

Foreword

The Gospel relates that Jesus, after curing a leper, warned: “See that you tell no one anything.” But the man went “to publicize the whole matter.” As a result, “his fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee” (Mark 1: 28). Our Lord was probably acquainted with the fact that the more you forbid something, the more it will be done.

This and other lessons remained in the memory of the First Christian Community and formed part of the Apostolic preaching, constituting the point of departure for the entire body of facts and words to which the Apostles were to testify. To the household of Cornelius, Peter said: “You know . . . what has happened all over Judea . . . how Jesus of Nazareth . . . went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil.”

The footnote of the New American Bible says, “These words are more directed to Luke’s Christian readers than to the household of Cornelius, tracing continuity between the acts and words of Jesus of Nazareth and the proclamation of Jesus by the early community.”

The words and deeds left and entrusted by our Lord remained in the **memory** of the First Christian Community and from this we get their written accounts as Saint Luke writes in his Gospel: “Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have handed them down to us, I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence.”

Memory. To be able to live and to love, we must remember. To forget leads to perdition, to death, to oblivion.

Exodus 32: 17–18, tells an interesting story: “Now, when Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, ‘That sounds like a battle in the camp.’ But Moses answered, ‘It does not sound like cries of victory, nor does it sound like cries of defeat; the sounds that I hear are cries of revelry.’ As he drew near the camp, he saw the calf and the dancing. With that, Moses’ wrath flared up.” Then, we are told “there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.” Centuries later the Psalmist says: “They exchanged their glorious God for the image of a grass-eating bull. They forgot the God who saved them.” (Psalm 106, 20–21)

They **forgot!** In Deuteronomy 4: 9, God told Moses: “Take care **not to forget** the things which your own eyes have seen, nor let them slip from your memory as long as you live, but teach them to your children and to your children’s children.”

It is the law of history that one’s identity is built up through memory. That is why we need old people. Old people are the repository of our collective memory and hence the privileged interpreters of our community values as Blessed John Paul II once said.

Our Lord knows this law. He used it to perpetuate the most important moment of his life: his redemptive death. The Church through her priests, who incidentally were originally called *presbyteroi* or old men, is the living memory of Christ’s passion,

death, and resurrection. This “memory” takes place in the Eucharist which makes it present, makes Him present, in our time and in our place. Our Christian identity is radically deeply marked by it.

But this identity is also deeply marked by the vagaries of the Christian people as they—as we—travel down the history of our journey toward the future as the People of God in our time and in our place, while glancing back to our past.

Sir Winston Churchill is quoted to have said: “The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see.”

So we go back to the beginnings of our Christianity where there remains in some people a memory: Ever since Lapulapu and his men defeated Magellan in Mactan, Legaspi had feared Rajah Tupas (King of Cebu) and his warriors—good old Cebuanos, fierce Cebuanos. But when Fray Andres de Urdaneta and his missionaries disembarked in Cebu with Legaspi, holding aloft a painted banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Rajah Tupas allowed them to approach. As Fray Urdaneta drew closer, Rajah Tupas was completely mesmerized by the beautiful Lady on the banner. This broke the ice, and hearing the story of Guadalupe in Mexico, Rajah Tupas allowed the Spaniards to come down.

This might not be completely historical, but the point is that it has remained in the memory of some people, which paved the way for the belief that the image of the Virgin preceded that of the Santo Niño, who would eventually overshadow his mother in terms of the devotion accorded to them by Filipinos. For Cebuanos, however, the Virgin remains to hold greater sway than the Santo Niño, as borne out by the fact that the amount collected in the coffers of Our Lady of the Rule of the MSCs in Lapulapu City is more than that of the OSAs in Cebu City. And that is fact.

While still studying I hated History the most: a list of dates and persons. I mean who cares who did what, where, and when. But in the archives of the Recoletos in Rome, reading the letters of their missionaries to their superiors in Madrid, I came to see the relationships of dates, places, and persons. People became alive

in my imagination. Complaints about what we now call strictly civil authorities in Misamis Occidental, who lived in Manila so they can be far from the danger of pirates (*moros*), abounded. But providentially the friars who remained in their places were instrumental in laying out not only the churches, but also the streets of the towns, the municipal buildings, the *kioskos*, the water systems, the rice paddies. “*Todo lo han hecho los frailes.*” This phrase is attributed to General Alaminos, even though some renowned visitors in the past must have said the same thing. It is narrated: “*El que fuera capitán general de Filipinas, al comienzo de su estancia en el Archipiélago, no salía de su asombro. Salgo por los pueblos -decía-, pregunto: Quién hizo este puente? y me contestan: El padre Fulano. ¿Y aquella escuela? El padre Mengano. “Todo lo han hecho los frailes.”*”

One of the most transcendental events in our history was the Philippine Revolution of 1896, which signaled the end of the *patronato real*. Pope Leo XIII made his Apostolic Constitution, *Quae Mari Sinico*, signed it on 17 September 1902, which addressed the changed situation in the Islands. As envisioned by *Quae Mari Sinico*, the reorganization of the Church would be much advanced by holding a Provincial Council, eventually held in Manila from December 1907 to June 1908. The Council acted on the proposed addition of dioceses by *Quae Mari Sinico* to be established in Tuguegarao, Capiz, Zamboanga, and Lipa. This became a reality in 1910 by virtue of a *Decretum Consistoriale* executed by Pope Pius X. However, the Capiz diocese was stillborn and was quickly replaced by one in Calbayog, whose first bishop, the Most Reverend Pablo Singzon, was appointed that year.

All of us had not yet been born when the first native bishops were appointed; hence, we are not conversant with their endeavors for the Church in the Philippines. But as Cicero said a long time ago: “To be ignorant of what happened before you were born is to remain always a child.”

With that in view, in 2006 I recommended conducting a seminar about the transition of the Catholic Church in the Philippines from the *patronato real* to the situation under the Americans as one of the agenda for the January 2008 Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines—some sort of belated centenary celebration of *Quae Mari Sinico* and its subsequent documents.

That seminar, with the members of the CBCP attending, finally took place in January of 2010 through the auspices of the CBCP Committee on the Cultural Heritage of the Church and sponsored by the St. Vincent School of Theology and Adamson University. It also marked the birth of the Church Historians' Association of the Philippines (CHAP). I congratulate them for their contribution to the growth of the Church in the Philippines.

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