

OUR LADY OF THE MOST HOLY ROSARY

This world-famous statue of Our Blessed Mother and the Infant Jesus is one of the rarest treasures of the Philippine Islands. Carved by pagan Chinese under the supervision of Captain Hernando de los Rios, the renowned image was presented to the Dominican Fathers in 1595 by Luis Perez Das Marinas, Governor of Manila. The masterpiece, more than seven feet in height, represents Our Lady tenderly bearing the Child Jesus in her left arm. The face and hands of both Mother and Son are of delicately carved, solid ivory. A third figure, Saint Dominic, completes the group. He is seen kneeling at the foot of the statue, receiving the Rosary from the Queen and King of heaven and earth.

Enshrined within the "Iglesia de Santo Domingo," Manila's proto-church, the image has been exposed to the same dangers that on many occasions have completely destroyed the great Dominican edifices. Fire (1645), earthquake (1863), and Japanese bombs (December, 1941), each took turns beating down those venerable structures, but the image has never been damaged, even in the slightest degree. This is one of the reasons why Filipinos attribute miraculous powers to it. For nearly three and one half centuries they have placed themselves under the protection of Mary, Queen of the Rosary. And today, more than ever before, they have turned to her image in the charred ruins of Santo Domingo for guidance during their present trials and for a comforting sign of peace for the future.

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SANTO TOMAS DE MANILA

The First University of the Philippines

QUENTIN McSWEENEY, O.P.



O THE Dominican Order, and to its Spanish Friars in particular, belongs the unique honor of founding both the first university in America and the first similar institute of the Orient. As early as 1538, just two years short of a full century before Harvard began to function, the Dominican Fathers had erected a school of higher studies in what is now known as the Dominican Republic.¹ This institute, just as that in the Philippines, took the name 'Santo Tomás' in honor of the Doctor of Europe's medieval universities, who is our "Patron of Catholic Schools."

Pope Paul III gave the Friars express permission to build and conduct the first university on the Isle of Hispaniola. His Brief "In Apostolatus" ceded to this establishment rights and privileges similar to those enjoyed by the University of Alcalá.²

To show that the Brief was promulgated and the University's claims were fully recognized, one citation from the Jesuit historian Hernaez will suffice: "This University has the special merit of being the first that was erected in America."³ Thus even before the famed University of Mexico had opened its doors, the University on the Isle of Santo Domingo was already rounding out its "teens."

Within the span of the same century the Dominicans in the Philippines were also busy in the field of education. A group of some twenty Spanish Friars left their native land in 1579 to aid in the evangelization of the pagans scattered through the Archipelago's more than 7,000 islands. Father Dominic Salazar, founder of the

¹ The present Dominican Republic, lying to the southeast of Florida, was formerly known as the Isle of Santo Domingo and, also, as the Isla Hispaniola.

² Brief of Pope Paul III "In Apostolatus," given on the 28th of October, 1538: "Paulus Episcopus Servus Servorum Dei . . . secundum morem Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum, ac Prioris et Fratrum Domus Sancti Dominici, Civitatis etiam Sancti Dominici . . . in qua Studium Apostolicum auctoritate noviter erectum viget Generale . . . in eadem Civitate unam similem Universitatem Doctorum, Magistrorum, et Scholarium ad instar dictae Universitatis de Alcalá . . . tenore praesentium, erigimus et instituiamus . . ."

³ Hernaez, P. Francisco X., S.J. *Colección de Bulas, Breves y Otros Documentos Relativos a la Iglesia de América y Filipinas*, vol. ii, p. 439. Brussels, 1879. Cited in "Unitas," University of Manila, P. I., Feb., 1941, p. 539.

Philippine Province of the Most Holy Rosary, was in charge of the band of missionaries.

After a two year voyage, during which most of the Friars died, Fathers Salazar and Salvatierra were the only ones fortunate enough to reach Manila. Handicapped by the loss of their companions, these two men, nevertheless, set to work immediately and did whatever they could to assist in the conversion of the islanders.

