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## Document 1587

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# The galleon San Martin ends up wrecked at Macao and a small ship makes it to Manila in 1587

*Sources: Fr. Diego Aduarte's Historia de la Provincia del Sancto Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores..., Manila, 1640; 2nd ed., Zaragoza, 1693 and 3rd ed., 2 volumes, Madrid, 1962-63. Synopsized in B&R 30:128-130.*

## The history of the Dominican Province of the Holy Rosary

### Chapter 8. The voyage of the Fathers from Mexico to the Philippines.

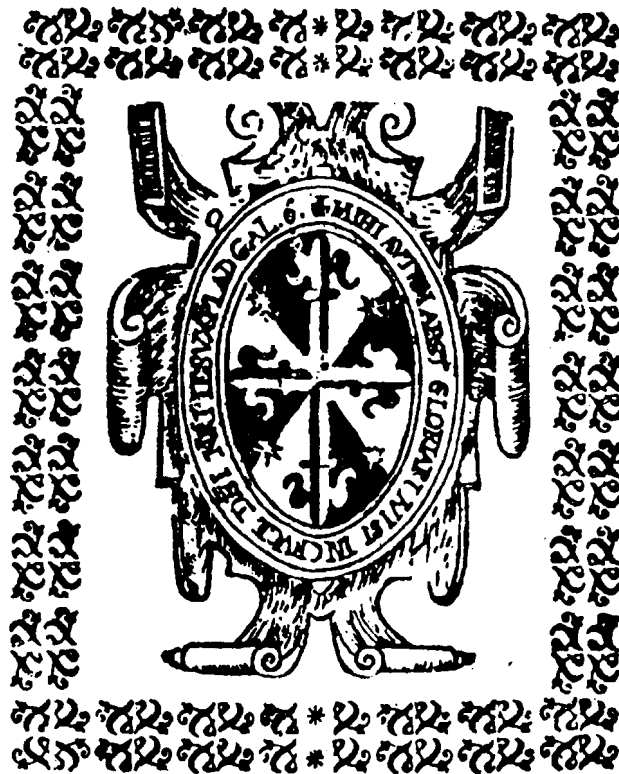
[Synopsis: The three brethren destined for China set sail from the port of Acapulco for Macao in a ship called the **San Martin**. The other 15 religious began their voyage on the Sunday called Quasimodo, the Sunday after Easter, 6 April, in the year 1587. It was very late in the year, so that there was danger of storms; for the time of the *vendavales* had come—stormy and contrary winds, which are feared greatly by the best pilots. They had the misfortune to lose their ship-stores by spoilage<sup>1</sup>, and were obliged to live on beans and chick-peas for all the rest of the voyage, which lasted three and a half months. But a much more severe affliction was the narrowness of their quarters in the ship; for two factions broke out among the crew, one party fortifying itself in the forecabin, the other in the poop; and they were about to give battle to each other, as if the one party had been Moors and the other Christians. Fortunately, the Fathers succeeded in reconciling them. The carelessness of the navigators almost caused the ship to be lost on one occasion; on another, the vessel was almost lost on some islands

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<sup>1</sup> Ed. note: Henry B. Lathrop, who synopsized the original text for the B&R series, wrongly says that the goods were lost by fire; he simply misread the word “luego” for “fuego.”

# HISTORIA DELA PROVINCIA DEL SANCTO ROSARIO DELA ORDEN DE PREDICADORES EN PHILIPPINAS, IAPON, Y CHINA.

POR EL REVERENDISSIMO DON FRAY DIEGO  
 Duarte Obispo de la Nuevaegovia. Añadida por el muy Reverendo  
 Padre Fray Domingo Gonçalez Comissario del sancto Officio,  
 y Regente del Colegio de Sancto Thomas de la  
 misma Provincia. ~



CONLICENCIA, EN MANILA  
 En el Colegio de Sãcto Thomas, por Luis  
 Beltran impressor de libros. Año de 1640.

inhabited by cannibals. On the eve of St. Magdalen's Day [i.e. 21 July] they reached port; and they took this saint to be patron of that province.]

### **Full translation of Chapter 8: Of the voyage made by the founding Fathers from Mexico to the Philippines.**

The happy day finally arrived and as luck would have it, it fell upon the feast day of the glorious apostle Matthew, in the year of 1587. The religious who were to pass to the Philippines had gathered and, with a quick and devoted spirit, they offered themselves once again to the Lord, prepared to begin their journey and face its hardships, which were many. However, as they were used to it, they had by then lost fear of it and even relished the prospect because they are usually borne by the Lord and transformed into happiness and consolation, even in this valley of tears, since the Lord cannot contain His favors and rewards when He sees His very own in the middle of hardships and tribulations arm themselves with patience, resigned to His divine will and not wanting nor pretending anything else other than what the Lord would send them, given that, as a Father, He loves them and, being wise and almighty, He knows what is best for them and He sends it to them. They had a large experience of it all; therefore, without fear of great hardships about which they had been told existed along the way, at sea and overland, they prepared to cover the distance and to sail.

