

## **PRELUDE**

My trip actually began with a trip to Seattle, WA to the annual meeting of the Episcopal Asian American (EAM) Convocation from June 29 thru July 2, 2005. During this meeting I met many Filipino American clergy and laypersons. We discussed my trip to the Philippines and I received many recommendations of places to visit and people to contact. These encounters also enabled me to be able to connect some of the cultural aspects the Philippine Episcopalians in America with the Church in the Philippines. I was also able to carry greetings to from some American Episcopalians to the Philippines and back after the trip. This was a very profitable aspect of the project.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the Rev. Winfred B. Vergara, EAM Missioner for the National Church, for granting me a scholarship to attend the meeting. My major expense for this trip was the airfare.

Many thanks to Bishop Bart Esposito for arranging this trip with Dean Maddela and to Dean Maddela for taking such great care of me in the Philippines.

## **THE TRIP**

I arrived at Manila airport on Sunday morning July 10, 2005 and was met by two seminarians at St. Andrew's Seminary in Quezon City and a driver. I was billeted at the guesthouse at the seminary. Had breakfast with the Rev. Dr. John Kater and we attend mass at St. Mary's Cathedral where I met Prime Bishop Saliba and the dean of the cathedral.

On Monday I met with dean of the seminary, the Rev. Tomas Madella. He arranged an itinerary for me to visit the Mountain Province, the birthplace of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines.

On Tuesday I arranged for a cell phone to stay in touch with the seminary and all those whom I was to meet along the way. It was the least expensive way to maintain contact and also provided a way to be in touch in case of an emergency. Text messaging is the preferred way of communicating over cellular in the country – I believe PI sends the most text messages of any country in the world.

At 8PM on Tuesday I boarded a bus with many other passengers on my way to Banaue to visit the ancient rice fields. I arrived at about 5AM on Wednesday morning and after a short nap I chartered a Jeepney to take me to Hapau to see the rice terraces that were over 3000 years old.

The next morning I hailed a motor scooter to take me to the village to board a jeepney for the four-hour ride over bumpy roads (all roads are bumpy in the PI mountains) to Bontoc. I arrived in Bontoc about noon and proceeded to the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Philippines to meet with Bishop Malecdan and his staff. The next morning I attended a mass at the Cathedral and met with Dean Daniel Carino.

On Friday Morning I was off to Sagada, once again on a jeepney. This time, however, the ride was only about two hours. During the day I toured the local school, St. Mary's and met with the headmaster, Mr. Dennis Faustino. I also went to the local factory where they made various articles, such as, handbags and backpacks, out of a cloth woven in the fashion of the indigenous peoples. Later in the evening I met with Fr. Jerry Sagayo and we agreed that I would preach at St. Mary's.

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Saturday I traveled to Kin-iway to meet with Fr. Brent Quines. When I got there I learned that he was off to an ordination in a remote village in the diocese. By the time I decided to go back the last jeepney south had departed, therefore, I had to rent a microbus for the trip back. A nice gentleman and his son drove me back along the bumpy road to St. Joseph's Retreat Center where I was staying.

Since it is generally hot and humid in PI and people want to work a full day the first mass on Sunday was at 7AM and the second at 9AM. I preached both services and the sermon was well received. Later that afternoon I rented a microbus for the trip to St. John's. The church was in a remote village about an hour's drive from Sagada. There we had a mass at 3PM and I preached again. In my sermon told a story about a rice farmer to draw a parallel to the story about sowing good and bad seed in Matthew 13:31-33, 44-49a. These people were rice farmers and it was interesting to see how they responding hearing the Gospel in their own context.

That evening I was invited to the house of Dennis Faustino for a meeting of the youth group at St. Mary's school. It was interesting to see how the youth reacted to the challenges of Mr. Faustino. By the way, the Filipino food was GREAT!

