

Chapter Four

THE PMEs and THE TRIBAL FILIPINOS

In declaring his Mission Perspectives in Mindanao Archbishop Antonio Ll. Mabutas took note of the particular character of the inhabitants of Mindanao and Davao; a majority of Christian immigrants and a native minority of Muslims and non-Muslims.¹ He was quick to perceive that many of Davao's economic and political problems were directly related to the human texture of the social environment. The so-called "melting pot" effect of the in-migration to Davao had not been very adequate. The post-colonial society assimilated only the migrant groups: the Visayans, Ilocanos, Tagalogs, etc. Set against more pronounced differences from the indigenous peoples of Davao the former seemed more successful in obliterating ethnic lines. The same could not be said however, of the latter who have retained most of their ethnic characteristics and identities, perhaps with more tenacity than before.

It seems as though the native non-Muslim peoples have been left out of the evangelization efforts, a charge which is easily refuted by the PME whose primary objective in coming to Davao was initial evangelization, i.e. the conversion of non-Christian tribal peoples.

The missionary effort of the Church has always been . . . to push back local frontiers and to penetrate ever deeper in the most remote areas of the world. In a very real sense Mission knows no boundaries and is a stranger to no people or culture. In this sense, the PME Fathers were not the first, nor the only missionaries to work among Tribal Filipinos in Davao . . . for the PME Fathers whose Project of Life states that 'For us to live is to evangelize', this effort of reaching out to all people, wherever they might live has always been a constant and enduring preoccupation.²

Since their arrival in Davao in 1937, the PME missionaries have been striving to work not only in cities and among the Christian population but also in mountains and hinterlands among the widely-

¹ Archbishop Antonio Ll. Mabutas, "Pastoral Orientations in Mindanao," *Sentire Cum Ecclesia*, Selected Addresses, Sermons and Writings, (Davao City: Tambara Publications, 1986), p. 40

² "The PME Fathers and the Tribal Filipinos", Fr. Pierre Fiset, p.m.e. PME MS collection. A large part of this chapter was adapted from Fr. Fiset's MS.



Fr. Pierre Samson, Superior General of the P.M.E. Fathers, with a group of Tagakaulos in Malita, 1980.

dispersed cultural communities. As the least Christianized and westernized Filipinos, the Tribal Filipinos have been able to preserve many of their cultural traits: communal values on land, cooperative work exchange, the barter system, belief system, etc. Today, however, the forces of market economy and centralized government have slowly caught up with their traditional values and cultural traits. Lowlanders, settlers, and plain adventurers often supported by national laws, have occupied their communal lands, so have big corporations and government infrastructure projects. All have come in the name of progress, wisdom or civilization. The most immediate and obvious result, however, has been the erosion of their self-sufficiency and tribal identity, making ever wider room for a new dependence on modern ways and approaches.

Moreover, the tribal Filipinos living in the hinterlands, mountain slopes or peaks have all too often become victims of unwanted guests; rebels and members of military and paramilitary operations. They have been forced to regroup in artificial hamlets and pay all kinds of illegal taxation. These economic, political, and ideological assaults have left many Tribal Filipino groups helpless. Often they would sell their land to newcomers, or leave them in the face of a more acute adversity such as a military operation. Since their indigenous cultures are closely-bound with their communal lands, the loss of their lands means the loss of their cultural roots and identity. Ultimately, this would also deprived them of dignity as a full-fledged partner in Filipino nation-building.

The PME Fathers Among The Tribal Filipinos

Because of the ethnic composition of the region, it can be said that all the PME Fathers of Davao, have at one time or another come in contact and worked with Tribal Filipinos. The Mandayas of the old Christian town of Caraga, were the first native group to make the acquaintance of the PMEs. Boa, a small Mandayan settlement in the mountains of Caraga was the first to receive the visit of a PME priest: Fr. Yvon Guérin. He befriended the Mandayas and in due time recruited young people for the parochial school. During summer vacations, these Mandaya students would return home to share what they had learned with the community. Fr. Guérin's students event-

ually became his first Mandaya converts.

In 1938, the RVM Sisters who were running the school in Caraga opened a dormitory for Mandaya girls. After the war in 1948, a dormitory for boys was also opened. By 1951, the dormitory had 70 Mandaya boys. Boa became the first barrio to form a Mandaya Christian community. The first Mandaya family to entrust its children to the care of the church was Tikilid whose son, Enrique Mariano was baptized in 1946. A sister, Badian, followed his example and was likewise baptized. In the course of his long association with PME Fathers, Tikilid became a good friend and eventually consented to be baptized himself. In 1951, he was chosen as the main actor for a PME production meant for Mission Education and Animation, in Canada.

In Cateel, Fr. Paul Guilbault prepared catechists to teach religion in the different schools of the parish. Through this program many Mandaya school children were catechised and baptized. Fr. Guilbault visited many Mandaya communities where he organized catechetics and celebrated the sacraments of baptism and the Holy Mass. In Lupon, Fr. Germain Pelletier, just expelled from Mainland China, worked in a special way among the Mandayas. His work also centered around Catechetics and the Sacraments.

Sometime in 1959, about forty Atas from Calinan came to visit the parish priest, Fr. Rolland Hébert and requested a catechist. Fr. Hébert sent Felipe Ranilo, a former student of Holy Cross of Calinan. Today, there are many Ata Christian communities in the Calinan area owing to his efforts. The present pastors of the Atas are the diocesan priests of the Archdiocese of Davao.

All too often, working in vast and remote places, undermanned and overworked, the missionaries never really had the time to adjust, and adapt their approaches or pastoral programs to the human and spiritual needs of the tribal peoples. While serving the cultural communities the PME Fathers used Cebuano in conversations and Latin in the liturgy as they would among the Christians of the lowland areas. Thus, it can be said that before the seventies, there was little or no attempt to focus the main effort on the inculturation of the Gospel to suit the particular needs of Tribal Filipinos. The merit of the missionaries lies in their interest and genuine concern for the latter, respecting their dignity and considering them fully worthy of the same pastoral care as the lowland Christians. The PME missiona-

ries have always looked upon the Tribal Filipinos as an integral part of the flock.

