Chapter Thirteen

Dark Hours of the Night
(1941-1945)

The Tragedy of War Overtakes the Vincentians

On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1941, ominous news reached our shores: Japan had treacherously attacked Pearl Harbor. War between Japan and America was on. At midnight of that same day, Japanese bombers destroyed American airfields around Manila. Terror and commotion reigned that night. Blackouts, air-raid sirens, antiaircraft fireworks, and bomb explosions rocked the city. The students of San Carlos Seminary in Mandaluyong had to be sent back to their homes the very next day. The Seminary building was occupied by American personnel of the demolished air base, and the Fathers transferred to the Vincentian Central House in Manila. From there they witnessed with dismay the bombing of the historic Walled City of Manila, which General MacArthur had declared an “Open City”, precisely to spare it from wanton destruction.

Besides these and similar other frightening incidents in the following years of the Japanese occupation (1941-1943), life was relatively normal for the Vincentians in Manila and in the provinces except in Cebu. Although classes were interrupted for some weeks during the days of turmoil, these resumed as soon as circumstances allowed. The Vincentians, faithful to their mission, quietly did their work amidst the people, whom they did not abandon in the dark hours of their trial. The Fathers continued their work inside and outside the Seminary. In Mandaluyong, for example, besides their classes in the Seminary, some Fathers took on the heavy work of spiritual ministrations to the poor and neglected inmates of the Psychopathic Hospital, and the orphan children, delinquent youth, and old folks of the Welfareville Government institutions, as well as in the Prison for women. There they established “praesidium” units of the Legion of Mary to bring lay helpers into their apostolic works. They were also involved in the White
Cross mission of attending to children of tubercular patients. On July 21, 1942, the Provincial, Fr. Tejada reviewed the prospects of the Philippine Province in the face of prevailing circumstances. He noted the uncertainties, the sufferings, and insecurities that prevailed in various parts of the Philippines. He spoke about the situation in the Vincentian House in Manila, because he had been there with his Council and several other confreres. He described how the House had become a raid shelter. Many families sought refuge there, as if — he noted — it were a Noah’s ark, admitting under its roof whomever and whatever was running away from danger.

During the occupation years, in the provinces, our confreres in Jaro and Lipa, were a little better off. However, this was not the case in Cebú. Here the Archbishop’s palace, the Sisters’ Colegio de la Immaculada and a great portion of the city were burnt to the ground. Fortunately, the Seminary building was still standing, and so also was the Asilo de la Milagrosa of the Sisters. The Fathers were sent to various places; some were transferred with the seminarians to Dalaguete, a town south of Cebu; others remained in the Seminary, and the rest went to Mandawe or to Bogo.

The Vincentians had some premonitions and fears about what might happen, so the Superiors decided to make some special acts of prayer and penance such as the daily Stations of the Cross, in order to ask for special help from heaven. Father Tejada, the Provincial, foresaw many things, based on reports he received and observations he himself made. Little did he suspect that he himself would be one of the innocent victims of those terrible days.

The Philippine Vincentians almost foundered during World War II. They lost 22 members: 13 Priests and 5 Brothers perished in violent death; 4 confreres died from natural causes during the same period.

It is beyond us to assign the reasons for the unbelievable, cruel assassination of so many Spanish Vincentians by the Japanese soldiers or by the guerrillas. Mercifully, some died quickly, others suffered slow torture and agony. Known details of their deaths serve as fearful historical markers of the Japanese occupation, samples of the excesses of a desperate pagan soldiery that was defeated.

Vincentian Victims of the War

Most of our Vincentian victims met their deaths in Manila during the war of liberation in 1945. Two died violently in the provinces during the Japanese occupation: Fr. Alfonso Saldaña, at the beginning of the Japanese occupation in 1942, in Cebú; and Fr. Aniano Gonzalez, at the end of the Japanese occupation, in 1944, in Baguio.
VINCENTIAN VICTIMS OF THE WAR (1942-1945)
Indicated years of Their birth, vocation, and arrival to Philippines

Fr. José Tejada, C.M.  
(1892; 1907; 1916)

Fr. Alfonso Saldaña, C.M.  
(1884; 1899; 1908)

Fr. José Fernández, C.M.  
(1891; 1907; 1916)

Fr. José Aguirreche, C.M.  
(1891; 1911; 1913)
VINCENTIAN VICTIMS OF THE WAR

Fr. Prisciano González, C.M. and Fr. Aniano González, C.M.  
(1885; 1901; 1913)          (1890; 1906; 1915)

Bro. Antolín Marcos, C.M.       Bro. Valentin Santidrián  
(1880; 1897; 1898)          (1901; 1918; 1920)
On account of the war, the Archbishop of Cebu had ordered the Major Seminary to be transferred to Dalaguete. Fr. Alfonso Saldana, the Seminary Rector since April 1937, with three other Fathers and the seminarians, were accommodated there temporarily.

Not long afterwards, a sad and unfortunate incident between a Spaniard and a Filipino took place. The Filipino died near the Seminary house. In retaliation, on the night of September 17, 1942, Filipino guerrilleros (underground forces waging war against the Japanese) invaded the Seminary. They took the Spanish Priests — the Rector and others — to the mountains. Convinced later of the Vincentians' innocence in the sad affair, the guerrilleros allowed the Fathers to return either to Dalaguete, or to their vacation house in Mantalongon. The Fathers chose the second option, and returned to Mantalongon on September 19. The following day, September 20, two men, with revolvers, demanded that Fr. Saldana go with them. The good Father had surmised from the beginning that they wanted to kill him. Before leaving the house, he made his sacramental reconciliation; he had been preparing for death since the first assault, and during the long marches they had been forced to do. Resigned to God's Will, he followed his executioners. They killed him some 4 km. from Mantalongon, by the end of the road going to Badian. He was shot several times — one shot was aimed at the right temple. According to some references, he died forgiving his murderers. They left his corpse unburied, and stripped of the habit. Some good friends found it later, in a state of decomposition. They buried him on September 25. When the news reached the Fathers they could not even go to bless his grave, since they were confined in the house, and forbidden to leave the place under penalty of death.

Fr. Saldana's grave was on a slope, by the action of the rains, the skull was released and washed away some meters from the grave. In mid-April, 1943, the Fathers and some friends brought it to the chapel of Mantalognon; they placed his remains in a box, and buried it in the sacristy behind the main altar of the chapel.

Fr. Alfonso Saldana, C.M. was born in Tardajos, Burgos, Spain, on January 6, 1884. He studied Humanities in the Apostolic School of his town; and entered the Congregation on September 22, 1899. He was ordained priest on August 9, 1908. He left Spain for the Philippines on November 7 of that year; and arrived in Manila on December 11. He was appointed to Naga Seminary, on December 20, 1908. In 1912 he went to America to learn English. In 1925 he was assigned Rector of the Seminary of St. Francis de Sales, in San Pablo, Laguna, and then in 1931 in Lipa, Batangas. He went to Spain in 1933; was elected Provincial Deputy for the
General Assembly of 1933; and was appointed Rector of Potters Bar, London until 1935. Having returned to the Philippines, he was assigned to the Manila Major Seminary in Mandaluyong. By this time he was chosen member of the Executive Committee for the International Eucharistic Congress in Manila. In April, 1937 he was appointed Rector of Cebu Seminary. He died in Barrio Ablayan, Dalaguete, Cebú on September 20, 1942.