The next morning I boarded the bus for Baguio City. The bus ride was about six hours long and it was raining a good bit of the way. The roads winded down one mountain, up another and back down into Baguio. I was in Baguio until Thursday. While in Baguio I visited the following churches, schools and met with the following persons:

- Bishop Joel Pachao of the Diocese of North Central Philippines and his staff
- The Very Rev. David Tabo-oy, dean of the Cathedral of the Resurrection
- Padi Alicia Sabaen, Rector, Holy Innocents
- Dr. Benjie Yngente, Headmaster, Easter Collage
- Fr. Richard Egmalis, Chaplain, Brent School International
- Fr. Vincent Bete, Missioner for three churches in Ambiong and Tawang near Baguio and La Trinidad
- Fr. Louis Yacuan, Rector, Epiphany, La Trinidad
- Fr. Charles Carino, Rector, Holy Guardian Angel in Pico, La Trinidad

While visiting Holy Guardian Angel, Fr. Carino, Fr. Bete, and I went to a celebration of the first anniversary of the death of one of the parishioners at Guardian Angel. It was held at the man's house. This was quite an experience. For one thing the main course was a roasted and boiled pig in the indigenous fashion. In the pictures on the DVD one can see that the close relatives of the deceased gather around his belongings and have a very last meal with the person. Then Fr. Carino said a funeral mass. This was an excellent example of how the Philippine church is integrating the old and the new.

On Friday morning I left on a bus for Aglipay Central Theological Seminary in Urdaneta, Pangasinan. There I met with many students and heard some pretty interesting stories related to the social actions the students have been involved in. One was the protest over working conditions at Hacienda Luicita, where riot police killed several persons. I also interviewed the Dean Fr. Terry Rovillido and Fr. Nixon Jose. To get a sense of the living conditions, take a look at the picture of Fr. Jose doing his wash on the DVD.

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I left for Quezon City on Saturday morning arriving after about a five-hour bus ride.

All of the meetings and interviews are recorded on videotape except for the one with Fr. Sagayo, which is only on audiotape.

On Sunday Morning I attended mass at the IFI Cathedral. I had a chance to speak briefly with the Obispo Maximo after the mass.

The date was July 24, 2005.

The following week I met with and interviewed the following persons:

- Prime Bishop Ignacio Soliba at the ECP headquarters a short walk from my guesthouse.
- Fr. Feliciano Balangui and Bishop Mike Yamayan, Youth and Evangelism, ECP
- Dean Toman Maddela
- Ms. Dominga Anosan, Community Based Development, ECP
- Dr. Andrew Tauli, Secretary, ECP
- Laura Somebang-Ocampo, Development, ECP
- Fr. Apolonio Ranche, IFI, History Professor at St. Andrew's Theological Seminary (SATS)
- Fr. Red Molina, Instructor at SATS
- The Student Council of the seminary
- Several students at the seminary

In addition to these interviews, I attended the 103<sup>rd</sup> anniversary mass for the IFI (Iglesia Filipina Independiente) at the Cathedral. The IFI is a church in the Philippines that was founded just after the Spanish-American War protesting the Roman Catholic support of the Philippine government and the treatment of indigenous priests. The IFI and the ECP are in full communion. There are several IFI priests working in Episcopal Churches in the United States.

I had the opportunity to attend a clericus meeting of the priests and deacons in the Diocese of the Central Philippines. The Rev. Dr. John Kater was speaking on the state of the Anglican Communion.

I also was able to meet with the Rev. Dr. Joseph Frarie. Fr. Frarie was a priest in the ECUSA (TEC). He began teaching at St. Andrew's many years ago and eventually returned last year permanently and transferred his canonical residence to the ECP. He lives in a suite of rooms attached to the seminary. He was kind enough to take me to a tailor to have a pair of Philippine clergy shirts made. Dr. Kater, he and I had shared a meal three times together. He was a good source of information on the internal workings of the ECP.

On Monday, August 1, I boarded a bus for the city of Cabanatuan to meet the Rev. Dcn. Florence Ayban. From Cabanatuan we traveled to a remote squatter village on a military reservation called Palale. Since this was the last Jeepney to Palale from Cabanatuan today we made several rounds in the city picking up more and more people along the way. We had people packed inside the jeepney with all their groceries, people hanging off of the back and several people on the top of the vehicle. In all we had 27 people packed in, on and on top. It was OK as long as it wasn't raining or our tire did not go flat – Both happened. We stopped for the tire but

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not for the rain and we trucked up narrow winding road; up and down and through gullies and rivers finally arriving in Palale about 7PM way after dark and the electricity was off to boot.

We had purchased fish for the family we were staying with, the Junior Warden of Saint David's, the local ECP church where Florence had worked. As it happened a member of the parish had died that week and they were having a wake that night so we walked in the dark over to the wake. I sat and talked with the men on the porch while all of the women sat in the living room and sung songs. The local priest came up from the city and said some prayers and words of comfort for the family. The young woman that had died was in her late 20s and had a husband and two cute children. It was a sad occasion; but, an example of the kind of community typical in the PI.

