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Pilapil, (1753-1822)**

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LUCIANO P.R. SANTIAGO

The House of Pilapil of Bulacan was probably the most distinguished Filipino priestly clan in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It provided the Philippine colonial church the services not only of Padre Domingo and Dr. Mariano Pilapil, but also of its other scions starting with B.D. Sebastian Fabián de Móxica (ca. 1685-1730) one of the first Filipino priests and great-great uncle of Don Domingo (see family chart). Padre Domingo also had two uncles, three first cousins and at least two nephews who were worthy priests.¹

Padre Domingo was born in Bulacan, Bulacan, in 1753, most probably on 4 August, the feast of Sto. Domingo de Guzmán, founder of the Order of Preachers. He studied Latin classics and philosophy at the University of Sto. Tomás where he graduated with a Bachelor of Philosophy degree in 1774. It appears that, at first, he was unsure of his calling. However, two years later, his priest-uncle, B.D. Luis Moxica Pilapil (1726-76), pastor of Taytay, died "suddenly" and this might have crystallized his vocation.²

1. Luciano P.R. Santiago, "The Second Group of Filipino Priests (1707-23); Biographical Profiles" (PQCS) 12 (1984): 128-81; Archives of the Archdiocese of Manila (AAM), Libro de Gobierno Ecclesiastico (LGE) (1747-55), (1755-56), (1759-64), (1767-71), (1772-83), (1789-97), (1797-1804), (1804-1806) and (1815-1824) passim; *Castillogos del Clero Secular* (1762, 1776, ca. 1806 and 1809); Salvador P. Escoto and John N. Schumacher, "Filipino Priests of the Archdiocese of Manila, 1782" *Philippine Studies* 24 (1976): 326-43; "Capellania de Pilapil" *Capellanías de Misas* (CM) (1751-1833).

2. AAM, "Respuesta al Real Orden de 3 Agosto 1776 sobre el Real Seminario Conciliar de San Carlos. 9 Dic. 1778." *Cedularios*, Tomo 8 (1744-72) n.p. This includes an up-to-date bio-data of Padre Domingo; UST Alumni Association, *UST Graduate Listing (1611-1971)* (Manila: UST, 1972) p. 7b; AAM, "Diligencias seguidas por Don Alonso Pantaleón, Natural y Principal del Pueblo de Taytay contra el Difunto D.D. Alexandro Domínguez, Cura que fe en propiedad de el sobre cantidad de pesos. Año de 1778 *Expedientes Sobre Diferentes Materias* (EDM) (1730-79) B. This document mentions the sudden death of B.D. Luis Moxica Pilapil in 1776.

He was the first among his cousins to follow in the footsteps of his priest-ancestors.

He entered the Royal Seminary of San Carlos at the relatively late age of twenty-four on 20 August 1777 when he was invested with the clerical habit by Archbishop Basilio Sancho de Santas Justa y Rufina. The following 20 December, he was granted tonsure and minor orders. He was one of the most outstanding students of theology with the grade of *sobresaliente* and he was able to maintain this status all during his seminary training. He was raised to the subdiaconate the next year, probably during the September Ember Days. Finally, on 17 and 18 September 1779, he was ordained to the diaconate and the priesthood with dispensation from the required interval (*intersticio*) between ordinations. He received the license to celebrate Mass for six months on 25 October 1779.³

The colony was then on alert against another British invasion due to the resumption of hostilities between Spain and England in Europe. Padre Domingo's first assignment, therefore, which was announced on 12 July 1780 was as chaplain of the cavalry troops of Marikina, Pasig and Tambobo (Malabon) as well as of the archers and footsoldiers of Bataan. When the threat subsided, Padre Domingo was sent briefly to the parish of Malolos, Bulacan, as its coadjutor in 1782. However, before the end of the same year, on 24 October, he got his first opportunity to see the outside world when the archbishop appointed him chaplain of the ship *San Felipe* which embarked for the port of "Tonsuabe" in China. After this voyage, he was transferred on 15 July 1783 to another ship which was to sail for the Marianas (Guam) (then part of the Philippine colony).⁴ For the next three years, he probably remained in this assignment but this cannot be ascertained because the administrative books of Archbishop Sancho are missing for this period (1784-87). His other priest-uncle, B.D. Julián Móxica Pilapil died at this point.

