Chapter Seven

Time To Grow
(1870-1890)

The Vincentian Philippine Vice-Province Becomes a Province

As we have seen earlier, Fr. Aquino Valdivielso came with the 7th mission in 1870 as representative of the Visitor of Spain; and thus the Philippine Mission was constituted into a Vice-Province. Fr. Manuel Orriols was assigned as Director of the scholastics and novices who came with that mission. The first concern of the Philippine Vincentians was to look for a suitable place for the training of youthful candidates.

The well-known Roxas family, of illustrious ancestry in Manila, was one of the most distinguished benefactors of the Vicentians. The scholastics and novices were brought to one of their houses in San Pedro, Makati (a suburb of Manila), in the town public square (plaza) near the Parish Rectory and the Municipal Hall, at the bank of the Pasig river. This became in fact, the first Vincentian Seminary and Scholasticate in the Philippines. However, since the Fathers were living in Intramuros (the Walled City), it was rather difficult and inconvenient to go all the way to Makati to attend to the needs of the students, so that in March of the following year, 1871, they were transferred to another house in Paco (San Fernando de Dilao) nearer Manila. Brother Fermin Cobisa was called in 1872 from Naga to attend the temporal needs of the Scholasticate.

By 1870, before the arrival of the 7th mission, the number of missionaries had grown to 28, dispersed in the following manner:


With the arrival of the 7th mission, 12 more Vincentians reinforced the existing personnel. It was incredible that the Spanish Province could send so many priests (23) and brothers (7), besides novices and scholastics (10) who were soon to be ordained in scarcely nine such critical years. Ironically, the religious persecution following the Spanish revolution of 1868, was a blessing for the Philippines, enabling the Vincentians to take over practically all the Seminaries in the Islands during their first decade.

Another positive offshoot of the Spanish revolution and of the general disturbances prevailing in Europe, was the raising of the Philippine Vice-Province to the status of an independent and separate Province in the Congregation. Actually, towards November 1871, the Vice-Provincial, Fr. Valdivielso wrote to the Spanish Provincial, Fr. Maller "about the question of a Province." Fr. Moral, one of the pioneers of the mission, had already indicated earlier to Fr. Maller, a similar intent. Everyone believed that the progress of the Mission under the prevailing social and political unrest in Europe, seemed to point out that the time had arrived for this momentous step. Fr. Maller submitted the question to the Most Honored Fr. General with the proposal that the Philippine Vice-Province could and should be erected as an independent Province in the Congregation of the Mission.

After a serious study of the case with his Council, the General Fr. John Baptist Etienne finally issued the constitutional charter of the Philippine Vincentian Province, in a Letter dated December 12, 1871, addressed to the Superior Fr. Aquilino Valdivielso, as follows:

My Dearest Brother,

The Grace of Our Lord be always with us!

The immense distance which separates the Philippines from Spain, and the serious difficulties which such distance occasions for the regular government of the Houses that are established there, and for the relations they ought to maintain with the Visitor of the Province, have been a matter of concern for me, since my duty is to preserve in the Houses the spirit of the Congregation, and to favor the development of their works for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Having pondered the matter earnestly before God, I have resolved, for this purpose, to constitute the Philippines as a distinct (autonomous) Province, and to nominate you as its Visitor; whereby I am sending you the Letters Patent granting you the power to exercise such office.
However, as the situation of this Province places it in different circumstances from those of Europe, and by necessity it has to be in some way dependent on Spain, I have found it necessary to limit the powers of the Visitor of the Philippines, and to put it in the same condition in which the Visitors of the Foreign Missions are placed depending on the Superior General to obtain the personnel and to direct their works. Therefore, you shall govern your Province in accordance to the Rules of the Visitor, with the exception of the following conditions.

1) Since it is customary for the Spanish Government to reach an understanding with the Visitor of Spain for anything concerning the administration of the Philippines, this state of things shall be maintained. Consequently, the Visitor of the Philippines will abstain from any relation with the Government of the Metropolis, and will leave to the Visitor of Spain the duty of dealing with it in all questions concerning the government of your Province and the direction of its works.

2) All decisions or permissions relative to the administration of the Province which are to be asked from the Superior General, shall be transmitted through the Visitor of Spain.

3) He should come to an understanding with the Visitor of Spain regarding the personnel he might need to fulfill the demands of the Houses in his Province.

4) Without proper authorization by the Visitor of Spain, unless there is an urgent need, no subject employed in his Province will be sent back to Spain.

5) He will not establish an Internal Seminary (Novitiate) without express concession from the Superior General and the knowledge of the Visitor of Spain.

6) In case an Internal Seminary (Novitiate) is established, all individuals formed therein will belong to the Philippine Province, and they cannot be sent to Spain without permission of the Superior General and the knowledge of the Visitor of Spain.

7) He will not accept new establishments without the permission of the Superior General and he will not increase the personnel of the existing establishments without authorization of the Visitor of Spain.
8) Since the Philippine Province is not able to get personnel besides those sent by the Visitor of Spain, it should help in the expenses needed for this purpose. Thus, the Philippine Province will send to Spain every year the remainder of all earnings of all the Houses. Only the Visitor will keep an emergency fund. The amount of this fund should be agreed upon by both Visitors. Consequently, the Visitor of the Philippines will send every year to Spain an honest and exact account of income and expense in each House of his Province and the status of the emergency fund.

As soon as you receive this Letter you will tell me who among the confreres may constitute the Provincial Council, and whom you would prefer to become Admonitor and Provincial Procurator.

I trust that this organization of your mission will be favorable for the success of its works and the prosperity of its enterprises. In case you may be called to take part in the Assemblies of the Congregation, you will enjoy the faculty of holding elections to choose the Delegates to be sent. To this end, I ask you to get acquainted well with our Constitutions.

As you are the first Visitor of your Province, I am fervently praying that you may establish good traditions in accordance with the spirit of St. Vincent, in order to assure a prosperous future.¹

A few days later, Fr. Etienne announced the news to the whole Congregation about the establishment of the new Philippine Province with the following statement:

They already form a Province of the Company, called to harvest abundant fruits of salvation. The misfortunes that have afflicted our Province of Spain, have served to give life to a new Province, which in no way is the least interesting of our Congregation.²

Both the Letter to Fr. Valdivielso and the Circular to the whole Congregation did not arrive in the Philippines at once; and even after receiving them, the appointed first Provincial did not announce the good news immediately to the community. There was in fact a serious obstacle unforeseen by the General, and he wished to solve it first.
Fr. Valdivielso felt himself unable to discharge the duties of the office, on account of his health, among other reasons. Since the time he arrived in the Philippines, he had been suffering from nervous attacks which at times even prevented him from celebrating the Mass.

On March 2, 1872, he wrote to Fr. Maller, the Visitor of Spain, and to the Superior General, Fr. Etienne, declining the office entrusted to him and avowing his incapacity to fulfill it. In view of the situation, Fr. General accepted his resignation, and appointed, instead of him Fr. Diego Salmeron to be Visitor of the Philippine Province. In the minutes of the domestic Council of the House of Manila, on July 29, 1872 the Letters Patent for Fr. Salmeron as Superior of that community and Visitor of the Philippines were publicly read. Fr. Salmeron in true obedience accepted the dignity conferred on him. The news was kept secret until it was communicated to the Ecclesiastical Authority. It was in such manner that the Philippines was constituted as a distinct Vincentian Province, known then as the Province of Manila.

At the time of its establishment in 1872, the Philippine Province had 46 Vincentians: 27 priests, 9 professed scholastics, and 10 Brothers, distributed in all the five Seminaries of the country, as follows (parenthesis, arrival year).


