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The remnant of the Dominican mission crossed the Pacific in an unnamed small ship in 1588

Source: Aduarte's Historia, tome 1, chap. XXIV; partly translated in B&R 30:200-207.

Chapter XXIV. Of the coming to this province of Father Fray Juan Cobo and other religious

Though Father Fray Juan Cobo and other Fathers did not come on the first voyage for the reasons given, they were always thinking of and longing for this province. So when Father Fray Juan Chrisostomo felt a little better, though he was not well, they began to think immediately of resuming the journey which his severe infirmity had necessarily interrupted. Father Fray Juan Cobo had the same idea; and, even if he had not done so, affairs went on in such a way that he would have been obliged to give up all the business that kept him in New Spain and go to the Philippines.

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The Viceroy sent into banishment Father Fray Luis Gandullo...

Father Fray Juan Chrisostomo was joined by several: Father Fray Juan Garcia, a distinguished religious and minister to the Indians in New Spain, who was afterwards of the very greatest importance in this province; Father Fray Thomas Castellar, a very religious friar; a brother, better known in this country by the name of "the Holy Friar" than by his own name, who was Fray Pedro Martinez; and the brother Fray Juan Deza, who had come to take care of Father Fray Juan Chrisostomo in his illness. These all had gathered together because of the fame of the province, which was spreading abroad—that it was beginning with such a great reformation within itself, and with zeal for the conversion of so many tribes. There were seven religious in all; and, as they were on the point of departing, Father Fray Juan Cobo wished to bid farewell to one of his friends, a cleric of much virtue called Juan Fernandez de León, who lived in a very exemplary manner in Guastepec. When they reached there they found the house where he lived tightly closed. They shouted to him many times, but the good clergyman who

was within made no answer, so carefully did he protect his retirement. It was necessary to get a ladder and climb in by a window. The virtuous cleric rejoiced much to see Father Fray Juan, and, when he knew where they were all on the point of going, the enterprise pleased him also so well that he immediately determined to go with the religious to the Philippines. He carried out his plan, set a very noble example in life, and after his death was and is venerated as a saint, our Lord proving his sainthood with miracles. A layman of much virtue called Juan de Soria, when he saw people of such virtue making this journey, made the same journey in their company, being desirous of assuming the habit in that province, as he did when he reached the islands. With these two good associates the company increased greatly in virtue, though it was not very great in numbers.

They resolved to make their voyage immediately; and reaching Tisla [i.e. Tixtla], which is near the port of Acapulco, they were informed that there was being prepared for the Philippines a vessel, small, old, and in ill condition, and so loaded with people, soldiers, and sailors—since they had doubled the number of those needed for the navigation of the vessel because sailors were required in Manila—that it was impossible for them to embark. The news grieved them greatly, and to be assured of the truth of it they sent to the port Father Fray Juan Garcia and Brother Fray Juan Deza, who found all true that had been said of the vessel, and more. It was so heavily laden that it was in the water above the scupper-holes, without having taken on board the people who were to go as passengers, who were of no small number. The religious went back with this report, and repeated what they had been told in the port, namely, that it was impossible to put on board more, at most, than one or two priests, whom they might have with them in case of danger, in order to confess to them; and that if there had to be only two, they would better be the banished ones. They were all deeply grieved—those who remained, because they had to give up their holy enterprise; and those who were to undertake it, because they were to be separated from such a company. As they were so near the port, they thought that they would all go down and bid farewell to those who were about to sail. Father Fray Juan Chrisostomo alone, being so infirm, remained in Tisla. When they reached the port, they saw that according to human reason no more could be put aboard than what they had been told; but as they were taught to direct themselves by other and higher motives, they were not discouraged, but were very instant with the Lord in prayer, the priests all saying mass and begging His aid. Then with new confidence they went to talk with those who had charge of the despatch of the vessel, to persuade them to give the religious a place in it. While they were busy with this, they saw the vessel putting out to sea and beginning its voyage—being in greater haste, perhaps, in order that these new passengers might not be admitted in addition to the great (and indeed excessive) number who were already going. When they saw that they were being left behind, they found a very small boat; and without further stores or other equipment they got alongside. Once there, they pleaded so well—and what is more, the Lord so greatly aided them and gave them such favor with the persons on board—that they admitted the **six**: Fray Juan Cobo, Fray Luis Gandullo, Fray Juan Garcia, Fray

Juan Deza, four religious; and Father Juan Fernandez de León, and Juan de Soria. Instantly, without waiting longer, they set sail with a fair wind, on Shrove Tuesday, 1588.

