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Beginnings of the Filipino Dominicans, by de la Rosa

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rendered in vivid images and sharp impressions. Even the Americanization of Manila is most fully recounted, but always in terms of the situations the characters have found themselves in. The novel leaves the impression of a text concerned with freezing for posterity these sights and sounds that characterize a specific period in history.

Moreover, the novel is deemed crucial in the further development of realism as a mode of representation. Roman Reyes' superb eye for details of language and gesture is clearly manifested in this novel where the everyday activities of a whole community constitute an engrossing series of related vignettes. Like the *costumbrista* writers, Reyes trained his sights on the particular and unique qualities of the community that serves as the stage for the unfolding of his drama. In *Pusong Walang Pag-ibig* Roman Reyes can lay claim to being one of the foremost realists of his generation.

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Beginnings of the Filipino Dominicans. By Fr. Rolando V. de la Rosa O.P. Manila: Dominican Province of the Philippines, 1991. 289 pages.

Fr. Rolando V. de la Rosa O.P. is a writer, philosopher and historian with a degree in Theology from the Katholieke University of Leuven in Belgium. He is at present Rector Magnificus of the University of Santo Tomas in Manila.

Understandably, writing and publishing a dissertation on the history of the Filipinization of the religious orders, specifically the Dominican order, is a ticklish task. The problem is to "resolve the reason behind the late emergence of the native Dominicans in the Philippines," exploring and probing, digging through massive data from archival and non-archival sources, even those he barely had access to and considered well-guarded secrets of the order, finally providing a systematic historical study of the origin, as well as the development of the Filipino Dominican Order, from the Spanish period up to the eventual establishment of the Dominican Province of the Philippines.

The objective ultimately was to view this issue of the late beginning and retarded growth of native secular clergy and religious in the Spanish colonies with proper understanding and incisive interpretation, to provide fresher insights into a problem that had "mystified missiologists for a long time," quoting the author, and, most importantly, to facilitate a bonding among all Dominicans in the Philippines, working as they all are towards the same goal and cause.

After the amply documented findings on the virtual absence of native Dominicans in the history of the Church in the Philippines from the sixteenth century until the first four decades of the twentieth century, Fr. de la Rosa traces the history of the formative years of the first Dominicans until the establishment of the Philippine Dominican Province, after a brief incursion into the rise of nationalism and the birth of the *indio* as Filipino.

Essential to an initial awareness of the problem is a look into this too-much-too-soon-too-little-too-long pattern (the author's own coining) regarding the native recruitment way back as practised in Latin America. The early overbearing enthusiasm to enlist native children as auxiliaries for evangelization (subtly a self-serving act) led one way or the other to the conclusion about their alleged incapacities and ineptitudes which inevitably resulted in a turn-about policy of purge, this time an exaggerated demeaning of the natives' capacities. This native bias was to foul Philippine air through the centuries for a long, long time.

A provocative and relatively new element introduced into the problem by Fr. de la Rosa is the idea of the *limpieza de Sangre*-factor which he considers the main culprit, certainly one of the causes of the late beginning and retarded growth of the native clergy, and which is related to the so-called Mexican Experience. Previous literature hardly mentioned this connection between the prohibitive legislations implemented in Latin America and the *limpieza* statutes.

The *limpieza* statutes already rampant in Spain before American colonization led to rigid legislation against the admission of *indios* to the religious habit or to Holy Orders in Latin America. This in turn, the author concludes, caused in the long run this prejudice against the natives as evinced in the cultural norms and values brought by the missionaries to our own country. (*Limpieza* soon meant not only "purity" in blood but also immunity from servile office or trade).

The gradual evolution (a painstaking process) of the Filipino Dominicans into a self-governing body was really the result of an uphill struggle, changed conditions in the country, pressures from the Holy See, and the mushrooming of nationalistic movements all over the country. The time was ripe. Filipinos began to be admitted to the order in 1936. And finally, on 8 December 1971, the first native Filipino Dominican Province of the Philippines was established, the first appointed Provincial being Fr. Rogelio Alarcon, and the first Filipino Rector of UST being Msgr. Leonardo Legaspi. Needless to say, the birthing process of this Province had its fair share of labor pains, preceded as it was by tumultuous meetings, caucuses, letters, heated arguments, and mutual distrust. "The relation between the Spanish and Filipino Dominicans was strained by mutual accusations of stone-walling," writes the author. Despite this honest, straight-forward statement, the reader still somehow feels that in other more delicate issues, Fr. de la Rosa,

occupying the position he does, now and then does some sly pussyfooting, and skims along safe surfaces.

Nonetheless, the book takes a brave stance, for having been written at all, and is certainly a major contribution to a better understanding of the Filipino Dominicans, the Dommies-come-lately, the order presently enjoying its youth (a gift, indeed), a plus factor in the struggle towards greater heights. After all, quoting Fr. Honorato Castigador, O.P., Prior Provincial of the Dominican Province of the Philippines: "We've only just begun."

The method used is historical hermeneutics, the author not only trying to understand but also to interpret events by properly situating them in their historico-cultural context, and viewing them from his own space-time position, a "fusion of horizons," so to speak.

Fr. de la Rosa interprets historical events from the past and analyzes from a vantage point and distance something which he is now part of, viewing and recreating on hindsight as contemporary historian. His writing is inevitably "colored" but is never a distortion or manipulation of facts, even as its framework is contoured by certain prejudgments and foremeanings (nothing wrong with this, says Gadamer) which constitute the historical reality of his research and determine the nature of the spadework his fore-understandings demanded of him as scholar and researcher. His conclusion is that the problem comes down to racism or racial apartheid, even if nowhere in the book do these terms appear.

This book is one that had to be written, to "blast myths" and some old wives' tales about some aspects of Philippine history in general. The Dominican Presence, this one Dominican claims, was not all "martyrologies and eulogies." Some history books are written as pure straight records of the past. This one, as breakthrough, rewrites history, which should always be the task of the contemporary historian—viewing events in a new light.

As theologian, Fr. de la Rosa is a seeker after truth; as historian, he recreates events with understanding, to better understand, since "to understand is to forgive," a historical dictum, quoting Dr. Emerita Quito. Fr. Rolando de la Rosa writes with a lucid, well-directed, even-keeled pen, the presentation of subject coherent and scholarly. This reader applauds, and awaits Fr. Rolando's next book. The historian after all cannot just say—there, I've had my say—the rest is history. Certainly, the rest is history still unfolding. A good historian's job is never quite done.

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