

PROLOGUE

“EVERY DETAIL OF OUR LIFE HAS BEEN THE OBJECT OF A DIVINE
THOUGHT, AND THAT THOUGH HAS ALWAYS BEEN ON LOVE.”

- Blessed Marie Eugénie

DECEMBER 1992 is a landmark for the Religious of the Assumption in the Philippines. Turning points such as this recall to our minds and hearts remote but significant beginnings of striking manifestation of God’s kagandahang-loob to both the Assumption and the Filipino people. Beyond any doubt, we were in God’s loving thought long before events actually materialized.

We invite all of you who, in one way or another, have touched our life or whose life we have touched – our invaluable collaborators, our faithful alumni and alumnae, our dear students, and all our beloved friends and benefactors throughout these last hundred years – to reread and to relive with us our experience of God’s kagandahang-loob in grateful remembering and in dynamic living.

And in this rereading and reliving, may we become more open to deeper and vaster dimensions of this same kagandahang-loob of the Father in the century opening before us.

P R E F A C E

Kagandahang-loob

THE STORY of the Assumption's 100 years in the Philippines is the story of God's kagandahang-loob to us. This is the same kagandahang-loob personalized in Jesus Christ Himself, the Father's gift (kaloob) to humankind, the Model we are called to follow; the kind of kagandahang-loob characterized by total obedience to the Father, by self-giving (buhos-loob), by initiative (kusang-loob, by benevolence (mabuting-loob) by openness to all (bukas-loob sa lahat), and by love for the lost, the last and the least.

But it is a story that is still unfinished. It is a story that has yet to be completed, but completed only in eternity. For we, too, are expressions of the Father's kagandahang-loob, exemplified in the Son and continued in the Spirit. We are called upon to continue this story of goodness, to share with others God's kagandahang-loob to us, and to heed the counsel of our Foundress, Blessed Marie Eugénié, "to fully be what one truly is."

PRELUDE

LIGHTING THE FLAME

*"A religious is order a divine thought for the salvation of men,
realized by weak creatures who leave all to commit themselves
solely to this goal. For us, this divine thought is the Assumption."
-Blessed Marie Eugenie*

In April 1989, the Congregation of the Religious of the Assumption celebrated the 150th year of its foundation with a Jubilee Year. Faithful to the charism of its Foundress, Blessed Marie Eugénie, and desiring to respond more effectively to the changing needs of tomorrow's world, the Congregation decided to make as its Jubilee clarion call "Refoundation." This meant a loving and honest look at both the past and [present for the purpose of reaching out to the future.

The 17 provinces of the Congregation in 29 countries spread out over four continents as well as the 35 nationalities that constitute the Assumption today are at present committed to this tremendous task. How shall Blessed Marie Eugénie's timeless and universal charism respond to the demands and needs of the 21st century.

For the Philippines-Thailand Province, at this juncture of our history, "Refoundation" sounds a double call: a call to the Congregation and a call to the Province itself. Our attachment and fidelity to our founding charism will be the measures of our audacity, courage and hope for a genuine refoundation.

As Filipinos, our heritage of wisdom urges us to look back, believing as we do that he who refuses to look back at his roots will fail to reach his goal. (Ang di lumignon sa pinanggalingan ay di makakarating sa paroroonan.) Looking back, therefore, is part and parcel of our refoundation efforts.

The Congregation of the Religious of the Assumption was founded in Paris in 1839 by Anne-Eugénie Milleret de Brou when she was only 22 years of age. Born to a well-to-do French family, Anne Eugenie enjoyed a happy childhood in the vast family estate in Preisch in Lorraine. Her parents were not exceptionally religious, but when she reached the age of 12, her mother saw to it that she was prepared for her First Holy Communion by the parish priest. At that time, nobody suspected that a singular grace was awaiting this young girl that was to determine the path she would follow for the rest of her life.

At the moment Anne-Eugénie received Jesus into her heart, "she was struck by the grandeur of God and her own littleness, For a while, everything around her vanished." She

felt that, at last, she could give God the worship worthy of Him since she was now one with His Divine Son, the Incarnate God. As she was walking back to her pew, she was disturbed by the momentary loss of her mother in the crowd. It was then that she heard an inner voice saying, " You will your mother, but I will be more that a mother to you...You will dedicate yourself to that Church of which, now, you know so little." Clearly, the passions that would move her all of her life were out-lined: Jesus Christ, His Church, His Kingdom.