The Second Victim, Fr. Aniano Gonzalez, C.M.²

Fr. Aniano Gonzalez, a veteran Vincentian in the Philippines, had assiduously labored for 25 years in the Seminaries of Calbayog and of San Pablo, Laguna. Finally, his health gave way and he was sent to Baguio in 1940 to recover. At the same time, he was to attend to the Daughters of Charity as their Chaplain in Villa Milagrosa, a rest house for sick sisters. He was joined there by his brother, Fr. Prisciano Gonzalez, C.M. who also went for reasons of health to the Pines City. By 1944, however, Fr. Prisciano was back in the Seminary of Manila.

On September 9, 1944, at 5 o'clock in the morning, the Japanese Military Police came noisily to Villa Milagrosa to seize and arrest Fr. Aniano who had been accused of keeping a hidden short-wave radio in his room. The accuser was an Igorot house-boy of the family of a certain Spaniard, Mr. Vallés. In revenge for having been beaten, the house boy had informed the Japanese that his master, as well as Fr. Aniano and two others, had a clandestine radio. During the search no evidence could be found to support the false accusation. Still, the Japanese tied Fr. Aniano up, and brough him to prison. The Cold Store in Baguio City was used as a prison, and there for 15 days, Fr. Aniano was harassed, and tortured during the long and repeated interrogations. Everyday, in that prison, the good Sister Superior of Villa Milagrosa, Sor Delfina Abaurre, brought Fr. Aniano something to eat; but practically nothing of that food reached his hands. He was given common miserable food like the rest of the prisoners. The poor Father who had been suffering for 20 years of some stomach ailment, was exhausted, and begged to be brought to the Hospital.

With some sense of humanity, the Japanese allowed it. Fr. Aniano stayed in Notre Dame Hospital for 14 days, during which time he prepared for the death which he saw was coming. In the Hospital he made his sacramental confession to the zealous Msgr. Jose Billiet, C.I.C.M., Apostolic Prefect of the Mountain Province, who visited him. After 14 days, he was brought back to prison. The harsh treatments, his own sickness, and lack of nourishment weakened him so much that after some days, he was unable to eat. When they brought
him his miserable diet, the few crumbs fell from his hands to the ground. At times, he begged for God’s sake, to be lifted up towards the little window to breathe some air. His bed was the hard cement floor. At times he asked for water, and there was no one to give it to him. One day he tried to raise himself up, gasping for breath. He felt dizzy and fell, striking his head on the corner of the hard wall. For half an hour, he was in agony, bathed in his trickling blood. Finally he expired. This was on October 21, 1944.

The Sisters were notified at 11 o’clock at night that Fr. Aniano had died, but, insisted the Japanese, “not out of ill treatment.”

With Christian charity, the Belgian Canoness Sisters of St. Augustine arranged to celebrate the funeral of Fr. Aniano in their own chapel. The Vice Consul, with a great crowd of people, specially from the small Spanish colony in Baguio, came to attend the funeral. Many were overheard to have said: “he was a martyr”. There was even a representation from the Japanese Imperial Army who came to express their condolences! Three Daughters of Charity and a Dominican Father accompanied the coffin to the cemetery. Fr. Aniano Gonzalez was buried in the same place where his confrere, Fr. Lope Legido had been previously buried.

Fr. Aniano Gonzalez, C.M. was born in Isar (Burgos) on April 25, 1890. He entered the Noviciate on August 30, 1906. After his priestly Ordination, he came to the Philippines on October 22, 1915. He worked in the Seminary of Calbayog from 1915 to 1921, and in the Seminary of San Pablo, Laguna from 1921 to 1940. In spite of poor health, he continued bravely and always joyfully the hard labors of Seminary life for a quarter of a century.

The Tragedy of the Vincentians of the Manila Seminary

The school year 1944-1945 began as usual in June, 1944, with 43 Major seminarians and around 70 Minors. Fr. Zacarias Subinias was Rector. The Faculty Fathers were Luis Angulo, Gabriel Rodriguez, Prisciano Gonzalez, Crispin Gomez, Prudencio Mayoral, Antonio Gomez, Antonnio Mayoral, Teotimo Pacis, and Jesus Cavanna. There were also the cleric scholastics, Bro. Wenceslao Yonson, and Bro. Francis Bogacz, and the well-loved Mandaluyong Brother-Coadjutor, Rafael Martinez, who had been in the Seminary of San Carlos (Mandaluyong) since 1915.

On August 19, 1944, the Provincial, Fr. Tejada came to bring the official news that the Japanese army was to occupy the Seminary building. On September 12, classes were stopped and the seminarians returned to their homes. Still, Fr. Prisciano Gonzalez was able to
Vincentians During The 20th Century

preach the Annual Retreat to the Major seminarians before they left.

On September 21, 1944 the first American air attack over Manila harbor took place at 9:20 a.m. It was repeated in the same day at 11:30 a.m., at 3:00 p.m. and at 5:00 p.m. The war of liberation was on.

On September 23, Fr. Luis Angulo left the Seminary to reside in Meycawayan Bulacan. The Japanese army began to occupy the Seminary. The Fathers were confined to the East wing of the building. Two days later, the Provincial, Fr. Tejada, expressed his desire that somebody would remain in the Seminary, but allowed each one to look for shelter wherever he might find it. Fr. Pacis and Bro. Yonson left for Malolos, intending to gather some seminarians there and to hold some classes. Fr. Prudencio Mayoral also left for Malolos to act as Chaplain of some Sisters of Charity who had gone there from various Houses in Manila. Fr. Antonio Gomez left for White Cross (Quezon Preventorium) in San Juan del Monte, Fr. Gabriel Rodriguez went to attend to the poor patients of the Psychopathic Hospital and the inmates of the Prison for Women, in Mandaluyong. Fr. Cavanna went to the Welfareville Institution (Children’s Village) to attend to the juvenile delinquents, and children of the Orphanages. He also helped out at the Nurseries for lepers’ children from Culion and at the Home of the Aged and Infirm. The pastoral work of Fr. Gomez, Rodriguez and Cavanna in these Institutions was enormous. Everyday, an average of 7 to 13 patients died of hunger, sickness, and misery in these institutions. The last to leave the Seminary on October 11, 1944 was the Rector, Fr. Subiñas, who went to Hagonoy, Bulacan, with the plan of gathering some seminarians and giving classes there.

In the Mandaluyong Seminary remained only Frs. Prisciano Gonzalez, Crispín Gomez, Antonino Mayoral, and Brother Rafael Martinez. A 4th Year Latin seminarian, a good and promising youth, Gumersindo Novero, had decided to stay with the Fathers.

The air attacks were becoming more frequent and violent by the end of October and during the whole month of November. On December 4 the Japanese Captain Tada ordered the Fathers to give the entire Seminary building to the army. He offered them a small house, apparently good enough for the time being. On Christmas day, the Japanese helped the Fathers transfer their belongings to the small house in San Juan del Monte, not far from the Seminary. On December 31 the Fathers went to inform the Archbishop of Manila, Mons. O’Doherty about their transfer.

On January 2, 1945, the Provincial, Fr. Tejada, came to visit the community of Mandaluyong in their new residence in San Juan.