**Naga:** Fr. Antonio Santonja ('65), Fr. Santiago Serrallonga ('65), Fr. Francisco Masferrer ('68), Fr. Manuel Casado ('69), Fr. Blas M. Montañés ('69), Bro. Pablo Barceló ('68) and Bro. Cándido Gonzales ('72).

**Cebu:** Fr. Antonio Farre ('66), Fr. Gabino López ('66), Fr. Francisco Potellas ('66), Fr. Jose L. Goicoechea ('68), Fr. Miguel Pedrós ('68), Fr. Fernando La Canal ('69), Fr. Juan Espelt ('69), Fr. Juan Jaume ('70), Bro. Antonio del Río ('65) and Bro. Gabriel Tarrasa ('68).

**Jaro:** Fr. Aniceto Gonzales ('69), Fr. Joaquín Jaume ('66), Fr. Juan Miralda ('69), Fr. Rufino Martín ('70), Bro. Francisco López ('69) and Bro. Mateo Gómez ('72).

**Vigan:** Fr. Ildefonso Moral ('62), Fr. Valentín Maramala (69), Fr. Jose Recorder ('72) and Bro. Miguel García ('68).

The name at the head of each community is that of the Superior of the House. The Scholastics by that time were: Julian Ilheru, Francisco Jarero, Rafael del Río, Francisco Saez, Juan Santandreu, Marcelo Vazquez, Jorge Coll, Domingo Viera, and Narciso Vila. The 8th mission arrived in the Philippines on February 14, 1872, and was composed
Vincentians During The Spanish Regime

of Fr. Jose Recoder, and Brothers Cándido Gonzáles, Vicente Navarro and Mateo Gómez.

It may be a mere coincidence, but it is significant that the Vincentian Mission was established as a distinct, independent Province in the Congregation in 1872, exactly ten years after the arrival of the Vincentians in the Philippines. And it was also in that year, 1872, when the fateful Cavite revolt and the lamentable execution of the national heroes, Fathers José Burgos, Mariano Gómez and Jacinto Zamora took place, marking a turning point in Philippine history. These patriotic priests who died for the cause of the Filipino native clergy, caught the imagination of the people in their struggle for freedom. They symbolized the efforts to raise the status of the Filipino secular clergy so as to attain the rights due to them. This was precisely the proposed aim and earnest endeavour of the Vincentians working then in all the Philippine Seminaries. It was also precisely at this juncture that these Vincentians were raised to the status of an independent Province in the Congregation of the Mission.

Fr. Diego Salmerón

As already mentioned, the first working Visitor of the new Province of Manila was the Very Rev. Fr. Diego Salmerón, appointed instead of Fr. Valdivielso who had declined his appointment. Fr. Salmeron, however, died after only 2 years office. Fr. Diego Salmerón was a Mexican, born in Xalapa, Puebla de los Angeles, in 1847. When the Spanish Provincial Fr. Sanz went to Paris for the General Assembly of 1861, he took Fr. Salmerón as his companion, though he was not a participant in the Assembly. Again with Fr. Sanz, he returned to Madrid. In Spain, he worked on the instruction and education of the young Scholastics, as well as in other various ministries, such as giving Spiritual Exercises to the members of the “Conferencias” (Society) of St. Vincent de Paul. Fr. Sanz had a great esteem for Fr. Salmerón, and he corresponded faithfully to such favor. When Fr. Sanz was relieved from his office of Visitor in 1866, Fr. Salmerón came to the Philippines with the 5th mission. They arrived in Manila on March 25, 1866. Fr. Salmerón was assigned to the San Carlos Seminary of Manila. He acted as Councillor of the Superiors, Fr. Farré and Fr. Valdevielso, until he was appointed, (instead of Fr. Valdivielso,) first Provincial Visitor of the Philippine Vincentians.

He governed the Province for two years only. On July 7, 1874, he left Manila, together with Fathers Valdivielso and Moral, to take part in the General Assembly at Paris. After that, he submitted his resignation from the office, and was assigned back to his Province of origin,
México. But before leaving, the pious missionary asked the Fr. General to allow him to make the Spiritual Exercises at the Mother House. He piously made his Retreat; and on the last day, November 13, 1874, he died in the Lord's peace at the Mother House in Paris. He was gratefully remembered by the Philippine Vincentians as well as by other priests who came to know him during his stay in the Seminary of Manila.

**A new Provincial**

The following year, 1875, the Very Rev. Fr. Manuel Orriols was appointed to succeed Fr. Salmeron as Visitor of the Philippine Province. He was only 39 years old when he became Provincial; and he remained in the office during the remaining period of the Spanish regime, as well as the first years of the America regime, a total of 27 years (1875-1905). It may be said that to him belongs the story of the Vincentian Philippine Province during the last quarter of the 19th century, a period of vitality and maturity marked with steady progress and precious achievements, interrupted only, for a time, by the stormy winds of the revolution.

When Fr. Orriols took over the helm of the Province, his ship made good progress although sometimes sailing on rough seas. It was indeed at the beginning of his Provincialate that the Seminary of Vigan was lost to the Vincentians in 1876. Still, they worked actively and to the full satisfaction of the respective Bishops in the Seminaries of Jaro, Cebu, Naga and Manila. Even the Holy See showed special favor for the Seminaries run by the Vincentians. In a Brief of February 28, 1873, Pope Pius IX granted, upon request of the Fr. General, the privilege of administering and directing the Seminaries entrusted to them by the Ordinaries, “with full freedom from any intervention of Diocesan deputies both in spiritual as in temporal matters.” (see Appendix 16) This was a well deserved recognition of the fruitful services rendered by the Congregation of the Mission in 34 Major Seminaries and 22 Minor Seminaries all over the world, at the beginning of 1873. But it seems that three years later in Vigan, the ecclesiastical authorities were not acquainted with the papal concession. The Vigan Vincentians were not entirely free from blame either. Nevertheless, the loss served as a lesson for the future, and a salutary stimulus to quicken the zeal of those laboring unselfishly in the other Seminaries.

Fr. General ordered Fr. Valdivielso to remain behind in Spain. The Letters Patent for the new Visitor were thus brought from Paris by Fr. Moral, upon his return from the General Assembly of 1874. Fr. Manuel Orriols took his oath of office as new Visitor of the Philippine
Province on February 22, 1875; but he left the office of Director of the Sisters to Fr. Velasco, until this last departed for Spain in the same year. The practice until the mid-20th century was that the Vincentian Visitor became at the same time Director of the Daughters of Charity.

Fr. Manuel Orriols

Fr. Manuel Orriols was born in Prats de Rey, Diocese of Vich, of the province of Barcelona on July 3, 1836. After studying Humanities in the Seminary of Vich, he joined the Congregation of the Mission on July 14, 1853 at the age of 17. He belonged to that promising generation of young candidates during the period of restoration which caused so much joy to Fr. Sanz. Ordained priest on July 15, 1860, he was assigned for two years in the Seminary of Badajoz, as Procurator, Assistant to the Superior, and “ad interim” Superior, when he was only 26 years of age. Then he was transferred to Madrid, and appointed Director of Novices and Scholastics in 1862. When the first mission to the Philippines departed, he also became the Secretary of the Visitor, Fr. Sanz, until the revolution of 1867-1868 when he was forced to leave Spain, and had to go to France with a group of novices and scholastics under his care. With them, he came to the Philippines in 1870 and under his wise guidance the young candidates finished their missionary formation. Fr. Orriols was in fact the first Master of novices and Director of scholastics in the Philippine Province. He was indeed the most qualified to become the successor of the first Provincial Visitor, Fr. Salmeron, in 1875; and he proved it during the long quarter of a century he remained in the office.