Her scanty religious grounding plus adverse developments during =her adolescent years brought Anne-Eugénie to a crisis of faith. First came s reversal of the family fortune which led to the loss of the Milleret estate in Preisch. This was followed by the break-up of the family and her settling down in a small Paris apartment with her mother, and, finally, by her mother's succumbing to cholera while helping those afflicted by the plague.

With the death of her mother, Anne-Eugénie was entrusted by her father to a friend, MMe. Doulcet, who lived and entertained elegantly. M. Milleret soon feared that exposure to a worldly lifestyle would not be good for his young daughter. He. Thus. Entrusted her to some relatives, the Foulons, whose way of life was the exact opposite of MMe. Doulcet's.

It was while living in the Foulon's household that Anne-Eugenie was invited by her cousin to listen to the popular series of conference at the Cathedral of Notre Dame conducted by the renowned preacher Lacordaire. Through his words, she was not only brought back to the Faith, but she began to be drawn to the religious life. However, God's design were to be clearly shown she first saw in a dream preaching in a church she had ever been to before.

When her cousins again invited her to listen to another preacher, this time at the Church of St. Eustache, Anne-Eugénie, much to her surprise, recognized the preacher and the church of her dream. Abbe Combalot pointed the way and delineated the first steps in her religious life. The fulfilment of God's plan for her and for the Assumption, however, was to be guided by still another, Father d'Alzon, who would be led to found later the Assumption Fathers, It was to be a two-way collaboration between the two founders.

Anne-Eugénie was a daughter of her time: 19th century France, unsettled by the successive political upheavals of 1830, 1848 and 1870 on one hand, and, on the other, by a wave of religious incredulity that started a century before but was a still going on. However, God's saving grace and the help of eminent instruments sent her way as she searched earnestly for the truth, enabled Anne-Eugénie to journey back to the Faith. She was only 19 then, but once converted, she felt impelled to serve the Church she then barely knew.

Her vocation stemmed from her personal experience and the urgency of the mission she saw. Her encounter with Abbe Combalot, a former disciple of Lammenais, oriented her toward the foundation of a new apostolic congregation rooted in the

contemplative tradition of the Church and open to the fundamental question posed to the Faith. The Religious of the Assumption was born of this intuition: the correlation of the Gospel message to the needs of the time.

How was this to be done? For Anne-Eugénie, the answer was clear: through education that would make Jesus Christ penetrate the deeply irreligious society and work toward its rebirth; harmonize culture and Faith; and render the Christian social spirit understandable.

From the time of her revelation, life for Anne-Eugénie was dedicated to one philosophy and one passion: Jesus Christ and the extension of His Kingdom.

In 1865, THE ASSUMPTION was invited to Malaga, Spain, to open a school for young girls in that city. This development was significant because it introduced the Assumption into Spain where “we shall find so much sympathy.”

A few years later, Madrid became the Assumption’s next foot-hold in Spain. Centuries earlier, the king, Philip II, established in this city the Real Colegio de Santa Isabel for the daughters of the nobility under the protection of the Crown. The school was first entrusted to the cloistered Augustinians who gave it up soon after because running it conflicted with their cloistered way of life. A group of lay people took over the school. Eventually, its direction was passed on to the Escuelas Pias.

When Alfonso XII became king, he wanted to give a new impetus to the Colegio Real. He looked around for possible administrators. Once more, Mme. Loring, Malaga’s faithful benefactress, proposed the Religious of the Assumption. The king readily accepted the suggestion and immediately requested Mother Marie Eugénie to take over the direction of the Real Colegio de Santa Isabel. The Foundress was already well-known to the king through his uncle, The Duke of Montpensier. Moreover, Alfonso’s cousin, Mercedes, who later became his queen, was a student of the Assumption at Auteuil in Paris. Thus, the Assumption came to Madrid in 1872.