On February 3 the American army was able to enter the city of Manila. This day marked the beginning of the liberation of the city. It
also marked the beginning of the final catastrophe where hundreds and hundreds of civilians were to perish, trapped between the merciless and reckless bombings and cannonade of the liberators and the gunfire and bayonets of the cruel and desperate retreating enemy. The very next day, February 4, the Japanese army abandoned the Seminary, which was immediately looted and plundered by neighboring folks. More than a thousand people of all ages stripped the Seminary building of everything it had.

On February 7 the bombardment was formidable and put the city of Manila in flames. The following day, February 8, from 7 o’clock in the morning until noon, a duel of gunfire started from a machine-gun of the guerrilleros who were close to the house of the Fathers, and seven Japanese soldiers parapeted some 80 meters in front of the same house. The fight ceased at 12 o’clock. While the Fathers were taking their lunch, eight guerrilleros arrived, bringing along in a little cart their machine-gun, intending to fix it in the house. However, after taking some drinks, and inspecting the house, they changed their minds and left the house without fixing the machine-gun there. Their visit to the house had probably been noticed by the Japanese, or by the so-called Makapilis (Filipino armed bands, collaborating with the Japanese). The revenge was to come soon against the supposed friends of the guerrilleros. The Fathers however never suspected that anyone was to disturb them that night.

At 11:00 p.m., the town of Mandaluyong was aglow with big fires all around. Fr. Crispin woke Fr. Mayoral up to show him the frightening flames. Then, Fr. Mayoral heard firm steps in the street. He saw two men stopping before the exterior gate of the house. With the help of a flash-light they saw the gate and opened it violently. They came under the window from which Fr. Mayoral and Fr. Crispin were looking. One of them said aloud “Hali ka!” (in Tagalog, meaning “come down here”). The poor Fathers, deeply frightened, were unable to utter a word. As the Fathers did not answer, the two men (perhaps they were Japanese or “makapilis” or just brigands) angrily smashed into the ground something that sounded like glassware.

Over and over they called “hali ka, hali ka”. Because of the noise, Fr. Prisciano woke up, and said at once. “There we go!” The three Fathers deliberated for a few moments in the little hall about what to do, and then decided to go down. Brother Martinez and the seminarian Novero were sleeping in the ground floor. While they were going down through the stairs at the back of the house, once more the criminals shouted “hali ka!” Impelled by a terror that seized him. Fr. Mayoral, without a word, instinctively ran in the opposite direction, and out through the garden’s back gate. He ran behind the neighboring houses;
and, crawling amidst the tall grass of the field, sought the nearby brook, until he reached a clearing. While escaping, he distinctly heard, in the midst of the night, four gunshots. He could not tell whether these were aimed at him, or at his confreres. Most probably, the four innocent victims, Fr. Prisciano Gonzalez, Fr. Crispin Gomez, Brother Rafael Martinez, and the Seminarian Gumersindo Novero were killed there and then by the murderers.

Still crawling behind trees and bushes, Fr. Mayoral arrived at the house of a friend, Dr. Genato, where he was attended to and comforted. These friends advised him not return to the house until the next morning. But Fr. Mayoral could not sleep. At 1:30 a.m. he decided to go back to find out what had happened. He could see enormous fires all around. Stealthily he reached the house of Dr. Josefa Estrada which was near the Fathers’ residence. Some 30 frightened persons were gathered around the fire. Quietly, he crawled away towards the direction of the Fathers’ house; forty meters away, he saw the flicker of a cigarette. Were they waiting for him? He advanced 3 meters more, and then he heard and counted 15 gunshots, probably pointed at him. At once, he turned back, and retired to the house of Dr. Josefa Estrada where the 30 persons had been gathered, and were now asleep. Fr. Mayoral could not rest. He said one rosary after another, and stayed nervously awake until 6:30 a.m. The next day, February 9, cautiously, he returned to the Fathers’ house, and found no one there. Everything was in disarray: clothes were scattered in the little hall, and utensils of the Brother were strewn along the stairs. The little house was wrapped in ominous silence.

With immense sorrow, Fr. Antonino Mayoral went to the Holy Cross Sanctuary of the Dominican Fathers, not far away from the place. They received him with great charity, as a real brother. The prior of the convent sent some good and pious persons back to the house occupied by the Vincentians to take whatever could be salvaged from there, and bring these to the Dominican convent. (That house belonged to a certain Dr. Cabrezas, who during the war, had gone to Pagsanjan Laguna with his family. They were glad to know that it had been occupied by our Fathers).

Meanwhile, Fr. Mayoral had developed a malignant fever which lasted for several days. The Dominican Fathers solicitously cared for him in their convent, until he recovered and retired to the White Cross.

The American forces entered the town of Mandaluyong on February 9, bringing to the people salvation and food. But... nothing more was heard about the victims after that grim night. Some said they were tied, killed and their corpses thrown into one of the houses on fire. Others insist that they were thrown alive into the flames. Still others
guess that they were massacred together with 35 other unfortunate
victims in the Psychopathic Hospital of Mandaluyong. Although all
these are just rumors, the first conjecture seems the most probable.

Fr. Prisciano Gonzalez y Moreno, C.M. born on October 12, 1885
in Isar, Burgos. He studied Humanities in the Apostolic School of
Tardajos; and entered the Congregation on September 19, 1901. After
his Ordination, he was sent to Andujar, and then to the Apostolic
School of Los Milagros, Orense. Although he was very fond of the
ministry of preaching and of giving Missions; his true vocation seemed
to be that of Seminary professor. He arrived in the Philippines in 1913,
and from that year until 1932 he taught Philosophy and Church History
in the Seminary of San Carlos, in Mandaluyong and in San Marcelino.
In 1932 he was transferred to the San Carlos Seminary of Cebú. He
taught Dogmatic Theology, Patrology, History of Philosophy, Sacred
Elocution; and in the Minor Seminary, Religion, Latin, Spanish,
World History and Bible History. He studied and graduated from the
Faculty of Philosophy and Letters at the University of Santo Tomas of
Manila. For many years he was Prefect of Discipline. In the Cebú
Seminary he stayed 8 years. He got sick in 1940, and after some time in
San Juan de Dios Hospital, he was sent to Baguio to recover. In 1944 he
was back in Mandaluyong, where he died on February 8, 1945, faithful
until the end to his dear San Carlos Seminary of Mandaluyong. His
brother Fr. Aniano had died also by violence in Baguio 5 months
before.