A Place of Their Own

For 14 years the Vincentian Fathers were scattered in the Philippine Seminaries without any house of their own. However, there were some confreres who were not directly involved in the training of seminarians, and were in charge of other functions, as that of chaplains and directors of the Daughters of Charity. Even the Provincial had no place of his own. In those days, he was supposed to be, at the same time, Rector of the San Carlos Seminary of Manila. Thus noticeably, the records of the seminarians’ marks from 1876 up to June 1889 were signed by the Vincentian Visitor, Fr. Orriols. This was not, however, an ideal situation. At least in Manila, the Vincentians needed a home of their own. This became a nagging problem, especially vis-a-vis the increasing demand for an increase of personnel.

With this problem in mind, Fr. Valdivielso, as far back as June 22,
1871, wrote Fr. Maller, the Visitor of Spain, about the necessity of having “our own house,” and “the offer of a land for it, which they offer me”; and “the convenience of separating it from the Seminary, and making it the Central House in these islands.” On November 6, he insisted on “a House of the Province.”6 By that time the Philippine Vincentian Vice-Province was about to be raised to the rank of an independent Province.

The Philippine Province was established on December 12, 1871; Fr. Diego Salmeron became the first Visitor on July 29, 1872; he died on November 13, 1874 after the General Assembly held in Paris; and Fr. Manuel Orriols became the second Visitor on February 22, 1875.

One of the first urgent problems placed before Fr. Orriols was again “whether it would be convenient to rent a country house (casa de campo) for the two members of the community that were not needed in the Seminary (of Manila), so that they could retire there.” By May 13, 1875, they resolved “to buy a lot of around 60,000 square meters in Paco for the country house,” close to what is now San Marcelino Street.7 The actual boundaries would have been, San Marcelino on the East; Estero de Balete, a tributary to the Pasig river, on the North; General Luna Street on the West; and Isaac Peral (now, United Nations Avenue) on the South. A little later, they were also offered the so-called “house of the Dean” (possibly, the present isla de Provvisor), but it was too expensive, and so it was not bought. The lot of San Marcelino was bought under the name of Fr. Casarramona; but in 1877 before he returned to Spain, it was legally ceded to the Congregation.

The Vincentians felt grateful and fond of their newly acquired lot. On July 28, 1876, before making any final decision about it, they asked the Spanish Visitor, Fr. Maller, “whether it might be convenient to start a College of Secondary Education in the Country House (Casa de Campo).”8 They thought that it was premature to open a public Chapel; so they put up a provisional private oratory, using two rooms suitable for the purpose on the upper floor.

As the land was quite large, they rented a parcel of the lot to some Chinese folk for an orchard and for planting rice. Near the house, they had a small farm, appropriate for raising cattle or poultry to serve the needs of the Seminary; but, after some hesitation, they did not proceed with the idea, because of the difficulties and even troubles it could bring about.

In 1878, they started some additional construction works in the Country House, raising it up two yards higher, buying a nearby lot from the property of a certain Mr. Reyes, at the rather expensive price of ₱2,500. This was necessary to minimize the danger of fire. The construction was finished in July, and the Archbishop of Manila, Pedro
Payo, O.P., blessed the Country House of San Marcelino on the octave of the feast of St. Vincent (July 26, 1878). So great was the rejoicing of the Vincentians of that day, that as a souvenir, they took some photos of the celebration, something quite extraordinary in those days.

Everybody wished to improve the new Country House. They were not satisfied till they had a garden, and a fountain with its waterspout and basin to sprinkle and adorn the property. But above all, they were most concerned in having a public Oratory for the service of the people of the expanding town of Paco in the neighborhood. They actually converted a storehouse into a Chapel open to the faithful. Years after, in 1883, they studied “a design for the decoration and adornment that could be made in the hall of the House of Paco, so as to transform it into a decent little church.” Such were the first attempts that were to crystallize some 30 years later in the artistic Church of St. Vincent de Paul, erected in 1912, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the Vincentians in the Philippines.

The Vincentian “Casa de Campo” a Retreat House

The Country House in the outskirts of the city proper, quite retired as it was, served at the beginning as a resting place for Priests and Seminarians of the Archdiocesan Seminary of Manila and also as a center for Spiritual Exercises or Retreats for laymen. There were always residing in the House some Fathers and one or two Lay Brothers to attend to the spiritual and material needs of the faithful who went there.

About a month after its inauguration, the Vincentian “Casa de Campo” in San Marcelino began the precious apostolate of Spiritual Exercises for the laity. On September 1, 1878, Fr. Ildefonso Moral directed the first course of Spiritual Exercises for retreatants. The Provincial Fr. Orriols remarked in his diary, for September 7th thus: “it seems that some fruit has come from it.” A second course was given by come Fr. Moral on October 29, 1878 to some 55 lay retreatants. These two retreat courses were given in Spanish but by that time there were already some Vincentians, notably Fr. Jose Lopez de Goicoechea, who spoke Tagalog well.

Hence, on June 29, 1879, the group of 85 retreatants who came to San Marcelino was divided into two sections; one, the Spanish speaking people, under Fr. Ildefonso Moral; and the other, the Tagalog speaking folks, under Fr. Goicoechea. On October 19 Fr. Goicoechea did it in Tagalog. There were 180 retreatants. Before starting the Retreat both missionaries went to Archbishop Payo to ask his blessing. The Archbishop was so well impressed with this apostolate that he requested to be informed of the Communion day at the end of
the Retreat so that he could go personally and himself distribute Holy Communion to the retreatants. And so he did at the closing of the Retreat. Everybody was therefore enthusiastic about this strictly Vincentian ministry. The Provincial, Fr. Orriols, recorded in his Diary: "Thanks be to God, a great deal of good has been done."!

A fifth retreat course, exclusively for 102 Tagalog speaking retreatants, was given on November 30 of 1879 by Fr. Goicoechea. From February 22 to 28, of 1880, Fr. Gabino Lopez (for the Spanish group) helped Fr. Goicoechea (for the Tagalog section) in directing the Spiritual Exercises for 106 retreatants. So that, all in all, during the first two years of the "Casa de Campo" in San Marcelino, six retreat courses were given to a total of 548 retreatants.

Furthermore, the members of the "Conferencias" (Society) of St. Vincent de Paul began to make their Monthly Recollection day in the "Casa de Campo" of San Marcelino, in August 1879. Despite some difficulty, at their own earnest request they continued to hold Monthly Recollections from that time on.

When the San Carlos Seminary was transferred to the Country House of San Marcelino, after the earthquake of July 1880 the Lay Retreat Apostolate had to be interrupted for lack of room to accommodate the retreatants. Then, came the terrible cholera epidemic of 1882 (in Manila, from August 19 to December 12) with a death toll in the city, 13,377. Unfortunately, Fr. Goicoechea, the first Vincentian preacher of Tagalog missions, fell sick. He was forced to leave the Philippines on June 15, 1883; and he died in Madrid on October 9 of that same year 1883.

The Lay Retreat Apostolate was resumed by Fr. Francisco Potellas, who was the only one to remain in the House of San Marcelino. During a full decade, from the retreat of May 11, 1884 to that of September 16, 1894, Fr. Potellas directed groups of laymen in their Spiritual Exercises, almost every month of the year, except December, March and April, due to the celebrations of Christmas, Holy Week and Easter. People, not only from Manila and suburbs, but from neighboring towns, as Pasay, Taguig, Polo, Meycawayan, Mandaluyong, Obando, Paranaque, etc., flocked to the "Casa de Campo" of San Marcelino, at times in groups of some hundred persons. During this decade (1884-1894) the retreatants from the provinces, were 2,700; from Manila and suburbs, 417. If to these are added those of the first period (1878-1880) the total number of retreatants in San Marcelino was 3,665.