After five months of a very happy marriage, Queen Mercedes died. The king remarried, this time to the Archduchess Maria Cristina of Hapsburg, who proved to be highly regardful of the former queen and who seemed to have inherited her fondness for the Assumption. She was especially close to Mother Marie Celestine, Superior of Madrid from 1877 to 1894. The new queen became staunch protectress of all Assumption house in Spain, but, very particularly, she was mother, benefactress and friend of the Assumption house in Madrid. It was through her that the Assumption was invited to assume the direction of the Escuela Normal Superior de Maestras in Manila in 1892.

The Journey East

SPAIN DID NOT ONLY become the Assumption's third home in Europe, it also served as the Congregation's gateway to the East. By the time the first group of Assumption sisters started their eastward journey to Manila, the Philippines had been under Spanish rule for well over 300 years.

Like many of its Asian neighbors, the Philippines was a prime target for colonization by invading Europeans during the so-called "Age of Discovery" that began in the 15th century. During the period from 1486 to 1522, two European nations – Spain and Portugal – had so expanded their empires beyond the seas that they asked the Pope to divide the colonial world between them. Pope Alexander VI, in issuing the first of a number of demarcation bulls, drew an imaginary line running north to south on the Atlantic Ocean. He then granted to Spain the right to explore and to take possession of all the unknown parts of the world west of this line. Portugal was given the same right over all unknown lands east of the demarcation line. The Pope's decision was to undergo various readjustments through subsequent bulls and treaties. Without his demarcation bull and the Treaty of Tordesillas, the Philippines could have been occupied by Portugal and eventually fallen into Dutch hands as did the much sought after Spice Islands or the Moluccas. IN fact, when Magellan "discovered" the Philippines while trying to trace a westward route to the East, there ensued much debate as to whose side the country was in.

The king of Spain, Charles I, assumed the right to colonize the Archipelago of St. Lazarus, the name given by Magellan to the Philippines. An expedition, under the command of Villalobos, was sent for that purpose in 1542. However, all that Villalobos accomplished was to rename the islands "Felipenas" in honor of the crown prince, Philip II. With the union of Spain and Portugal in 1580, the Portuguese claim on the Philippines ended.

That the country should fall into the hands of a Catholic nation whose reigning monarch's (Philip II) priority was evangelization may appear to some historians as accidental or as the incidental outcome of political negotiation involving treaties and demarcation bulls. However, as far as the Assumption of concerned, this was part of a grand design; it was God's kagandahang-loob at work. Whatever it be, the fact remains that the Philippines first formally encountered with Christianity through Spain.

Legaspi's expedition in 1565 established Spain's power over the archipelago and laid the foundation of a colonial government that would last over three centuries. The staunch work of Fr. Urdaneta and his friars also deserves mention. They were inspired by a

daunt-less apostolic zeal. They labored tirelessly, won converts and blocked the slow but steady advance of Islam. The turning point in their missionary effort came with the baptism of Tupas, an influential native, and his son. This event paved the way for the Filipino's general conversion to Christianity for Tupas' example carried great weight.

"So well rooted was the cancer (Islam) that had the arrival of the Spaniards been delayed, all the people would have become Moslems, as all the islanders who have not come under the government of the Philippines."

God's kagandahang-loob was manifested in greater clarity in the Filipinos' receptivity and fidelity to the Faith. Despite such adverse circumstances as the language barrier, limited formation in the Christian faith, unfavorable social and political conditions, Christianity grew steadily among the Filipinos throughout the three and a half centuries of Spanish colonization. The Spanish colonial policy aimed, in principle, at preserving and furthering the humanization of the this humane policy. Numberless were the situations and incidents on the part of both Spaniards and Filipinos that could have doomed the Faith, but God's unshakeable fidelity and loving graciousness prevailed.

NINETEENTH CENTURY PHILIPPINES began experiencing a change in the country's economy with the closing of the Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade in 1815, and the consequent opening of Philippine ports to foreign traders. Trading was no longer limited to commodities originating from Spain, but extended to local produce. For that matter, local inhabitants, including Filipinos, became involved in trading. Although the country remained primarily agricultural, there appeared the beginning of small local industries in response to the people's needs.

