Chapter 6

New Frontiers: Jaro and Vigan
(1870-1876)

Iloilo, on the island of Panay, was enjoying peace and prosperity when the Vincentians arrived. The cultivation of sugar cane and the development of the sugar industry, had brought significant economic and social changes had made Iloilo an important domestic and international port.

The economic progress of Iloilo elevated the intellectual life of its people. It may be mentioned in passing, that it was in Jaro, Iloilo, that Graciano Lopez Jaena, a great Filipino patriot and orator, was born, on December 20, 1856.

A NEW PHILIPPINE DIOCESE: JARO

On May 27, 1865, Pope Pius IX issued the Apostolic Letters for the erection of a new Diocese in the Philippines, the Diocese of Jaro. Its titular was to be St. Elizabeth, to honor the devotion of the Spanish Queen Isabel II. In his letter instructing the erection of the Diocese, the Pope expressed his utmost interest, in “a Seminary in which the clerics may be imbued in piety and letters, and be instructed in ecclesiastical sciences, so that once ordained priest, they may bring light to the people and help the Bishop to expedite the spiritual affairs of his Church and gain souls for heaven.” And so, continued the Holy Father, “We ordain and command that as soon as possible a Seminary should be erected, and directed by the Bishop according to the norms established by the Sacred Canons and especially by the Sacred Council of Trent.”

Most Reverend Gregorio Meliton Martinez, Archbishop of Manila, having fulfilled all the necessary requirements with the full collaboration of the Government, erected the new suffragan diocese on October 10, 1867, the birthday of the Queen. It was formed by segregating from Cebu the civil provinces of Iloilo, Capiz, Antique, 95
Calamianes, Romblon, Palawan, Jolo, Zamboanga, Cotabato, Davao, and the island of Negros.

Fray Mariano Cuartero y Medina, O.P. was elected first Bishop of the Diocese on September 20, 1867, and consecrated in Ocaña, Spain, on November 30 of the same year. He took possession of the Diocese on April 24, 1868. For the erection of the See, and for pontifical expenses, the Government gave 31,000 crowns. (A crown or gold escudo is equivalent to two dollars, the silver escudo a half dollar.) An annual endowment of 10,000 escudos was also granted; although the initial money was not very much, it proved a great help in organizing a diocese of about one million souls. Bishop Cuartero lived in a rented house paid for by the Government, until his episcopal residence was built.  

One of the first steps Bishop Cuartero took was to contact the Superiors of the Congregation of the Mission to ask some Vincentians to run his seminary. He knew well how the Seminaries of Dominican confreres, Bishops Gainza in Naga and Jimeno in Cebu had flourished and how these Seminaries had been satisfactorily organized by the Vincentians. The first difficulty he met was the perennial problem of scarcity of available personnel.

Although it was true that by the year 1870, the Vincentian personnel in the Philippines had increased considerably, (they now numbered 46 in the Philippines) not all of them were priests. There was a good number of scholastics among them.

As a result of the Spanish revolution of 1868, the scholasticate and novitiate had been transferred to Dax, France. Here they increased in number, with new aspirants and candidates. But the French war against Prussia in 1870 disturbed this promising condition, the Spanish Vincentians had to evacuate the House of Dax to make room for their French confreres who were fleeing from Paris, before the German advance. And so they were forced to disperse, and some were sent to the Philippines.  

From 1862 to 1866 the Vincentians from Spain sent four missions to the Philippines.


Not all the above, however, were ordained priests. In the 6th mission of 1869, there were four priests, three Deacons, one Scholastic and one Brother, besides a novice with tonsure, Rev. Nicolas Torre, who was to serve for 40 years in the Seminary of Naga where he spent all his life. In the 7th mission of 1870, there were the famous Fathers Aquilino Valdivielso, and Manuel Orriols with 11 scholastics and novices. From among these, in the course of time, three became Rectors of Seminaries in the Philippines. Fr. Valdivielso came as representative of the Visitor of Spain and Fr. Orriols as Director of scholastics. Their main concern was the religious formation of the young aspirants who had recently arrived in the Islands.

