

Vianney Seminary and the Mindanao Mission of the Restored Society

Norlan H. Julia, SJ

St. John Vianney Theological Seminary, Philippines

ABSTRACT: This paper reflects on the meaning of the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the restoration of the Society of Jesus for St. John Vianney Theological Seminary. It asserts that the same spirit of companionship, sense of universal mission, and trust in Divine Providence which inspired its Jesuit forebears in the Mindanao mission also shape the way Vianney seminary fulfills its task of forming future priests for Mindanao and Bohol. Through a brief review of the history of Jesuit mission in Mindanao and of Vianney seminary, the paper shows how seminary formation stands in continuity with the centuries-old Jesuit involvement in Mindanao. The personnel and the times may have changed, but the Jesuit mission in Mindanao continues, thanks to the Ignatian principles which transcend the disruptions in the history of the Society of Jesus.

KEYWORDS: St. John Vianney Theological Seminary, Jesuits, Mindanao, restoration of the Society of Jesus, St. Ignatius, companionship

Introduction

The year 2014 is a significant year for the Jesuits and their associates because of the 200th anniversary of the restoration of the Society of Jesus since 1814. Pressured by the Bourbon monarchies of Portugal, France, and Spain that were wary about the Jesuits becoming very powerful because of their international network of schools, universities, and mission stations, as well as their unflinching loyalty to the Holy See, Pope Clement XIV suppressed the Society of Jesus through the bull *Dominus ac Redemptor*.

It was not a universal suppression, however, because the emperor and empress of Prussia, Frederick and Catherine, refused to promulgate the papal bull. Hence, the Society of Jesus continued to exist in Prussia. Forty-one years later, Pope Pius VII issued in 1814 the bull *Sollicitudo omnium Ecclesiarum*, thereby restoring the Jesuit Order.¹

This paper seeks to reflect on the significance of the restoration for St. John Vianney Theological Seminary and its mission of forming future priests for Mindanao and Bohol.² Taking the points suggested by the current Jesuit superior general, Adolfo Nicolas, this paper asserts that the same spirit of companionship, universality, and trust in Divine Providence, which inspired the Jesuits of the restoration period and of the early Mindanao mission continues to move the Jesuits and their collaborators in Vianney seminary in fulfilling this important contribution to the local churches in Mindanao and Bohol. To do this, a very brief and sketchy outline of the highlights of the Jesuit mission in Mindanao will be given. Then, the key turning points in Vianney's twenty-eight year-old history will also be highlighted. Finally, the continuing influence of the three-fold elements of companionship, universality, and trust in Divine Providence on Vianney's crucial task of preparing future priests will be explored.

The Jesuits in Mindanao: Before the Suppression and After the Restoration

A few years before Pope Clement XIV signed the bull of suppression, the Jesuits had already been expelled by King Charles III from Spanish colonies in 1767. His decree, however, reached Manila and was implemented here only in 1768 (Schumacher 1987, 201). That meant that the Jesuits had to abandon their mission stations in Mindanao, mostly in the Western part of the island, and these were handed over to the Augustinian Recollects, who, since their arrival in 1606, took charge of the eastern side of Mindanao.³

The first phase of the Jesuit mission in Mindanao started in 1596 when Fr. Valerio Ledesma arrived in Butuan and started evangelizing the natives in the area. This was, however, a short-lived venture due to lack of manpower. It was the Recollects who arrived in 1606 and took over the Jesuit-founded

missions in eastern Mindanao. The Jesuits then concentrated their efforts in western Mindanao. In 1631, they established a permanent mission station in Dapitan. In 1635, with Fr. Melchor de Vera completing the construction of what would later be called Fort Pilar, the Zamboanga mission was founded (Arcilla 2013, 18-20). From Zamboanga, the Jesuits expanded their mission to Jolo in 1635 (Fernandez 1979, 22). Schumacher estimates that by 1755, less than twenty years before the suppression in 1773, the Jesuits were administering 130 towns with a population of 212,153, mostly in Visayas and Mindanao (Schumacher 1987, 201). When the Jesuits were expelled from the Philippines, all of the Mindanao missions were transferred to the administration of the Recollects.

It was only in 1859, forty-five years after the universal restoration of the Society and after ninety-one years of absence from these islands, that the Jesuits returned to the Philippines, and consequently to Mindanao.⁴ According to Miguel Bernad, eminent Jesuit writer and historian from Ozamiz, the Jesuits wanted to resume their mission work by starting in Northern Mindanao, but they were overruled by the Spanish colonial government who had planned to occupy the delta of the Rio Grande de Mindanao in order to halt the operations of the Muslim pirates and slave raiders. Hence, in September 1861, four Jesuits, two priests and two lay brothers arrived in Pollok, Cotabato, and in January 1862, the Tamontaca mission was established (Bernad 1997, 128-132). From there and since then, the Jesuits would cover the various parts of Mindanao: 1862 in Zamboanga, 1868 in Davao, 1870 in Dapitan and in Sigaboy, 1871 in Surigao, 1876 in Caraga, 1877 in Misamis Oriental, and 1881 in Jolo.⁵ The Filipino Dominican historian Pablo Fernandez notes that in 1896, the Jesuits administered 213,065 Christians in thirty-six mission stations in Mindanao (Fernandez 1979, 23). The Jesuit mission would again be interrupted in 1899, briefly this time by the Spanish-American War. In 1900, when the Jesuits returned again to Mindanao, this time in bigger numbers, 'their missions burst into life in a third spring,' as the historian, Jose Arcilla says (Arcilla 2000, 56; Dela Costa 2002, 155-157).