Economic growth, although very modest, awakened a desire for better education. Parents sent more of their boys to secondary schools and even to Spain and other European countries for higher studies.

Formal legislation related to the education of Filipinos came to existence only with the Royal Decree of December 20, 1863 which established a plan of primary education in the Philippines. This decree arranged for the creation of schools of primary instruction in all the villages of the archipelago, and the creation of normal school in Manila which would graduate educated and religious teachers who would then take charge of these institutions.

Prior to this decree, a Royal Order of November 3, 1839 directed a committee to draft a set of regulations for the schools in the Philippines. However, action on this order was delayed until 1855, and a report, dated March 7, 1861, revealed very little accomplished. The draft was finally completed at the end of August 1861.

The Royal Decree of December 20, 1863 ordered the establishment of separate primary schools for boys and girls in every town in the Philippines. This decree was

followed by a whole series of legislations which concretized and speeded up long-awaited action on provisions for the education of girls. As a consequence, there arose a need for women teachers. The royal decree prescribed that these schools be conducted by certified teachers. Since there was no normal school as yet those who aspired to teaching positions had to pass an examination before a board of examiners on the subjects taught in primary schools.

In 1875, a normal school for women was established in Nueva Caceres, but it was exclusively for the young women of that diocese. However, the advantage offered by this normal school in the training of women teachers prompted the Spanish government to open a similar institute in Manila to prepare women teachers for girls' primary schools all over the country. Thus, March 11, 1892, a royal decree was issued creating the Superior Normal School for Women Teachers in Manila under the direction of the religious of the Assumption established in the Real Colegio de Santa Isabel in Madrid.

The main work of the Religious of the Assumption is the Christian education of young girls. The Foundress, Mere Marie Eugenie, saw in the society in which she grew up that the great evil of her times came from learning in which faith had no part.

"As long as the scientific and literary education of a young girl is not permeated by Catholic dogma and by the teachings of the Faith, and if Christian life does not become the nourishment and the very atmosphere of her soul, she will be the source of the family and of society and the fruit of this false knowledge for her will be death.

The realization of the urgent need to rebuild in Christ this portion of society that was sadly drifting away from God inspired Marie Eugenie to form a teaching congregation of religious. By means of an enlightened and profoundly Christian education, their special mission would be to introduce the seed of a spiritual rebirth into society and family life by implanting in the minds and souls of young girl the knowledge and the love of Jesus Christ.

The queen regent, Maria Cristina, was a frequent visitor at Santa Isabel. It was during one of her visits that she first broached to Mother Marie Celestine the project of a normal school for women teachers in Manila. The Spanish government had for a long time contemplated the creation of such a school. Now that this project was about to be realized, the queen wished the Religious of the Assumption to assume its direction. Mother Marie Eugenie saw the immense possibilities for good in this distant mission to the East and readily acceded to the queen regent's wish. The proposed foundation fully answered the Foundress' educational vision.

Part 1

Remembering...

A CENTENNIAL YEAR UNFAILINGLY INVITES RECOLLECTION OF THE PAST HUNDRED YEARS. IN OUR CASE, WE LOOK BACK IN LOVING, JOYFUL GRATITUDE. WE SING FOR JOY IN PRAISE OF AND THANKSGIVING FOR GOD'S OVERWHELMING KAGANDAHANG-LOOB AND FIDELITY TO THE NOW PHILIPPINE-THAILAND PROVINCE OF THE ASSUMPTION.

THIS IS A UNIVERSAL THANK YOU FOR THE GIFT OF FAITH TO OUR PEOPLE. IT IS ALSO OUR THANK YOU FOR THE GIFT OF THE ASSUMPTION TO THE PHILIPPINES, AND CERTAINLY, THE RELIGIOUS OF THE ASSUMPTION'S THANK YOU FOR HAVING BEEN LED TO LIVE AND WORK AND LOVE AMONG OUR PEOPLE THESE PAST HUNDRED YEARS, AND HOPEFULLY, GOD WILLING, IN THE MANY MORE HUNDRED YEARS TO COME.