They were without stores or clothes or provisions, being dependent solely upon the providence of the Lord and upon the alms which they might receive from the people on the ship; these were small, in any case, on such a voyage—and the more so upon this one, for they had set out from a port where the population was so small that they could not provide themselves so well with ship-stores as they could at other places. The vessel had hardly put to sea before it was found to be leaking and to be making much water. The pilot, who was very skilful and very courageous, went straight to the Fathers, and bade them commend the ship to God; for, if the prayers of good men did not save it, it would be certain to founder in the first little storm, and they would be drowned. They undertook to do as he asked, and it was well that they did so.

One night a great storm arose, with a great massing of clouds and with furious winds; and though the wind was not favorable, the pilot ordered sails to be set for a tail wind—letting the ship drive before the wind, because the vessel would not sail close-hauled. The storm was such that, though the pilot did his best to hide his anxiety, and gave his commands in a very low tone, so as not to excite the passengers and bring them on deck to see their own death and to hinder the sailors; yet, in spite of all this care, the religious perceived his fear. Being in alarm at the fury of the winds and the roaring of the sea, and perceiving the danger, they gave themselves to prayer; and with outward silence they uttered the voices of their souls to the Lord, begging His pity. At midnight they heard the pilot say, although in a low voice, that he wished axes to be brought, which is a preliminary to cutting away the masts.

[Father Gandullo's prayers to save the ship]

Thereupon, Father Fray Luis Gandullo left the rest praying, and climbed up into the waist of the ship. He looked upon the sea in silence; its fury terrified him; he lifted his eyes to the heavens, and saw them all cloaked with the deepest blackness. Therewithal, the sea was white with the waves which roared and dashed against one another, sending up spray; it seemed to him that all of the Spaniards must soon be buried in them, so mighty were they, and the vessel so weak. At this point there overcame him a strange consciousness of his sins, which gave him no opportunity to think of those of others, and assured him deep inside that his own transgressions only were the cause of this frightful storm. He went back to his post and fell on his knees before a Christ that was there, prayed to the Lord with great affection to please discharge his ire upon him, who deserved it so much, and to forgive the others, who had not provoke it. He repeated this many times and, when it appeared that the Lord was turning a deaf ear, he turned to the Virgin of the Rosary, begging her to intervene and help. Raising his arms up high, he repeated and invoked the name of the Mother of God with great fervor: "Virgin of Consolation", he said, "for all those people who have gathered to your Holy Rosary, for your servant Fr. Juan Cobo—he had such a regard for him—and for these your friars who are going to serve in your Province, I beg for them here present, not to

let the Devil triumph over so many souls." At this moment, without knowing how, he found himself transported, and he saw what looked like a poor hermitage, but with a great light and splendor, and among them the Virgin with a very honest but very gracious robe, who said:

— "Look at me, here I am. What do you want from me?"

— He responded: "Mother of God, that you may be my mother."

— "I promise it to you," said the Virgin and she disappeared, leaving Father Luis with an extraordinary feeling of safety and consolation, although he was still somewhat elated.

A ship's boy became involved in this; he came very perturbed and made his fear known to the Father, who answered that he had nothing to fear. Then the pilot came in, calling out: "Fathers! cast some relics into the sea. For the love of God recite some litanies, that the Lord may have compassion upon us! I will have a lighted lantern sent down to you." Father Luis replied that they should all be safe, but they would certainly help the Lord to do so. They cast into the sea a certified relic of Saint Mary Magdalen, a great benefactress of our Order and special patroness of this Province, and an *Agnus Dei* [Lamb of God]. Fathers Luis and Juan Cobo threw them into the sea. Then they all began their litany. While they were saying it, Father Luis chanced to look up into the heavens, hoping to see there the accomplishment of the promise made to him. He was not disappointed because, in the middle of all that obscurity, he sighted a very bright star, which made him very happy and warmed his heart. While proceeding with the litany, they kept on sighting more stars, and finally all of them. After the cover of the sky had been removed, the wind died down and the sea subsided; everyone took such a favorable weather as miraculous, because that storm had promised otherwise. They gave infinite thanks to God for having delivered them of it.