It was in the 1900's that the three Mindanao Ateneos were established. These universities, which started as small parochial schools, were born out

of the Jesuits' concern that the young be brought up in the Catholic faith to ensure that the mission would carry on to the future. Hence, in 1912, Fr. Manuel Sauras opened the *Escuela Catolica de Zamboanga* which would later become the present Ateneo de Zamboanga University (ADZU). In 1933, the beginnings of Ateneo de Cagayan were laid down in a small building owned by the Roa family of Cagayan de Oro. However, it was only in 1940 that Ateneo de Cagayan would receive formal approval from the Jesuit superior general. Ateneo de Davao opened only in 1948 after the Japanese occupation.

Besides these educational institutions for which the Jesuits are best known, they also continued their efforts at the evangelization of the various parts of Mindanao, establishing many of the original parishes in the island. In 1906, the Jesuits started their mission in Malaybalay, formerly known as Oroquieta. According to Bernad, the Jesuits went around Mindanao as teams of roving missionaries (*missiones excurrentium*) composed of two priests and one lay brother. They tried to cover as many areas as they could in the region where they were sent. Some went to Zamboanga and Davao in the south, Caraga and Hinatuan in the east, Butuan and Surigao in the northeast, Talisayan in the north, and Dapitan in the northwest (Bernad 1997, 238). Antonio de Castro (2012), a Jesuit historian, notes that for the Jesuit missionaries who labored with much dedication and passion in Mindanao, their work here is "apostolic, because it was work for the Church, patriotic, because it was work for Spain, and civilizing, because it was work for the people."

In the transition years between the Spanish and American periods, the Jesuits decided to divide Mindanao into two mission areas for greater apostolic effectivity: The American Jesuits took the northern areas, and the Spanish Jesuits retained the southern areas.⁶ As other religious congregations arrived in Mindanao, the Jesuits would turn over many areas to them. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) would take the Jolo and Cotabato area, the Claretian missionaries (CMF) would go to Zamboanga and Basilan. Missionaries from France, the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME) fathers would take over Davao area, the Redemptorists in Surigao del Sur and the Society of Divine Word (SVD) in Surigao del Norte. The Jesuit mission areas in Mindanao would then be reduced to two areas:

The Zamboanga Peninsula and the highlands of Bukidnon. More recently, the Jesuits turned over to the SVD missionaries the last two parishes held by Jesuits for many years in Olutanga Island, Zamboanga Sibugay. In Bukidnon, only three parishes are currently under the Jesuits: One each in Cabanglasan, Zamboanguita, and Mirayon. A large part of these parishes are far-flung barrios inhabited by indigenous peoples (IPs) or *Lumads* of Bukidnon, like the Talaandigs and Higaonons.

St. John Vianney Theological Seminary: Then and Now

The Jesuit involvement in seminary formation in Mindanao is a very recent development, unlike their work in San Jose Seminary in Manila which dates back to the earliest years of the Spanish colonial period (Schumacher 1987, 143-144). It was only in 1985 that the St. John Vianney Theological Seminary opened as the third major seminary in Mindanao, in addition to St. Francis Regional Major Seminary, better known as REMASE, in Davao, and the St. Mary's Theologate in Ozamiz City. The bishops of the ecclesiastical province of Cagayan de Oro, led by Most Rev. Patrick Cronin, of the Congregation of the Holy Cross (CSC), thought that a third seminary catering to the needs of Northern Mindanao dioceses was needed to accommodate the increasing number of vocations to the priesthood in the area.⁷ They asked Fr. Bienvenido Nebres, the then Provincial of the Philippine Jesuits, if the Society of Jesus could provide formators and faculty for the seminary. The bishops' request was granted and Fr. Guiseppe Raviolo was appointed as rector, and together with him, two other Jesuit priests, Salvador Wee and Jesus Lucas. They divided among themselves the tasks of administration, teaching, spiritual direction and other duties pertinent to seminary formation.

The seminary community, however, while awaiting the completion of the buildings and other structures being constructed for the purpose, was lodged in the Cocofed dorms in the Manresa campus of Xavier University (XU). It was only in August 1986 that they were able to move into the present seminary compound in Camama-an, Cagayan de Oro City. When Vianney seminary opened in 1985, there were thirty-seven seminarians. In the next

five years, it would house 120 seminarians. Then, in 1990, the first batch of seminarians graduated from the seminary course for priestly ordination offered by the seminary.⁸ Among the thirty-seven who entered in 1985, only seventeen made it to graduation. Sixteen of them were eventually ordained priests. In 1991, Raviolo ended his term as rector. He was succeeded by Fr. Honesto Pacana who was rector for three years before he was appointed bishop of Malaybalay in 1994.