Beginnings

1892-1898

*"The whole educational system must be permeated
by the light of Christ until the spirit, the heart,
the deepest center of one's being is reached.
It is there that the seed of a new life
in the family and in society can be sown,"
-Blessed Marie Eugenie*

PREPARATIONS FOR THE LONG VOYAGE to the Philippines started as early as 1890. Assumption Sisters were required to take examinations in Toledo, Spain to determine who were qualified for the work of running the Superior Normal School for Women Teachers in Manila.

By 1892, the first group of Sisters was ready and on November 13 of the year Mother Marie de Perpetuel Secours, who was chosen as the superior, S., M. Alipia, Sr. Maria de la Cruz and Sr. M. Celedoni sailed from Barcelona to Manila about the middle of December. They stayed in a small house that had been prepared for them in the San Miguel district. A few days later, on December 18, Mass was celebrated for the first time in their temporary quarters. The Sisters remained in this house until May 1893 when they transferred to a rented three-story building, No.3 Anda Street, behind the College of San Juan de Letran.

Meanwhile, a second group of Assumption Sisters had left Barcelona on march 31, 1893 also on Isla de Panay. This group was composed of Sr. M. Antonia, Sr. Florentina, Sr. M. Loreto, Sr. M. Juana, who were all authorized to teach at the Normal School, Sr. M. Nieves and Sr. M. Guadalupe, who were both assigned to handle the Escuela Pratica, a municipal teacher, and Sr. Angelica, the music teacher. Sr. M. Ines, Sr. M. Del Carmen, Sr. M. Olida and Sr. M. Custodia completed the Community.

This second batch of Assumption Sister arrived in the Philippines on May 4, 1893, but instead of going straight to Manila, they made a detour by boat to a tiny isle in Navotas, a fishing village north of Manila, where the Dominicans had a resthouse. Sr. M. Loreto wrote about their arrival:

"...cual no fue nuestra sorpresa cuando al desembarcar, vimos que en lugar de tomar el camino de Manila, nos instalaron en un tren que habian puesto expresamente para nosotras, Llegamos enseguida a una playa donde habia dos o tres indigenas que patronaban una especie de canoa muy estrecha que llamaban banca; de ellas salian unos palos a lo largo que era lo que daban equilibrio a la embarcacion. Nos colocamos dos o tres en cada una, sentadas muy derechas, y el indio que nos llevada empujaba con un palo muy largo al fondo del mar y daba gritos...La isla es tan pequena que colocada una en el centro de la isla se ve el mar por todos lados..."

The Sisters stayed in the rent house for five days after which they made their formal entry into Manila. A Te Deum was solemnly sang at the Cathedral upon their arrival. They were received by the Archbishop of Manila, Msgr. Bernardino Nozaleda, in his palace. With the staff almost complete and with a fairly adequate house on which to start their work, the Sisters began preparing for the opening of the Normal School. From the very start, both the ecclesiastical and civil authorities lent their valuable co-operation to the undertaking. They did everything to minimize as much as possible the innumerable difficulties that generally accompany the foundation of any school.

On July 2, 1893, the Superior Normal School for Women Teachers opened with an enrolment of approximately 100 students. The first students came mostly from the district of Tondo, Binondo, Quiapo and Santa Cruz in Manila and from the nearby towns. This was the first superior normal school for women authorized to train and to graduate teachers for the girls; primary schools the Government was putting up all over the Archipelago.

In view of the pressing need for women teachers, the General Division of Civil Administration empowered the school to give examinations to students who had taken liberal coursed elsewhere and who wished to be come elementary school teachers. This authority, however, was limited to the Normal School's first two years of existence, the academic years 1893-1894 and 1894-1895.

Thus, even before the end od the School's third academic year, it had already granted several elementary schools teacher's certificates, mostly to students from the different schools of the Daughter of Charity. Those who aspired to become superior teachers had to take the fourth year course in the Normal School. The first recipient of the superior teacher's certificate granted by the School was Susan Revilla, who not long after her graduation opened a school of her own.