Fr. Crispín Gomez, C.M., born in Hontauas, Burgos, Spain on
December 4, 1895, and studied Humanities in the Apostolic School of
Tardajos. He entered the Congregation on September 7, 1911, and
came to the Philippines on January 20, 1921. From June 1922 until the
end of his life, he taught in the San Carlos Seminary of Manila, in
Mandaluyong and San Marcelino, except for the years 1937-1939 when
he was sent to the Vincentian Seminary of Perryville in the States, to
get acquainted with English. He had been always fond of languages.
Besides, Latin, Spanish and English, he knew French, Italian, Hebrew,
Greek, and from the Filipino dialects, Pampango. He taught Philo-
sophy, Sociology, Sacred Scripture, Hebrew, History of Philosophy
and History of Literature; and in the Minor Seminary, Religion, Geo-
ography, World History, Greek, Latin, and Spanish. In those days,
Pampanga was part of the Manila Archdiocese. There were many
Pampangos in the Seminary, and Fr. Crispín showed a special prefer-
ence for them. The Pampanga parish priests often invited him for
vacations and asked the help in the pastoral ministry of their parishes.
He was well known and loved by all for the overflowing goodness of his
character. He died also in Mandaluyong, on February 8, 1945.
**Brother-Coadjutor Rafael Martínez**, C.M., was born in Ferrero, León, Spain on October 24, 1876. By the year 1899 he was a soldier in the army’s Department of Health, working in a hospital of Santiago de Galicia. A good Sister of Charity noticed in him good qualities for the Vincentian vocation, and encouraged him to join the Congregation of the Mission. He entered the novitiate around 1900. He stayed in the House of Tardajos, and in that Apostolic School he got acquainted with many of the missionaries who came to the Philippines. He also was sent here, and arrived in Manila on November 21, 1914. On December 8 of that same year, he came to the Seminary of Mandaluyong, and there he remained until the day of his death on February 8, 1945. Everybody loved him for his kind and friendly character. He was simply called, “the Brother”, and for more than thirty years the Mandaluyong Seminary and “the Brother” became so fused with each other, that only death could part them.

The seminarian Gumersindo Novero, from Cavite, was studying 4th year Latin, and was due to enter the Major Seminary. When the fateful hours of the liberation war came, and the seminarians were dispersed, Novero offered to remain to help the Fathers. Faithfully he stayed, assisting Brother Martínez in the material needs of the House. He served as an acolyte to the Fathers in their daily Mass. He was immolated with them on February 8, 1945.

*The Catastrophe of the Vincentian Central House of San Marcelino*

The Community of San Marcelino at the coming of the Japanese was composed of the Provincial, Fr. José Tejada, who had been (residing there since 1932), Fr. Estanislao Arana (since 1920), Fr. Adolfo Soto (since 1939), the Parish priest, Fr. Jose Fernandez (since 1922), his coadjutor, Fr. Jose Aguirreche (since 1922), the Master of novices, Fr. Maximo Juguera (since 1935), Fr. Jerónimo Pampliega (since 1938), and Fr. Elías Gonzáles (since 1937). Fr. Julio Ruiz, of the Seminary of Lipa, joined them at the beginning of the Japanese occupation, in 1942. By 1943, Fr. Luis Ejeda who was rather sickly had come from the Seminary of Jaro. Also in San Marcelino were the Brothers Coadjutor, Antolín Marcos Pardo, (since 1898), Valentín Santidrián (since 1920). In 1943, Bro. Gregorio Induráin came from the Seminary of Naga. To this Community also belonged Fr. Anselmo Andrés although he had been confined in the San Juan de Dios Hospital since 1936. The only ones who were saved from the catastrophe were Fr. Estanislao Arana (who had remained in La Concordia, as Chaplain of the Sisters, since February 3), and Fr. Máximo Juguera (who had left also San Marcelino for St. Anthony’s Orphanage in
Legarda St., with the Franciscan Sisters). The rest of the Community became innocent victims of the cruel war.

From March 3 to December 15, 1942 His Excellency Bishop Taguchi, of Osaka, and chief liaison officer for the mutual intelligence of Philippine Church authorities with the Japanese imperial Army, resided with the Vincentians in the Central House of San Marcelino as guest of honor. In September of the first year of the Japanese Occupation, the San Vicente de Paul church was used for the preparatory feast of the petition to the Vatican for the beautification of the noble and heroic Japanese Catholic, Justo Takayama Ukon. Ukon had been expelled from Nagasaki for his religion, and had died in Manila at the beginning of the 17th century. During this celebration, photos and movie films were taken, some of which showed the beautiful church of San Marcelino. These were used in the Japanese Propaganda in the provinces, and in Japan itself. But during the hours of the final disaster, nothing of these good relations which the Vicentians had with the Japanese were of any help.

Two thirds of the Vincentian Central House of San Marcelino was occupied by the Japanese in June, 1944. This forced the young Jesuit scholastics and Professors who had been accommodated there for one year, to leave the place. The Japanese troops were entirely separated from the Fathers through partition walls. The Japanese kept besides big reserves of food, large deposits of ammunition. Obviously, the Vincentians foresaw the great risks the presence of these ammunitions presented to the people in the house, especially when the liberation of Manila would come. But where could they take better shelter than in the strong edifice of their own residence? So, although the Provincial gave the Fathers permission to seek safer refuge elsewhere, the majority remained, preferring to entrust their fate to Divine Providence, specially Fr. Fernández and Fr. Aguirreche who considered it their duty to stay with their parishioners in San Marcelino.

The American troops entered Manila on February 3, and liberated their countrymen who were concentrated in the University of Santo Tomas. In fury and despair, military orders were issued to the Japanese army, to kill all civilians in Manila, to gather them in houses that were to be put on fire with incendiary bombs. Those who would try to flee would be shot with machine-guns already set up in the streets. In many places in Manila these inhuman orders were fulfilled to the letter. To be fair, however, we should note that among the savage Japanese soldiers were found also some soldiers with noble hearts who, at their own risk, prevented and opposed such barbarous orders in order to save the lives of innocent people.

In San Marcelino, however, the Japanese did not spare children,
or religious men, or even poor Chinese fellow orientals. They had sworn: “The Americans might come in, but you will not see them. . .”

On the evening of February 3, when the bombardment of Manila was beginning, the Vincentians were arrested in their own House, and confined to limited quarters in the ground floor: the Community dining hall, the kitchen, three rooms of the Brothers and the adjacent corridor. They were always under the watchful eyes of a sentinel who had a rifle and a bayonet. With the Fathers and Brothers there were also an old cook, a young, exceptionally bright, 1st year Minor seminarian, named Ramon Santos of the San Carlos Seminary of Mandaluyong, two small boys, acolytes of San Marcelino church, named Eusebio Quintana and N. Magno, and three houseboys. No one was allowed to go out, except one of the small acolytes, just to get some vegetables and food for the community meals from a small farmyard tended by some Chinese folks within the Vincentian grounds. These Chinese had been there already for some time, renting a small lot from the Vincentians, for their garden and poultry.

Thus the Vincentians and their companions were held incommunicado for six days. In the meantime, the shelling was growing in intensity from February 3 to 9th. The Americans, having come from the North, had already reached the South of Manila, crossing the Pasig river through a pontoon bridge at Nagtahan. They were almost at the gates of San Marcelino, having occupied Pandacan and part of La Concordia, in Paco.

The Japanese were maddened with despair. On February 9 the Americans occupied the Paco market. The shelling was formidable. At ten o’clock in the morning, the poor Chinese gardeners, frightened by the rain of falling bombs, sought refuge in our house. Some of them joined the group of the Vincentians, without realizing that the Japanese inside were more cruel than the shells outside. Only 2 Chinese, Tan Chiu and Co Ching, with 6 Filipinos decided to remain in their shelter in the garden.