The influence of masonic and revolutionary propaganda during the '90s brought down the number of retreatants. But this was compensated, in some way, by 9 Spiritual Retreats given to some 97 Diocesan Priests during the years '92, '93 and '94. Unfortunately, due to the
calamity of the times, this precious Vincentian function of Spiritual Retreats for the laity or for priests, in the “Casa de Campo” of San Marcelino, came practically to an end with the death of the zealous missionary, Fr. Francisco Potellas, on July 17, 1895.13

Personnel Reinforcement in 1871-1890

Slowly but steadily, the Spanish Province continued to send during these two decades more missionaries to provide, as far as possible, the urgent needs of the Philippine Province. Here are the various missions, with the date of their arrival:14

10th mission: May 8, 1876: Fr. Melquiades Caño.
16th mission: December 23, 1887: Fr. Venancio Saiz Mata and Fr. Luis de la Iglesia.

Faithful Servants Recalled15

During the two decades 1871-1890 the Philippine Province lost several Fathers and Brothers, through death or by transfer back to Spain. The memory of these good and faithful laborers in this portion of the Lord’s vineyard should not be forgotten in history. “All these were
honoured in their generation, and were the glory of their times. There are some of them who have left a name so that men declare their praises... Their posterity will continue for ever, and their glory will not be blotted out. Their bodies were buried in peace and their name lives in all generations.” (Sir 44: 7-8; 13-14)

The first Vincentian missionary to die in the Philippines was the pioneer Brother Caodjutor Romualdo Lopez who came in the company of the first Philippine Vincentians, Fr. Velasco, Fr. Moral, and Bro. Perez on July 22, 1862. After 9 years of humble and silent service in the San Carlos Seminary of Manila, at the old San Ignacio building of Intramuros (corner of Victoria and Palacio, later Gral. Luna streets), during which he experienced the terror of the 1863 earthquake, and the joy of witnessing the rapid expansion of the Little Company in the remote dioceses of Nage, Cebu and Jaro (in 1865, 1866, and 1868 respectively), he peacefully slept in the Lord on May 30, 1871.

Two years later, a young priest, Fr. Rufino Martin who, having arrived in Manila with many other ordinands on November 1, 1870, and having been assigned to Jaro by January 1871 after working in the Seminary of St. Vincent Ferrer of Jaro for just a little over two years, died in that Seminary on March 30, 1873.

The following year, on August 6, 1874, another Vincentian, Bro. Vicente Navarro, who arrived in the Philippines on February 14, 1872, and after serving two years and a half in the San Carlos Seminary of Manila, passed away also to his reward.

The year 1875 marked the loss for the Vincentians of their first benefactor, the Archbishop of Manila, Most Rev. Gregorio Meliton Martinez, as well as their beloved Founder and first Superior, Fr. Gregorio Velasco, whose lives were in some providential ways so closely intertwined. Both of them arrived in Manila in the same year 1862, and both of them left this city for Spain, in the same year 1875.

*Fr. Gregorio Velasco* 16

Fr. Gregorio Velasco was born in the town of Arroyal, province of Burgos, Spain, in the year 1816. At the age of 16, he entered the Seminary of Burgos where he was admired for his intelligence and more still for his virtue. While still a student of Moral Theology, Cardinal Fuentes, Archbishop of Burgos, chose him for domestic assistant, and after his ordination, for his secretary, granting him some ecclesiastical dignity in the Cathedral Chapter.

His zeal, however, did not incline him to canonical prebends, and so, at his own request, he was assigned, at the age of 30, to become parish priest of the town of Sotrarejo. There he worked for some time as
a true apostle; but, fearing the responsibilities of pastoral life, he decided to work more safely and more efficaciously for the salvation of souls, as a religious.

By that time, the Congregation of the Mission of St. Vincent de Paul was reestablished in Spain by virtue of the Concordat of 1851 with the Holy See (Arts. 29-30); and then, by order of Queen Isabel II on October 19, 1852 (Arts. 9-10). Fr. Velasco knew very well the nature and aims pursued by the Congregation for the evangelization of the poor, and so, unhesitatingly he asked and obtained admission among the Vincentians on December 15, 1852, at the age of 36. According to records, he was the first Vincentian native of Burgos admitted in the Congregation. His exemplary conduct and zeal as a diocesan priest of Burgos, was probably the moving cause for many to follow him. In less than six years, there were a dozen Vincentian priests and seminarians from Burgos, although the Congregation did not have any residence in Burgos until 1888. Among those who followed Fr. Velasco were Fathers Valdivielso, Diez, Marcos, Gomez, Moral and several others. In half a century, more than 500 Vincentians from Burgos had been counted.

After finishing his novitiate, he was appointed assistant master of novices who was to carry on practically the whole burden of the office since the Director of novices was quite old and sickly. But his vocation was decidedly for the missions. Thus he was assigned to preach popular missions in the Archdiocese of Toledo; and he did it with such zeal and success that big crowds flocked to listen to his sermons and to witness the virtuous deeds of the fervent apostle of the poor. Many years later, Brother Fermin Cobisa, a Vincentian coadjutor in the house of San Marcelino, could still recall in his old age of the missions preached by Fr. Velasco and his companion Fr. Esteban that he attended when still a layman.

In 1862, upon the request of the newly elected Archbishop of Manila, Most Reverend Gregorio Meliton Martinez, his namesake who was also from Burgos like him and had been his companion in the Seminary, and wished to count on his help in the remote islands. Fr. Gregorio Velasco was chosen to be the Founder and first superior of the Vincentian Mission to the Philippines. Leaving Spain on March 5, he arrived in Manila on July 22, and was joyfully welcomed by the Manila Archbishop who having been installed just two months before, on May 27, chose him at once as his confessor, adviser and confidant in the affairs and problems of the Archdiocese.

Fifteen days after his arrival, he took over, with Fr. Ildefonso Moral and Brothers Romualdo Lopez and Gregorio Perez, the administration and direction of the San Carlos Seminary of Manila. At the
same time, he was in charge of the direction of the 15 Daughters of Charity working in the Philippines. Although he was better known by the seminarians who esteemed him as a truly dedicated and holy priest, his fame as a wise and prudent guide of souls was soon spread around, and many high ecclesiastics and priests frequented his room for confession or to seek advise in their problems of conscience.

In spite of his modesty which inclined him to reserve and restraint from social affairs, his charity and zeal impelled him to overspend himself in the succor of the injured during the earthquake of 1863 and the cholera epidemic of 1864. Fr. Velasco proved to be truly, as St. Vincent wished his missionaries to become, "a carthusian at home, and an apostle in the village." When, on the occasion of the 1863 earthquake, the Manila Archbishop decided to give a mission in the San Agustin church (the only one that was not seriously damaged in the city) the preaching of the mission was entrusted to the only two Vincentian Fathers in the country, Fr. Gregorio Velasco and Fr. Ildefonso Moral. Those who attended it could still remember after many long years the admiration generated by Fr. Velasco among the people of Manila, both religious and secular clergy as well as laymen, for the depth of his theological knowledge and especially for the evangelical unction of his simple and popular language. This was the first popular mission given by the Vincentians only a year after their arrival in the Philippines.

Fr. Velasco was Superior by full right (pleno iure) of the Vincentians, Rector and Professor of the San Carlos Seminary of Manila and Director of the Daughters of Charity in the Philippines for three years, from 1862 to 1865. The burden was too heavy for his shoulders. On July 21, 1863, he asked and insisted on being relieved of at least part of his many responsibilities. He wrote to the Spanish Provincial Fr. Sanz and to the General Fr. Etienne about this matter. He suggested them to let the young priest Fr. Moral (then 28 years old, while he was 47 already) teach Moral Theology, and even assign him as Director of the Daughters of Charity an office that kept him outside the Seminary often. Everyday, he had to walk, at least once, some four kilometers from Intramuros to the Sisters' House at La Concordia, and then return back the same distance. But the Superiors in Madrid and Paris did not heed such appeals and requests; probably they could not find a better replacement.