The Normal School was housed in the building on Anda Street from 1893 to 1895. The steady increase in enrolment, however, soon called for a longer building. Early in 1894, the site of the Convent of the Assumption on Herran and Dakota Streets (now Pedro Gil and Macario Adriatico Streets) in Manila's Malate districts was purchased by the Congregations from Father Tico, a Filipino priest. The Sisters who worked at the Normal School were adequately paid by the Government. Their salaries, plus the rent for the premises used by the School proved sufficient to finance the purchase of the land and the construction of the new school plant.

Following the purchase of the site, plans for the construction od suitable building to house both Normal School and the projected Boarding School were immediately drawn up. On March 19, 1894, Archbishop Nozaleda laid the cornerstone of the future Convent and School at a solemn ceremony attended by representatives of the ecclesiastical and civil authorities of Manila. The building was completed the following year and on May 30, 1895 the Assumption Sisters took up residence in their own convent in Malate. Construction of the Chapel, a jewel of Gothic architecture, started in 1896.

WITH THE COMPLETION of the school building in Malate in 1895, the religious of the Assumption started a Boarding School. Boarding schools were the usual venue for education in the Faith utilized by the Assumption. Mother Marie Eugenie was especially concerned with the education of young girls as future Christian wives and mothers. She was very worried about the superficial education young girls in her country were getting at the time in the so-called fashionable schools. For this reason, the Assumption foundation during the Mother Foundress' lifetime were, by the large, all boarding schools for girls. The acceptance, therefore, by the Religious of the Assumption of the offer to handle a teacher-training institution was exceptional.

In the Philippines, the Assumption had to make a clear distinction between the Normal School and the Boarding School. The Normal School was an institution of the State that was only being administered by the Assumption Sisters; the Boarding School, on the other hand, was the Congregation's own. Thus, in planning the Malate building, one wing was allotted to the Normal School, and the other wing, at right angles to the first, was assigned to the Boarding School.

Six month prior to the completion of the building, on December 9, 1894, another batch of Assumption Sisters arrived aboard the Isla de Mindanao to staff the Boarding School. This group was made up of Sr. Helene Marguerite from Ireland, Sr. Catherine Aloysia from England, Sr. Ana Benedicta, also from Ireland, Sr. Therese Angele from Poland, Sr. M. Letitia, Sr. M. Fortunata and Sr. M. Feliza, all from Spain. In May 1897, Sr. Caroline Marie and Sr. Louise de Ste. Marie, both French; and Sr. M. Petronila and another co-adjutrix sister joined the Manila Community.

The program of studies at the Boarding School followed the curriculum used in Madrid. The official language was French but English was also taught. The School's students came mostly from the families of foreign residents in the city – the foreign Sisters first contracts – although a few came from Filipino families. One of these was Consuelo Severino, mother of Sr. M. Agnes Ledesma (now in charge of the provincial archives at the Emmaus Community in San Lorenzo). Another former student was Margarita Aviles, grandmother of Sr. Stella Maria Sanz (today, a missionary in Thailand).

ALTHOUGH THE SUPERIOR Normal School for Women Teachers in Manila was administered by the Assumption teachers, it was still a government institution. As such, its administration and the instruction given there were all appointed by Royal Order through the Minister of the Colonies. With the exception of the professor of religion and morals, who was a priest, all the faculty members were Religious of the Assumption and graduates from the normal schools of Spain. Their compensation was fixed according to law. The school's equipment, the admission of students, their attendance, the examinations, the awarding of prizes, the maintenance of discipline and the school's finance were all regulated by the State.

The Normal School was established for a double purpose: to serve as a teacher-training institution and as a model school. Its students, upon graduation, were expected to be adequately prepared to assume the direction of primary schools for girls. Because of this, the program of studies was designed to provide these future teachers with ample cultural background as well as with a knowledge of and experience in the use of teaching methods most conducive to the all-around development of the child. Two methods most conducive to the all-around development of the child. Two kinds of teacher's certificates were granted: an Elementary Teacher's Certificate upon the completion of three years' training and a Superior Teacher's Certificate upon the completion of the four-year course.

The plan of studies was adopted from the used in normal schools in Spain with the necessary adaptations. For the first and second years, the curriculum included the following subjects: religion and morals, Spanish grammar, elocution, arithmetic, penmanship, general geography as well as the geography of Spain and the Philippines, history of Spain and the Philippines, hygiene and domestic science, needlework, geometry and physical education. The same subjects were given further development the third year with the addition of courses in pedagogy, the natural sciences and practice teaching. The fourth year was given a more extensive treatment of all the subjects studied during the three previous years with two slight modifications: elementary literature was added and geometry replaced by a course in designing for needlework.