In 1973, during a General Chapter, the PME Society revised its pastoral priorities and decided to give a new impetus as well as importance to initial evangelization, i.e. the first proclamation of the Gospel message. Two years earlier, Fr. Pierre Samson was assigned to Caburan, Jose Abad Santos, Davao del Sur. He soon became aware that the vast majority of the population in the area was Manobo. As he began to pay visits to the Manobos, Fr. Samson exerted efforts to learn their native tongue. As he learned the Manobo language, the world of the Manobo opened up to him and Fr. Samson penetrated their cultural universe: language, cosmology, history and belief system. Fr. Samson carefully took notes of this cultural odyssey. Unfortunately, all these precious notes were lost when his *convento* burned down in 1974. Far from being discouraged, Fr. Samson started his work all over again visiting Manobo families and studying their culture. As he gained familiarity with various communities, he began to propose Evangelization Seminars to some of them. With his knowledge of Manobo language and culture Fr. Samson integrated certain aspects of Manobo culture in the seminar. To his immense satisfaction, the Manobos responded with great interest. Meybio, the first Manobo Christian community, was born in 1974 amidst the growing political tension and rebel presence in the area.

Fr. Samson's work among the Manobos included the production of books for the weekly Celebration of the Word, translation of Bible texts and composing liturgical songs. He inserted certain native symbols in the Ritual of Baptism and adapted some Manobo rites in the Liturgy of Marriage. In his work, Fr. Samson was greatly helped by Carl Dubois of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Dubois published a Manobo Grammar in 1976 and the New Testament in Manobo in 1982.

Fr. Samson also made contacts with the B'laans (Bilaan) of Don Marcelino and Malita and lived in a small B'laan community in Little Baguio, a barrio of Malita. He stayed with the B'laans for three months during which he studied and learned the B'laan language. As with the Manobos, Fr. Samson organized Evangelization Seminars for the B'laan. In 1977, the first B'laan Christian community was born in Little Baguio, up in the mountains of Malita. There Fr. Samson also translated Bible texts, prepared booklets for songs

and worship in B'laan tongue and composed a special blessing for seeds and planting rites. Today there are six B'laan Christian communities in the Malita-Don Marcelino area.

When the Tribal Filipino Apostolate in Caburan was turned over to the Diocesan Clergy of Digos in 1983, Fr. Santos Villahermosa took over the work began by Fr. Samson in Jose Abad Santos. Fr. Samson remained among the Manobos and B'laans of Don Marcelino and Malita and continued his work until June 1985 when his apostolate abruptly came to an end due to his election as the Superior General of the PME Society.

Another of the PME Fathers to work among the Tribal Filipinos Mission is Fr. Gilles Bélanger who arrived in Malita in 1977. Fr. Bélanger was assigned to work among the Tagakaulo. Fr. Bélanger spent four month in Sangay, a barangay of Malita, living with a family of Tagakaulos where he learned the language. Hewing closely to the evangelical trail set by Fr. Samson, he visited many native Tagakaulo communities, preparing liturgical and catechetical texts, composing songs, and translated the Synoptics along with the Rituals



Fr. Gilles Bélanger assisted by Sr. Eulalia Loreto, MIC, presenting crosses to Tagakaulos at Kangko Chapel, Malita.

of Baptism and Marriage where a few cultural adaptations were introduced. In 1979, Macul became the first Tagakaulo settlement with a small Christian community. Today, there are twenty-two Tagakaulo Christian communities in Malita.

In an interview with Fr. Bélanger held in Malita, he spoke of his work:

A reflection on the main purpose of our work as missionaries made me take up work with Tribal groups. I saw myself as being able to work in the mountains. I strove to learn the language as soon as I came in 1977. At Sangay where I studied the Tagakaulo tongue my knowledge of Visayan helped a great deal in learning to speak the Tagakaulo language. I did a lot of listening. Everybody wanted to teach me. Later on they seemed to have become bored. I discovered that they respond easily when you talk to them about their own culture.

Our point of entry is to build a chapel for their fiesta. Then we give seminars where we compare some of their cultural values with Christian values such as creation, concept of women, man's role in creation, etc. Through animation we talk about who they are, using the Bible as point of reference.

As missionaries we opted for proclamation of the word but tried to adapt it to the culture of these people. We made them understand also that we are interested as well in their material well-being.

Some of their positive values are consistent with Christian ones, for example, hospitality. We regard as negative values the idea that fiesta is seen as a status symbol and their apparent readiness to abandon their native culture. Their sense of community is evident in practices such as the *tabo* (weekly market). They also like to come together for other social events.³

In 1982, Fr. Pierre Fisette arrived to join Fr. Bélanger in the Tagakaulo mission. Fr. Fisette took up residence in Sta. Maria and stayed with a native family in Barangay Kilegbe in order to learn Tagakaulo. In four months he learned the language and like Fathers Samson and Bélanger he travelled extensively in his area going as far as Malegang and Malungon. In the course of his travels and work among the Tagakaulos he was able to compile about 10,000 Tagakaulo words. Fr. Fisette plans to produce a Tagakaulo-Cebuano-English dictionary. In 1986, he transferred to Malita and started to

³Personal Interview with Fr. Gilles Bélanger, p.m.e., Sto. Rosario Parish, Malita. August 16, 1987.



Fr. Pierre Fisette and two Tagakaulo women.



Fr. Fisette and teachers in Literacy Program, Tagakaulo Mission.

work among the Tagakaulos in the municipality. His former apostolate in Sta. Maria was taken over by Fr. Roberto Lagos, a priest of the diocese of Digos. Now there is a total of 41 small Christian Communities all over the municipalities of Sta. Maria-Malita.

Fr. Fisette described his work among the Tagakaulos thus:

Our approach is one of integral evangelization. We see development as a holistic process, including the spiritual as well as the material. The point of entry is often literacy. We work with little groups instead of the whole population. The Tagakaulos place a lot of importance on health and long life; their prayers are invariably concerned with these. We form the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BCC) or the *Gagmayng Kristohanong Katilingban* (GKK) to develop the proper attitudes for self-reliance. 'Don't wait for the priest to come in order to go to church.' Don't wait for the government to build your roads (Build them yourselves).' Our GKK is global in the sense that it is concerned with every aspect of their daily lives. The liturgical aspect is only one. The other aspects are catechetics, health, literacy and agriculture. These five aspects comprise our approach of integral evangelization. These are the five poles around which our communities revolve. Not all our communities possess the five, but many have at least three.