On November 15, 1869, Fr. Ildefonso Moral, Rector of Naga Seminary left for the Diocese of Jaro “to settle some affairs of his Congregation” in the recently erected Diocese. He left Fr. Antonio Santonja in charge of the Naga Seminary. It is probable that he went to Jaro to present the personnel assigned to be with him in the Jaro Seminary: Fr. Aniceto Gonzales, and the newly ordained Fr. Juan Miralda, who had just arrived with the 6th mission on October 26 of that year. Before the end of 1870, two young ordinands, Rev. Juan Jaume and Rev. Rufino Martin, arrived with the 7th mission; and as soon as they finished their studies they were sent also to the new Seminary of Jaro in January, 1871. However, Fr. Juan Jaume stayed for only one year in Jaro; in 1872, he was transferred to Cebu, Fr. Rufino Martin died in Jaro on March 30, 1873. To replace Fr. Juan Jaume, his brother Fr. Joaquin Jaume was sent in May, 1872, to Jaro, after having spent three and a half years in Naga and two and a half years in Manila. That same year, 1872, Brother Francisco Lopez was also sent to Jaro. Fr. Juan Jaume, after two years in Cebu, came back in 1874 to Jaro, where he stayed for 10 years until he returned to Spain in 1884. These were the Vincentians who worked during those first years of the material and formal organization of the Seminary in the new Diocese of Jaro.

In the same rented house where the Bishop lived, the new Seminary was set up, with the former students of the Cebu Seminary, as the first Seminarians. In the meantime, the construction of a building for the Seminary was started. The benefactors for this work were Dña. Ana Sitchon, Dña. Maria Sitchon and the secular priest Fr. Mariano Sitchon, as well as Dña. Gregoria Hingson all of them from the Parian of Iloilo, or Molo. The three ladies gave a cash donation of $6,000 hard dollars (“pesos duros”) each to Bishop Cuartero. Two thirds of this
amount was assigned by the Bishop for the construction of the building, and one third was kept as maintenance reserve for the support of the Seminary. These donations were made in July and October, 1870. Fr. Mariano Sitchon gave his own donation of $6,000 dollars to finish the construction of the Seminary. The building was very spacious; it was in plan "a square of 60 yards each side"; it soon accommodated "more than 100 students, including those of high school, philosophy and theology." The superintendent of the construction was Fr. Aniceto Gonzales, C.M., himself. The cornerstone was laid on March 11, 1871 in a lot of 20,000 sq. meters obtained through the donations of the three ladies mentioned above. Even before the construction of the new Seminary was finished the old one was transferred to the new building. The Seminarians suffered a lot of inconveniences not only in the first months, but until 1875, when their new residence was finally finished.5

Community Organization

Although Fr. Moral came with a group of missionaries to establish the Seminary in Jaro, he continued to act as Rector of the Naga Seminary. It was urgent, therefore, that someone be appointed superior of Jaro.

In January 1871, Fr. Valdivielso, the Superior of the entire Vincentian Mission in the Philippines, visited the Visayas, to see for himself how the community of Jaro was getting along. On March 29, he went back to Manila and appointed Fr. Moral, Superior of the Seminary of Jaro. But Fr. Moral by that time was needed for a new mission. The following year, on January 22, 1872, Father Moral was sent to the new foundation in Vigan. Hence, the Seminary in Jaro remained without a superior for several months until April 1872. It was at this time that Fr. Valdivielso returned to Jaro to put into effect a resolution of the Council that "it would be good to discuss with the prelate if the foundation could continue under the direction of Fr. Gonzales. If not, to find out who could be designated. Should there be need for a new superior, Fr. Orriols would be appointed." As it turned out, however, the Bishop himself and the Community were happy to keep Fr. Aniceto Gonzales.6

The Philippine Vincentian Mission becomes a Vice-Province

Fr. Aquilino Valdivielso had been sent with the 7th mission as representative of Fr. Provincial Visitor of Spain. On the day following his arrival, November 2, 1870, the Letters Patent appointing him Vice-
Visitor of the Philippines were read before the Manila Community: Fr. Salmeron, Fr. Casarramona, Fr. Farre, Fr. Orriols, Fr. Valdivielso and Fr. Velasco. Fr. Gregorio Velasco was finally relieved of the burdens of the highest authority over the two Vincentian families: as Superior of the Philippine Vincentians, and as Subdirector of the Daughters of Charity in the Islands. In the past, he had long and insistently sought relief from these burdens. At times this need for relief has been so urgent as to tempt him to become a Carmelite. From April 5, 1862, to December 6, 1865 he had been Superior of the Vincentian mission in the Philippines, until he turned the office over to Fr. Jose Casarramona. But since January 23, 1867, when Fr. Casarramona became Superior of the Cebu Seminary, again for all practical purposes, the actual burden of the whole Vincentian family in the Philippines had come to weigh heavily upon Fr. Velasco. Now at last by the end of 1870, with the appointment of Fr. Valdivielso as Vice-Visitor of the Philippine Vincentians, Fr. Velasco could sigh with relief. Yet, he was to labor hard four years more in the Philippine mission, before returning to Spain in 1875. In the annals of the Philippine Vincentian Mission his invaluable work in the Islands will always be remembered.