Under the leadership of Pacana, several key improvements on the formation program of the seminary were introduced. The teaching regency program became a mandatory stage of formation. Between the second and third years in their studies, the seminarians would be assigned to various schools in Mindanao to experience teaching as a way of furthering their personal growth and of testing their vocation outside the seminary compound. Following the suggestion of *Optatam Totius* (no. 7) that small communities be established in large seminaries in order to give more personal attention to each seminarian and assist them more effectively in their growth, the four subcommunities were established in each of the four dormitories. A formator was assigned to each subcommunity as its moderator. As part of the pastoral formation program, each year level was assigned to a particular sector for their weekly apostolates: The first year and second year theologians to some secondary schools in Cagayan de Oro City, the third and fourth year theologians to various nearby parishes in Misamis Oriental and Bukidnon. In the secondary schools, the seminarians either taught catechism to the students or assisted in the campus ministry office. They also gave recollections to the students on weekends. The third and fourth year seminarians assisted in parish programs, especially in the basic ecclesial communities (BECs). Some of the fourth year seminarians have been ordained deacons; thus, they could administer baptism, officiate at weddings, give homilies during masses and perform blessings.

In 1994, St. John Vianney Seminary obtained permission from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to grant civil degrees through the Graduate Theology Program (GTP). Hence, seminarians could now obtain a master's degree concurrent with their diploma from the seminary program. Many lay people started to enroll in the GTP. The first batch of

GTP graduates in 1997 consisted of eighteen candidates. As of 2014, the GTP of Vianney seminary boasts of 140 graduates.

In its early years, and even now, Vianney has always had a problem recruiting new faculty members. To assist the resident faculty in teaching the various theology subjects, professors from Loyola School of Theology (LST) in Manila came to Vianney for modular courses running for a month or two. Hence, well-known Jesuit theologians such as Catalino Arevalo, Joseph Smith, and Antonio Lambino came for the dogmatic and systematic courses. Ruben Tanseco, Romeo Intengan, and Nicasio Cruz also came for the Pastoral Counseling, Christian Ethics, and Mass Media courses, respectively. Of these visiting professors, only Cruz still comes to Vianney every two years since 1990.

Upon the appointment of Pacana as bishop of Malaybalay in 1994, Fr. Renato C. Ocampo took over as rector. During his term, the formation programs of the seminary continued to improve and strengthen. Fr. Jose Quilongquilong, who joined the faculty in 1989, spearheaded the 'reforestation' of the compound. He planted the many mahogany trees along the gate of the seminary. Fr. Timoteo Ofrasio, who was already vice rector under Ocampo, assumed the rectorship in 1998. Under his watch, the liturgical formation of the seminarians was emphasized. He was assisted by Fr. Florencio Salvador, Jr., of the archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro, who, like him, holds a doctorate in Sacred Liturgy. Around this time, the formands of some religious congregations started to enroll in the seminary program for the priesthood. They are the Calabrians, Sacred Heart Fathers, and the Third Order Franciscans. Many more lay students came in for the GTP classes usually held on Saturdays.

A significant development under Ofrasio's term was the presence of diocesan priests as resident formators and faculty members. By this time, some of the Jesuits had been transferred to other assignments and the Jesuit Provincial could not send other Jesuits to replace them. The Society appealed to the bishops to assign some of their priests to the seminary. Hence in 2000, Fr. Florencio Salvador, Jr., Fr. Raul Dael, and the now-bishop of Malaybalay, Bp. Jose Cabantan from the archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro came to Vianney

as resident formators. Salvador taught the courses on the sacraments, together with Ofrasio. Dael took care of the Spiritual Pastoral Formation Year (SPFY) and taught Priestly Spirituality. Cabantan took the post of Director of Regents and taught Pastoral Theology. Fr. Frederick Camacho of Talibon joined the formators as administrator and vice rector in 2003.

In the succeeding years, other diocesan priests and Vianney alumni would come and replace those whose terms have ended. In 2004, Fr. Demetrio Berondo, Jr. of Malaybalay became the first diocesan priest/alumnus to serve as academic dean. The list also includes Alberto Uy of Talibon who took over from Berondo as dean and taught the Moral Theology courses, Allan Pulgo who taught Church History, Jose Rapadas (Social Ethics and Dogmatic Theology), Butz Zayas and Raoul Magracia (administrators), Demli Valmores (Moral Theology), Julius Clavero (Pastoral Theology and Director of Ministry Year), Bobby Cena and Robert Selecios (treasurer). Some alumni of San Jose Seminary (Harold Parilla, Alan Casicas, Rey Raluto) also came to join the faculty and formation team.