Our goal is helping the Tagakaulos help themselves. We try to wean them away from money and material values. The best means to bring this about is to "bring them the Good News", which is the message that they can become better human beings by improving what is already in their environment and in themselves. How to announce the "Good News" tied up or within the context of the whole human situation is our challenge. How to link life inside and outside the Church is part of this challenge.

We try to bring about challenge by means of example. When the Church promises something we see to it that the Church's promise is kept. We think it is very important to build trust and confidence for the Church as such. When we say we will come to a certain place at this day at this time, we come. If the people are not there, we wait for them. The people come to trust our word. We also try to foster another kind of communal awareness: On social occasions or when we gather the people to build a road we encourage them to share what each one has with the others, so that one eats not only what he has brought himself but tastes and eats of what others have prepared.

We have noted that native beliefs are deeply ingrained among them, and for that matter, even among our own catechists. So we are emphasizing the behavioral as well as the theological aspects of Christianity. Of the sacraments, the hardest to teach is matrimony, that is, its monogamous aspect. The easiest to teach is penance; they have a keen sense of their sinfulness. We appeal to the whole person in the context

of his human situation, including the transcendent as well as the personal and social dimension.⁴

Catechetics, Social Action, Evangelization and Team Work

As time and experience showed, Initial Evangelization had to go hand in hand with Catechetics and Social Action Programs. From the very start a special effort was made to recruit catechists, people who would continue the work achieved during the Evangelization Semi-



Catechetical and Social Action staff of Tribal Filipinos Mission in Malita.

nars. In 1974, Narcisa Ambong, a newly graduated Manobo professional catechist started working with Fr. Samson. In 1979, Lolita Moto, a non-professional but experienced Tagakaulo catechist, teamed up with Fr. Bélanger. In 1980, she was followed by another non-

⁴Personal Interview with Fr. Pierre Fisette, p.m.e., Sto. Rosario Parish, Malita, August 14, 1987.

professional Tagakaulo catechist, Corazon Agravante. In 1983, Lucia Cejas, a Cebuano professional catechist, learned the Tagakaulo dialect and started to work with Fr. Fisette.

The tribal Filipino Apostolate of the Diocese of Digos received a big boost in 1980 when the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (MIC) committed themselves to this type of work. The first Sisters to arrive in Malita were Sister Socorro Carvajal and Sister Estela del Bando. After four months of exposure and language studies in sitio Kaigtan, Sister Socorro, with diplomas in Education and Catechetics, began to work with Fr. Bélanger among the Tagakaulo. Lolita Moto entered the Missionaries of Charity Sisters, Corazon Agravante went into Catechetics. In 1983, Sister Eulalia Loreto, MIC, a professional catechist, after two years of work and pastoral experience among the natives of Miyarayon in Bukidnon, arrived in Malita. After learning Manobo in Caburan, she started working with Fr. Samson.

Today, the Tribal Filipino Teams of the Diocese of Digos are composed of the following. Among the Manobos of Jose Abad Santos: Fr. Santos Villahermosa, DCD, and Miss Norbelita Onari, a Manobo catechist. Among the Manobos and B'laans of Don Marcelino and Malita: Fr. Gilles Bélanger, PME, Sister Eulalia Loreto, MIC, and Miss Tita Limbudan, a B'laan professional catechist. Among the Tagakaulo of Malita: Fr. Pierre Fisette, PME, Sister Socorro Carvajal, MIC, and Lucia Cejas. Among the Tagakaulo of Sta. Maria: Fr. Rudy Tulibas, DCD, Elsa Albaracin, a Tagakaulo professional catechist, and Fe Dubuque, a Cebuano professional catechist.

In another part of the Diocese of Digos, other PMEs have recently started work among Tribal Filipinos - namely the B'laan group. In 1986, Fr. Gervais Turgeon, in Matanao, started two small communities in Colonsabac and Datal Pitak. This year he added Literacy Programs in these two areas. In Magsaysay, the neighboring municipality, Fr. Donald Bouchard has also started work among the same tribal group. He is planning to give an Evangelization Seminar and thus set up a new community in January 1988.

Even though Evangelization Seminars and Catechetics were first in the Initial Evangelization process, there was always a special pre-occupation, a special effort to touch, to uplift the total human condition of the people. Social Action programs, especially literacy and health always accompanied the formation and process of the Small

Christian Communities. In January 1985, three Social Action Projects were formally launched. These represented a special and official effort by the Church of the Diocese of Digos to improve the everyday lot of the Tribal Filipinos of the region. These programs are Health, coordinated by Rose dela Cruz and assisted by Linda Garcia, with Edita Flores as professional Midwife; Literacy, with Narcisa Ambong; and Agriculture, with Rosino Talima. Their offices are in Malita but their work extends to all the Tribal Filipinos from the mountains of Sta. Maria to the hinterlands of Jose Abad Santos.

From the start, there was a deep-felt need to prepare the future. Those working among the Tribal people were always looking for companions. People who would be with them to help them. Necessarily, these would be people from within each Tribal group who need to pursue their studies and prepare themselves for the future. For High School students, two main projects have been put up: one in Sta. Maria for the young Tagakaulos, and one in Caburan for the Manobos and B'laans. These young adults study in the parochial High Schools and live on a small farm. They help pay for their education by farming backyard gardens and taking care of domestic animals.



Tagakaulos scholars at their Residence in Santa Maria.

With the help of the Presentation of Mary Sisters, catechists, and priests, the students meet regularly to deepen their faith, reflect on their culture, and their role as Christian Tribal Filipinos. A system of scholarships has also been initiated for students in college. Today, there are young Manobos, B'laans, and Tagakaulos studying Catechetics, Education, and Midwifery. In 1988, the plan is to send one student to study Social Sciences. The main idea is to prepare a human reservoir of knowledge and talents among the young Tribal Filipinos. These are expected to go back to their respective communities after their studies to teach, guide, and help the others along the difficult road of tribal independence, and national integration, and Gospel values. Some have graduated and are already working, especially in the field of catechetics and literacy.

Perhaps, the best way to get a real understanding of this apostolate with the Tribal Filipinos of Davao del Sur initiated by the PME Fathers and now joined by so many others is to present this poem of Fr. Fissette.

AROUND HARVEST TIME

August. Thursday. Eight in the morning. Still early.

I enter Kilalag. Tagakaulo country.

So near and yet so far.

It rained all night long.