When the Philippine Vice-Province was constituted, its government was composed of Fr. Valdivielso, Vice-Visitor, and Fathers Velasco, Salmeron, Orriols and Farre, Councillors; Fr. Velasco was to be the Assistant, and Fr. Orriols, Sub-assistant to the Vice-Visitor. Fr. Farre left Manila for Cebu on November 15, 1870, together with Fr. Blas Montañes. They arrived in Cebu on the 25th of November, 1870.

THE NORTHERN FRONTIER: THE DIOCESE OF NUEVA SEGOVIA

Vigan, where the Nueva Segovia Diocese was located, was founded by Juan Salcedo as Villa Fernandina. It had a rich political and ecclesiastical history, for it was the birth place of Diego Silang, Ilokano hero, and Gregorio Aglipay, who became “Obispo Maximo” of the Philippine Independent Church.

The Diocese of Nueva Segovia was founded as early as August 14, 1595, along with those of Cebu and Nueva Caceres, as suffragans of the Archdiocese of Manila.

The Seminary of Vigan

In the beginning, the seat of the Bishop was in the town of Nueva Segovia near Aparri, in the province of Cagayan. Later in 1755, it was transferred to the city of Vigan, Ilocos Sur.
Soon after Most Rev. Juan Ruiz de San Agustin, O.R.S.A. took possession of his See on May 13, 1782, he tried to establish a Seminary. Unfortunately, he did not succeed. Another attempt was undertaken by his successor, Most Rev. Agustin Pedro Blaquier, O.S.A., who took possession of his See on May 29, 1799. But many difficulties stood in the way: he lacked priests and specially money. At most, all he could do was start some Latin classes, and prepare a few for ordination.

Bishop Francisco Alban, O.P., (1817-1842), erected a big building of solid materials for a permanent Seminary. However, during the time of his successor, Bishop Rafael Masoliver, O.P. (1843-49), the Seminary was poorly staffed. Due to financial difficulties, the Seminary had just an administrator and a professor of Moral Theology and, it seems, a professor of Grammar. Seminary life was so languid that from 1848 to 1852, nothing was heard of it. Under Bishop Vicente Barreiro, O.S.A., (1848-1858), the Seminary was re-opened in 1852, but faced with the perennial difficulties of money and personnel. Nominally, it was in the hands of the secular clergy, but for lack of available priests, lay teachers were hired to work under a priest who acted as Rector, and another as Vice-Rector.

In the year 1861, Bishop Francisco Miro had only 18 seminarians studying Moral Theology. Not surprisingly, the Bishop himself and some parish priests had to support these seminarians because the seminarians' parents simply could not afford to defray the expenses.

Preparations and Contract

As soon as Bishop Miro learned about the arrival of the Vincentians in the Philippines and their taking over the Manila Seminary, he immediately asked for the missionaries to go to his Seminary. This was by the end of 1862 or the beginning of 1863. But in July of 1862, there were only two Vincentian priests, and in the following year there were four. So, the only answer the good Bishop could obtain by 1864 was a promise by the Vincentians to come when they had more personnel to spare. A letter of the Madrid Provincial, Fr. Sanz, dated February 22, 1864 said: "We will be able to take charge of the Seminary of Nueva Segovia, God willing, after two years as I promised the Bishop of that Diocese in the answer brought by Fr. Casarramona." But when this answer reached the Philippines, the Diocese of Nueva Segovia was already vacant because of the death of Bishop Miro in 1864; thus, the negotiations were postponed. The successor, Bishop Juan Jose Aragones, O.S.A., took possessions of the See on March 27, 1865. He tried
at once to improve the Seminary, all by himself. He asked for copies of the Rules followed in Nueva Caceres, and at the end of 1870 requested that the Congregation of the Mission should take over. By March 1871, the agreement for the Vincentians to go to Vigan was already settled between Bishop Aragones and the Vice-Visitor of the Philippine Vincentians, Fr. Valdivielso.

**Vigan Seminary under Vincentians**

Fathers Ildefonso Moral, Jose Recoder and Valentin Matamala with Brother Miguel Garcia teamed up as pioneers of the Vincentian community in Vigan. When they arrived, the conditions of the Seminary were distressing. The chapel was provided with an altar, but there was no Blessed Sacrament reserved there, because day-scholars did not have any religious activities within the Seminary. Even some of the ordained deacons said that they had not served Holy Mass for a long time.