In 2004, Fr. Renato Repole who has been coming to the seminary every year during the summer break from his studies in Rome became the fifth rector of Vianney. By this time, the *Updated program for priestly formation in the Philippines* had been published. It became the guiding document for the further improvements made on the formation program of the seminary. Some of these are: The transfer of SPFY from the first year of seminary life to the year after the seminarians' regency, the renaming of SPFY to 'Galilee Year and of Regency Year to 'Ministry Year,' and the greater emphasis on the human formation of seminarians. These improvements were influenced by another significant development in Vianney: The presence of a full-time female vocational growth counselor in the seminary. In the past, only seminarians 'with problems' were referred to a counselor, thus creating a stigma against confronting one's psychological and developmental issues. It has never happened, too, that a woman was ever a member of the formation team. Hence, the arrival of Ms. Venus Guibone, a veteran educator and a competent and well-trained counselor, can be considered a milestone in the history of the seminary.

In 2010, Fr. Celerino Reyes succeeded Repole as seminary rector. Reyes had already been assigned in Vianney in 1991. Gifted with expertise in Ignatian spirituality, discernment, and retreat giving, he brought these talents to bear in strengthening further the human-spiritual formation program of the seminary. He was ably assisted by the team of Frs. Manuel Montesclaros, SJ, and Raul Dael, and Ms. Guibone. It was in Reyes' term that the celebrations of the seminary's silver anniversary (2011) had its culmination. These became an opportunity for him to make appeals to the bishops, alumni, and friends of the seminary to help stabilize the finances of Vianney to ensure its future. In 2011, through a generous grant from the Japanese Province, the seminary library was renovated, with a third floor added to the previous two. It was then named after Agustin Consunji, another notable Jesuit missionary to Mindanao who was tortured and executed by the Japanese in 1943.⁹ Acquisitions and cataloguing of library holdings received tremendous boost during this time. A significant decision made during Reyes' term, which would impact the future of the seminary, was the agreement made in March 2014 between the episcopal board and the Jesuit provincial, Antonio Moreno. The consensus was that the Society will turn over the leadership of the seminary to a diocesan rector in 2023. The Jesuits, however, will still make themselves available for service in the seminary as members of the formation team if the bishops so wish.

Vianney Seminary in the Spirit of the Restoration

As of 2014, Vianney, in the twenty-eight years of its existence as a seminary, has graduated 410 alumni excluding the GTP graduates. Most of these alumni have been ordained priests, and one, a bishop. They come from sixteen dioceses in Mindanao, two dioceses in Talibon, one in Myanmar, the military ordinariate in the Philippines, and five religious congregations. On this 200th anniversary of the restored Society, it is incumbent for Vianney Seminary to reflect on what the Lord could be telling as regard its mission. The aim of this reflection, according to the Jesuit superior general, Adolfo Nicolas, is "to revive those great desires that Pope

Francis spoke of and to continue the work of evangelisation, refining our brotherhood and deepening our love.” Nicolas proposes companionship, universal mission, and trust in Divine Providence as lenses through which Jesuits, and by extension, their collaborators, could discern the movement of the spirit as the Society celebrates the bicentenary of its restoration. For him, these are the principles which sustained and strengthened the Jesuits through the difficult period of the restoration. As said earlier, these three guiding principles which are rooted in the Ignatian tradition as experienced by Ignatius himself in his pilgrim journey from Loyola to Rome and in his Spiritual Exercises (SpEx), are the same principles which inspired the earliest Jesuit missionaries in Mindanao. These, too, are the inspiration behind the significant turning points and milestones in Vianney’s almost three decades old history.

Companionship

On the theme of fraternal companionship, Nicolas invites Jesuits thus:

During the difficult years, Joseph Pignatelli united, strengthened, and encouraged his brothers. Even during suppression, he maintained communication, friendship and hope among the former companions. What does the witness of those who cared for their brothers during the time of crisis say to us today? Especially if we are told by General Congregation 35 that ‘community is mission’?

Even as early as Manresa, companionship already figured as a key feature of Ignatian spirituality. As St. Ignatius engaged in spiritual conversation with people, some of them were attracted to follow him (Tylenda 2001, 73). In Paris, which served as the nucleus of the Society, the original first companions was born (Tylenda 2001, 148-155). When the possibility of being dispersed loomed before them, they decided to preserve their companionship by making the vow of obedience among themselves. They were not only companions to each other. They were, first of all, companions of Jesus. Ignatius and the first companions were adamant that they be called not *Inígistas* or Society of St. Ignatius, but *Compañía de Jesus*. Their

companionship with one another is rooted in their being companions of Jesus. This sense of companionship with one another and with Jesus is, in turn, rooted in the meditation on the call of the King in the SpEx. The eternal King addresses his call to those who would like to labor with him that they, sharing in his toil, might share in his glory (SpEx, 95).

Similarly, the earliest Jesuit missionaries came to Mindanao as companions to one another. As noted above, the Jesuits covered the various parts of Mindanao, crossed rivers, climbed mountain, established communities always in groups of three or more. The priests among them would take care of the spiritual ministries like teaching catechism and administering the sacraments; the lay brother would look after the construction of the residence and of the church. For example, as Bernad pointed out, the first group of Tamontaca missionaries were Frs. Jose Ignacio Guerrico and Juan Bautista Vidal, and lay brothers Jose Maria Zumeta and Venancio Belzunce (Bernad 1997, 219).