When Fr. Casarramona arrived in November, 1863 he alleviated Fr. Velasco, a little by taking over the class of Moral Theology. But this was not enough. On October 23, 1864, he insisted once more to be relieved from the office of Superior; on December 7, he wrote, "my soul is in danger if I were to continue in the office." On January 3,
1865, he presented his resignation to the General, asking to be relieved "on account of his incapacity," and he wrote the same thing to Fr. Sanz. But the constant answer was always the same: "for the time being, your resignation cannot be accepted." On November 6, Fr. Sanz consoled him by appointing Fr. Casarramona as Sub-Director and Confessor of the Sisters, whenever Fr. Velasco might be absent; also he was granted to have Fr. Moral as his assistant in the Seminary, although the latter was rather sickly. But at all costs the Superiors in Madrid and Paris wanted to keep Fr. Velasco at the head of the Philippine Mission. They were convinced that this would suffer a great loss with the resignation of Fr. Velasco.

Things came to the extreme when Fr. Velasco pondered seriously the possibility of leaving the Congregation to join the Carmelite Order. Some solution was imperative. By the end of 1865, Fr. Casarramona was finally appointed Superior of the Manila Vincentians. But soon after, Fr. Casarramona, by January 1867, had to leave for Cebu as Rector of the Seminary recently entrusted to the Vincentians. Fr. Velasco was forced to continue for three years more working as before with respect to the Missionaries; and similarly with respect to the Sisters.

Finally with the arrival of the 7th Vincentian mission on November 1, 1870 came the Letters Patent appointing Fr. Aquilino Valdivielso Vice-Visitor of the Philippine Mission. From that moment, he was relieved from the office of Superior of the Vincentians and Sub-Director of the Daughters of Charity in the Philippines. He still remained as Councillor and Assistant of the Vice-Visitor, and for five years more he continued his apostolate, particularly to the seminarians of San Carlos, and the Sisters in the hospitals and schools they administered. In 1875, the Superiors recalled him to the Central House of Madrid, where he continued working as Councillor to the Provincial and attending to the direction of the Sisters in their Central House in the capital of Spain. He edified those communities with his virtues for 16 years until he was called to his eternal reward on May 11, 1891. He died in Madrid, at the age of 75, with 39 years of Vincentian vocation, and 13 years spent in the Philippines where he was loved and revered as the Founder of the Vincentian mission in the country.

Fr. Julián Illera¹⁷

A Vincentian martyr of charity, Fr. Julian Illera, during the cholera epidemic of 1882 worked zealously with other two Fathers of the Jaro Seminary, who, like him, could speak the Visayan dialect, went around the towns in the neighborhood of Jaro, visiting and attending to the
unfortunates. After 20 days of strenuous work among the victims of the infectious malady, Fr. Julian Illera got sick and died in the peace of the Lord on August 20, 1882 at 11 o’clock in the evening. He was only 34 years old, and rendered 13 years of service in the Vincentian vocation. He arrived in the Philippines on November 1, 1870, worked for 3 years in the Seminary of Manila, and then 10 years in the Seminary of Jarro.

On November 9, 1883, Brother Candido Gonzalez died in the Vincentian House of Los Milagros, Orense, Spain, after working from 1872 to 1874 in the Seminary of Naga, and from 1874 to 1883 in the Seminary of Jarro. He was 33 years of age with 15 years of Vincentian vocation.

On August 30, 1885, Fr. Ramon Molinas died at the early age of 26 in the Seminary of Jarro where he arrived the previous year and after having worked one year in Cebu (1883-1884). He arrived in the Philippines on October 15, 1883; he entered the Congregation at the age of 20.

On November 16 of the same year, 1885, another pioneer of the Vincentian missions in the Philippines, Brother Gregorio Perez died in the peace of the Lord at the age of 46, with 27 years of Vincentian vocation, and 23 years of silent and humble work in the San Carlos Seminary of Manila. He arrived in the Philippines with Fathers Velasco and Moral and Brother Lopez on July 22, 1862.

Fr. Ildefonso Moral

On July 1, 1885, Fr. Ildefonso Moral fellow pioneer with Father Velasco and Brothers Lopez and Perez of the Vincentian mission, and tireless founder and organizer of the Seminaries in Manila, Naga, Jarro and Vigan, was summoned by his Superiors on account of his failing health, and left the Philippines he loved so well to continue his apostolic works in Spain. Fr. Moral was born on January 22, 1835 in the town of Anaya of the province and diocese of Burgos. At the age of 13, he entered the Seminary of Burgos where he followed the ecclesiastical courses until the 5th Year of Theology, with the best academic grades in all subjects. He got the degree of Bachelor in Theology, and was intending to proceed to the Licentiate and Doctorate, when the Archbishop of Burgos, Cardinal Alameda y Bea, O.F.M., recently elected Archbishop of Toledo and Primate of Spain, chose the young cleric Ildefonso Moral, of 23 years of age, to go with him as his household attendant. In Toledo, by 1858, he finished the 6th Year of Theology and was about to prepare for the academic degrees, when much to the surprise of all, he decided to leave the bright prospects of a successful ecclesiastical career in order to enter, with some other fellow
seminarians from Burgos, the Congregation of the Mission on July 15 of that same year 1858.

His favorite authors, from the Seminary years in Burgos, were St. Theresa, St. John of the Cross, Fray Luis de Leon, and Fray Luis de Granada. Inspired with such solid doctrine, he advanced steadily on the paths of Christian perfection during his novitiate. He made his Vincentian vows on July 16, 1860; was ordained Subdeacon and Deacon in September and December respectively, and received the Priestly Ordination on March 16, 1861, at the age of 26.

The Superiors, aware of Father Moral's capacity, planned to place him at the head of the Novitiate. And for this purpose, they sent him to the Mother House of the Congregation in Paris, to get acquainted with the sound customs, traditions and practices of the Vincentian communities. But God's designs for him were different.

By that time the double family of St. Vincent was soon to be established in a new mission, in far away Philippines. A carefully chosen personnel was imperative for a good start. As we have seen, Father Gregorio Velasco and Father Ildefonso Moral were selected to be the cornerstones of the Philippine Vincentian Mission. They arrived in Manila on July 22, 1862. They were installed in the San Carlos Seminary of Manila on August 2. There were 50 seminarians. At the beginning, they could attend only to the spiritual direction and discipline of the clerical students, and could only help them in reviewing their lessons of Moral Theology taken up in the University of Santo Tomas. Twice a week, they trained the seminarians in liturgical rubrics. By September of that year, they gave the first Retreat for Ordinands and other diocesan priests. To these regular ministries in the Seminary were added other calls outside: confessions in the Hospitals, (San Juan de Dios and Real) last Sacraments to dying persons, etc. Furthermore, they were planning and getting ready to give Conferences to the secular clergy, together with popular missions among Spanish speaking people of the neighboring towns.

At the beginning of 1863, in just half a year, they had already directed three Retreats for Ordinands, besides the ministries offered to the Daughters of Charity and the poor under their care. Fr. Moral was allowed by the Provincial of Spain, Fr. Sanz, to become the Master of a novice (most probably, one of the Filipino seminarians of San Carlos) who had requested to join the Congregation of the Mission. In accordance with the spirit of the holy Founder, they were encouraged to give regularly some alms to the beggars, up to 5% of all their meager earnings. However, they were told not to accept the chaplainship of the Hospitals (Real and San Juan de Dios, which they were urged to take over) without the approval of the Visitor of Spain, because, at least for
the time being, this was not possible, in view of the main duties they were bound to, according to the Contract with the Government (namely, the direction of the Philippines Seminaries and of the Daughters of Charity).