The night of February 9, the Japanese ordered the Vincentians and the Chinese to take supper early. At around 10 or 11 o’clock the soldiers came. They tied up the Vincentians and the Chinese and took them through the corridor and out through the main door. First the Vincentians were lined up at the bank of a nearby brook Estero de Balete (tributary of the Pasig river). Then they were machine-gunned or bayonetted mercilessly by the soldiers. Their bodies were thrown into the estero. Afterwards, the Chinese group was similarly massacred. One of them, Ching Co, was wounded in the neck, but not mortally. He was thrown in together with the other bodies into the muddy estero. Overcoming great difficulties, he succeeded in crawling away stealthily,
little by little, until he reached the Chinese shelter in the garden. There he found his two companions Tan Chiu and Co Ching still in hiding. After telling them about the whole tragedy, he left the shelter to seek refuge elsewhere. He was never seen again. But the two witnesses who heard the whole story from his lips, lived to narrate it in an interview with our historian, Fr. Manuel Gracia, who met them on March 26 of that same year (1945), in their dwelling place at Legarda St. no. 502, Sampaloc, Manila.

Those massacred were the six Vincentian Fathers, Jose Tejada, Luis Ejeda, Adolfo Soto, Julio Ruiz, José Fernández and José Aguirreche; four Brothers Coadjutor, Antolín Marcos, Gregorio Indurain, Valentín Santtidrián, and Alejandro García; plus the minor seminarian Ramón Santos, and one of the acolytes (Eusebio Quintana? or N. Magno?). Their bodies were found some 20 days later — at the end of February — in a state of advanced decomposition, but still recognizable. The removal of the bodies was a work of combined charity involving Fr. Manuel Gracia., C.M., the American Army Chaplain, Fr. Ferdinand Evans, the good friend, Don Marino Olondriz and his sons, “Tito”, José, and the good Jesuits, Fr. Francisco Araneta, (a Scholastic), and five Juniors, Frs. Catalino Arevalo, Roque Ferriols, Expedito Jimenez, Lucio Codilla and Rodolfo Malasmas. The mortal remains of the ten Vincentians and the young seminarian and the acolytes were taken from the estero, and piously buried in a common grave, blessed by Fr. Manuel Gracia, C.M., in the ground between the San Marcelino building and the Parish church. According to the Chinese eyewitness, before the time of the execution, the three houseboys and one of the acolytes were no longer in San Marcelino. It cannot be ascertained whether these four companions were also killed. The mortal remains were later transferred to the Crypt of San Vicente de Paul Parish Church.

Very Rev. Fr. Jose Tejada, C.M., was born in Covarrubias, Burgos, on March 18, 1892. He studied Humanities in the Apostolic School of Tardajos, and joined the Vincentians on September 15, 1907. Arrived in the Philippines on December 8, 1916, after some time in San Marcelino, he was assigned to the College-Seminary of Bauan; and then to San Carlos Seminary of Manila in Mandaluyong on June 11, 1917, where he was appointed Master of Ceremonies and Procurator. In 1927 he became Rector of the Minor Seminary, just separated from the Major Seminary. In February 1932 he was chosen Visitor of the Philippine Province. At the beginning rather strict in his zeal for religious discipline, he later softened somewhat his ways of governing. He was extremely prudent, cheerful in recreations, and reserved in matters pertaining to the government of the Province; an assiduous
lover of good and solid books, and conscientious and diligent in his studies of ecclesiastical sciences; but above all, a man of prayer and interior life. The Manila Archbishop Most Rev. Michael J. O’Doherty who knew him well as a close collaborator in many affairs of the Archdiocese, wrote this letter to the Superior of the Vincentians, on March 21, 1945.

"Having ascertained the tragic death of Very Rev. Fr. José Tejada, C.M., the worthy Visitor of the Congregation of the Mission in the Philippines, who, together with his confreres, succumbed in the savage hecatomb in one of the days of last February, we wish to take this opportunity to express our sincere condolence for such an irreparable as well as sorrowful loss, not only for the Congregation of the Mission but also for the Archdiocese of Manila. We are stressing in these short lines the inappreciable services which Very Rev. Fr. José Tejada has given to the Archdiocese of Manila on several occasions, but in a very special way in his capacity as President of the Matrimonial Tribunal, Archdiocesan Consultor, and as Secretary of the Administration of the Hospicio de San José.

"His devotion in complying with his duties, and the good judgment with which he has proceeded in his actuations in the said positions, is an honor to the Congregation and for those of us who still are working in the vineyard of the Lord. May God grant him an eternal reward."

Fr. Luis Ejeda, C.M., born in Albarracín, Teruel on August 18, 1881, joined the Vincentians on September 17, 1898. After his ordination he came to the Philippines, arriving here on November 15, 1907. He went to Calbayog, Samar on May 1, 1908, and after one year, he was assigned to the Seminary of Jaro, where he stayed until April 1914 when he returned to Calbayog, and then back again to Jaro. There in Jaro Seminary he worked most of his life, until 1943 when he came to Manila rather sick, as a consequence of something he had to suffer from the Japanese. He died a victim of their wrath and despair in San Marcelino.

Fr. Adolfo Soto, C.M., born in Rebolledo, Burgos, on March 17, 1884, entered the Apostolic School on June 21, 1900. Upon arriving in the Philippines on December 16, 1909, he was assigned to the Seminary of Cebú where he stayed for 8 years until he was transferred in 1917 to the Seminary of Calbayog. Then in 1921 he was sent to the Pre-Seminary Elementary School of Jagna, Bohol, and after one year he returned to the Seminary of Calbayog. He stayed longest in the Seminary of San Pablo, Laguna. There he worked until 1932. Transferred to the San Carlos Major Seminary of Manila, he remained there for a couple of years, and then returned to the Seminary of San Pablo. His last years were spent rather sick in San Marcelino where he was immolated with the other Vincentians.
Fr. Julio Ruiz, C.M., born in Villarodrigo, Palencia, Diocesis of Burgos, on May 22, 1890; entered the Internal Seminary in September 1906, and was ordained Priest in 1915. On October 22 of that same year he came to the Philippines, and was assigned to the Seminary of San Pablo, Laguna; after one year in the house of Bauan, he was destined to the Calbayog Seminary, where he remained until 1925. In May 1925 he was transferred to the Seminary of Naga for 9 years; in 1934 he went to the Seminary of Lipa. In 1942 he came to Manila and worked as Procurator of the Community, and Chaplain of Hospicio de San José. He was killed by the Japanese on February 9, 1945.

Fr. José Fernández, C.M., born in Madrid on October 24, 1891, entered the novitiate of the Congregation on September 6, 1907, after his studies at the Apostolic School of Murguía. His poetical inspiration was shown in some beautiful compositions published, during his scholasticate in Vincentian Magazines. After his priestly Ordination, he was sent to the Philippines and arrived here, together with Fr. Tejada and Fr. Juguera, on December 8, 1916. Immediately he was sent to the San Carlos Seminary of Mandaluyong, where he taught Rhetoric, Philosophy, Canon Law, and Latin. In April 1922 he was appointed Parish Priest of San Vicente de Paul Church in San Marcelino. He was well known and loved in Manila, under the name of “the Parish Priest” (el Párroco), because he fulfilled perfectly this mission which covered the last 23 years of his life. Kind and courteous always, a sincere friend, consooler and counsellor of those who went to him in their needs, his parochial ministry may have deserved for him the unfading crown of glory of the Lord’s good and faithful servants. Exquisite poet and sacred orator, the poems and sermons he prepared won the admiration and enthusiasm of Manila. What a pity that all his writings were destroyed and consumed by the fires the Japanese caused both in the San Marcelino church and convent! Some few poems or articles he published at times may well prove his insuperable literary style. In the first National Eucharistic Congress, the Lyrics for the Official Hymn, “Gloria a Jesús que se encierra . . .” were composed by him, and won the first prize in the Literary Contest for that purpose. One version about his death was published by Fr. Alberto Lopez in “Misiones Dominicanas”, and runs like this: “While Fr. Fernandez was assisting a wounded person, some Japanese officer came over at that moment; Fr. Fernandez told him he was assisting a dying person who asked for Confession. As an answer, the officer fired all the bullets of his pistol into the head of the Father.” The same author, reports about the death of Fr. Tejada: “Fr. Tejada went to the Japanese Colonel to inform him that there were more wounded persons to be brought to the House of San Marcelino. The Japanese officer enraged unsheathed his big
spear, and struck Fr. Tejada cutting his head.” These versions, however, do not seem reliable; the testimony of the Chinese witnesses are more trustworthy, and seemingly confirmed by the finding of their corpses in the “estero” of San Marcelino. Nothing was more lamented among the friends of Vincentians than the loss of these two great figures of the Congregation, Fr. Tejada and Fr. Fernández.