The teaching methods employed discouraged the traditional rote memory system prevalent in almost all the girls' schools in the Philippines at that time. Lectures, discussions and laboratory work were extensively used. Every effort was made to develop the students' power of thinking, reasoning and organizing, enabling them to deepen and widen their knowledge by themselves in later years.

The Normal School recognized the value of teaching aids. The School had a well-furnished library. The geography and history classes were provided with globes and colored wall maps and charts. There was a wide collection of zoological, botanical and mineral specimens for the study of natural history, and a well-equipped physics laboratory.

The Government provided the funds to purchase the needed teaching aids. Each year, the School's directress could petition the Government for the amount she deemed necessary for this purpose. On June 27, 1894, for example, it is recorded that the *Intendencia General de Filipinas* authorized the release of P2,000 requested by the directress of the Superior Normal School for Women Teachers in Manila to complete the school's equipment.

Since the School was intended to serve as a teacher-training institution, its third and fourth year students were given the opportunity to acquire teaching experience in a municipal school for girls attached to the Normal School. This municipal school, generally

referred to as the *Escuela Practica*, was opened only in 1895 when the Normal School was already on its third year and had transferred to its Malate home.

There were about 60 pupils in the *Escuela Practica*. Third and fourth year students of the Normal School practiced teaching here under the supervision of either the directress, Sr. M. de la Cruz, or the secretary, Sr. M. Alipia, during the last five months prior to their graduation. The lessons given by the student-teachers supplemented the lessons given to the municipal school pupils by their regular teachers.

The student's progress during the school year was closely monitored by the professors. There were no weekly or monthly tests, but for each lesson by the period was set aside for recitation. Professors were required to submit a monthly report of their students' progress in both studies and conduct. This report was posted on the bulletin board, this, in effect, making the students responsible for the scholastic standing and deportment.

A general appraisal was made at the end of each school year. Students had to pass an examination on each of the subjects they had taken during the year. The greater part of these examinations was oral. After every examination, the Board of Examiners graded the students. The grades were *Sobresaliente*, the highest, *Notable*, *Buena* and *Suspensa*, the lowest. In addition to the yearly examination, students had to take the *revalida* on the completion of the elementary and superior courses to obtain their diplomas.

Prizes were awarded annually for outstanding scholastic achievement: for the undergraduates, a *matricula de honor* which entitled them to a full scholarship, and for the graduates, a *Titulo de Honor y de Gracia de Maestra de Primera Enseñanza Elemental* and a *Titulo de Honor y de Gracia de maestro de Primera Enseñanza Superior*.

Aspirants to these awards had to pass a competitive examination. Only students with a grade of *Sobresaliente* in all their subjects were eligible to take the examination for the *matricula de honor*. The examination was oral. The questions were written on the blackboard and the contestant who gave the correct answer first was awarded the prize. In the case of the *Titulo*, the aspirant must have had completed the *revalida* for elementary or superior teacher with a rating of *Sobresaliente* in all the examinations. This distinctive title was awarded to the best contestant.

IT WAS ABOUT THIS TIME that the health of Mother Foundress started to wane. For nearly 60 years, Mére Marie Eugénie had steered her Congregation with characteristic dynamic zeal. But old age and a delicate health could no longer bear the burdens of administering an growing global network of Assumption houses. In 1858, she was elected Superior General for life, but now it was time for her to pass on the stewardship of the Congregation to another. She tendered her resignation upon the suggestion of the general Chapter of 1894 which was attended by all the Superiors.

In 1854, she had written "It is God's will that everything around me should fade... I seem to catch a glimpse of a stripping, a simplification, a state in which there is nothing left but love... I will not be at all inclined to shrink from the kind of death which is to be experienced in weakness and powerlessness. If I become less attractive to others, they would leave me more time to spend with our Lords. To be of no account would be a good thing if it brought me to Him..."