During the earthquake of June 3, 1863, Fr. Moral and Fr. Velasco came out tirelessly and zealously to rescue the victims from amidst the ruins, and to attend spiritually and corporally with other religious, to the injured and the dying. By the end of 1863, after the arrival of Fr. Casarramona and Fr. Serra, Fr. Moral was assigned to teach Moral Theology in the Manila Seminary. This was the only main subject the Fathers were allowed to give in the Seminary, together with Sacred Liturgy and Gregorian Chant. The rest of the subjects were taken at the University of Santo Tomas..

After three years, however, upon an urgent request of the Rector, Fr. Velasco, and with full approval of his Archdiocesan Consultors, the Archbishop of Manila decreed on July 26, 1865 that a chair of Dogmatic Theology be established in the Seminary, not for attaining any academic degree, but rather to prepare practically and safely the future priests for their ministry of preaching the Gospel and teaching the Catholic doctrine without any danger of errors. The textbook was the work of Puig y Xarrie. This change was certainly an improvement and an attraction for the candidates’ training.

During the school year 1864-1865 when Moral Theology alone was given in the Seminary, the number of students was only 26, i.e., about a half of those 50 found in 1862-1863. Specifically, of those students, six were priests; three deacons; three “habitantas” (already vested with the cassock). Once, the Dogmatic Theology was introduced in the Seminary, and the following school year 1865-1866, the students enrolled in Dogma were 45, those studying Moral were 11. Among the students of Dogma, three were in the Seminary since 1863; nine since 1864; five since 1865 before the establishment of the Dogma class in the Seminary. All the others, that is, 28, were newcomers. Obviously, as the Fathers foresaw, the number of seminarians increased when greater facilities were provided in the Seminary itself.

However, such success was not to be enjoyed any more by Fr. Moral who worked for it. It seems that the mission of this good Father was to start and organize the Philippine Seminaries, and once on the march, to let them grow and run their own course under others. In that same year, when the Manila Seminary was to take its true shape with the establishment of the Dogmatic Theology course in it, Fr. Moral was assigned as Rector of the Naga Seminary recently entrusted to the Vincentians. On April 25, 1865, he left Manila and arrived in Naga on May 3, with Fr. Santonja, Fr. Serrallonga and Brother del Rio. In Naga,
he taught again the course of Theology. The Seminary was at the same time a College, with the courses of Humanities (High School) Latin and Philosophy, with a Preparatory course for beginners before starting the Latin.

Soon Fr. Moral was appointed by Bishop Gainza, with the approval, after some hesitancy, of the Vincentian Superiors, as Chancellor and Vicar General of the Diocese. But Fr. Moral was very reluctant to accept any position, implying some ecclesiastical dignity which he had renounced by his Vincentian vocation. The Superiors succeeded in convincing him that there was no question of honor or dignities, but rather of more apostolic work in the service of the Church. He was also given charge of the Cathedral Rectory and Sacristy, in which work he was often helped and relieved by the other Seminary Fathers. Still more, the Fathers were appointed Synodal Examiners of the clergy for the ministerial faculties.

Fr. Moral felt himself overwhelmed with the great and many responsibilities and insistently presented his resignation from the office of Rector to his Superiors. He has been always rather weak and sickly; but now he was feeling exhausted. After three years of strenuous labor in Naga, Fr. Moral was given a respite with a call in 1867 to attend the Provincial Assembly of the Congregation in Madrid. So after almost a year of vacation in Europe, he returned to Naga. For about a year and a half, he continued his work as founder and organizer of that Seminary, until the end of 1869 when by mid-November, he left Fr. Santonja as his substitute ad interim in the office of Rector, and with the Bishop's consent, he proceeded to Jaro to start organizing a new Seminary entrusted to the Vincentians there.

At the beginning, he was not sent to Jaro as Rector or Superior since he remained still juridically Rector of Naga. He went to Jaro simply to organize the new Seminary that was to be established in the newly erected Diocese. As a worker and organizer, he labored there with Fr. Aniceto Gonzales and Fr. Juan Miranda until one year afterward, in mid-November, 1870 the Superiors decided to appoint him Rector of Jaro and was officially installed at the end of March 1871. For about one year more, Fr. Moral worked strenuously to improve and strengthen the new Seminary of Jaro. On January 9, 1872, he arrived in Manila to deal with some affairs of this Seminary of Jaro. But, there and then, unexpectedly, he was asked to forget all about Jaro, to start a new Seminary again. On January 22, 1872, Fr. Moral was sent to Vigan, where he arrived on the 25th, feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, foundation day of Congregation of the Mission and Patronal solemnity of the Vigan Cathedral Church. He was commissioned to present to Bishop Aragones the Terms of the Contract with the Congregation for
the taking over the Diocesan Seminary. These were practically the same as those of the Contracts with the other Philippine Dioceses, with but slight variations taught by the experience of the past years. Bishop Aragones signed the Contract at once. On March 9, Fr. Moral, appointed Superior of the Vigan Seminary, went with Fr. Recoder, Fr. Matamala, and Brother Garcia to Vigan. The Bishop received them joyfully in his Palace and strove to attend and please them in everything. The new Seminary was under the Titular Patroness of the Immaculate Conception, and St. Paul the Apostle, as secondary patron. The Fathers were installed in the Seminary on March 16, 1872.

On May 29, feast of Corpus Christi, Fr. Moral organized the whole Seminary life for the school years 1872-1873. He taught the classes of Philosophy and Moral Theology. The Seminary was a College at the same time, with boarding students and day scholars, all in all 347 of them. On August 14, the vigil of Our Lady’s Assumption, he was at the bedside of Bishop Aragones who died, attended by the Seminary Fathers.

In 1874, Fr. Moral was assigned to attend the General Assembly of the Congregation in Paris. Upon his return to Manila, Fr. Moral was called by his Superiors to go back once more to the Seminary of Jaro, instead of to that of Vigan. And thus, was he spared the distress of the sad events that culminated in the loss of the Vigan Seminary which he left so well organized.

Fr. Moral, then, again took over the rectorate of Jaro Seminary in April 1875, to substitute “ad interim” Fr. Aniceto Gonzales who left the Congregation. He remained in Jaro as “acting Superior” for three years until July 1878 when he was called back to the Seminary of Manila to teach Moral Theology again.

Strange were the events that surrounded this pioneer Father, founder and organizer of four Philippine Seminaries. In Manila, he was not the Superior, but was the Superior’s right hand and best collaborator in reforming the Archdiocesan Seminary of San Carlos.

In Naga, he was appointed Superior, but remained as such for three years only, the time necessary to raise the Seminary of the Most Holy Rosary to be the best, in some respect, in the whole Philippines. In Jaro, he established the new Seminary of that new diocese, not as Rector or Superior, since by that time, he remained still Rector of Naga Seminary, but he brought it forth, not only as a Seminary but as a College also for the education of the Visayan youth in the island; this he did for some two years only, until he was called to Vigan to become Rector of that Seminary. In Vigan, he went as Rector, and reorganized in full the Seminary of the diocese, but he was Rector there for only two years. Later, he returned once more to Jaro, but just as “acting” Rector for
some three years. Evidently, his vocation was not really to be a Superior, but rather a founder and organizer of diocesan Seminaries, something he did splendidly everywhere. And to do that he did not need any honorary title.