I walked. One hour and thirty minutes.

From Sangay to Kaigtan: how muddy! A real chocolate parfait!

And then, Mahayahay, Kitulali, Swollen rivers.

On my shirt sweat and salt have mingled. Blended.

They have sketched their presence in long, jumpy, greyish lines.

Like a silent monitor describing a heart beat.

My boots, my jeans, my packsack . . . They also have tasted the trip.

Kilalag. Mountains and rivers.

Nineteen hundred and seventy-seven I remember.

There was nothing here. Or almost.

Nonoy and his family. One boy and four girls. Still young.

A small sari-sari store. A grinding stone.

Two classrooms. Without chairs.

Four horses. And many dogs.

Ten years already.

August. Thursday. Eight in the morning. Still early.

I walked. Yes.

But not alone. Lucia and Socorro were walking too.

With me. By my side. We were together.

Then Abelardo joined us. Then Dodong and his wife.

And leaders and animators and catechists.

Mamundas, Garet, Ginal. Paabay.

Twenty-five. Nineteen. Twenty-three. Twenty six years. Still young.

Dimuluc, Taguntungan, Kangko new communities.

Four years. Three years. Two years. Still young.

It rained there too.

Bare feet, net bags. One small fish, one small egg. In a banana leaf.

Mud and rivers It was for them too.

Nine in the morning. Still early.

We are thirty-one.

All six small communities are present.

Outside, the sun is hot, splashing its rays all over.

A soft breeze touches soil and shoulders.

On the other side of the narrow path,

five meters from here,

Men and women appear.

Big baskets strapped around their heads.

Big baskets hanging on their backs.

They are three, seven, ten, eighteen. Together.

August. Mountains.

Kilalag. Tagakaulo country.

Harvest time. Rice. The magic word. The magic grain.

How good the thought. How sweet the smell.

They slide their fingers along the stems,

press the grains hard.

And throw them behind – in their backs

– in their big baskets.

Hands bare. Hands full.

New rice. Rice of the year. Rice of this year.

Tonight new flames will crack old wood.

There will be a new perfume in the house.

Tonight it will be fiesta.

The first grains will be offered to Tyumanem: The Great Planter.

There will be prayers of gratitude. Short but deep.

There will be plenty to eat.

And music will fill the heart.

Our meeting place is a little Chapel.

It is sown right here.

Right in the middle of the rice field.

Our sharing is alive. And lively.

The Bible: Moses: I have seen the misery of my people.

Amos: So we can sell the poor for a pair of sandals.

Paul: Love is patient. Love understands everything.

Leaders. A promised land. Regrets. Deportation . . . A midnight star.

Jesus: The Kingdom of God a seed, a yeast,

two fish, five loaves of bread.

A few grains . . . This is my body. Given for life.

Literacy. Evangelization. Hygiene. Agriculture. Catechetics.

Nineteen hundred and seventy-seven.

Kilalag. A country without communities. Hungry.

May. June. July. A country without rice. Hungry.

Ten years. It passed.

So fast.

Today, six communities. Thirty-one leaders.

Woman. Men. Baptised. Young. Generous.

It is already four in the afternoon.

And we are in the mountains.

Eight in the morning. Still early.

Four in the afternoon. Late already.

Our meeting has to end: home is far away.

Each one leaves. Until next month. In Taguntungan.

We are all pieces of humanity

And it is only when we come together

that we are what we become.

Life is like that. We know.

Outside, in the rice field,

On the other side of the narrow path,

The big baskets are almost full.

It was a hot day. Slopes were steep.

And now backs are heavy

and hands are sticky.

But it was a good day.

A day of flesh and blood.

A day of food.

Ten years, one day. A rice field, a Chapel.

Mamundas, Moses.

Rice, Bread.

Feet walking the land, hands pressing the grain.

Foreheads sweating, knees trembling, backs bending.

Eyes smiling, hearts beating.

Around harvest time.⁵

The Tribal Filipinos Mission in Malita, Davao del Sur

Presumably one of the largest parishes in the Diocese of Digos, the Sto. Rosario Parish in Malita serves as a center for the Tribal Filipinos missions in the whole province of Davao del Sur. Malita coordinates the different tribal Programs of Caburan, Sta. Maria, Don Marcelino, and Malita itself. There are three PME Fathers who discharge the various functions of parish and missionary work: Fr. Jacques Doyon, Fr. Pierre Fiset, and Fr. Gilles Bélanger. The Fathers have divided the work in order to optimize their time and other resources. The administration of the parish itself is undertaken by Fr. Doyon while Fr. Bélanger and Fr. Fiset handle the B'laan and Manobo; and Tagakaulo missions respectively.

The Tribal Filipinos missionary work may be perceived in two broad categories: catechetical and social action. Opening a tribal mission is initiated through contacts. For this purpose, the first job of the missionary is to travel extensively in his area of assignment in search of friendly communities. In the course of his sojourn and frequent association with native communities, some would eventually signify their willingness to attend an Evangelization Seminar, or the priest himself could identify one or two such communities for which such a seminar would be fruitful.

For more formal visits, the missionary brings with him trained catechists who make several more visits to the community by themselves before a seminar is actually given. The parents are asked to sign a *panaad*, a promise to allow their children to be catechised and to support the program actively. The seminar proceeds in two phases:

⁵Pierre, Fiset, p.m.e., "Autour d'une moisson." *Missions Étrangères* Vol. 23, No. 2 (Avril 1987): 12-13.