Many other things in the Seminary were found to be in the same sad state of neglect. The Seminary looked like a prison; the patio was dirty, and the bathroom was so exposed that those taking a bath could be seen from the outside. Around that same area, pigs wallowed in a muddy swamp. The walls of the classrooms and the refectory were without any religious sign, not even a crucifix. When the seminarians came for meals, they had to bring their own chairs and the 24 boarders shared three or four drinking glasses. Two broken-down lamps were the only source of light for the refectory at night. No superior or director supervised the meals.

The upper floor was occupied by the Rector and Professors. Seminarians lived in five large rooms, called “cells,” for everybody and for everything! These “cells” were served as sleeping rooms, study halls, visiting rooms, recreation places for smoking and chewing betel nut, and occasionally, as kitchen and dining rooms for everybody had his relatives bring in food, two or three times a week. The furniture was filthy, and in various stages of deterioration. There were old rocking chairs, suitcases, trunks, valises, etc. Students answered the call of nature anywhere wherever there was an opening through which they could discharge on to the street. As a matter of fact, there was a joke in Vigan that if one had to pass under the veranda of the Seminary, one would be wise to take along an umbrella, preferably waterproof. Everything around seemed to point to a state of utter neglect and lack of discipline. Such was the poor condition of the Vigan Seminary when the Vincentians took over.
There were 24 interns present at the formal installation of the Seminary’s new administration, on March 16, 1872. The former Seminary Rector read to the students and professors an official announcement issued by Bishop Aragones, appointing Fr. Ildefonso Moral Rector of his Conciliar Seminary of the Immaculate Conception.

The new administration, following usual practices of the Congregation, started organizational work at once. The first surprise for the seminarians was to see, on the very first day, the Directors present at their meals to supervise discipline and orderly service at the table. During Holy Week the seminarians went to assist at liturgical services. Immediately after the school year ended on March 25, Fr. Rector arranged the time schedule for the vacation with specific hours for study and review for the exams at the end of vacation. Two hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon were allotted each day for recreation. This schedule, however, was only temporary to prepare the way for future reforms in the Seminary Rules.9

New Policies and Improvements.

Plans for the physical improvement of the Seminary were immediately approved verbally by the Bishop. The lack of any written document was a serious mistake that eventually resulted in serious troubles. On April 8, 1872, construction work began at full speed. A study hall was constructed to obtain the necessary space and ventilation; then the dormitories were built. Fr. Recorder was happy to jot down in his "Notes."10

"Little by little the regulations promulgated very recently are being observed, thanks to having got rid of the 5 so-called "cells", having the seminarians sleep in a common dormitory, having improved the refectory, and above all having improved the food."

Much prudence and patience had to be exerted by the Fathers to get rid of many abuses and disorders in the Seminary. The month of May was spent in preparing the chapel. This task was considered urgent, as a life of piety and devotion had to be fostered in the Seminary. On May 2, Fathers took the seminarians on an excursion, which apparently was something quite unusual for these young people.

The next year, the Fathers decided to celebrate the formal opening of school with the solemnity customary in other Seminaries in the Islands. Such solemnity was unheard in this place. But in the first year of their administration, the Fathers wanted to show the public the
direction they were planning to give to the Seminary. For this purpose the local Authorities were invited to attend the High Mass, the inaugural speech after the Mass, and breakfast served afterwards.

Even while the construction of the buildings was going on, the Vincentian Fathers buckled down to business. The seminarians made their Spiritual Exercises in the new Seminary under construction; Father Rector made his own Retreat and then the whole community. On May 29, 1872, an official Notice was issued regarding the new school year. In accordance with Art. 2, Title 17th of the Seminary Rules, the Revalidation exams were to be held on May 31st, starting from the higher courses down to the years of Latin. For the public examinations, only those who had been previously approved by their professors for promotion could be admitted. Examinations were to be held from 8 to 11 a.m., and from 3 to 5 p.m. Those who passed the examinations were to be given a Certificate for admission to the next course.

Everyone was supposed to attend the formal opening of the School Year on June 7, in the morning; in the afternoon, all were to attend their respective classes. All students, both interns and externs, were to pay one peso to be enrolled in the Registry Book by the Secretary of Studies. The courses offered were Moral Theology, 3 courses in Philosophy and 3 Years of Latin. With respect to extern students, Art. 4 under Title 2 of the Rules was to be henceforth strictly observed, namely, “no one shall be admitted as extern student if he is over 20 years of age.” Those who had reached or passed the age of 20 were to enter as boarding seminarians, so that they could be better prepared for the ecclesiastical state; and they were to wear the clerical dress.

