
Documents 1606E

Eyewitness report on the Dominican mission that came aboard a patache in 1606

Sources: 1) Fr. Aduarte's History, Manila, 1640; partly translated in B&R 31: 252-254; 32: 271-272. 2) Fr. Aduarte's letter in AGI Fil. 68-1-37; translated in B&R 14: 331.

Volume I. Chapter 63. The conquest of the Moluccas ... and the entry of religious into the province.

...
At the beginning of August in the same year [1606], large reinforcements of religious came from Spain; and so great was the need which there was of them that they came at a very fortunate time, especially since they were picked men in virtue and learning... Father Fray Diego del Aguila ... labored much in the ship, hearing confessions, and preaching and teaching; for as in voyages there are so many kinds of people, there is need of all these things, while many of the people need them all at once, because they do not know the doctrine which it is their duty to know and believe, and do not take that care of their souls which they ought to take. Some of them do not even desire to have such things spoken of, that their ignorance may not be known; and hence there is much labor in teaching them, and it is a great service to God not to refuse this labor.

The college student from the college of San Gregorio at Valladolid who came with the rest of the religious was Fray Pedro Rodriguez,¹ a native of Montilla and a son of the convent of San Pablo at Córdoba. His departure was deeply felt because he was much loved and esteemed. His parents loved him tenderly, for he was, like Benjamin, the youngest of the family and had always been very obedient and docile toward them, very devoted to them, now that old age had begun to affect them. The religious of his convent were grieved because they had seen in him such a notable beginning in virtue

1 Ed. note: Later on, Fr. Aduarte refers to him as Fr. Pedro Valverde (see below).

and letters, and they knew that he had progressed in both at the college of Valladolid, that every day he made progress; they were sorry that he left that convent without the many benefits and advantages which they hoped from such a son. Everyone had some arguments to put before the constancy of Father Fray Pedro, each one having his own set of arguments which he defended as best he could. His parents, brothers and relatives were all begging him, with tears and sighings, with such an obstinacy that they followed him and pursued him until the embarkation. As for the religious, they objected by letting him know how inadequate his little strength was, how big the labors were in the Philippines for which lean and weak friars like him were not adequate, and that it was imprudent and therefore not acceptable to God to leave the exercises of reader and preacher, for which God had given him special talents, in order to go to the Philippines, where the work would be superior to his capacities and he would not be as useful. However, the constant religious was not moved, either by the tears of the former, who must be underrated since we are dealing with matters in the greater service of God, or by the entreaties of the latter, trusting that God, who had given him such an ardent desire to undertake such a pious journey, would also provide him with the required strength. Indeed, God does not give great desires for higher works so that they would be left undone, since He is perfect in everything.

[Fr. Pedro was sick in bed with fevers when the mission band was in Mexico. While aboard ship, he took special care of ministering to the sick.]

The Lord considered Himself well served and sent to his faithful servant the final illness when his ship had already come among these islands.

[They were already at the port of Ibalon and he was being carried ashore when he lost consciousness.]

He had wanted to walk on foot over the 150 leagues of bad road that exist from one port to the other in New Spain, and he had even persuaded Father Fray Juan, his companion who was as delicate as he was or worse; he would have accomplished it and would have caused money to be left over from these two trips, had not the Prelate [i.e. the author] objected to it, given the state of his little strength.

At the islands of the **Ladrones**, he had offered himself to stay, and had even tried to put it into execution, moved by the fact that, being so poor, they had never had a minister and they remain heathen, [although] every year our ships pass by there when they come from Mexico. By signs, as he did not know their language, he was asking them to take him along, but he was not permitted to do so on account of the many difficulties involved. It may be that Father Fray Pedro, on account of his determination, would have overcome them, but one must not look at these things for one person only, and the disadvantages that this may entail, as things now stand, are morally greater than the benefit that can be expected, as experience has told us as a result of some religious of the seraphic Father St. Francis having stayed there.

...

The religious were much affected by his death, since they had conceived great hopes out of his determination, as they had seen clear signs that his ministry would have

reaped many souls, if only he had made it. Some of our religious, and a Franciscan, carried his body to be interned in the church of Casigura[n]¹ and they placed it next to the altar steps on the gospel side. He left the reputation of a saint among his companions and also in the town where he was buried, even though the Indians had never seen him alive, but his works were such that alive or dead this name was given him.