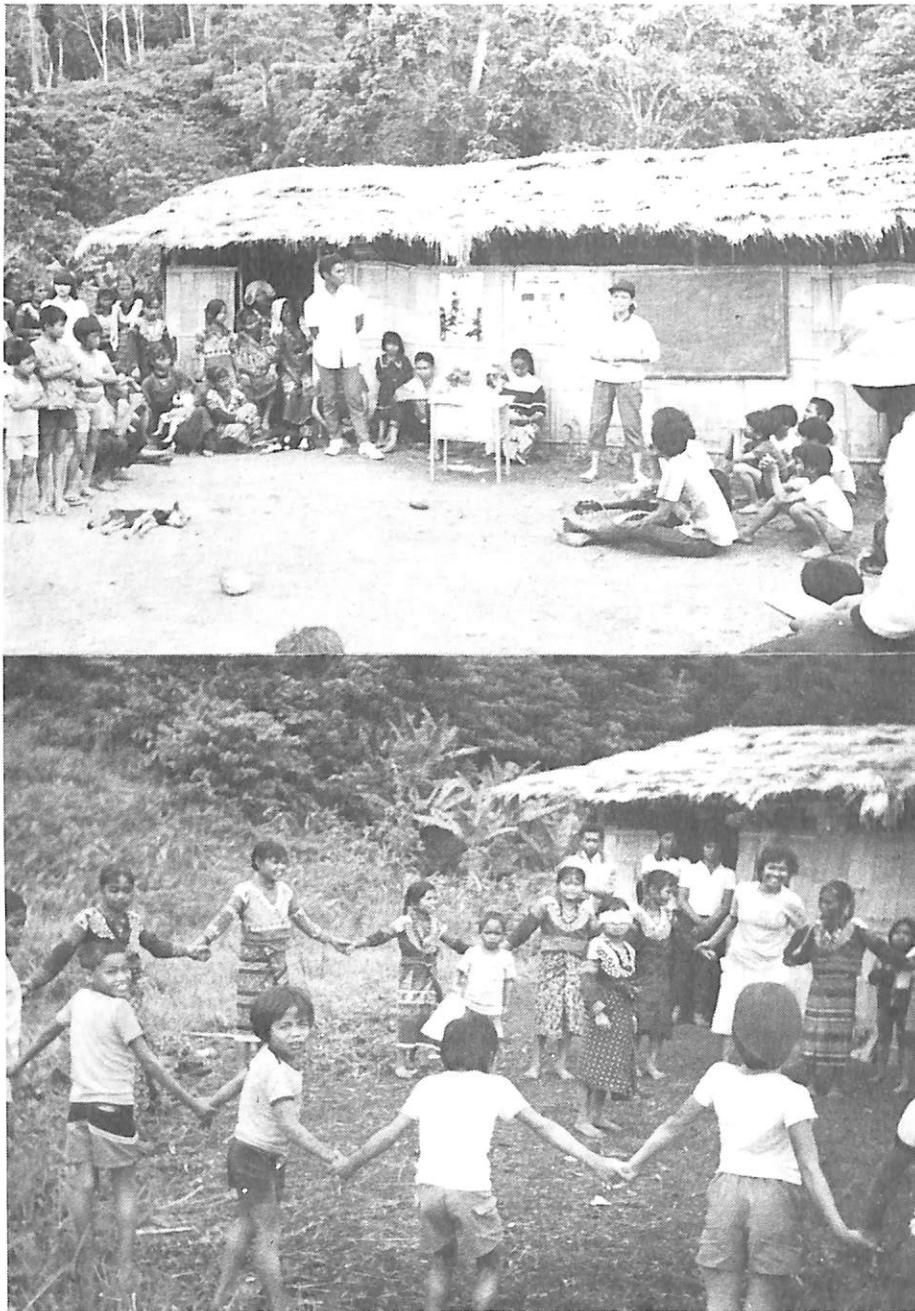


Fr. Jacques Doyon blessing the boats: Fisherman Project. Sto. Rosario Parish, Malita.

one for beginners, and a second one for a core group. The initial seminar is held at the Malita parish, and the second, in the native community.

Certain considerations require that the participants be recruited from among the young adults in the community who have had at least three years of primary education. Those who graduate from the seminar become the catechists of their own community. Catechetical instructions are usually held in the community chapels for want of schools and are intended for children. There are at present no resources for undertaking adult catechesis. The community is expected to share the modest obligations of catechetical work; in particular, they are asked to contribute something for the remuneration of the catechist. The parish shoulders the major financial burden of the seminars.

The basic content of the seminar is the proclamation of the Word of God, taking into consideration the native beliefs and the culture



Literacy Program in Kindag School (Little Baguio), Malita.

as a whole. During Bible sharing sessions the local problems of the community are discussed; thus, the Word of God is contextualized. The most commonly discussed problems are early marriage and personal conflicts for which reconciliations are worked out in the same sessions.

The social action component is dispensed through three major programs: literacy, agriculture, and health. This phase usually follows catechetics once the community has been a little organized already. The Literacy Program lasts three years and has three grade levels. The program is attached to formal education, and its more promising graduates are recommended to the public schools upon accreditation by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports. All teachers are employed by the Program which is under the administration of the Parish. They are given a "model house" in the community where they reside as a member of the community they serve.

The agriculture and health programs follow the same procedures as the Literacy Program. The Agriculture Program trains from three to six people from the community in some modern technology such as sloping agriculture and backyard farming. Health visits are an important component in the program, and the campaign is focused on sanitation and herbal medicine. The evangelization dimension is present in every aspect of the program. The activities are often begun with a prayer. There is an integration of faith and action.

The main problems of the programs seem to arise from cultural idiosyncracies and practises: The inferior status of women in the community inhibit them from active participation, while early marriages (many young girls are married at the age of twelve or thirteen) account for nearly all of the drop-outs. Among the native institutions that the catechists and trainers have found to be inimical to the natives is the *makabatog*, a local broker to whom the Tagakaulos look for good business opportunities such as profitable barter deals; credit, or marriage arrangements when they have sons or daughters of marriageable age. Since the nature of the *makabatog's* profession or social station requires him to be a well travelled individual, the Tagakaulos also seek him for information about the outside world and usually regard the *makabatog's* words with authority.

The social action staff of the Tribal Filipinos Mission perceived the *makabatog* however, as an exploiter of his own people, and therefore a menace to his own community. For the marriages that the

makabatog, arranges, Tagakaulos are often willing to incur huge debts misled by the *makabatog's* words on the desirability, or profitability of a marriage arrangement.



Tagakaulo Makabatog

A Day In the Lanipao Mission

Lanipao is a barangay of Malita that nestles in the mountainous regions of the municipality. It is the nearest barangay to Malita that

is completely populated by Tagakaulos and is one of the places in which the PME Fathers have established a Basic Ecclesial Community. Last August 16th, the editors of this journal went to visit the Mission with its missionary, Fr. Pierre Fisette.