In 1786, he became the coadjutor of Bacoar. Its parish priest, B.D. Vicente Adriano Molina (1751-89) unexpectedly fell ill in March 1788 and died the following year at the age of thirty-eight. As the acting pastor of the parish, Padre Domingo competed in the

3. AAM, "Respuesta"; LGE (1772-83) ff. 10v, 21v, 49, 49v and 50v.

4. Ibid., ff. 67-68, 116, 130v and 140v.

Genealogy of the Pilapils

PILAPIL

MÓXICA

Don Phelipe Somalansaua de Sta. María

m.
Doña Nicolasa Guya

B.D. Sebastián Fabián de Móxica*

Don Luís de Móxica
m.
Doña Josefa de Jesús

Don Augustín Roque Pilapil
(d. 1760)

Doña Nicolasa Dalisay

B.D. Julián de
Móxica Pilapil*
(1723-ca. 1785)

B.D. Luís de
Móxica Pilapil*
(1726-1776)

Don Matheo
Rosales Pilapil
m.
Doña Martina
Paula

Doña María
Rufina
Pilapil
m.
Don Andrés
Bernave'

Don Theodoro
Guillermo
Pilapil

Don Augustín Isidoro
Torres
Pilapil

B.D. Domingo
Sevilla
Pilapil*
(1753-1822,

D.D. Mariano
Bernave' Pilapil*
(1759-1818)

B.D. Isidoro
Pilapil*
(ca. 1762-1809)

B.D. Manuel
Pilapil*
(ca. 1768-1798)

- d. — died
- m. — married
- * — denotes a priest
- (?) — denotes uncertain descent
- BD — Bachelor, Don
- DD — Doctor Don

subsequent synodal examinations and won the first place in the terna. Hence, he was presented by the governor-general for this curacy on 5 February 1790 and given the title of proprietary pastor of Bacoor by Archbishop Orbigo seven days later.⁵

When Archbishop Orbigo died in 1797, the Cathedral Chapter, named the pastor of Bacoor concurrently as the vicar forane of the ecclesiastical province of Cavite. On 25 February 1801, Padre Domingo's plan to replace the termite-ridden altar of the church of Bacoor with a new one was approved by the Cathedral Chapter.⁶

The new Archbishop Zulaibar, who was Don Domingo's exact contemporary, took over the archdiocese in 1804 and renewed his appointment as vicar forane. In the beginning, the prelate was impressed by the vicar's performance so long as it did not impinge on his own authority. When the church of the Hacienda of Dinalupijan, Bataan, which had been allotted to his alma mater, San Carlos Seminary, was erected in 1806, Padre Domingo donated a pair of breeding cows for its ranch. The following year, when a *tulisdán* named Francisco Xavier, alias "Castila", was killed in an encounter with the authorities, the vicar refused to grant the "impenitent man" a Christian burial. When informed of this case, the archbishop upheld his decision. In 1808, he accomplished necessary reconstructive work on his parish church for which he ordered "duck eggs" for a more durable mixture with mortar. Apparently music-minded, he acquired an organ for the church choir in 1809 at the cost of ₱300, a third of which was contributed by the parishioners. It was such a novelty in the province that they made a big fuss over it, ordering a special canopy (*pabellón*) made of handwoven blanket from Ilocos to shield it from dust and other tropical impurities.⁷

Padre Domingo was evidently close to his cousin, the better-known Dr. Mariano Pilapil (1759-1818) who was four years younger and who served briefly as his coadjutor in 1794-95. When their other cousin Padre Isidoro Pilapil (1762-1809) died, leaving

5. Archives of the Parish of Bacoor (APB), *Libros Canónicos de Bautismos* (1781-93). This information was kindly supplied by Mr. Regalado T. Jose, Jr., historian of Cavite; AAM, *LGE* (1789-97) f. 29.

6. AAM, *LGE* (1797-1804) ff. 27v and 194.

7. AAM, *LGE* (1804-06) f. 25v; *Libro de Oficios* (1804-13) f. 110; Regalado T. Jose, Jr. "Church Expenses in 19th Century Cavite" (Ms. 1984) pp. 4 and 5; APB. *Cargos y datas* (CD) (1788-1823).

the clan's capellanfa vacant, the doctor applied for it and Padre Domingo renounced his rights to this pious foundation in his favor.⁸