From 1878 to 1885, he remained in the San Carlos Seminary of Manila, first as Professor of Moral Theology, and then as Spiritual Director of the seminarians, and at the same time he was Provincial Councillor and Assistant to the Visitor, Fr. Manuel Orriols, and dedicated the rest of his time to the exercise of the sacred ministry. He was, indeed, a man of action endowed with the charisma of a director of souls. He was tireless in attending to the countless penitents who flocked to his confessional. His health had been always quite poor; his manifold activities came to undermine it so much that the Superiors decided to bring him back to Spain. In 1885 he left his mission in the Philippines where he spent 23 fruitful years of his missionary career (1862-1885).

In Madrid, he met again his fellow pioneer of the Philippine Vincentian mission, Fr. Gregorio Velasco, who had been also called to work there ten years before in 1875. Fr. Moral became Assistant to the Spanish Provincial and Director of the Scholastics at the Central House of Madrid. He stayed there for five years, always actively occupied. He was also spiritual director of a great part of the large Vincentian community of that House and also of the Sisters in various Houses of the capital. His Eminence Cardinal Sanchez, Bishop of Madrid, chose Fr. Moral as his Confessor as well as of his own episcopal household. He often directed the Spiritual Exercises of the members of the Society (Conferencias) of St. Vincent de Paul.

In 1890, the Superiors sent him to govern the Vincentian House of Andújar, Andalucía. In October of the following year, he was appointed Visitor of the Province of México which was much in need of renewal from an apostolic man of action like Fr. Moral.

For another 16 years (1891-1907), he worked strenuously to improve the life and mission of that languishing Province and he succeeded in this task entrusted him by the General Fr. Antonio Fiat. He promoted the religious and social works of beneficence, especially fostering these among the many penitents of all social classes that came to him for confession or spiritual direction. In particular, the Conferences of the Ladies of Charity and the Association of the Children of Mary Immaculate benefitted a lot from his tireless zeal.

Finally the Lord called this good and faithful servant to his eternal reward on November 13, 1907, at the age of 72 years with 49 years of Vincentian vocation and 46 of priestly ministry in the vineyard of His Master.
Other figures that deserve special mention among the losses of the Province during these two decades were Fathers Valdivielso, and Casarramona whose names are frequently mentioned among the illustrious Philippine Vincentians of the Spanish regime.

Fr. Aquilino Valdivielso

Born in Rabé de las Calzadas, Burgos, on January 2, 1826, Fr. Aquilino Valdivielso entered the Seminary of Burgos when still quite young and followed the ecclesiastical career, as well as the studies of Civil and Canon Law. In the University of Valladolid, he obtained the degree of Bachelor in Theology with the highest academic grades. Giving up the ecclesiastical dignities he could enjoy in Burgos, he entered the novitiate of the Congregation of the Mission in November 1856 at the age of 30. After his novitiate, he taught Philosophy and Theology in the Central House of the Vincentians in Madrid, and then later Moral Theology in the Seminary of Badajoz where he was appointed Superior. During the war in Africa in 1859, he worked as Chaplain of the Sisters of Charity. In 1866, he was assigned as Assistant and Provincial Procurator in the Central House of Madrid.

He was sent to the Philippines as Vice-Visitor in 1870. When the Philippine mission was raised to the status of an independent Province, he was appointed the first Visitor on December 12, 1871. But feeling himself incapable to assume responsibility of the office, mainly on account of a nervous sickness that overtook him since he arrived in the new mission, he resigned from that office.

During the four years Fr. Valdivielso stayed in the Philippines, he was distinguished by his prudence in preserving the regular observance in the double family of St. Vincent. In 1874, he left the country to attend the General Assembly of the Congregation in Paris as deputy of the Philippine Province. At the end of the Assembly, the General sent him back to Spain, where he was appointed in 1875 as Assistant to the Visitor and Provincial Procurator which office he held for 30 years. He died in Madrid on February 3, 1912; at the age of 86 years, and 56 years of Vincentian vocation.

Fr. Jose Casarramona

Born in Barcelona in 1838, he made his ecclesiastical studies in the Seminary of Barcelona. But before receiving the priestly ordination, he entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1858. Soon after pronouncing his vows, he was ordained priest.
He was assigned to join the second Vincentian mission to the Philippines where he arrived with one confrere only, Fr. Antonio Serra, on November 5, 1863. One of the first works entrusted him in the Manila Seminary was to prepare a draft of Seminary Rules following the traditions of the Congregation, adapted to the needs of the country. But prudently, the draft was not presented to the Archbishop of Manila until 1878, when the Prelate himself requested to formulate the Rules of San Carlos Seminary.

In 1867, Fr. Casarramona was appointed Superior of the new Seminary entrusted to the Vincentians in Cebu. Finding the Seminary in very poor condition, he decided to do something about it immediately. He prepared again the disciplinary Rules which he strictly enforced while confronting a lot of difficulties and some opposition at the beginning. He succeeded in the end. He was particularly rigorous in the admission of candidates to the Holy orders, demanding in accordance with the mind of the Church some moral certitude on their vocation and fitness for the clerical state.

Eager, however, to get rid of such responsibilities, he repeatedly presented his resignation as Rector. Finally, after four years in Cebu, he was allowed to return to Manila in 1871, but to be Provincial Councillor (instead of Fr. Farré who was appointed Rector of Cebu), and Vice-Rector or Director of seminarians as well as professor of Moral Theology. In Manila, he remained some eight years more, until 1878 when he returned to Spain.

In the Peninsula, he was Superior of the Seminary of Badajoz or House of Ordinands, and then of the House of Barcelona. Later, he retired to the Vincentian House of Mallorca where he continued working for many years, in the priestly ministry especially in the spiritual direction of the clergy of Mallorca. He died in Palma de Mallorca on April 15, 1916 at the age of 78, after 58 years of Vincentian vocation.

Other Missionaries

Fr. Antonio Serra, who came with Fr. Casarramona, in the second Vincentian mission to the Philippines, arrived in Manila on November 5, 1863. After working 4 years in the San Carlos Seminary of Manila, he returned to Spain in 1867 and died in Madrid on September 24, 1909 at the age of 80, with 50 years of service in the Congregation.

Fr. Miguel Perez Gallardo arrived in Manila with the third Vincentian mission on April 12, 1865; worked in the Manila Seminary for 5 years; returned to Spain in 1869, and died in Madrid on December 20, 1900, at the age of 72 after 38 years in the Congregation.
Fr. Valentin Matamala arrived in Manila with the sixth Vincentian mission, on October 26, 1869. After working 3 years in the Seminary of Manila, he was assigned to Vigan in 1872 where he became Vice Rector for about 5 years, until the Vincentians were forced to leave the Seminary in 1876. Then he returned to Spain and died in Figueras on April 1, 1909 at the age of 70, after 47 years of Vincentian vocation.

Fr. Francisco Masferrer arrived with the fifth mission on March 25, 1868. He was assigned to work in the Seminary of Naga where he stayed for 9 years until 1877. He returned to Spain, and died in Rialp, Lérida, on February 24, 1877, at the age of 73, after 53 years as a Vincentian.

Fr. Marcelo Vazquez, arrived in Manila in 1870. In 1875 he was assigned to the Seminary of Jaro. There he worked for some 4 years until 1879, whereupon he returned to Spain. He died in Teruel on August 14, 1900 at the age of 51, and 32 years as a Vincentian.

Fr. Jose Recoder arrived in Manila on February 14, 1872 with the eighth mission. He was assigned to the Seminary of Vigan, and there after Fr. Moral left for Europe in 1874, he became Rector until the Vincentians left the Seminary. Then he was assigned to Naga where he worked until 1880. He returned to Manila, and then the following year 1881 to Europe. He died in Turin, Italy on December 15, 1920, at the age of 86, and 69 years of Vincentian vocation.