Although Father Fray Luis, at that time, said nothing to anyone about what he had seen and heard. That being so, the next day, it was said among the sailors that two of them, who had been below deck that night, had seen an apparition of Our Lady, and it was the occasion for some of them to confess that day, with particular devotion. However, there were many more who, with Lent being well in and they having been admonished many times, did not try and confess themselves. Father Fray Luis frequently declaimed against those, as he had taken upon his charity to become the chaplain of the ship; he would condemn their lack of care for such a great and useful obligation, the more so because they were people who owed much to God's favor and who had seen themselves on the point of being lost.

[Gambling aboard]

A few days later, Easter arrived and, as is usual among worldly people, they fell back into their lax way of living, and particularly into gambling, with all the evils that ordinarily accompany it, and are sometimes followed by others. Such an extraordinary thing happened there to a miserable one; having gambled and lost all he had, agitated by the disgrace that he himself had sought, he opened his sea-chest and took out his rosary,

in which there was a pewter medal with the image of Our Lady with her Child in her arms on one side and that of the face of the Savior on the other; and, as if Mother and Child were the cause of his craziness, he gave it a blow with a butcher knife which penetrated the Virgin through the chest and pierced the face of the Lord. He then threw away the medal where no-one would see it. At least the one who had committed such an evil thing while alone was sure that no-one would see it, but it was not to be so. Such atrocious sins are want to be revealed and punished by the Lord; so, He willed that a crew-man would see it.

With the great scandal that such a great disrespect to God and to His Mother caused in him, he came to consult with Father Fray Luis to know from him what he had to do. One can well imagine what the Father felt about this affair; however, he dissimulated it as much as he could and told him who had brought the news: "What every good Christian must do. I beg you to go and get me the image, if he did not throw it overboard, for me to keep it so that nothing bad will happen to that man, and please keep this affair a secret."

— "He threw it between some chests", said the man. "I will look for it."

He did so, and brought it back to the Father who in turn showed it to his companions whose hearts were pierced by sorrow at such a very great temerity. They all prayed to the Lord to let that man realize the true nature of that sin and feel penitence for it. Father Fray Luis, in complete stratagem, nonchalantly approached the culprit and engaged him in conversation, relating the affair as if he did not know the author. The man in question showed himself so scandalized that he said that it was not possible for a Christian to have done such a thing.

— "What if it were you?" said the Father.

The man denied having committed such an evil.

— "Well then, show me your rosary", said the Father, "so that I may check the image that goes with it."

— "My rosary does not have an image," said the man. And the Father continued:

— "That is true, it does not have one, because I have it, and have heard about your despicable crime from someone who has seen it with his own eyes. I know, you don't have to deny it, nor fear anything, because, although much harm could come to you for this affair, in addition to what your soul already suffers from, that is not my intention. Rather, I want to free you body and soul, if only I could extirpate from you the pain and repentance that such an atrocious crime should demand from a baptized Christian. If you are baptized, you would indeed not fail from feeling sorry to see this image of Jesus Christ and His Most Holy Mother—and he showed it to him—more mistreated than it would have been at the hands of the perfidious Jews, simply because they never did anything to the Virgin Mother, reserving their rage and envy only for her Son, since they did not know God the way you should know Him."

The above reasoning brought out an abundant flow of tears from the chest of the sinner. These were taken by the Father as a sure sign of repentance and he asked him if he had confessed. He said that he had done so, but that he had not had the courage

to reveal such a great crime. He was offered to confess, and the man did so with a great feeling. That is how the affair was closed, and that soul saved that would otherwise have been lost. This was not the only one, as many more were saved by the good doctrine and the good examples of those religious aboard.

So, they came to Manila with all those aboard the ship proclaiming the great and wonderful virtue they had seen in the religious whom they carried with them. They would say that it was due to their prayers that such a rotten ship had arrived in port, after having crossed such seas and with the severe storm they had had.