Fr. José Aguirreche, C.M., born in Regil, Guipúzcoa on August 27, 1891, joined the Congregation on August 29, 1911. He arrived to Manila on May 5, 1913, and still as a novice of the Congregation, sent to reinforce the personnel of the Mandaluyong Seminary recently entrusted to the Vincentians. He stayed in Manila; in 1915 he was sent to Bauan, and returned the following year to Manila. In June 1920 he was assigned to the Mandaluyong Seminary, where he taught until June 1922. Then, he was appointed Coadjutor to assist the Parish Priest, Fr. Fernández. Of quiet and serene character he spent plenty of hours in the confessional, in the Parish church and in the Houses of the Sisters. He was a rather silent man of assiduous pastoral work. He learned the Tagalog dialect, and attended most of the poor and lowly parishioners, specially in the barrio of “Tanque”, near La Tabacalera, in Isaac Peral Street (now, United Nations Ave.). Every afternoon he made his usual round of visits to many poor families in that place. The children loved him. He taught catechism, arranged marriages, and rendered other pastoral ministries. He could be seen always with his little box of Holy Oils, for the Sacrament of the sick; and zealously he attended all the sick calls. He became one of the best Confessors of the Major seminarians while they stayed in San Marcelino. A priest of deep spiritual life, he zealously directed towards the paths of Christian perfection many souls who chose him as their spiritual director. He deserved the reward foretold by Daniel: “They who instruct many in justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity” (Dan. 12,3).

Bro. Antolin Marcos Pardo, C.M., born in Pedrosa de Rio Urbel, Burgos, on September 1, 1879, entered the Internal Seminary on May 13, 1896; still a novice, arrived in the Philippines on January 2, 1898. He worked in the San Carlos Seminary, in Intramuros, Manila, until it was closed that same year, on account of the revolution. From that time he remained in the Vincentian Central House until the end of his long and laborious life. Around the year 1914 he made a trip to Spain. His cleverness in business transactions made him a great asset for the community. He was seen equally in the kitchen, in the marketplace, or in the Bank. Swift and agile in his pace, in spite of his age and sickness (he suffered some heart ailment), silent in his trials, and truly pious, the good Brother was distinguished for his charity, and fatherly concern for those around him. Whatever little funds he might dispose
of were given in charity for the Mission lands, and for the Asylum of Looban under the Daughters of Charity, near San Marcelino.

**Bro. Valentín Santidrián, C.M.,** born in Villadiego, Burgos on February 12, 1901, entered the novitiate on July 28, 1917, and arrived in the Philippines on January 8, 1920. From that time his life was silently hidden in the sacristy of the St. Vincent de Paul Church, in San Marcelino. His constant labor was among the acolytes and the boys at the service of the church. Of his fidelity and accomplishment in the fulfillment of these duties, the best testimony is that the Parish Priest Fr. José Fernández, although meticulously fond of order and perfection in the church services, was fully satisfied with the work of Bro. Santidrián, and never thought of looking for another to take his place; and the good Brother remained for 25 years the “Sacristán” of San Marcelino parish church. Besides that work, he took care also of some small poultry in the grounds of the convent. Silently as he lived so also he went to his reward among his dear confreres and acolytes...

**Bro. Gregorio Indurain, C.M.,** born in Ozcoidi, Navarra, in 1870, he joined the Congregation in 1897, and arrived in the Philippines in 1903. He was sent to the Seminary of Jaro, where he remained until May 1908, when he was assigned to Calbáyog. In Manila he spent the year 1917; then in February 1918 he returned to Calbáyog. But the greater part of his life he worked in the Seminary of San Pablo, Laguna. He retired to San Marcelino in 1943 after the Minor Seminary in San Pablo, (since 1926) was transferred to Lipa. The good old Brother helped slowly but surely in the Linen Room, until he perished with his confreres in San Marcelino.

**Bro. Alejandro García, C.M.,** was well known among the Sisters of Charity, in whose little House of Jesus (la “casita de Jesús”) he spent his best years. He came to the Philippines about the year 1932, and was assigned to the San Carlos Major Seminary in San Marcelino; remained in San Marcelino when the Seminary was transferred to Mandaluyong in 1936-1937; but in the 1937 he became again the Brother of the Major Seminary, until 1941 when he was assigned to the Seminary of Naga, where he stayed two years, and then returned to San Marcelino in 1943, and perished with his confreres in 1945, to go to his eternal reward.

**Epilogue of the Catastrophe of San Marcelino**

After the cruel massacre of these innocent victims, the Japanese soldiers in San Marcelino remained in that big building, to fight their last desperate stand against the oncoming American forces. The Central House and the adjacent Church were strongly built; and although these were badly damaged by the constant shelling, They were
not reduced to ruins like many neighboring houses. When the Americans were almost at the gates, the Japanese, in a last fit of madness, set fire to the interior of the church and convent. In the church all the altars, images, benches, and flooring went up in flames. The Crypt, with its niches that kept the mortal remains of many Vincentians, was desecrated, and converted into a kitchen. The rich library of the convent was reduced to ashes, as was the Community oratory.

Although a fierce battle was still going on, the American troops seized the House of San Marcelino on February 24 and drove away the Japanese. Crossing dangerous zones and lines of battle, Fr. Arana and Fr. Juguera went to San Marcelino that day. They could find no trace of their confreres. Fr. Garcia went there again on the 26th, and came back with the same negative results. At the end of February, our scholastic, Bro. Wenceslao Yonson, who had remained with the American soldiers in the House together with a friend, Eduardo Altónaga, learned from an American soldier that the corpses of our victims had been seen in the estero, near the House. Fr. Gracia then began to take steps to remove from the estero those dear remains and bury them in holy ground, on March 6, 1945. May they rest in peace! And may eternal light shine upon them!

Other Victims of the Central House

Fr. Elias Gonzales, C.M.⁵

On February 1 or 2, Fr. Elias Gonzalez, C.M., Chaplain of the Canoness Sisters of St. Augustine (Belgian Sisters) of St. Theresa’s College, advised the good Sisters to transfer with him to Assumption College, which he considered a safer place. The Chaplain of St. Paul College, Fr. Pedro Martinez, C.M., from the Seminary of Naga, also joined them and so did the Religious Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres.