At this point, it will be well to give some explanation relative to the birth and infant days of education in the Spanish colonies of the sixteenth century. Such a digression will not wander from the theme of the article. Rather it will afford a better background to the history of Santo Tomás, for its history perfectly parallels that of Philippine education. First of all, teaching was intimately associated with the spread of the Gospel. The natives had to be educated to Christianity before they could be expected to have a love for it. Necessarily, a common mode of expression was the first requirement. If the Spanish religious wished to be understood, they had a choice of two alternatives: teach their own tongue to the natives, or learn the myriad dialects of the tribes. Usually a compromise ended the difficulty. The missionaries learned some of the natives' languages and the latter picked up a smattering of Spanish.

To see that the early missionaries did an excellent job of gradually implanting their own language, one need only consider Mexico and South America where Spanish, centuries later, is still the chief means of communication. The Fathers in the Philippines, however, leaned more to the other alternative. They learned many of the varied dialects and did not press the use of Spanish to any great degree. Herein lies the cause of the present-day existence and popular use of the many distinct dialects found in Luzon, Mindanao, and the other inhabited islands of the Commonwealth.

The first schools in the Philippines started out the hard way. There were no huge grants for lecture halls, libraries, laboratories, or gymnasias. Students were few. Classes during this pioneering era were confined to the Spanish equivalent of our three "R's." As was usually the case, these schools were a part of the convents in which they were founded. The first days of Santo Tomás de Manila followed this pattern. Its initial lectures were delivered within the walls of the Convento de Santo Domingo, adjoining the famous church of the same name.

That education in the Philippines began with the advent of the Religious Orders, should be stressed. As Frederic H. Sawyer writes: "The Religious Orders were hardy and adventurous pioneers of

Christianity, and in the evangelization of the Philippines, by persuasion and teaching, they did more for Christianity and civilization than any other missionaries of modern times."⁴ The first to arrive on the educational scene were the Augustinians, who accompanied Legaspi in 1565. Some of their number founded the first school in the islands, which was known as the 'Escuela del Santo Nombre de Cebú.' The next arrivals were the Franciscan Fathers. Their settlement is officially listed as 1577, but the probability exists that they were working in the islands prior to that date. These two Orders were joined by the Dominicans in 1581. Six years later, more Friars Preachers came from Spain and Mexico. Their arrival was celebrated "with the first solemn academic act . . . in the Philippines."⁵ The Jesuits and the Recollects were the fifth and sixth teaching communities, respectively, to settle in the tropical islands.

When the numbers of the Dominicans were increased in 1587 on the arrival of the Friars from Spain and Mexico, the infant University was able to operate on a comparatively large scale. Additional courses were introduced and the student enrollment steadily grew.

Among the several reasons underlying the initial successes of the foundation, the principal one is to be found in the excellent qualities of the first professors. These were holy, learned and zealous men. The University, under their wise guidance, soon assumed and, to this day, has never relinquished the leading role in the Islands' world of education. A mere glance at the imposing list of the original faculty is sufficient to resolve all doubts in the matter. Arranged in the order of their arrival at Manila, some of the first members of the teaching staff were:

- 1581—The illustrious Domingo de Salazar, first Bishop of the Philippines; Doctor of Sacred Theology; one time Professor at Salamanca; the "Las Casas de Filipinas."
- 1581—Cristobal de Salvatierra, first Ecclesiastical Governor of the Islands' churches.
- 1587—MIGUEL DE BENAVIDES, FOUNDER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS; Bishop of Nueva Segovia; Archbishop of Manila; one time Professor of Philosophy and Theology at Valladolid; founder of San Gabriel Hospital.

⁴ Sawyer, F. H. *The Inhabitants of the Philippines*. Scribner's Sons, N. Y., 1900, p. 75.

⁵ Aduarte, Diego. *Historia de Provincia del Santissimo Rosario* ch. x, Manila, 1640. Cited in *Unitas*, Oct., 1940, p. 159.