The monthly tuition fee for boarding seminarians was only P6.00; extern students were supposed to pay only the registration fee of P1.00 at the beginning of the school year. A change introduced by the Vincentians was that no extern seminarian would be admitted into Moral Theology. The reason behind this policy that those to be ordained were in need of greater recollection than those who would lead a secular life outside. Furthermore, with few exceptions such was the general practice in the Seminaries in Europe. For this reason, the Fathers gave preference, in the admission of boarding seminarians, to those belonging to higher Faculty. The rest remained simply as students and were not vested with clerical dress.11

One cannot fail to observe at this point the great interest shown by Bishop Aragones, Bishop of Ilocos, in the Catholic education of the youth in his region. Such interest had similarly been shown by the Bishops of Naga, Cebu, and Jaro. From the beginning, Bishop Aragones gave his Seminary the specific character of a Catholic College.
This was stated in the official Statutes approved by him. Until the time of the Vincentians’ administration, the Seminary did not have any College students from outside. When the Vincentians took over, however the number of seminarians, both boarding students and day-scholars increased notably and to these were added a great number of College extern students. Under the Vincentians in the school year 1872-1873, the previous number of 24 boarding seminarians was increased to 62. No more than that number could be accommodated because 62 was the maximum capacity allowed by the Seminary building. Many other applicants had to be refused admission for lack of room in the dormitory. Besides the 62 interns, there were 285 day-scholar seminarians enrolled plus other College students ("Colegiales"). The total enrollment was 347, distributed thus:

<table>
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<th>Course</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Dogmatic and Moral Theology</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy 3rd</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities or Latinity</td>
<td>262</td>
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It should be noted that the enrollment in Grammar and Latinity had tripled. In the previous school year 1871-1872, there had been only 88 students.

The School Year was opened according to schedule on June 7, 1872 with the ecclesiastical and civil authorities attending the ceremonies along with the higher ranks of the citizens. After the High Mass sung by Fr. Rector, Fr. Recoder delivered the inaugural address and announced the schedule of classes. After the breakfast and concluding prayers, the celebration was finished at 10 a.m. On June 30, a Special Rule for day-scholars was published. The Fathers saw that discipline had to be instilled in a large number of students who formerly were completely left to their own whims. This Special Rule or Instruction was added to the General Rule of the Seminary, and was approved verbally by the Bishop and his well-trusted Vincentians. There was no written document on it.

In Naga, many written documents had been exchanged between the Bishop and Fr. Moral about every detail of the foundation. This had become a heavy burden to Fr. Moral; and sometimes even became a source of misunderstanding and friction. Perhaps, due to such unpleasant experiences in the past, Fr. Moral refrained now from written documents and simply relied on the good will of the Bishop, without foreseeing the possible trouble that could and did arise in the future from lack of a proof in writing. This perhaps was the only mistake made
by Fr. Moral in Vigan. Later on the Spanish Provincial Fr. Maller called the attention of the Philippine Visitor, Fr. Orriols, to the fact that no important actions were to be taken in the Seminaries, unless explicit and written approval from the authorities concerned had been secured.12

It was decided also that, following the practice of other diocesan Seminaries, the students should have a recollection day every last Thursday of each month, something they had never before been given.

To celebrate solemnly the feast of the holy Founder, St. Vincent de Paul, the missionaries prepared and adorned the chapel as best as they could. On the eve of the feast, solemn Vespers were sung for the first time in the Seminary, with all the students, both interns and externs attending. On the feast day, July 19, Bishop Aragones himself came to join the Vincentians in their celebration, conversing with them like a most loving Father. Unfortunately, this was to be his last visit to the Seminary.

At the beginning of August, Bishop Aragones’ condition became serious, in spite of the doctor’s efforts to prevent a fit of apoplexy. His faithful Vincentian friends did not leave him for a moment. They took turns at his bedside. Until he died, the Vincentians lovingly nursed him. On the eve of Our Lady’s Assumption, August 14th, 1872 while repeating the ejaculations suggested by the Vincentians who were hovering around him, and after piously kissing the Crucifix Father Recoder offered him Bishop Juan José Aragones breathed his last. He had often said that the sons of St. Vincent were his devoted companions “who will not leave nor abandon me when I die.”13

Academic life at the College Seminary of Nueva Segovia.

The core of the seminarians’ course was Moral Theology which was studied for six to eight years. This course was based on a textbook written by Larraga. This handbook, revised in subsequent editions, was used in practically all Philippine Seminaries until 1880. In the beginning, a little Latin and some Philosophy were required before the students could wear the clerical habit. The following subjects were offered under the following professors:

Preparatory and 1st Year Latin...........Mr. Geronimo Pe Benito (seminarian)
2nd Year Latin ..................................Rev. Jorge Coll, C.M. (in Minor Orders)
3rd Year Latin ..................................Fr. Valentin Matamala, C.M.
Mathematics and Physics.............Fr. Jose Recoder, C.M.
Philosophy and Moral Theology ........Fr. Ildefonso Moral, C.M.