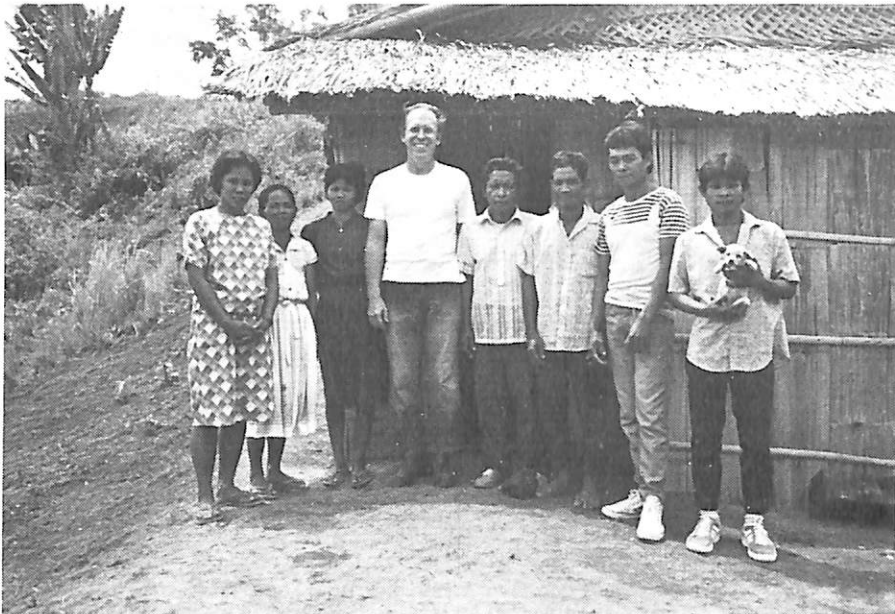
About an hour's drive from the Malita Parish, the trail to Lanipao starts from a small stream. Our party alighted at a lay leader's house in Talugoy and from there, we picked up the trail. For the first two hours we followed the course of the stream, walking sometimes on its banks but most of the time in the stream itself. After a while the significance of the name Tagakaulo (dwellers of the origins of rivers) dawned on us; we were following the river or the stream to its source up in the mountains.

There were a number of Tagakaulo settlements all over the mountain sides. We were told that we had only one more hour of walking, but that was a steep ascent along mountain passes which in several places were no wider than foot paths at the edge of deep ravines. As the morning progressed, the heat of the sun grew more severe. The barren mountain sides accentuated the heat. The mountain climb was difficult for us and caused a delay in our schedule. In order to complete the day's journey we had to budget our time wisely, leaving allowances for the main purpose of the trip: to visit a Tagakaulo community and experience the liturgy conducted entirely in the native language.

A few hundred yards away from the nearest *patag* (flat land) an unexpected help came. Imoy, one of the Tagakaulo lay leaders, appeared on the path to help us reach his community. He had been waiting for our arrival. He decided to meet us on the trail intuiting the difficulties that we were presently undergoing.

At last we reached the community chapel, a nipa and bamboo hut filled with about thirty to thirty-five native Tagakaulos who have been evangelized in their own native tongue by our host, Fr. Fisette, who speaks Tagakaulo. We started to greet one another in Visayan, unable to speak Tagakaulo. Before the mass we were offered some repast at the house of the schoolteacher. For this we had to do more climbing as the schoolteacher's hut was located about two hundred meters from where the chapel stood.

The mass was truly a community celebration. It was begun by Fr. Fisette, and the people were active participants throughout the whole liturgy. The Tagakaulos read biblical texts and sang songs



Literacy Teacher and her model house in Lanipao Mission.



Tagakaulo Community at Mass in chapel

which have been translated into their own language. The first part of the mass was conducted by the *Pangulo sa Liturhiya* who integrated a "question time" on biblical passages in the short celebration. The entire mass was in Tagakaulo. After the mass, Fr. Fisette spoke to the people about the upcoming fiesta and asked them about the progress of the literacy, health, and agriculture projects. This was integral evangelization in practice.

We were deeply impressed by the stark simplicity of the whole proceedings. By then it was noontime, and with a mixed feeling of gratitude and anxiety we accepted two lunch invitations and went to climb two more mountaintops to reach our hosts' houses. At two o'clock in the afternoon we started the homeward trek. The skies were threatening, but fortunately it did not rain. Imoy, who had helped us climb the mountain, now together with a companion, assisted us in making the difficult journey down. By then, we were totally exhausted. We could not have made it down without a helping hand.

Back in the convento at Malita, we reflected upon the experience. Despite threatening clouds in the afternoon, it did not rain the whole day. We shuddered to think what rainfall would have done to the mountain trails that we had been climbing.

Setting aside what had not happened, we reflected on what actually transpired. We accomplished our main purpose for the visit to Lanipao, which was to experience a day in the life of the Tagakaulos and a liturgy that was entirely in the native tongue. It was a valuable experience well worth the physical exhaustion together with the dangers that we were exposed to. We wanted the experience as a kind of situationer, and an immersion process for writing about the history of the Christianization of Davao.

Some days after we had visited Lanipao, several of the Tribal Filipino Health workers went there for a special project. The people told them all about our visit. They were very grateful for the efforts we had made to visit them, realizing the difficulties we had encountered. They liked our participating in the liturgy, especially trying to sing the liturgical music in Tagakaulo. They were very sensitive to our every reaction.

The one image that remains is the image of Imoy, meeting us on the mountain trail, helping us up the mountain, and then accompanying us down, the image of the helping hand. The Tagakaulo reaching



Fr. Fisette and Imoy, a Tagakaulo Lay Leader.

out to help the struggling guests to be with them, helping them with a quiet strength and dignity, helping them with a deep sensitivity.

What an enriching experience this was for us. The entire day was an experience of an appreciation of nature as well as an encounter with a new culture. As we walked with Fr. Fisette, we thought about PME missionaries who have made and are still making similar journeys throughout the Davao region, helping establish Christian communities, bringing the Church's presence to many places. It was an insight into the mission and work of the PME Fathers.

The PMEs in Jolo

Two years ago, in 1985, the PME Fathers undertook a new mission: to join the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (O.M.I.) Fathers in working in the Prelature of Jolo in a population that is overwhelmingly Muslim. The four P.M.E. Father are Jacques Bourdages, Real Lévesque, Robert Piché, and André Rondeau.