- 1595—Diego Aduarte, Bishop of Nueva Segovia; Preacher General; first historian of the Province in the Philippines.
- 1598—Blessed Francisco de Morales, one time professor of philosophy in Spain; he suffered martyrdom at the hands of the Japanese in 1622.

Men such as these set the professorial standards of Santo Tomás. Their successors have been men of the same calibre. Is it any wonder that this University has been the educational leader of the Islands?

Santo Tomás, having outgrown its infancy, was solemnly dedicated on the 28th day of April, 1598. Instead of the name it bears today, the original title was the "Colegio-seminario de Neustra Señora del Rosario." This was later changed to "Colegio de Santo Tomás" and, finally, to the "Universidad de Santo Tomás."

Bishop Salazar, due to the burdens he had accepted along with the miter, was no longer able to devote so much of his time to the institute of his brethren. However, he still remained a strong guiding force in education. He worked untiringly for the promotion of more and better schools, whether they were primary, secondary, or devoted to higher studies. In this regard he aided the Jesuits in establishing some of their first educational programs in the Philippines. Meanwhile, Father Miguel de Benavides assumed control of the destinies of Santo Tomás. His is the singular honor of being the founder of the University, for, though Santo Tomás as an institution originated in 1587, it was not until 1611 that its formal and official establishment as a university took place.

From the year 1611 to the present, the history of Santo Tomás may be conveniently divided into three epochs: ancient, modern, and contemporary. The first of these begins with the rectorship of Father Domingo Gonzalez in 1612 and extends to 1865; the second, from the latter date to the period of American domination; and the third, from 1900 to 1942.

Though Santo Tomás was founded prior to the first epoch under consideration, it was not until 1617 that full civil and ecclesiastical recognition was enjoyed. In that year, King Philip III, aware of the worth and influence of the University, petitioned Pope Paul V to confer on Santo Tomás the right of granting superior degrees. Two years went by before His Holiness issued the Brief, dated March 11, 1619, which conceded the requested powers.⁶ Strictly speaking, this

⁶ Brief of Pope Paul V, "*Ad futuram rei memoriam*": "Charissimi . . . Ut gradibus Bachalaureatus, Licentiatuæ et Doctoratus insignire valeant, . . . qui in Universitatibus Generalibus fieri consueverunt pro his gradibus adipiscendis . . . tenore præsentium, concedimus et indulgemus . . ."

document officially raised the "College" of Santo Tomás into the "University" class. But because the procedure of establishing schools of higher studies was slower in those days than in our own, the privileges cited in the Brief were to expire after a ten-year period of trial. A university of the 17th century had to maintain high standards to remain in the privileged class. In the same year, 1619, the Dominican University was approved by the Governor of the Islands in the name of the Spanish King. Four years later, Philip affixed the royal seal to documents favoring Santo Tomás, thereby confirming the reports of the Governor of the Archipelago.

Previously, King Philip II had shown an interest in the University. His immediate successors had bestowed more and more favors upon it, but not until the Royal cedula arrived in 1639, was Santo Tomás designated a "Perpetual University." This recognition, however, was only in the eyes of the Crown. Due to the union of the Church and State in Spain, a dual confirmation had to be obtained. For this reason, the King petitioned a Papal sanction of the privileges he had already extended to Santo Tomás. The Supreme Pontiff, Innocent X, in compliance with the royal request, expedited the Bull "Insuperamenti" of November 25, 1645, whereby Santo Tomás of Manila attained full status as a university "in perpetuum."

The standards of teaching followed at Santo Tomás have always compared favorably with those of any leading university throughout the world. The seven Chairs, or Departments, at the institute were patterned after the systems found in the best European halls of learning. These embraced the studies of Latin, Philosophy, the Summa Theologica, and Art. The Latin classes included Rhetoric, Christian Doctrine, and Poetry. If the student satisfactorily passed these, he was admitted to the Philosophy Department where he would be taught Logic, Physics, and Metaphysics. In the Logic course, Arithmetic, Algebra, and Geometry were stressed; in the Physics classes, Mechanics, Cosmogony, Astronomy, Geography, and Optics were the subjects; and finally, Ontology, Cosmology, Natural Theology, and Ethics rounded out the students' Metaphysical discipline. The study of Theology was the most comprehensive of all the higher studies. A complete course in Saint Thomas' Summa Theologica was given back in the "convento" days of the University. It continued as a special favorite.

