992, Fray Crisostomo Garnica acted as spiritual director of the core group comprising twenty CST-R faculty members. The official foundation of the SARF San Carlos was sanctioned on 23 March 1992 by the prior provincial with Cabarles as the spiritual director. On 2 April 1992, the pioneering 23 members made their promise.<sup>68</sup>

The SARF – Bacolod was set up at the University of Negros Occidental – Recoletos on 28 August 1998 by the former university president Hermenegildo Ceniza. The first fourteen SARF members made their promise on 20 October 1999. They attended the Eucharistic Sacrifice on a specific Saturday, prayed the Liturgy of the Hours, held regular meetings, and engaged themselves in community outreach programs.

<sup>64</sup> Administrative Faculty Manual, Tertiary Level, University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos, Bacolod City 1991.

<sup>65</sup> Inocencio PEÑA, *La Primera Universidad de la Orden*, in *BPSN* 52 (1962) 446-451; Federico TERRADILLOS, *Universidad de Negros Occidental-Recoletos*. Bacolod, Filipinas, in *BPSN* 54 (1964) 67-72.

<sup>66</sup> *Constituciones de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos núm 109* (Rome 1975) 106.

<sup>67</sup> LUIS DE JESÚS, *370<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (1646-2016) of Isabel of Butuan: Life of a Pioneering Augustinian Recollect Beata or Tertiary in the Philippines*, in *The Recoletos Observer*, vol 18 (January-December 2017) 44-46.

<sup>68</sup> Dennis V. MADRIGAL, *The Augustinian Recollect Fraternities in Negros, in Handurawan. Visita Iglesia Negros y Recoletos* (Bacolod City 2006) 127-129.

Fray Arnie Visitacion met the core group of the SARF chapter in Valencia, Negros Oriental. Parish Priest Fray Rafael Cabarles accepted the first thirteen aspirants to the chapter that was created in 1998. Their activities included sick visits, liturgical celebrations, the formation of lectors and commentators, and support to the religious community.

In Talisay City, Fray Casiano Cosmilla encouraged the establishment of its SARF chapter in 1993. The interested persons were initiated to SARF national convention in Cebu City in 1992. This was followed by their attendance at Casiciaco Recoletos in Baguio City in 1993. Thereafter, Cosmilla became its first spiritual director.

#### **10.0. Augustinian Recollect Contemplative Nuns**

Accompanied by Mother Federal María Cruz Aznar, the first nuns arrived in Manila from Spain on 10 August 1992, thus completing the Augustinian Recollect Family in the Philippines. The five pioneers initially sojourned for a month at the house of the Carmelites of Charity in Quezon City. They proceeded to Bacolod City on 11 September and after the approval of the local ordinary Bishop Camilo Gregorio of Bacolod. With Mother Lourdes Eizaguirre as prioress, they established themselves in Brgy. Villamonte for three years. On 19 August 1995, their Monastery of Saint Ezekiel Moreno was blessed and inaugurated. Fray Antonio Palacios, the local prior of the Recollect religious in UNO-R (1985-1994), provided the budding community of Augustinian Recollect Contemplative Nuns with all kinds of assistance and support. At present, the religious community comprises eleven members: eight solemn professed, one simple professed, one novice, and one aspirant.<sup>69</sup>

#### **11.0. Conclusion**

The most significant legacy of the Order of Augustinian Recollects to this island of Negros is, without any trace of a doubt, the Christian faith. This is the Recollects' intangible legacy, the faith and hope, and love that sustained the People of God in this beloved island, deemed as the land of promise and hope in the past by adventurous immigrants, well-off hacenderos, daring merchants, and seasonal migrant workers (*sacadas*) from Cebu, Bohol, Panay, and Luzon.

Now it is also worthwhile re-echoing the grateful words of Bishop Casimiro M. Lladoc as he commemorated in 1948 the first centennial of the Augustinian Recollects' methodical evangelization of Negros Island:

From the year 1848 to the present time, they have been working in this portion of the Vineyard of the Lord. Our Lord has their names written in the book of life. The fruitful results of their evangelical work are incalculable indeed. That meager group of Christians of a century ago has increased to more than a million Catholics, which constitute today the Catholic population of this progressive Island of Negros. This is the most eloquent testimony of God's blessings on their evangelical enterprises.

Taking into consideration these great benefits obtained from heaven during these hundred years of plethoric and fruitful missionary work of the Augustinian Recollect Fathers, it is worthy and just to express our gratitude publicly to God and to give likewise public and solemn homage to those who were responsible for that beautiful realization of the salvation of souls and for the religious and material progress of our country.<sup>70</sup>

We now bring to mind what Msgr. Jaime Morelli, *chargé d'affaires* of the Philippine Nunciature, declared on the Recollects in Negros six decades ago:

The Christian civilization that distinguishes the Philippines is the work of the religious congregations in the Islands. This is a kind of work that cannot be valued in terms of material values. It is a work that tends to link man with God, which is a kind of relation of which only intelligent beings are capable. Suppose the Philippines is rated among the Catholic countries. In that case, it is because of the work done in this respect by the religious congregations among which occupies a conspicuous place the illustrious Order of the [Augustinian] Recollect Fathers.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> The historical account in PDF was provided by the actual Prioress Mother Maria Emy Catalonia and Sister Shirley Nonato, the first Filipina vocations to the Augustinian Recollect contemplative life at Saint Ezekiel Moreno Monastery in August 2020.

<sup>70</sup> Casimiro Lladoc, *Message, The Thomasian Memoir 1948-1949* (San Carlos 1949) 7.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* 5.

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