It was a new venture for these missionaries to move from a region overwhelmingly Catholic, alive with dynamic pastoral activities, employing many innovative pastoral approaches in forming Basic Ecclesial Communities and developing lay leaders, and caring pastorally for tens of thousands of parishioners to a region overwhelmingly Muslim in population with a Church that is only a tiny minority. Aside from caring for the small Christian community present in Jolo, the main apostolate is one of witness and dialogue. The Oblates have done tremendous witness work especially in education, establishing the Notre Dame schools which have been responsible for the education of many of the Muslims. The Muslims are very grateful for this. The new venture is very challenging. The four PMEs have learned Tausug and are now assigned to missions: Fr. Bourdages in Bongao, Frs. Lévesque and Piché in Siasi, and Fr. Rondeau in Bato-bato.

In our interview with Fr. Bourdages, he said that the PMEs are still in a period of adjustment to this new mission, adjustment to the new language, to the culture, to the people, to the local conditions. He sees the main purpose of his work as being able to give witness that Christians and Muslims can live together in harmony. He sees the special gift that the Church has to give to the Muslim

Community is the value of Christian forgiveness. He said that the value, even the word, does not exist in the Muslim world. This is the special gift the Church has to share with the Muslims. This sharing must be given in terms of witness. ⁶



Tagakaulo woman and child

⁶Personal interview with Fr. Jacques Bourdages, p.m.e., at PME Regional House, Sta. Ana, Davao City, September 22, 1987.

CONCLUSION

To write history as a synchronic performance is not the intention in writing the history of the Christianization of Davao. The abstraction of historical facts or their synchronization must rest ultimately, on individual interpretation. To do otherwise would be to commit an injustice to the significance of the historical past. The writing of the Christianization of Davao beginning in the 17th century up to the contemporary and present periods, is an attempt to contextualize the labors of the Catholic missionaries as well as the evangelization process itself within the social or collective experience of the people. The implicit assumption is that Christianization, together with its successes or failures, its strengths and weaknesses, could only be viewed, and eventually understood upon consideration of a dialectical reality as its context.

The Christianization of Davao began in the 17th century in the east coast where the Spaniards had already laid political claims on certain communities such as Caraga, Tandag, and Cateel. The early missionary efforts of the Recollects, and later, the Jesuits, were written as part of the social and religious history of the people. Contextualizing the events means describing the occurrences within the purview of the political, economic, and cultural institutions existing at the time. It was necessary as well, to write not only of the events themselves but of the mutual impact that they had on one another. The purely religious events created an impact on the non-religious affairs of the community, and vice-versa. Hence, the Christianization of Caraga in the 17th century evoked associations with the political unrest that periodically flared into violent confrontations between the native populations on one hand; and the politico-religious establishment on the other.

The native population of Davao, and in particular its ethnic composition at this time was an important dimension of this history. The description of the native Caragans, Bilaans, Manobos, Tagakaulos, etc., help established the evolutionary change that happened to the indigenous peoples. The transformation of some of them into the Christian Davaoño of present times is an account of the acculturative process of Christianization.

The conquest of the Davao Gulf in mid-19th century enabled the Spaniards to penetrate the southeastern interiors of Mindanao. This

event was a most important achievement of the period. It made possible the extension of Spanish influence from the east coast to about a third of the whole island of Mindanao. After this, Christianity made significant headways to the western half of the island, a predominantly Muslim territory. Heretofore, Christianity would be firmly entrenched on the whole eastern half of Mindanao.

The American period which began in the 20th century initially resulted in some unfavorable changes for the growth of a now highly visible Catholic church. On the whole however, the setbacks were temporary and insignificant. With the arrival of the missionaries of the Foreign Society of Quebec towards the end of the 1930's, the further and unimpeded growth of the Davao Church was assured. The renewed evangelization of Davao was begun in the last decade before the end of the colonial period in Philippine history.

This account has focused on the efforts of the PME's who played a major role in the development of the Davao Church. Although the present Church owed as much to the evangelizing efforts of other religious congregations, it was the Foreign Mission Society of Quebec which laid the more solid foundations of the Davao Church. By laying emphasis on the development of the native clergy and the active involvement of the community in the church, the PME Society has secured the basic framework for building the local church. More recently, the PME has reprioritized its concerns. It has renewed its interest in initial evangelization, hence the birth of the Tribal Filipinos Mission. With this the Christianization of Davao has come full circle, the nearly forgotten indigenous communities of Davao who were supposed to have been the first beneficiaries of evangelization have once again become of primary concern.

Heidi K. Gloria

EPILOGUE: "FOR US TO LIVE IS TO EVANGELIZE"

To celebrate fifty years of evangelizing presence in the local Church of Davao is a special moment. It is a remembrance of the years, the personalities, the events, the difficulties, the achievements, the challenges, the special graces, God's presence, the response. Yet, to remember the past is also to cherish the present and to look forward to the future. The call and the challenge take new forms, but they never cease.

Remembering

As Fr. Allary said in the Foreword, fifty years in the history of the Church or in the life of a people is very brief, but fifty years in the life of the Foreign Mission Society of Quebec is a significant period because it is fifty years of building up the local Church of Davao and turning it over to the local diocesan clergy.

In interviewing Frs. Allary and Picard for this study, I asked about the special contributions of the different Regional Superiors to the pastoral orientations and directions of the PME Fathers in Davao, and I was very impressed by their response.

What was accomplished in Davao was the work of the PME Fathers, all of them. Do not focus on the Regional Superiors. Everything we did, we did together. We would meet every month. Any new undertaking, any new apostolate would be presented to the Fathers. If they supported it, they would try it and encourage it in their parishes, or they would give it financial support. If they did not support it, it did not succeed. Not that we had unanimity at all times. We made some mistakes, but we worked together. This gave us tremendous support.¹

Thus, we have an example of authentic communal discernment. Perhaps, this is the reason for the PME's pastoral achievement in the Davao Church. What was accomplished was accomplished by the PME Fathers together, not individually. Each of the PME's gave their unique contribution. There is no need to focus on the Regional Superiors; there is no need to focus on the Fathers who had worked in Davao and had become Superior Generals of the PME; there is no

¹Personal Interview with Fr. Viateur Allary, p.m.e., and Fr. Patrice Picard, p.m.e., P.M.E. Regional House, Davao City, September 8, 1987.

need to focus on the Fathers who had worked in Davao and had become Bishops; there is no need even to focus on one of the two Filipino PME's who became the first Bishop of Digos, Davao del Sur: Msgr. Generoso Camiña. The focus is on all of the PME Fathers who labored tirelessly proclaiming the Gospel, building Christian communities, caring for the people, fostering vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. This is the work of the PME's in Davao.