In the case of the Jesuit mission in Vianney, the first group of Jesuits in Vianney was composed of three members. A few years after the opening of Vianney, lay brothers would be assigned to the seminary to be administrators, that is, to look after the maintenance of the buildings, to supervise the workers, and to take care of the kitchen, garden, and carpentry. In 1991, Br. Quipanes came to Vianney as the first lay brother to be assigned there. Since there were five to seven Jesuits assigned in Vianney, they formed one independent Jesuit community. However, since 2002, when there were only three or four Jesuits, they became a subcommunity under the XU Jesuit community. Thus, when diocesan priests came in as resident formators, they formed one subcommunity of priests together with the Jesuits. Far from creating tensions or friction among themselves, Jesuits and diocesan priests were able to live together in harmony. They gave powerful witness to companionship in Jesus. It was an excellent example for the seminarians to demonstrate how differences in personalities and divergence in opinions can be negotiated for the sake of the common mission of seminary formation.

In a way, it had not been difficult for Jesuits and diocesan priests to live and work together because the latter were also products of Jesuit formation. They were alumni either of San Jose seminary or of Vianney seminary. Hence, they

shared the same Ignatian worldview and held the same Ignatian principles of *magis, cura personalis*, Ignatian indifference, etc. Guibone was a non-resident formator but she participated in faculty meetings, deliberations and faculty development activities. She, too, may be said to have undergone some 'Jesuit training' for she trained under Jesuit Fr. Roger Champoux for her counseling profession. The companionship among the Jesuits, the diocesan formators and the lay formator themselves was strengthened by the occasional faculty recollection started during the time of Repole. It was a simple overnight recollection which brought them together for fellowship, reflection, sharing, and mass. Through this activity, the formators were witnesses to the necessity of nourishing the bonds of friendship and camaraderie through fellowship and prayer.

Among the seminarians, emphasis on the value of community life was given. The importance of their relationship among themselves in the subcommunity was a crucial formative experience. Hence, the practice of peer evaluation or appraisal was also introduced during the time of Repole when human formation became the focus area for improvement. Time was also given for group sharing not only among their year level batchmates but also among their fellow seminarians from the same diocese. This was done to show them that their circle of companionship was not only their dorm mates, but also their year level batchmates, and even more importantly, their fellow seminarians from their diocese. This situation has demolished the thinking that diocesan priests "do not have a community," that "community is only for the religious." This kind of thinking proved disastrous for the diocese, and this is evident among priests who distanced themselves from their fellow priests and their bishops. As shown in the Vianey experience, seminarians have the capacity for mature interpersonal relationships because they are going to be leaders of the parish community and will have to deal with various kinds of people, from the educated elite of the urban parishes, to the illiterate farmers and Lumads in barrio parishes, and the fisherfolk in island parishes.

Universal mission

As regards the universal mission which is a key element in the Society's apostolic discernment, Nicolas reminds Jesuits that:

One of the marks of the restored society was great missionary activity and initiative. Many of the provinces in Africa, Asia, Australia and America trace their beginnings to this period in history. What might be the significance of this strong sense of universal mission of the restored Society to us today?

Why Mindanao? The SpEx of St. Ignatius again shows how the eternal King calls each person to follow him. His will, he says, is "to conquer the whole world and my enemies, and thus to enter into the glory of my Father" (SpEx, 95). St. Ignatius also refers to the temporal king who wishes to 'conquer the whole land of the infidels' (SpEx, 93). Ignatius' vision of the eternal King conquering the whole world reflects the missionary mandate given by the Risen Lord to his disciples just before he ascended to heaven, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them all that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28.19-20a). This sense of universal mission finds its expression in the Jesuit constitution in the criteria for the choice of ministries:

It would appear that in the ample vineyard of the Lord, one ought to select, all other things being equal...that part of the vineyard which has the greater need...where greater fruit is likely to be reaped...where our indebtedness is greater...where the good accomplished will be shared by others...and where there is an attitude favorable to the Society (Constitutions, 622-623).

Then why Mindanao? Arcilla notes that the first group of post-restoration Jesuits who returned to the Philippines in 1859 were sent precisely for the evangelization of unbaptized tribes in Mindanao and nearby islands. However, the Governor General asked them to stay in Manila in order to open the *Escuela Pia*, a primary school for Spanish boys. It was only in 1861 that a group of Jesuits would finally be able to sail to Mindanao. This was now the group led by Jose Ignacio Guerrico who arrived in Pollok and eventually settled in Tamontaca, ministering to the Tirurays in the area. The distribution of Jesuit manpower during the Spanish colonial

period shows the Mindanao mission as a priority. Schumacher notes that in 1755, the Jesuits were administering 130 towns with a population of 212,513, mostly in Visayas and Mindanao (Schumacher 1987, 201). De Castro (2012) points out that prior to the Revolution (of 1898),

[A] full two thirds of the total Jesuit manpower of the Philippine Mission was assigned to Mindanao. In 1898, out of a total of 167 Jesuits, 60 Jesuits (36%) were working in the Manila institutions of the Society, and 107 Jesuits (64%) were assigned to the Mindanao missions. In 1924, Jesuits were responsible for 379 towns and barrios, with a Catholic population of 301,262, and 65 parochial schools.