They were only sorry to have to leave behind Father Juan Crisóstomo, who was the one who had worked the hardest at this foundation, as it was said earlier, and he was even more sorry to stay. However, the Lord had him so crippled in bed that he could not even move his arms to carry his own food to his mouth, so, he then had to stay, and Brother Juan Deza, who had to serve him and keep him company. Fr. Juan Cobo also stayed, in order to conclude some important business that he had begun and because the Lord, as was seen earlier, with a very special providence, was reserving him for greater things not then understood by men. He demonstrated his good spirit by accompanying them as far as Acapulco<sup>1</sup> which is at the end of 80 leagues of a very bad road; the following year [1588] he embarked for his new province, and not alone, but well accompanied, as will be mentioned later.

The religious arrived at the port of Acapulco during Lent, a time during which the neglectful ones are revived in the service of God and the pious ones take advantage, as these Fathers did by transforming the hospital, where like poor people they had found some cells, into a very religious convent, giving a good example to the others with the rigor of their persons. They preached and heard the confessions of those who had to embark, attracting them to deal truly with the things of the soul, in spite of the many dealings and bothers that appear at such times and that men drag behind them, so much so that, busy as they are with material things, commerce and ship-stores, they forget

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<sup>1</sup> Ed. note: Fr. Manuel Ferrero, the editor of the 3rd edition mentions the fact that the word Acapulco (in a Mexican dialect, no doubt, perhaps in Nahuatl) means "the mouth of Hell" because of the extreme heat.

the main thing which is what pertains to the soul, and they have a need for people such as they to wake them up.

At that time there were two ships ready to sail; one of them, called the **San Martín**, was going to Macao, a Portuguese port and city on the mainland of China. It was a wonderful opportunity to send aboard it some religious to found there a house and to try an entry into China, whose door did not appear as closed as they had been led to believe. To this effect, the Father Vicar-General ordered the following to embark aboard that ship: Father Antonio de Arcediano, who was going as Prelate of that Mission, and Fathers Alonso Delgado and Bartolomé López, few in number but very well prepared in religion, letters and prudence.

They set sail during Easter week and, once at Macao, they gave so many proofs of their abilities that they gained the goodwill of everyone very easily and they founded a house named after their province, Nuestra Señora del Rosario. They would have founded many in China, if those who should have helped them had not prevented them from doing so, as will be mentioned later.

The other ship was going to the Philippines and aboard it embarked the Father Vicar General with the rest of the religious, 15 in all.<sup>1</sup> They set sail on the Sunday of Quasimodo, which is the Sunday after Easter, which was on the 6th of April of that year, a very late date, reason for which a not too successful voyage could be feared, since, toward the end of the navigation, they had to run a long way among islands and the *vendavals* which are very brisk and contrary winds would have begun to blow, causing great storms, feared even by the greatest pilots. However, they were not feared by those who sail for God; to them, prosperity and adversity are both converted into good and are taken advantage of, as the Apostle said.

Thus, although the weather was threatening storms, they embarked happy and with slightly better accommodation than in the previous navigation [from Spain to New Spain]. Very soon this happiness was attacked by hardships of major proportion that happened. For instance, the same thing happened to them as to the rest of the people aboard, as all the food supplies were later spoiled and they had to make do with only beans and chick-peas the whole time that the voyage lasted. If only that had happened, it would not have been so painful to bear but, although they were trained to suffer great privations, made willingly when they had other foods at hand and would thus suffer this need easily, when they saw others making do, they had not been trained for any of that.

What afflicted them most, and with reason, was the little peace aboard the ship, given that, for the slightest things, two of the leaders aboard were opposed to each other, in

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1 Ed. note: From the list of the first Dominican missionaries given earlier in the book, they were: Father Superior Juan de Castro, Fr. Alonso Ximenez, Fr. Miguel de Benavides, Fr. Pedro Bolaños, Fr. Bernardo Navarro, Fr. Diego de Soria, Fr. Juan de Castro (the nephew of the Superior), Fr. Marcos de San Antonio, Fr. Juan Maldonado, Fr. Juan de Ormaça, Fr. Pedro de Soto, Fr. Juan de la Cruz, Fr. Gregorio de Ochoa, Br. Domingo de Nieva (a deacon), and Br. Pedro Rodriguez (a lay brother).