Aduarte's History, completed by Fr. Gonçalves

Volume II. Chapter 59. Other journeys of Father Fray Diego in the service of the Lord, for the advancement of the conversions of these peoples.²

...
This company embarked at the beginning of July 1605; and, after suffering the ordinary discomforts of two long voyages following so closely one after the other, they reached Manila the next year, six having died in the voyages and journeys. One of these was Father Fray Pedro Valverde [sic], a student in the college of San Gregorio, a son of San Pablo at Córdoba, and a religious of superior virtue. He died as the ship was just beginning to come among the islands, and was buried in an Indian hamlet near the port of Ibalon. Some years afterward, when the Father Provincial sent a religious for his bones, he found the body still entire, without a foul odor or any decay, just as if it had been newly buried; but neither the Indians nor their *encomendero*³ would permit him to take it away, keeping possession of it as a holy body.

Report by Fr. Aduarte concerning the 1606 arrival of the Dominicans in the Philippines

Information by Father Fray Diego Aduarte, concerning the voyage that he made in the year 1605 from Spain to the Philippines, with 38 religious of his order; and, further, that made by Father Fray Gabriel de San Antonio in the year of 1608; and, further, what is necessary that there should not be failures in such voyages.

By command of Don Luis de Velasco, Viceroy of this country of New Spain, in compliance with a clause of a letter from his Majesty—whereby he was commanded to advise his Majesty of the religious who, going under his orders to the Philippines, have remained here [i.e. in Mexico], and what was the occasion of it; and in particular of

1 Ed. note: Now within Sorsogon Province, in SE Luzon.

2 Ed note: Fr. Aduarte died in 1636, but the events subsequent to 1634 were added by his editor, Fray Domingo Gonçalves, who wrote a sketch of Aduarte's life, thus repeating some of the events of the 1606 mission reproduced below.

3 Ed. note: The Spanish owner of the landed property.

those who remained of my company, two years ago [i.e. in 1606]¹—I, Diego Aduarte, declare as follows, having come as his vicar; and I call God to witness that in all I tell the truth.

In the month of July of 1605, I sailed from Spain, with 38 religious of my order, whom I was empowered by his Majesty's decrees to convey thither; and none was missing. Among these there were only 4 lay brothers; and of the rest, who were priests (they being in the majority), all except one were preachers and confessors; and those who were not such had studied sufficiently to be ordained as priests for mass—as all of them now are, and actual ministers, who preach and hear confessions in various languages which they have learned, much to the service of God and the increase of His Church.

I arrived in this country of New Spain with all the said 38 religious, where two of my priests died. One of them was named Fray Dionisio de Rueda, who had come from Valencia, of which he was a native; the other, Fray Pablo Colmenero, who came from Salamanca, and was a native of Galicia. Both of them were religious of excellent abilities.

I embarked at the port of Acapulco for the Philippines, with only 28. Although it is true that at the time of embarkation some 9 were absent, who had not yet arrived at the port, yet even if they had arrived they could in no wise have been embarked; for the ship which was given me was very small, and had accommodations for no more than 12 friars at the most. So true is this, that the treasurer of his Majesty of this city of Mexico, one Bribiesca, who was then at the port to despatch the ships by command of the Marquis of Montesclaros, told me not to embark more than 12. This I swear to be true *in verbo sacerdotis*.² I left that very port several religious, with permission and order to return to Mexico until they could go to the Philippines; and I was many times sorry for those whom I had embarked, on account of the poor accommodations that we had. Four of them died at sea, between here and the Philippines (3 of these being priests, and the other not), all of them being friars from whom much was hoped. I have made information of all this before the notary of the ship itself (who was called Francisco de Vidaurre), with witnesses who were aboard—which, with the favor of God, I myself shall take to Spain, as I am now on the way there. This was in the year of 1606.

The very next year two religious of my company—priests, confessors, and preachers, Fray Jacinto Orfanel and Fray Joseph de San Jacinto—went to the Philippines with Don Rodrigo de Mendoza, nephew of the Marquis, who was commander of two pataches; and this year, 1608, I sent four others of the same qualifications with the Governor, Don Rodrigo de Vivero.

1 Ed. note: Fr. Aduarte had returned from the Philippines in 1607 (see B&R 32:275).

2 Ed. note: Which means “on the word of a priest.”

Thus, of all my company, except six who have died, only one has failed to go to the Philippines. To this one, I confess, I gave permission to remain; and he is at present in the province of Oaxaca as minister and interpreter...¹

¹ Ed. note: He had granted his permission because, he says indirectly, that the subject lacked "apostolic spirit".