For Jose Magadia, former Jesuit provincial in the Philippines, the Jesuit work in Mindanao is of utmost value not only because of the intimate link between Jesuit history in the Philippines and Mindanao, but also because Mindanao is “an important part of the county and because of the critical work for peace” (Arcilla 2013, 228). Hence, that the Society accepted to run Vianney seminary is fully in accordance with the Society’s concern for Mindanao and its peoples. Through the parishes and mission stations, the early Jesuit missionaries were able to reach the poorest of the natives of Mindanao, and through the universities they were able to educate the children of middle class and affluent Mindanaoans. Moreover, through the formation of future priests for Mindanao, the Jesuits, even in diminished numbers, were able to reach all sectors and sections of Mindanao through the many alumni of Vianney who were assigned to various parts of the island. By way of this principle of extension and multiplier effect, the Jesuits of today are still serving the Christians of Maguindanao region and Zamboanga peninsula, just as their predecessors did in Tamontaca, Tetuan and Dapitan since some of the parish priests in these areas have been trained in Vianney.

It should be noted that Vianney alumni are not only parish priests but also chancellors, economes, and consultors in their respective dioceses. A quick survey of the college seminaries around Mindanao will show that Vianney alumni are there either as rectors, formators, or professors. In their seminary formation, they are reminded that they can expect to be assigned and should be ready to be assigned anywhere and to any task in the diocese. They could not be

in a barrio or a coastal parish forever. They will be placed also in the cathedral parish where their parishioners are as educated as they themselves are. Hence, they should be ready to preach to them in correct and coherent English. To help them in this regard, remedial or propaedeutic English is offered as part of the curriculum. Each semester, they are given a different house assignment, either as beadle, liturgy coordinator, academic liaison, sports coordinator, etc. Through the Ministry Year when seminarians are sent to different schools in Mindanao to teach mainly in secondary schools, the sense of mission is instilled in the seminarians. They are reminded that the Ministry Year is not a break from formation, a chance to earn money, or to engage in intimate relationships. They are sent precisely to minister to students as well as their fellow teachers. The Ministry Year has proven to be the avenue for testing their capacity to be available to take on various tasks and to multi-task: Teaching, attending meetings, dealing with students, parents, and fellow teachers. It is during this year that their leadership capacity is also tested.

Trust in Divine Providence

Finally, Nicolas invites Jesuits to ponder on what is probably the most important element which sustained the Society in the period of the restoration:

The Jesuits of this period went through very challenging times: the suppression, the precarious existence of the Society of Jesus in the Russian empire, localized recognition of the Society until it was universally restored, etc. What can we learn from the patient endurance, the fortitude, the faith and trust in God’s providence and the Spirit’s presence in the Church during this period?

Ignatius’ trust in Divine Providence shines forth in many of the key documents of the Society. In his autobiography, Ignatius narrates how on several occasions, he deliberately chose to place his trust in God’s providence. While in Barcelona doing his initial studies, he decided to beg for his food. For example, he took the boat to the Holy Land without any provision for money or food (Tylenda 2001, 88-92, 108-112). In the Constitutions, he is clear that the Society is to place its total trust in God. He says,

It was not human means that brought the Society into being, so neither can they provide for its future: survival and progress will come from the mighty power of Christ Jesus our Lord and God, in whom alone we must hope... (Constitutions, 812).

The early Jesuit missionaries in Mindanao certainly proceeded not without a fair amount of trust in God's providence. For sure, they did not have the modern conveniences that we now enjoy: Quick means of transport, even faster means of communication, more sophisticated programs for evangelization and development, modern ways of understanding people and their cultures. But they faced even more difficult circumstances which needed not only careful discernment but intense prayer and trust in God's mysterious ways of touching people's hearts: How far should they cooperate with the Spanish colonial authorities and soldiers in order not to compromise the mission in Tamontaca and Zamboanga? How could they convince the natives of Agusan and Davao that becoming baptized Christians need not mean ceasing to be Manobos and Mandayas? How would they pacify a Maranao sultan and a Maguindanao datu who doubted the sincerity of their mission work? In his letter dated April 1862 addressed to the mission superior, Jose Ignacio Guerrico highlighted twice the necessity of putting one's full confidence in Divine Providence. He says it is his deliberate decision "to leave everything to Divine Providence and the decision of my superiors whom the Lord will guide where he thinks fit" and that he hopes that "the Lord would give the fruit when and as He has decided according to the designs of His Divine Providence" (Arcilla 2000, 1, 7-8).