On February 9, at 5 p.m. a riotous crowd of Japanese soldiers, with fixed bayonets, came to frighten the poor Sisters, but did not do them any harm. One hour and a half later, several groups of soldiers came again and, with pointed bayonets, drove away all the Sisters, and all the men, women and children sheltered in the College, totalling some 250 people. They were forced to occupy the ground floor of a house so small that they could hardly sit down, or even move a little.

At this point, it seems that Fr. Elias foresaw his coming end. On February 11 he made a good general Confession to Fr. Pedro Martínez as if he were preparing for death. On that day, one of the Japanese sentinels of their prison came and violently pushed Fr. Elias González out of the overcrowded prison. He was taken away, nobody knew
where. He was never seen alive again. Some days after liberation, some Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres came from the Spanish Hospital de Santiago, in San Pedro, Makati, to visit the ruins of their College of St. Paul, in Herran St., Manila. There in the College grounds they found the corpse of Fr. Gonzalez already in a state of decomposition, but quite identifiable. His hands were tied at the back, and evidence pointed to a barbaric assassination. The good Sisters then narrated to Fr. González’s confrere, Fr. Pedro Martinez, what they believed to have been the cause of the killing of Fr. Elías González. On February 11, a group of Japanese soldiers had wished to violate some of the Sisters of St. Paul. They did not succeed. When the Sisters told Fr. Elias about this, he advised them not to come out if the soldiers came again, but to inform him, and he would send them away. Fr. Elías knew how to speak Japanese. He had learned the language during the occupation years, and he had been able to preach in Japanese to a group of some 70 Catholic employees in the Japanese Imperial Army. When the soldiers returned to molest the Sisters, Fr. Elias came out and scolded them for their villainy. This was tantamount to signing his death sentence. Revenge came soon after. Fr. Elias Gonzalez, C.M., gave his life defending Christian chastity against pagan debauchery, (as it happened also to Bishop William Finnemann, SVD, Prefect Apostolic of Mindoro, who was killed by the Japanese for the same cause, some time before). “How beautiful is the chaste generation. . . Their memory is immortal because it is known by God and by men!” (cf. Wis. 4.1).

Fr. Elías Gonzalez, C.M., after his priestly ordination, came to the Philippines on May 11, 1937. In June of that year, he enrolled in the University of Santo Tomas, to study Canon Law. In June 1940 he was sent to the Minor Seminary of San Pablo, Laguna where he stayed for one year. He returned to Manila on July 28, 1941. Here he was overtaken by the war. He devoted his time learning the Japanese language. He belonged to the Community of San Marcelino, but died on February 12, not far away, in the grounds of St. Paul College, Herran St., Manila.

Fr. Jerónimo Pampliega

Since July, 1941, he belonged to the Community of San Marcelino. He had come from the Seminary of San Pablo, Laguna, with a throat ailment that rendered him unable to teach in the classroom. During the Japanese Occupation, 1941-1942, he remained in San Marcelino. By August, 1944, he had recovered so well from his ailment, that he was sent to the Seminary of Mandaluyong to replace Fr. Manuel A. Gracia who was called by the Manila Archbishop to take care of the Archives
of the Archdiocese. But he stayed in Mandaluyong for a little over a month only. In October of that year he was sent to the College of Santa Isabel in the Walled City (Intramuros) as Chaplain of that Institution under the Daughters of Charity. From his observations of the war preparations being done by the Japanese in that last stronghold where they were to fight the Americans to the end with a desperate resistance, it seems that Fr. Pampliega knew for certain that his days were numbered. These forebodings he manifested to the Superioress of Santa Isabel College, Sor Juana Zabalza, D.C. Nevertheless, he did not recoil or abandon his post at the face of that imminent danger; he obeyed his Superiors and remained where they sent him.

On February 4, the Japanese went from house to house driving out people at the point of their bayonets. Women were sent to take refuge in the churches of San Augustin, San Francisco and the Manila Cathedral. Some men were brought to Fort Santiago. The next day, February 5, under pretext that the church of St. Augustin was the safer place, they forced everybody into that church. All the religious Friars of Intramuros, even those who were sick or weak in their old age, were expelled from their convents and gathered in the convent of San Augustin. Thousands of people were confined in the church, in the convent and in the gardens.

On February 7 began the destructive fire of all Intramuros. The fire that night was already reaching the College of Santa Isabel. Fr. Pampliega and the Sisters were forced to leave their house and take refuge with the immense crowd that was filling the grounds of San Augustin. In the morning of February 8, the Japanese came to San Augustin. They gathered all the men, lay and religious, and brought them to Fort Santiago. All in all, Filipinos and Spaniards, lay people and religious numbered over one thousand. They remained in Fort Santiago until the afternoon of February 9. Fr. Pampliega was among the prisoners who were badly treated by the Japanese, and at the same time, exposed to the American shelling of Fort Santiago. The religious imprisoned were 16 Augustinians, 14 Franciscans, 6 Recollects, 6 Capuchin Fathers, and the Vincentian Fr. Pampliega. Among themselves and some pious laymen, they organized a continuous Rosary recitation. In the afternoon of February 9, the prisoners who survived were brought back to San Augustin. From the one thousand that entered Fort Santiago, Filipinos and Spaniards, only around 150 Spaniards returned to San Augustin. According to semi-official reports some 700 Filipinos were sprayed with gasoline and burned alive, while others were bayoneted by the Japanese, and others left to die of hunger.

The survivors remained imprisoned at San Augustin. At 5 o'clock in the morning of February 18, all men over 14 years of age were
gathered in the church and then brought away, in spite of the tears and cries of the women and children who were left behind. The American bombardment was frightful. It was a miracle that on their way along the streets, no one was hit. The prisoners, including Fr. Pampliega, were taken away from San Augustin at 6 o’clock in the afternoon of Sunday, February 18. They were placed in a warehouse in front of the monastery of Santa Clara, not far from Fort Santiago.

The next day, at 8 a.m., February 19, 1945, a group of 150 prisoners were forced to leave the warehouse, and were brought near the Manila Cathedral. In the corner of Aduana and General Luna Streets, some ground walls of a projected palace for the Governor General in Spanish times had been converted by the Japanese into underground air raid shelters. There, 80 prisoners were forced to enter one shelter, all piled up on each other. Once they were inside, unable even to move, the cruel soldiers threw hand grenades into the shelter. Sealing the entrance, they buried alive the unfortunate wounded, who died little by little inside the shelter.

One Augustinian Fr. Belarmino de Celis, survived the holocaust to tell the story. According to him, Fr. Jerónimo Pampliega, C.M. might have been among those innocent victims sacrificed at the site near the Manila Cathedral, on February 19, 1945. However, an Officer of the American Military Secret Police reported that in Fort Santiago in one of the halls he found among the heap of fetid corpses piled on top of each other, three corpses dressed in white habit. Two of these wore a black leather cincture (Augustinians or Recollects?). The third wore a white cassock that had outside buttons from the collar to the bottom. He also had a black velvet cap on his head. Fr. Jerónimo Pampliega was the only one in Intramuros who dressed that way. The three religious were found with their hands tied at the back, and their backs deeply slashed. This report seems to indicate that Fr. Pampliega was among those killed in Fort Santiago on February 19. On February 25, the American Army buried the unfortunate victims. May they rest in peace. These details about Fr. Pampliega’s last days in Intramuros were furnished by Juanita Bull, the young widow of Ernesto Tárraga who was also killed in Intramuros. These good friends shared with Fr. Pampliega those fateful days in the church of San Augustín from February 7 to February 18, until Ernesto Tárraga and Fr. Pampliega were taken away from the Fort Santiago, to be immolated the following day.