such a way that they formed the ship crew into two bands, one fortifying himself with his gang on the quarter deck, the other with his followers in the forecabin. They were many times about to come to blows and fight one another, as if they were Moors against Christians, without the good advices and exhortations of the religious being able to stop anything between the ones and the others until, by leaving these inexorable men, they dealt this matter with God in prayer, and were heard better by Him and taken care of. The bands composed with each other and all became friends, the Lord having been touched by the many tears the religious had shed about this matter in His presence. With such tears they also pacified the ire of God who, having seen so much discord among them and that they paid little heed to His divine justice and to the just intermediaries who were trying to pacify them, threatened twice to send the ship to the bottom of the sea. The first time was in the middle of the sea, when they were all carefree, sailing without any caution, and with a good wind. The ship was about to hit a rock, unknown before, and that was why it was not indicated on the sea chart. So, they were not on the lookout for it, as they are now. Then, they were going very close to it when Father Miguel de Benavides saw it first, as he was apart from the others and praying by the side of the ship. As he could not tell whether it was a rock or a whale, he hailed a sailor and the latter then shouted that they should move off. This was done urgently but, no matter the diligence they gave, they came so close to it that the side of the ship almost brushed against it. Everyone saw it and everyone was left stunned and they did not stop giving thanks to God, attributing the danger in which they had been to the gangs they had formed, and the favor that the Lord had given them to the holiness of the religious in their company, on account of whom the Lord had forgiven the rest of them, as he had forgiven those who had accompanied St. Paul, while sailing to Rome, by making them arrive at Malta.

The other time was among the Philippine Islands themselves, where they went through three storms. Suffice to say that they were upon the land and among islands for those who know the sea to realize how dangerous they can be. However, one of them was so terrible that it took both topmasts and the mast they call mizzen and the foresail, leaving the ship with only the mainsail; hence, without the help of the others, the ship did not steer well and the force of the wind was so terrible that it was taking it toward some reefs where it would necessarily have broken up into pieces and all would have perished. In such a case, even though some could have escaped by swimming, which is rendered more difficult by such a storm, they would not have escaped with their life for all that, because the land belonged to some cannibalistic Indians, mortal enemies of the Spanish, and they would have finished them off upon seeing them.

When the crew saw that they were in such a great distress, the same necessity forced them to return to God, and, with the best devotion they could muster, they made a vow to make a procession with flagellation upon arriving ashore, if the Lord would have the blood flow. The Lord heard them, like a Father, and against all hope, with only the mainsail they had the ship moved off, went out of danger and filled them with happiness. The next day, there came a propitious wind and with it they entered into the bay

of Manila, which is the main city in the islands, inure to hardships and dangers. But, much favored by the Lord and thankful, they complied with their vow, having forgotten all the rivalries and enmities they had had. To bring out the good the Lord usually sends the hardships. May He be blessed forever.

On the eve of the glorious St. Magdalen they arrived at the port and the religious dressed themselves with the habits made with serge in Mexico which they had brought for use in the new Province. As someone who had put on a poorer habit in order to begin a reformation, on that day they wanted to partake of the favor of this glorious saint, who has so particularly favored our Order in so many occasions, by naming us her friars and by offering herself as our only Patroness; so, they elected her as such and she has remained so since that day, which was the first day the religious got there and they have always received and continue to receive great favors from this glorious saint in the preaching of the Gospel, from someone who was also a preacher and apostle.

## **Chapter 9. The voyage and experience of the brethren who went to Macao.**

[Synopsis: As it was the principal intention, in establishing this new province, to promulgate the Holy Gospel in the great kingdom of China, the Fathers who were sent there were distinguished for sanctity and learning. Of the voyage we know only that the vessel was wrecked on the coast of China, and that they escaped to land as if by miracle. They were not treated with the severity usually shown to foreigners who come to or are lost on the coast of China; but were kindly received by one of the chief men, who had observed their devotion. They did not obtain permission to carry on the work of evangelization in China, but went on to Macao and were thence carried to India. Father Antonio Arcediano taught theology, and was highly regarded in Goa. At different times, he sent his two companions to Spain and to Rome to plead the cause of Macao, and to do what they could to establish the preaching of the Gospel in China. At the end of six years, seeing no hope of what he desired, he returned to Spain, and there became a teacher of theology in the University of Salamanca. He afterwards went to Avila, and died there. The order did not succeed at this time in entering China by way of Macao; but finally, the desired entry to China was obtained by way of Hermosa [i.e. Taiwan].]

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1 Ed. note: In a letter dated Manila, 24 June 1590, taken from Retana's *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino*, Bishop Domingo de Salazar, O.P., was to report about "the kind reception given in the province of Chincheo to a ship which the Viceroy then governing New Spain sent to Macao, and whose captain was Lope de Palacios, the brother of the auditor Palacios, member of the Audiencia of Mexico. This ship was driven to Chincheo under stress of weather, and there everyone in her was well received, when the inhabitants of Chincheo learned that they were coming to trade in China."