On holidays, classes in Spanish Grammar and Good Manners or Clerical Politeness were given to the Latinists; Liturgy to clerics and "habitistas" (seminarians already wearing the clerical dress); and Gregorian Chant to all interns. As if this heavy load of classes were not enough, on July 10, the Staff decided to add half an hour of Spanish Grammar to the last afternoon period every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

The professors of Logic found their students in 1874 quite advanced. Thus they decided to use the morning period for the study of arithmetic, so that two years later these students could go on to take courses in Mathematics and Physics. Some time later, literary and academic public disputations for the Theology and Philosophy students were added, the latter in alternative rounds for each of the three courses of Philosophy. The theses defenses of the students required the attendance of the entire Faculty, with all the Clerics dressed in black cassock and beretta. The rest of the student body had to be dressed in their gala uniforms. The Academic Exercises lasted from one hour and a half to two hours.

Methods of Teaching in the Philippine Seminaries

The Vincentians followed strictly the religious tradition handed down by their holy Founder. Vincentian pedagogy is traceable to the 17th century when St. Vincent de Paul began to organize the Seminaries entrusted to his Congregation in France.

Then a large part of the difficulty met by St. Vincent with his priests assigned to teach in Seminaries was their habit of dictating notes to the students. Eventually the holy Founder in a letter dated March 17, 1642, called the attention of his confreres on the method to be followed in the Seminaries under the Vincentian Fathers. He asked the priests "to limit themselves to explaining an approved author and require the students to study the lessons learned in class and then later to recite what they had learned."14

There is an admirable sagacity in this pedagogy adopted by St. Vincent. Actually, the method was not new; it was being used in many universities of Europe, especially in Zaragoza, Spain where St. Vincent had studied in 1597 and 1598. St. Vincent wanted to ensure the Vincentians assigned to Seminaries would follow a textbook as guide, and avoid dictating notes. To give the lessons in writing, he wrote, "is contrary to our customary procedure, and of little value for the
students who would not exercise their intellect and memory but rather trust only in their class notes, an abundance of written papers which probably they would not look again." On the contrary, guided by a textbook the seminarians will learn the basic principles and doctrines, and learn to forego useless or abstruse elaborations, which at times simply lead to erroneous concepts if not actual deviations from the truths of faith. This Vincentian pedagogy has proved very successful in the past and has been found efficacious in many parts of the world, including the Philippines.

All the Philippine Seminaries were provided with a list of approved textbooks. The professors followed and explained these books and, at times, supplemented the same with research on controversial issues. In all cases, the broad lines of the educational process was not limited to textbook learning. It was always insisted that reference readings and factual observations were essential factors in the Seminarians' academic formation. It was for this reason that the Vincentians always urged the Bishops to provide a good library for the Seminarians. In fact a good library was a prerequisite to their acceptance of the administration of Seminaries. Thus, one will note that Seminary libraries in the Philippines can well stand up to careful scrutiny. They were veritable sources of historical records. In the years that followed, the College Seminaries became the axis of Filipino intellectual growth in the provinces, thus hastening national consciousness, and eventually, national independence.

The Vincentians Leave Vigan

When Fr. Moral left for Europe in 1874, Fr. Recoder became the Seminary Rector. It seems that Fr. Recoder was a rather difficult character to get along with. Even among his fellow confreres, it seems he was not too well-liked. In their correspondence with the Visitor, we find complaints such as these: "It seems that he has no confidence in the individual priest, and it seems that nothing is well done except what he does or orders"; "We are all pretty disgusted . . . because he has a terrible disposition"; and "a very harsh and annoying temper"; "He is too eager to receive courtesies and compliments"; "These habits lead us to distrust and dissatisfaction and obviously it cannot bring good results," etc. However, Fr. Recoder's positive points were mentioned too; he had a good heart, and demanded order and discipline; he certainly abided by whatever suggestion came from his Superiors; he was quite devout, even at times rather exaggerated in his piety. His confreres believed that an official visit from the Visitor might put an end to the ill-feelings of the small Vincentian family in Vigan. No one at
this time seemed to be enjoying good health, perhaps due to the strain of work and mutual relations.\textsuperscript{16}

In the meantime, the good Bishop Aragones who had always supported the Vincentian seminarians, had died in 1872 and the zealous Fr. Moral had been absent since 1874. The two persons who could have restored peace to the community were not around. It is gratifying to note however, that the Vincentians had good relations with the new Bishop of the Diocese, Mariano Cuartero del Pilar, O.R.S.A., who took possession of the See of Vigan on September 24, 1874. Unfortunately, at the end of 1875, some petty but painful friction arose between the superior of the Seminary and the Vicar General, a young priest, fresh from Spain, Dr. Felix Echazarra in whose hands the new Bishop had left the Seminary affairs. A little incident during the feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1875 became the spark which ignited an explosive situation. It was indeed an imprudent action of Fr. Matamala who called back the extern students from the procession. In a period of 4 months, from January to May, 1876, as many as 50 official communications and letters were sent from the Chancery and the Ecclesiastical Governor, Dr. Felix Echazarra, and the Bishop to the Rector. This number did not include the previous stormy correspondence exchanged at the end of the year 1875.