The Society's work in the seminary also requires much trust in Divine Providence. First of all, formation work does not yield immediate results. The fruits of one's efforts at teaching and forming seminarians may be reaped only a few years after their stay in the seminary. Only when they become parish priests, or chancellors, or economes can it be determined whether or not Vianney has produced good fruits for the local churches in Mindanao and Bohol. Nonetheless, as we have mentioned above, Vianney has already provided 410 priests for many of the Mindanao dioceses and Bohol as of 2014. In 2010, Vianney rejoiced in the election of its first ever alumnus-bishop, Jose Cabantan, from the archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro who was

named bishop of Malaybalay. Very recently, too, on 30 October 2014, Severo Caermare, the second Vianney alumnus to be appointed bishop, was ordained and installed as the fourth bishop of the See of Dipolog in Zamboanga del Norte. Many more of Vianney alumni serve in crucial posts in their respective dioceses as episcopal vicars, vicars generals, consultors, college seminary rectors, vocation directors, among others.

Furthermore, the seminary subsists mainly on donations coming from generous benefactors from various parts of Mindanao. It is still in the process of building an endowment fund to ensure the continuity of its mission of forming future priests for Mindanao and Bohol. It is always a confirmation of God's unsurpassable generosity and providential parenthood that the seminary is able to survive within its limited budget. To achieve the goal of financial stability, the seminary has strengthened its finance committee by inviting competent lay people to become committee members so that they could contribute their ideas and suggestions. More recently, the seminary has launched its major fund-raising scheme called *Vianney 300*. Its aim is to raise around 300 million by 2030 in order to ascertain the seminary's full financial stability and viability. A full 30 percent of the amount collected each year will be shared to the current endowment fund of the seminary which is no more than 30 million pesos. The number 300 is chosen since it is the estimated number of alumni which Vianney already graduated. Each person enrolled as a Vianney 300 friend will, in turn, invite three friends until at least 300 friends are recruited each year. The aim is to enlist 300,000 friends by the year 2030. These 300,000 friends, which include alumni, families of seminarians, benefactors and friends of Vianney, will all work together to achieve the goal of 300 million pesos by 2030. This dream, of course, is founded mainly on the seminary community's profound trust in Divine Providence that God will look after the needs of this seminary and ensure that it will continue to serve the purpose for which it was founded.

Given that trust in Divine Providence is an attitude of the heart, Vianney seminary gives priority to spiritual formation as a key component or pillar in its formation program. Through the various elements of the spiritual formation like recollections and retreats, seminarians are given opportunities to grow in their personal relationship with God. They are given ample time for

personal prayer and reflection. The celebration of the mass is the center of the seminarian's daily routine. They have an overnight recollection once a month. They can receive the sacrament of reconciliation or go to confession during the recollection. They are given a spiritual director whom they should meet at least one a month. During their Galilee Year, they undergo the full SpEx of St. Ignatius of Loyola for a month. Each year, they make a shorter annual retreat of five days. All these aim at building a solid relationship with God which lies at the heart of one's faith in Divine Providence.

Vianney Seminary Beyond the Bicentenary

Arcilla notes that when the Jesuits arrived in Northern Mindanao in 1926, particularly in the Cagayan de Oro area, they met not fierce Manobo or Bagobo warriors, but Catholics who have gone to American public schools where they learned to distance themselves from the Catholic church. According to Horacio dela Costa, these were students who were "dulled by Masonry or Aglipayanism; men less straightforward, more subtle and more dangerous" (Arcilla 2013, 69). Today, the situation may be different but the questions are the same: How to preach effectively the Good News to the peoples of Mindanao in all their diversity and commonalities? For Vianney, the challenge is to form future priests who could shepherd God's people with the same spirit that inspired the early Jesuit missionaries of Mindanao: Fraternal companionship, sense of universal mission, and trust in Divine Providence.

Vianney humbly takes pride in seeing many of its alumni continuing the mission of the Jesuits in Mindanao, started in 1596, interrupted in 1768, resumed in 1859, and continues until today. In this seminary, their dreams for their dioceses were born and nurtured, their minds sharpened through the lectures of American, Italian, and German professors in years past, and now, through the equally gifted alumni who teach theology and attend to the formation of the seminarians. Many Vianney alumni sit in the consultors' board of their respective dioceses, putting to good use the discernment skills learned in Vianney, influencing the bishop's decisions, sometimes challenging him, but in the end, humbly submitting to him in holy obedience. In Vianney,

seminarians learn the art of effortlessly combining intensity in sports with passionate and compassionate concern for the local church. Less than ten years from now, the leadership of Vianney will pass over to a non-Jesuit rector who will probably come from the long list of its alumni. It will not be a diminishment of the Society's mission in Mindanao. In fact, it will be the fulfillment of its mission in this island: That it has raised one of its sons to be the leader of his brothers who are laboring in the vineyard of the Lord in Mindanao.