In the morning we visited Saint David's and the house where Florence had lived and headed back down to Cabanatuan. We stopped at an ECP church, St. Paul's, along the way and talked to the priest, Fr. James Rome, who was Florence's supervisor. Fr. Romel drove us the rest of the way into the town and we visited the mission where Florence was now working and went to lunch. They told me that we were having dog – but they later told me that it was only goat. Then back on the bus back to Quezon City.

It is not Wednesday and I finished up with a couple of interviews with the students and pack for the trip home.

On Thursday, I interviewed Bishop Dixie Taclobo of the Diocese of Central Philippines whom I had met at the clericus.

All during the stay I had been attending at least three of the five services they had everyday at the seminary: Morning Prayer, Morning Mass, Noon Day Prayer, Evening Prayer and Compline. You would not know the difference between services of the ECP and the US Church except that the Filipinos have terrific voices and they would practice singing everyday after Evening Prayer. Seminarians are required to attend at least three of the five services each day. A bell summoned us to chapel and to meals. I took most of my meals in the refectory of the seminary when I was at SATS. Meals were very simple – we ALWAYS had rice and a portion of fish or meat and a vegetable or salad of some kind.

On Friday we left very early in the afternoon to try and beat the weekend traffic to the airport south of Manila. I arrived in plenty of time to clear customs and relax before boarding the plane back to San Francisco.

## LEARNINGS

- The Episcopal Church in the Philippines (ECP) is very much like its colonial founder The Episcopal Church in every way. This is good for us who are from TEC, because it is so US it struggles to reach the some of the culture in the PI.
- ECP was founded primarily in the Mountain Province. This is because the first bishop refused to evangelize where there was already an “altar”. Bishop Brent sent his missionaries to the Mountain Province to evangelize the Igorots. This tribe was so fierce that the Roman Catholics had abandoned their efforts. When the ECP made inroads in the area the Romans became jealous and started to actively evangelize.
- The ECP founded schools and hospitals to the betterment of the peoples. However, they failed to ask anything of the peoples for the work of the church. Thus, there is a culture in the ECP that the church will do everything and the people are consumers. This is a general truth but there are, of course, many responsible and involved Filipino Episcopalians. However, the church is working hard to correct this attitude.
- The majority of the members of the ECP are from the Mountain Province, including all of its leaders. I feel this could be inhibiting the growth of the church. Ther is a lot of tribal pride I the country and the church needs to lift up leaders for the other provinces, especially in the south.
- The IFI on the other hand, is a more universal and a larger church than the ECP. It does not appear that the IFI has ever had a majority ethnic component. This is probable because it was an off shoot of the RC Church and had a broad base when it was founded in 1902.
- The people of the Philippines are FANTASTIC!!
- There is a great deal of poverty in the country and the government does not seem to care about the little one. In remote villages there is rarely water or electricity. It is a priority of the ECP to partner with NGOs to provide water processing and electricity generating plants in remote areas. Japan and Sweden are major partners. ERD is involved in some places.

As an example of the government not really caring, on the way to the airport going throught the center of the city one passes what looks like a nice area of town. However, if one looks beyond the façade, that is painted pink, you can see squalor in the inside. This area is only a few blocks from the Presidential Palace.

- The government is corrupt. Arroyo is no better that Marcos.
- Students at both the IFI and the ECP seminaries are active in the causes of social justice. When there was a protest against the Arroyo government the students met at the rally to protest together. The seminaries closed for the day to allow the students to go.
- Episcopalians in the Philippines have a deep faith.
- The ordinary person in the Philippines has a tough life. They work hard and do not make that much to live on. There is a large gap between the rich and the poor.

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- Behind the altars in the ECP churches the crucifixes are being replaced by figures representing the resurrection of Christ. I believe this is because they see a lot of hope in the Good News of God in Jesus Christ contained in the Holy Scripture. In their difficult lives they see the Risen Christ as a symbol of over coming the oppression they are faced with daily. I could sense this in people I met along the way.
- I believe that there is a sincere effort to adapt the learned faith of the colonizer to the cultures and traditions of the indigenous peoples. The trail ECP hymnal has many hymns in the indigenous languages. At the seminary every Thursday one of the classes is responsible for putting planning the Eucharist. The middler class used an Igorot style meal setting for the Eucharist while I was there. I thought it was very moving. There was also the mass that was celebrated during the one year death ceremony where Fr. Carino celebrated a mass along with the ancient tradition.

In conclusion, it comes down to getting to know the people. I firmly believe that God is in the relationship and that experiences like this prove it.