The Manila Provincial was unaware of the situation because Fr. Recoder did not let him know about the trouble. He seems to have decided to let the Seminary go and look for other employment elsewhere, even in Jolo with the Sisters who had gone there to attend to the soldiers in the battlefield. So it was poor Fr. Valentin Matamala, the Vice-Rector, who suffered the brunt of those fiery exchanged letters during the first months of 1876.

Just what was the cause of such an awful situation? There had been introduced in the Seminary certain practices and rules additional or supplementary to the official and approved Rule of the Seminary. None of these practices and supplementary policies had any written approval from the higher Authority of the Diocese. Because these practices had been going on even during the days of Bishop Aragones and of the ecclesiastical Governor, \textit{Sede Vacante}, Fr. Ruperto Alarcon, O.P. it was assumed by everyone that everything was going on alright. Everything was being done in good faith, with tacit or mere verbal approval from the Bishop, without any written instrument to support it. This was the mistake of the good Father Moral. But now he was not there to explain the matter. Furthermore, it was said, that during the term of Fr. Recoder’s rectorate, 1874-1875, some extra contributions were asked from the seminarians, and their families resented it.
In the absence of the Bishop who was then making his Pastoral Visit in the Diocese, the Ecclesiastical Governor, Dr. Echazarra, was delegated to supervise the Book of accounts of the Seminary. Fr. Recoder however, refused to present the Books insisting that a very recent privilege granted by Pope Pius IX on February 28, 1873, exempted the Congregation of the Mission from the intervention of any diocesan deputies in their spiritual and temporal administration of the Seminaries. The Bishop knew, however, that notwithstanding this privilege, the Manila Vincentians still presented their administrative records every month to the Ordinary.

Then, a seminarian, who some years later became one of the schismatic followers of Aglipay, brought some complaints to the Curia. Several official notifications were sent to Fr. Recoder regarding this matter, but Fr. Recoder disregarded them. Finally, Fr. Recoder, the Seminary Rector, was suspended a divinis (i.e., punished with a prohibition to celebrate actions of the sacred ministry). Fr. Recoder however ignored the penalty and continued celebrating Mass in the Fathers’ Oratory within the Seminary. Fortunately, he soon realized his error, and thereafter, he asked for the removal of the suspension.

On January 11, a telegram was sent to Manila informing that all the Vincentians in the diocese had been threatened with a storm of censures. According to the Diocesan Chancellor the Congregation had not been canonically installed in Vigan, or could not present sufficient proofs of it. The official Contract with the former Bishop and an official notification from the same Bishop announcing that he was handing over to the Congregation the Seminary administration, did not seem good enough for the Chancery.

The Provincial, Fr. Orriols, made a canonical visit to the Vincentian community in Vigan on January 17 to 31, 1876. The Bishop had asked him to remove Fr. Recoder; it was decided to transfer him to Cebu and bring to Vigan, in exchange, the Rector of Cebu, Fr. Antonio Farre. Unfortunately, the result of this canonical visit lasted briefly. Another insignificant question, that of the Fr. Secretary’s signature demanded by the Chancellor to be added to the Rector’s signature, brought another burst of emotions. Then came the question of forcing the seminarians in matters of ordinations, and it seems there was some point in it. But what was most painful was the calling to question by the Bishop, instigated by his Chancellor, the canonical establishment of the Congregation in the Diocese of Vigan, notwithstanding the presentation of the Contract between the Congregation and Bishop Aragones. Things went so far that the Bishop ruled that the Seminary Chapel be closed, and that the seminarians could not fulfill their Sunday obligation there. Besides, the ministerial faculties of Fr.
Matamala, the Vice Rector, were recalled once Fr. Recoder was no longer in Vigan.17

The situation became truly unbearable. Fr. Orriols, Visitor of the Philippine Province, wrote a letter dated April 24, 1876, giving a choice to the Bishop of Vigan, either to rescind completely the Contract between the Congregation and the Diocese, or accept with certain conditions a new Rector and Vice-Rector:18

Taking into account all the above mentioned reasons, I request Your Excellency to please declare our Congregation relieved of the commitment contracted with Bishop Aragonés with respect to the Seminary, and give permission to our members to leave, as soon as transportation can be found. Since there are those who enjoy the complete confidence of Your Excellency and can take care of the Seminary, I am asking for the immediate departure of our confreres, to free them from the painful situation in which they find themselves, and from the obligation — according to the Contract — of waiting for some months (that in another normal condition, they would have joyfully satisfied).