On this year of the restoration of the Society, the Jesuits remember their past, so that they can understand the present, and prepare for the future. As Nicolas, the Jesuit superior general, says: "All the crises of history enclose a hidden wisdom that needs to be fathomed... It is, therefore, important that we should learn from the events themselves, in order to revive those great desires that Pope Francis spoke of and to continue the work of Evangelisation, refining our brotherhood and deepening our love." *In omnibus amare et servire Domino, ad maiorem dei gloriam.*

Notes

- ¹ For a detailed account of the complex events leading to the suppression, and later on, the restoration of the Society of Jesus, see Giulio Cesare Cordara, SJ, *On the suppression of the Society of Jesus: A contemporary account*, trans. and annotated by John P. Murphy, SJ (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1999); Martin Harney, SJ, *The Jesuits in history: The Society of Jesus through four centuries* (New York: The America Press, 1941), 292-364. See also (Jonathan Wright, 'The Suppression and Restoration,' in Thomas Worcester, ed., *The Cambridge companion to the Jesuits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 263-277.
- ² Since its inception in 1985, seminarians from Bohol, too, have been attending Vianney seminary. It is located in Barangay Camaman-an, Cagayan de Oro City.
- ³ With the coming of the Recollects in Mindanao, 'an imaginary demarcation line was drawn from Punta Siuaga in the northern coast to Cape San Agustin in the southeast. The territory to the west of that line was assigned to the ministry of the Jesuits; the area to the east, to the Recoletos. The Recoletto missions, were therefore on the Pacific and the northeastern coast of the island of Mindanao... It included territories that today belong to the provinces of Agusan and Surigao and parts of Davao and Misamis Oriental.' See Miguel Bernad, SJ, *The Christianization of the Philippines: Problems and perspectives* (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1972), 239.
- ⁴ According to Pedro Herce, a Recoletto writer, the administration of the Mindanao mission was transferred from the Recollects to the Jesuits through a royal decree dated 1855 and which deeply hurt the Recollects. 'After many intricate procedures and appeals, they were allowed to retain only seven towns. As a reparation and although much against their will, the Recollects

were given the administration of the parishes around Manila. The Recollects had received from the Jesuits 8,330 souls. They gave back to the Jesuits through this transfer not only what had already been conquered, but whatever progress had been achieved: the conversion of 125,861 souls'. See Pedro Herce, ORSA, 'The Recollects in the Philippines,' *Boletín Ecclesiástico de Filipinas*, vol. 39, no. 435 (January-February 1965): 220-253, on pp. 228-232.

- ⁵ Details of these missionary efforts may be read in the six-volume *Jesuit letters from Mindanao* edited by Jose Arcilla, SJ, vol. 1, The Rio Grande Mission; vol. 2, The Zamboanga-Basilan-Jolo Mission; vol. 3, The Davao Mission; vol. 4, The Dapitan-Balingasag Mission; vol. 5, The Surigao Mission; vol. 6, The Caraga Mission. See also de la Costa, *Cavalry*, 116-128,
- ⁶ Accessed from <http://jbecph.wordpress.com/2012/09/27/mindanao-as-jesuit-frontier-lessons-from-history-keynote-address-1/>.
- ⁷ The ecclesiastical province of Cagayan de Oro City consists of the archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro and the dioceses of Malaybalay, Butuan, Surigao, and Tandag.
- ⁸ See the article, 'The Birthing of Vianney,' *TULAY ng Vianney*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2005): 2-3.
- ⁹ Accessed from <http://goodjesuitbadjesuit.blogspot.com/2010/01/when-volley-rang-out-he-fell-into-grave.html>.

References

- Arcilla, Jose S., SJ. 2013. *Jesuits in Mindanao: The mission*. Quezon City: Media Wise Publication.
- Arcilla, Jose S., SJ. (ed. and trans.). 2000. *Jesuit missionary letters from Mindanao: The Rio Grande mission* vol.1. Quezon City: University of the Philippine Press.
- Bernad, Miguel A., SJ. 2002. The Tamontaca experiment in Southern Mindanao: 1861-1899. *Budhi* 5 no. 36.1.
- Dela Costa, Horacio, SJ. 2002. The Jesuits in the Philippines. In *Horacio de la Costa, SJ. selected studies in Philippine colonial history* vol. 3. Manila: Kadena Press.
- Dela Costa, Horacio, SJ. 1997. *Light cavalry*. Manila: National Office of Mass Media.
- Divarkar, Parmananda, SJ. (ed.). 1996. *The constitutions of the Society of Jesus*. Gujarat: Sahitya Prakash.
- Fernandez, Pablo, OP. 1979. *History of the church in the Philippines (1521-1898)*. Manila: National Book Store.
- Fromm, Joseph. 2010. When the volley rang out, he fell into the grave he himself was earlier made to dig. Accessed 8 August 2014, from <http://goodjesuitbadjesuit.blogspot.com/2010/01/when-volley-rang-out-he-fell-into-grave.html>.
- Ganss, George, SJ. (trans.). 1992. *The spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius*. Gujarat: Sahitya Prakash.
- Jesuit Basic Education Commission. Mindanao as Jesuit frontier: Lessons from history (Keynote Address #1). Accessed 27 October 2012, from <http://jbecph.wordpress.com/2012/09/27/mindanao-as-jesuit-frontier-lessons-from-history-keynote-address-1/>.
- Schumacher, John N. 1987. *Readings in the Philippine church history*. Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology.
- Tylenda, Joseph, SJ. 2001. *A pilgrim's journey: The autobiography of St. Ignatius*, revised edition. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.