Examinations were given at regular intervals during the school year. Special examinations were given orally before a board of three professors "armed with beans." The beans were not used as bullets to hurl at the recalcitrant student but as ballots to determine whether

or not the examinee had passed. There are still, in the Museum of Santo Tomás, some of these beans used in centuries past to determine the results of examinations. Another feature of the examinations was an hour-glass. At the beginning of the questioning, one of the instructors would tip the glass so that the sand could fall from the full into the empty section. Occasionally, the student looked at the timepiece to see how much longer he had. If he was lost for answers, he would cast repeated, anxious glances at the glass in the feverish hope that the sand would soon run out. To help the poor fellow, at least psychologically, one of the professors would shake the hour-glass. Perhaps, the student thought his time was being shortened, but in reality, time being inexorable, no amount of shaking could make the grains fall faster.

On completion of various phases of departmental studies, the student became eligible for those degrees within the power of the University to grant. Principal among these were the "Bachelor of Arts," the "Licentiate," the "Master," and the "Doctorate." Deeply symbolic and majestic ceremonies accompanied the reception of degrees during the ancient period of which we are speaking. This was possible at the time due to the relatively small numbers who presented themselves for the honors. All such occasions attracted huge crowds of civil and ecclesiastical dignitaries, along with students and others of lower rank. The degrees were given at the Church of Santo Domingo, and, usually, either a bishop or an archbishop presided over the elaborate ceremonies.

The student, in presenting himself for the coveted degree, was given a kiss on the cheek by the presiding ecclesiastical dignitary. This act was the sign of the bond of fraternity, friendship, and union between the graduating student and the University. Next, a gold ring was given the young man. This signified his being wed to Wisdom, that most loving spouse. Then a book was presented: "Accept this book of wisdom manifesting your power to teach publicly." Secular students received also a sword to overcome Wisdom's enemies; those taking degrees in medicine, a sword to fight disease. Other symbolic tokens, accompanied by appropriate formulae, were also included in the lengthy and impressive graduation rites.⁷

Santo Tomás' growth in size, influence, and prestige during this period brought about many changes affecting both the University and those with whom it came into contact. The great influx of foreign and native students necessitated the erection of new buildings. New buildings meant the possibility of additional faculties and depart-

⁷ Cf. *Unitas*, vol. xx No. 1, pp. 37, 38, 39.

ments. Because "nothing succeeds like success," honors, rights, privileges, buildings, faculties, and schools grew apace. Thus by 1682, Santo Tomás was already empowered to erect chairs of Law and Medicine. In 1785, Charles IV, to augment the honors already bestowed on the Dominicans, solemnly declared Santo Tomás a *REAL* or ROYAL UNIVERSITY.

One more point must be touched before passing to a consideration of the University's second epoch. The thought of 'a great university' naturally suggests a staff of learned teachers. Santo Tomás fulfilled this requirement to an eminent degree. But above and beyond the mere scholastic phase, it is able to point to a succession of professors whose sanctity has immeasurably enriched its venerable name. To enumerate all the saintly Friars in this brief article is an impossibility. Here we can list only a few who have been singled out by Holy Mother Church. Aside from their other merits, the following also had the special privilege of earning the martyr's crown: Blessed Lucas del Espíritu Santo, killed by Japanese in 1633; Blessed Jacinto Esquivel, author of famous Spanish-Japanese dictionary, martyred in 1633;

Blessed Antonio Gonzalez, one time rector of the University, died in 1637;

Blessed Guillerme Cortet, killed by Japanese in 1637;

Blessed Mateo Liciniana, martyred at Tung-kin in 1745;

Blessed Domingo Henares, killed in 1838.

The spirit of Santo Tomás was truly and beautifully reflected in the lives and heroic deaths of its many martyrs.

(To be concluded in the Summer issue.)