His unsuccessful struggle in behalf of and with the native clergy in 1814-15 marked a turning point in his life. He was stripped of his vicarship after eighteen years of service in this office. His falling out with the powerful Archbishop Zulaibar lasted for the rest of their lives. For a while, the archbishop remained picky in his dealings with his ex-vicar. For instance, in 1816, a year after the crisis of the Cavite clergy, the prelate sent him an official note admonishing him not to waste too much money on candles for the fiestas of Bacoar. But after this, the archbishop apparently ignored the pastor as much as possible and dealt with the new vicar, B.D. Dionisio de Layba, Chaplain of Puerta Baga.⁹

Dr. Pilapil predeceased Padre Domingo around 1818. In fact, he survived all his three younger priest-cousins. In October 1820 he suffered a stroke which weakened his power of speech and progressively rendered him an invalid. For the last time, he signed the church books of Bacoar on 1 September 1820. Ironically, the last circular from the archbishop dated 23 September 1820 that he managed to sign was regarding the royal order declaring "freedom of the press." However, his signature here was a shadow of his previous handwriting.¹⁰ In that year, the Spanish Cortes was revived but suppressed again three years later by the same King Fernando VII. Illness and death spared Don Domingo from hearing the news.

In October 1821, his coadjutor, Padre Gregorio Carlos Villareal reported to Archbishop Zulaibar the pitiful condition of the old pastor who was now speechless and bed-ridden, leaving the financial affairs of the parish to his relatives in the rectory. Padre Villareal was functioning as both coadjutor and pastor. The archbishop directed him to make an accounting of the parish funds and report back to him. The young coadjutor found a deficit of more than ₱2,900 chargeable to the pastor's accounts in the care of his relatives. On 5 November 1821, the prelate, who was also in his wan-

8. APB, *Libros Canónicos de Casamientos (LCC)* (1793-1823); AAM, "Capellania de Pilapil."

9. Jose, "Church Expenses," p. 8; AAM, "Plan Gral. de Almas," *Planes de Almas* (1818); "Expediente."

10. APB, *LCC* (1793-1823); "Año de 1821, Representación del P.D. Gregorio Carlos Villareal, coadjutor del Pueblo de Bacoar. . . (sobre) la inhavilidad de su Cura Párroco Don Domingo Sevilla Pilapil. . ." *Asuntos Criminales*. (1811-69) C. This is, of course, a misclassified document.

ing years, promoted Padre Villareal as the substitute pastor of Bacoor but charitably refrained from making judgments on Padre Domingo's deficits, indicating that he was completely confident that these could be straightened out in time.¹¹ This was probably the archbishop's unspoken way of making amends with his former adversary.

God kept His worn-out servant one more year in this world before He called him to his eternal reward in the last week of September 1822. An inventory of Don Domingo's properties on 4 October showed that he was a simple man of God who had refused to enrich himself during his thirty-two years as pastor of a prosperous town.¹² His major possessions consisted of a gilt tabernacle housing the image of a Saint whose robes were embroidered and adorned with gold, a big wall clock, a cane with a gold cap (the symbol of his office), the old wooden bed where he died, an *aparador*, an old wooden table made of *tindalo* and other miscellaneous pieces of furniture, a house made of wood and bamboo with its lot located beside the church, a pair of breeding carabaos and a ricefield for planting two cavans of rice seeds situated, appropriately enough, in a site called *Cay Bathala* (For God). He left this ricefield to the church of Bacoor which had only one other ricefield to its name at the time.

Archbishop Zulaibar announced the vacancy in Bacoor on 16 October 1822. In the meantime, Padre Villareal continued briefly as its acting pastor, followed by Padre Pedro de los Santos (1822-23). In 1823, B.D. Arcadio Aquino won its proprietary pastorship but barely a year later, moved on to the more prestigious curacy of Quiapo. It was in this second vacancy in two years that B.D. Mariano Gomes de los Angeles acquired the pastorship of Bacoor and later, the vicarship of Cavite as well, thus, continuing the tradition initiated by his predecessor.¹³

11. Ibid.; AAM, *LGE* (1815-24) f. 368.

12. AAM. "Año de 1823, Inventario de los Bienes del Cura difunto de Bacoor Don Domingo Sevilla Pilapil y de lo recibido por Don Gregorio Carlos Villareal en 4 October 1822." *EDM*, 1800-32; APB, *CD* (1824-50).

13. APB, *LCC* (1793-1823); AAM, *LGE* (1815-24) f. 404; *Libro de Ternas* (1806-24) n.p.; Luciano P.R. Santiago. "Before Bacoor: The Initial Career of Padre Mariano Gomes (1822-24)" *Philippine Studies* 33 (1985): 87-92.