The people remember the work of the PME Fathers.

Fr. Reindeau baptized me. Fr. Sabourin officiated at our wedding. Fr. Lemay took care of my mother in the hospital when she was dying. I served as an altar boy for Fr. Baril. Fr. Pelland helped me very much in discerning my vocation to the priesthood. I remember Fr. Pelletier in Bansalan. I remember Fr. Vallières in Calinan.

The remembrances of the people could go on and on. Perhaps, this is the most significant achievement of the PME Fathers. People remember the years, the men, and the work. It was hard work; it was humble work; it was work close to the people. The fifty years are remembered and cherished not only by the people but by the PME's themselves. For it has not only been fifty years of giving; it has also been fifty years of receiving, receiving the gift of being with the Filipino people.

Indeed, the missionary experience is realizing the gift of mutual sharing; it is realizing the Church of mutual gifts. There is an interaction of two cultures, and what is created thereby is a gift of the Spirit. It is a humanizing experience, an experience essential for the Church. Fr. Pierre Fisetette has described this experience:

When I go back to Canada for my furlough, I am struck by what the Canadian people tell me. They say, "You are Canadian, but somehow you are different from the other Canadian priests we know. You have time for us. You have time to listen to us. You have time just to be with us." These are the special gifts the Filipino people have given us: the gift of appreciating and cherishing the person, the gift of sensitivity, the gift of having time for people. I am very grateful for these gifts. I have been enriched so much by my missionary experience in the Philippines, and most especially by my work with the Tribal Filipinos.²

This realization of the experience of mutuality, of the exchange

²Personal interview with Fr. Pierre Fisetette, p.m.e., Sto. Rosario Parish, Malita, Davao del Sur, August 14, 1987

of gifts, is a memory to cherish for the PME Fathers.

Looking Forward

In the 1960's, there were more than eighty PME Fathers in the Davao region, now there are less than forty. The PME Fathers have built up the local Church of Davao and have turned it over to the Filipino clergy. Most of the PME's are old; the average age is about sixty. Only eight of them are below the age of fifty: four are in Jolo, working amidst the Muslims; three are in the parish in Malita, Davao del Sur, working with the Tribal Filipinos, and one is in Holy Cross College of Davao. The local Church of Davao still needs the PME Fathers, but now the need is for an accompanying presence, to fill in where needed, to be of service to the diocesan priests. This is indeed their new call, their new challenge, and they are responding as gracefully as ever.

It is significant to note that it is only within the past fifteen years or so that the PME Fathers have been able to undertake the mission that they had originally come to Davao for: to work with the non-Christians. The rapid expansion of population due to the influx of settlers necessitated the PME's responding to the challenge of meeting their pastoral needs and setting up Christian communities for them. Now, that this has been accomplished and turned over to the local clergy, those PME's who are willing and able to do so are free to undertake the mission of initial evangelization among the Tribal Filipinos. The work of Frs. Samson, Bélanger, and Fisetette here has been innovative and dynamic, employing the holistic approach of integral evangelization: combining evangelization and catechetics with the promotion of literacy, agriculture, and health projects. They are joined in this special mission by two diocesan clergy from the Digos Diocese: Fr. Santos Villahermosa and Fr. Rudy Tulibas, several religious sisters from the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception (M.I.C.) and Presentation of Mary (P.M.) congregations, and a team of laity, many from the tribal communities themselves. The pastoral approaches and experiences in this apostolate are gifts that should be shared with the wider Church.

We have spoken much of gifts. That is natural for the celebration of a Golden Anniversary of pastoral service. There is one more gift

to mention, however, the return gift. The PME Fathers have been a gift of the Church of Quebec, Canada to the Church of Davao, Philippines. Now, the local Church of Davao, Philippines, returns the gift. The young, dynamic Church of Davao, alive with a strong faith and new pastoral approaches, attempting to promote an integral, holistic approach to evangelization, allowing the Gospel to permeate every human situation as it struggles with severe socio-economic and political difficulties, says to the Church of Quebec, the Church of Canada, "Thank you for helping us; thank you for evangelizing us; thank you for building us up. Most of all, thank you for the PME Fathers. What they have learned in being with us, they share now with you. They have been your gift to us. They are now our gift to you."

Pasquale T. Giordano, S.J.



The mission continues:
Fr. Eloi Montambault, p.m.e.,
and Rodrigo Valentin, a lay
pastoral worker.

APPENDIX I
PME FATHERS ASSIGNED IN DAVAO WITH THE
YEAR OF THEIR FIRST ARRIVAL

Oct. 1937	Clovis Rondeau + Clovis Thibault + Léo Lamy+ Omer Leblanc+ Conrad Côté	1949	Bernard Gemme + Guy Riendeau Paul Guilbault Maurice Léveillé Paul Gravel
Nov. 1938	Joseph Geoffroy+ Léo Poirier+ Yvon Guérin+ Lionel Labelle+ Maurice Michaud Joseph Dupuis Paul-Emile Lahaye	1950	Louis-Charles Sabourin+ Gilles Ouellet Henri Veilleux Jacques Greendale Henri Coursol+ Georges Reid Julien Rivard
Jan. 1940	Rolland Hébert Robert Lemay André Pigeon	1951	Francois Han+ Paul Han Henri Babin Jean-Paul Foisy
Jan. 1941	Henri Desjardins+ Eugène Ouellet+ Jean-Bernard Bazinet Gérard Campagna Marcel Turcotte	1952	Jean Lalonde Donat Baril Claude Dumont Joseph Godbout Hervé Gautreau
Nov. 1941	Octave Rhéaume+ Julien Vézina+ Alfred Tremblay+	1953	Gérard-André Gagné+ Marcel Lavoie Jean Bernier Fernand Larocque François Brunelle
1946	Denis Cossette+ Maurice Côté+ Florian Roch+	1954	Gaston Pelland+ André Garneau+ Viateur Allary Ephrem Mélançon Carol Bernard Jean-Louis Breault
1947	Gérard Dubé Alcide Lefebvre+ Bernard Giraldeau Conrad Lafortune Jean-Paul Asselin Philippe Houle Gérard Rondeau Henri Fournelle Germain Pelletier	1955	Noël Scott Léopold Charlebois Louis-George Fortin