If, against what I presume, the decision which I am taking of withdrawing our confreres from the Seminary is against your will and displeases Your Excellency, I would have no objection to leaving them, placing a new Rector and Vice-Rector, as long as:

1) Your Excellency only should govern the Seminary, and this in such a way that the administrator will have a say only in the absence of Your Excellency, in serious and urgent cases.

2) If the Seminary does not have one already, the Fathers will be permitted their own private Oratory with the Blessed Sacrament. This, like the rest of the Establishment, is to be subject to the jurisdiction of the Ordinary.

3) That if the correction of Your Excellency is not sufficient, I should be advised of the faults that our confreres commit. Nobody's ministerial faculties are to be revoked unless he has committed a serious crime which would render him unworthy of such faculties.

4) That our confreres be treated as priests, and if there is a difference of opinion, then you may inform me, so that, in things relating to the Seminary, as long as it is just, I may command them to obey Your Excellency.
The Provincial, Fr. Manuel Orriols, concluded this letter by asking pardon from the Bishop for himself and for other confreres who may have committed some offense.

The letter was hand-carried to Vigan by Fr. Cassaramona, one of the Provincial Councillors, who did his best to iron out the difficulties. But it was a lost cause and so the Seminary had sadly to be given up.

On May 5, 1876, the Vincentians handed over the administration of the Seminary to Fr. Evaristo Abaya and Fr. Martin Giron, the parish priests of the Cathedral and of the town of San Vicente. It was a sad occasion for the confreres deeply felt this first loss of a foundation entrusted to them. It was the Visitor of Madrid, Fr. Maller, who probably felt the full weight of this loss, he who had loved and cared for the Philippine Seminaries. Soon after, in a letter to Fr. Orriols he warned that henceforth, “our confreres should take care not to do anything of importance without written documents” and “they should be attentive to recover, if possible, this Seminary so miserably lost”. It was a source of consolation to the Vincentians, that the Seminary was occasionally offered back to them, but due to lack of personnel, they were never in a position to administer it again. Dr. Echazarra was transferred that same year of 1876 to the Diocese of Jaro as Vicar General.19

The Augustinians succeeded the Vincentians in the Seminary from 1876 to 1882. Then the Recollects took over until 1895 when the Augustinians returned. The Augustinians administered the Seminary until the revolution in 1896.

The four years of Vincentian administration (1872-1876) bore fruit in the ordination of 65 Filipino priests. Unfortunately, 10 out of those 65 priests, later joined the Aglipayan sect.20 This relatively high number of priests turning Aglipayans would seem to reflect unfavorably on their mentors. But it must be remembered that those were days of intense nationalistic fervor especially in the Ilocos region. Besides, the first Aglipayans never thought of reneging from the Catholic faith. Filipinism was the battlecry: 28 priests altogether joined the Filipino independent Church from the diocese of Nueva Segovia, 20 of whom were from Ilocos Norte, the province of Fr. Gregorio Aglipay.

The deeply divisive movement of Aglipay was aggravated when two priests who had been trained under the Vincentians, Fr. Pedro Brillantes of Ilocos Norte and Fr. Pio Romero of Ilocos Sur, joined the movement. Although, they were swept along by the tides of those tumultuous times, however, their presence in the Aglipayan movement was in the end, for the better. Except for the rule on strict obedience to the Pope, Fathers Romero and Brillantes strove for the conservation, in the Aglipayan movement, of the doctrines, dogmas and tenets of the
Roman Catholic Church, especially the doctrine on the Blessed Trinity.\textsuperscript{21}

Fr. Pio Romero acted as Secretary of his diocese beginning December 29, 1898. On March 23, 1899, Aglipay named him as his secretary and successor in case of his death or incapacity.\textsuperscript{22}

Fr. Pedro Brillantes, another alumnus of the Vigan Seminary under the Vincentians, became the first Aglipayan pseudo-Bishop, appointed by Aglipay as Bishop of Ilocos Norte in October 1902. During his installation, he took an oath “to guard inviolate the Catholic Faith, Scripture, Tradition, the Sacraments, the veneration of the Saints and in particular of the Blessed Virgin.”\textsuperscript{23}