Fr. Jerónimo Pampliega, C.M., was born in Rabé de las Calzadas, Burgos. He studied Humanities in the Apostolic School of Tardajos, Philosophy in Villafranca del Bierzo, and Sacred Theology in Cuenca. He was ordained Priest in 1930, and that same year was sent to the
Philippines. He taught in Calbayog for 8 years. In 1938 the Superiors sent him to Australia to learn English, and there he remained for two years. Upon his return to the Philippines he was assigned to Jaro Seminary where he stayed for one year. At the beginning of the school year of 1941, he was sent to the Seminary of San Pablo, Laguna; but after one month, he had to come to Manila to recover from a throat ailment. Obedient always to the orders of his Superiors, in October 1944 he went to Intramuros to serve as Chaplain of Santa Isabel College. He died in Fort Santiago on February 19, 1945.

Fr. Anselmo Andrés, C.M. 7

Fr. Andrés belonged also to the Community of San Marcelino when he died as a victim of the war of liberation, on February 26, 1945. Born in 1875, he entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1891. He possessed rare talents, and dreamed of attaining academic degrees, and glory and honor for his scholarly accomplishments in the fields of ecclesiastical sciences. He excelled in Academies and Universities. In 1926, he wrote an article in the Vincentian Magazine ANALES. In all frankness, simplicity and humility Fr. Andrés made public a youthful mistake. He admitted that the Superiors had intended to send him to the Philippine missions, in the remote islands of the Far East; but he had refused to hide his talents in some obscure corner of the world; he ignored the orders. As a good lesson in humility he was assigned to the Iglesuela del Cid (poor church of the Cid)!

Nobody can question the intellectual gifts and solid learning of Fr. Andres. But he committed the youthful mistake, through lack of reflection, of refusing to serve the Philippines with his gifts from God. Somewhat like Jonah, the prophet, who refused to go to Niniveh, he was taught by God a painful lesson, that it was useless to oppose His plans. The winds of revolution and the tempest of war were threatening Spain during the first months of 1936. Only then did Anselmo Andrés came to the Philippines, arriving here by the middle of April, 1936. Strong and brave, he was now ready to work in these regions.

Scarcely 15 days after his arrival in Manila, Fr. Andrés suffered a stroke which left his left side paralyzed. He had to be given the Last Sacraments and hospitalized for treatment in San Juan de Dios Hospital. He improved a little, but remained an invalid for some 9 years, tied to his wheel-chair and to his sick bed. He was to offer to God, as his apostolate in the Philippines, the sacrifice of his patient suffering, resignation and prayer, instead of the satisfying ministry of teaching and lecturing in classrooms and College halls.

In 1941 when the war broke, the Sisters in the San Juan de Dios
Hospital decided to bring Fr. Andrés to the Hospicio de San José. There he was well attended to during the three years of the Japanese occupation. There, in the so-called Island of Convalescence, Fr. Anselmo Andrés, in the midst of his helplessness, experienced bright happy days reading and talking about books and authors, and sharing his original though sometimes impractical ideas about Seminary training, etc. Yet many times despondency and tedium overtook him and he refused even to shave or to speak a word. Poor Fr. Andrés certainly suffered his Purgatory in those long nine years spent in the Philippines, especially at the end of his days!

In late January, 1945, when the American army was approaching the city of Manila, the poor people of the Hospicio, were able to leave the extremely dangerous and doomed zone of the mined Ayala bridge. This was through the intervention of a good-hearted Japanese Officer in charge of Religious Affairs in the Japanese Imperial Army. On January 24, three Sisters brought the babies of the Nursery to La Concordia College, in Herrán Street, Paco. On January 29-31, the rest of the poor people and refugees sheltered in the Hospicio followed them to La Concordia. Poor Fr. Andrés, in his wheel-chair was accommodated by the Sisters in a little house reserved for old Sisters located at the end of the College. There Fr. Andrés spent those terrible days of the merciless shelling of La Concordia, first by the Americans, and later by the Japanese. The College was directly in the firing line of battle. The Americans firing at the East of the house, and the Japanese at the West. Thousands of people (from Hospicio de San Jose alone there were 1,700 persons) were trapped between these two firing lines. Fr. Andrés, helpless and invalid, lived in his little house together with an old Canon from the Manila Cathedral, Msgr. Hipólito Arceo, and a young man who took care of them both, from February 1 to February 11, Sunday, when the whole College was put to flames. There was no other remedy but to flee under a rain of bombs, grenades, and stray bullets from the machine-guns of the Japanese who systematically massacred the people who tried to escape from the burning houses. In the shelters of La Concordia there were more than 2,000 people.

The fire in the building began at 2 a.m. It had consumed half of the College, when the young man attending Fr. Andrés and Msgr. Arceo awoke. He succeeded in bringing Fr. Andrés in his wheel-chair down the 6 to 8 steps of the stairs to the ground. He left Fr. Andrés beside the wall. Then the houseboy took the old and weak Msgr. Arceo outside to a safe place. In the meantime, the wall was beginning to catch fire. Fr. Andrés, unable to move his wheel-chair, suffered several serious burns. At dawn, the houseboy returned and found Fr. Andrés in exactly the same place where he had left him. He had been unseated from his
wheel-chair. Perhaps from shock, Fr. Andrés remained absolutely speechless that day. The houseboy found a little cart, put the good Father in it, and took him — burned, cold, hungry, dirty — to the shelter where most of the people took refuge. In the afternoon, an ambulance of the American Army brought Fr. Andrés to the San Lázaro Hospital in Manila.

Several days afterwards, Fr. Manuel Gracia, C.M., happened to learn about his whereabouts and went at once to visit him. He found Fr. Andrés in the department of Tubercular patients, lying in a poor bed, along a corridor. Dressed in a shirt of green percale, he was unshaved, with big stains of permanganate for burns all over his face and arms. He spoke in monosyllables, and told Fr. Gracia that he was attended to quite well, as far as circumstances could allow.

Some days later, the parish priest of the Holy Ghost church nearby, a zealous Argentinian, Fr. Antonio Albrecht, S.V.D., reported to a group of good Catholics the case of that lonely priest in the Hospital. He suggested that someone take him at home. Immediately a charitable gentleman, Mr. Ignacio Capili, religiously educated by the Spanish Jesuits of old, went and took Fr. Andrés into his home, and personally took care of him, as if he were his own father, trying to satisfy even the petty whims of his patient. In the home of this good Christian Filipino gentleman, Mr. Ignacio Capili, the last Vincentian victim of the Japanese war, Fr. Anselmo Andres, C.M. died in the peace of the Lord on February 26, 1945. Fr. Antonio Albrecht, S.V.D. and Mr. Ignacio Capili buried him in the convent garden of the Holy Ghost parish church, at the foot of an image of Our Lady of Lourdes, at the entrance of the Parish rectory. Fr. Máximo Juguera, C.M. and Fr. Manuel Gracia, C.M., went the following day to express to the S.V.D., Fathers and the good and generous Mr. Ignacio Capili their own deep gratitude and that of the Congregation of the Mission in the devasted Philippine Province.