Fr. Miguel Pedrós arrived in Manila with the fifth mission on March 25, 1868, and was assigned to Naga Seminary where he worked for 4 years; then was transferred to the Cebu Seminary where he stayed 8 years; until he returned to Europe in 1880. He died in Barcelona on March 6, 1909, at the age of 66, after 46 years of Vincentian vocation.

Fr. Juan Espelt arrived in Manila with the sixth mission on October 26, 1869, and was assigned to the Seminary of Cebu where he worked for 12 years until he returned to Europe in 1880. He died in Palma de Mallorca on October 19, 1898, at the age of 60, after 37 years of Vincentian vocation.

Fr. Francisco Saez arrived in Manila with the seventh mission on November 1, 1870 and remained in Manila for 6 years until 1876 when he was assigned to Jaro. There he worked for some 7 years until 1883. He returned to Europe and died in Madrid on December 30, 1932 at the age of 80, after 64 years as a Vincentian.

Fr. Santiago Caño arrived in Manila on October 15, 1883. He was assigned to Jaro, but after four months returned to Spain. He died in Avila on December 13, 1916, at the age of 61, after 44 years as a Vincentian.

Fr. Juan Jaume arrived in Manila with the seventh mission on November 1, 1870. In 1871, he was assigned to Jaro, then in 1872 transferred to Cebu. There he remained until 1874 when he returned to
Fr. Mariano Cortazar arrived in Manila on February 15, 1877. Assigned to Naga, he stayed there for about 3 years; then transferred to Cebu in 1879, where he worked for some 6 years. In 1885, he returned to Spain. He died in Valdemoro, Madrid on April 14, 1920, at the age of 68, after 51 years as a Vincentian.

Fr. Antolin Trinidad arrived in Manila on February 15, 1889. Assigned to Naga, he died there two months later on April 28, 1889 at the young age of 25, with 7 years as a Vincentian.

Bro. Miguel Garcia Gonzalez arrived in Manila with the fifth mission on March 25, 1868. Assigned to the Seminary of Cebu, he worked there for 3 years. He was transferred to Manila in 1871 and sent to the new foundation of Vigan in 1872, where he remained all the time until the Vincentians left that Seminary in 1876. He returned to Manila. After one year, he was sent to Naga in 1877; then in 1880 back to Manila where he served as a faithful Brother Coadjutor for 10 years more, until God called him to his reward on September 6, 1889, in Manila, at the age of 40. He had been a Vincentian for 22 years, of which 21 were spent in the Philippines. This humble Brother broke a record, unsurpassed by any other Vincentian missionary in the Philippines, viz., he worked in almost all the Vincentian houses of his time, (Manila, Vigan, Naga, Cebu), spending more than half of his earthly life, and practically his whole Vincentian life in the Philippines, until he breathed his last in this country, his second motherland.

Fr. Rafael del Rio arrived with the seventh mission on November 1, 1870. He remained in Manila until 1874. Then he was sent to Jaro where he stayed for more than one year. Transferred to Cebu, he worked there for about 4 years, and in 1879, was transferred to Naga. After one year, he returned to Cebu in 1880 and worked there for some 6 years. In 1886, he returned to Manila; in 1887, to Jaro; in 1888, back to Manila; and in 1889, returned to Spain. He died in Badajoz on August 16, 1890, at the age 40, 22 years as a Vincentian, with 19 years spent in the Philippines. Like Bro. Miguel Garcia Gonzales, Father del Rio worked in almost all the Vincentian houses in the Philippines of his time (Manila, Cebu, Naga, Jaro) and spent half of his whole life and practically all the years of his Vincentian vocation in the Philippines:

Not included on this list are the famous names of Fr. Jose Lopez de Goicoechea, Fr. Antonio Fàrré, Fr. Antonio Santonja and Fr. Francisco Jarero who left the Philippines in 1880, 1884 and 1882 respectively. We shall speak of them later.
Most Honored Fr. ANTHONY FIAT, C.M. Superior General of Vincentians (1878-1914)
Fr. Aquilino Valdivielso, C.M., first elected Visitor of the Vincentian Philippine Province. For ill health he resigned.
The oldest photo of Philippine Vincentians taken more than a century ago, by the years 1879-1883, by photographer C. Aguilar in Cebú.
From left to right: Fr. Mariano Cortázar, Fr. Narciso Vilá, Fr. Fernando La Canal, Rector Fr. Francisco Jarero, Bro. Valeriano Alvarez, Fr. Rafael del Río, and Fr. Pedro Juliá. Though blurred already by the passing of more than 100 years, this historical photo deserves to be kept as a precious relic of a past era.

Fr. SANTIAGO SERRALLONGA, C.M. (1834-1901), Rector of Jaro Seminary who heroically served the victims of the cholera epidemic of 1882, with two other Vincentians of whom Fr. Julian Illera, after 20 days of strenuous work among the stricken patients, died a victim of his charity.
Another ancient photo of Philippine Vincentians with the Major Seminarians of San Vicente Ferrer Seminary of Jaro, taken by the years 1890-1892.

Seated (left to right): Fr. Mariano Napal, Fr. Doroteo Delgado Gómez, ?, Rector Fr. Juan Miralda, Fr. Domingo Viera, ?, and Fr. Quintín Alcalde. (The unnamed ones were either Fr. Manuel Pino or Fr. Tomás González. Standing, center 2nd. row: probably either Bro. Domingo Galerón or Bro. Pedro Ortiz).
Father John Baptist Etienne established the separate Philippine Province on December 12, 1871. Four years later, the new Father General Eugenio Boré in his Circular of January 1, 1876, described thus the situation of the Province:

The situation in Spain is becoming worse, due to the truceless desolation of endless civil wars. However, the magnificent colony of the Philippine Islands offers us precious compensations. There, our confreres established five Mission Houses, and are also directing five Seminaries. Enjoying greater religious freedom than in the motherland, they can exercise their apostolic zeal with all ease, both among the Spanish settlers and among the indigenous natives who number by millions, among whom there are still many pagans.

The Most Honored Father Anthony Fiat who became General of the Congregation from 1878 to 1914, in his Circular Letters at the beginning of the years 1879 and 1885, expressed his great satisfaction for the missionary spirit shown by the Philippine Vincentian Fathers and Daughters of Charity, particularly in the financial help sent to the China missions under the double family of St. Vincent. They sent several thousands of pesos for the urgent needs of those neighboring missions. In the Letter of January 1, 1879, Fr. General said:

Those in the Philippines have not been the least to give great joy to my heart. They have become creditors to my most fervent gratitude. Because of their solicitude and generosity in sending their resources to our Procurator in Shanghai, for the poor and the hungry in China.

Then, in the Letter of January 1, 1885 he added:

The missionaries and Sisters in the Philippines enjoy the happy state of affairs of their new motherland. They do not lose any chance to give to our confreres and Sisters of China unmistakable proofs of their generous self-abnegation. Both the Visitor, Fr. Orriols, and the Vice-Visitatrix, have placed their houses and whatever belongs to them, at the service of the Missionaries and Daughters of Charity from the Celestial Empire, should they find themselves compelled to leave their
own beloved residences. I am happy to express to them, from here, my most heartfelt gratitude.

Later, in the Circular of January 1, 1893, he noted:

I have nothing more to remark about the Province of the Philippines, aside from the fine spirit of our Confreres, and the fond desire I entertain that they may promptly add the work of the (popular) Missions to that of the Seminaries, which is the only one they actually have in the country.

Such indeed was the earnest desire of all. Unfortunately, the scarcity of personnel compounded with the language barrier, prevented its full realization.