Gradually, Mère Marie Eugénie weakened. The paralysis she was experiencing soon became total. She lost the power of speech. But her mind was still highly lucid. She was entirely dependent on the Sisters who took care of her. Her whole life was centered on the mystery of Christ's passion.

A slight in 1897 aggravated her condition. She was living more and more in isolation and in intense silent prayer. The doctor who attended her all this time said of her, "She is living her finest hour."

Dom Lagerot from Solesmes came and gave her the last blessing. "I Have seen your holy Foundress." He wrote the Superior of Bordeaux. "She could not speak anymore but her big eyes opened and showed she still understood. I brought her Holy Communion three times. She understood the great gift she was receiving, Her state is mysterious. She is supple, docile and gentle as a little child. I believe that she draws down on the Congregation great graces by her admirable submission to the will of God. She adores this will without uttering the least complaint. She is, thus, putting the seal on her work and preparing it for the future."

On March 9, 1898, the Sisters who were around her noticed that her face radiated a supernatural light. She was gasping for breath, yet fully conscious and gently pressing the hand extended to her in a gesture full of affection. Mère Marie Celestine asked her, "Mother, if you still think you can receive our Lord, press my hand." And Mère Marie Eugénie immediately responded. This was her last Communion.

The next day, March 10, 1898, the Foundress of the Religious of the Assumption gently fell asleep in the Lord, her face ever so radiant with humility and peace, as if with her last breath she wanted to say, "Across this darkness, Lord, I salute the dawn..."

THE OPENING OF THE PHILIPPINES to foreign trade in the 19th century and the construction of the Suez Canal, which significantly shortened the route to and from Europe, not only accelerated the country's economic growth but also facilitated the entry of liberal ideas from the Continent. The rise of the middle class families to send their sons to pursue higher studies abroad, especially in Spain.

A good number of these men eventually became the disseminators of liberal ideology that awakened national consciousness. These *ilustrados*, as these men were called, formalized their campaign name *La Liga Filipina*.

The association attracted the *ilustrados* and other nationalists who were more radical and impatient. A split in the *Liga* gave birth to the organization of a secret society, The *Kataastaasan Kagalanggalang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan* or the KKK. The KKK's untimely betrayal to the Spanish authorities pushed its leaders to strike first. Thus, the Cry of Balintawak, named after the place where the first national outcry for independence from Spain took place on August 26, 1896, marked the start of the Philippine Revolution.

The Cry of Balintawak (some historians insist it should be called the Cry of Pugad Lawin) sounded the death knell of Spain's colonial rule over the Philippines. However, it also meant the departure, albeit temporary, of the Assumption from the country.

With the outbreak of the revolution, almost all of the students of the Normal School went home. Only a handful remained. For instance, the third and fourth year class, which started out with 150 students in 1894, was reduced to seven. These seven were the first and last graduates of the four-year normal course at the Assumption. They were Florentina Arellano, Dolores Guerrero, Margarita Miguel, Emilia Sacramento, Maria Santillan, Rosa Sevilla, and a Spanish girl whose name was lost in the records.

Due to persistent rumors about a possible war between Spain and the United States, the graduation of these seven was advanced a fortnight to the middle of March 1898. An exception was made for two of the graduates at the request of the directress. Florentina Arellano and Rosa Sevilla were both awarded the *Titulo de Honor y de Gracia de Maestra Ensenanza Superior* because both completed the four-year normal course with the grade of *Sobresaliente* in all subjects and in all the exercises of the *revalida* for both the Elementary and Superior Teacher's Certificates.

It is significant to note that soon after the American occupation of the Philippines, when General Antonio Luna put out his revolutionary newspaper *La Independencia*, Florentina Arellano and Rosa Sevilla were the only women included in the staff which included such literary luminaries as Fernando Maria Guerrero, Joaquin Luna, Cecilio Apostol, Salvador V. del Rosario, Mariano V. del Rosario, Clemente Jose Zulueta, Jose Abreu, Epifanio de los Santos and Rafael Palma.

THE COMING OF THE AMERICANS transformed the Philippine Revolution of 1896 into a three-cornered fight. Negotiations for peace were already being undertaken by Spanish and Filipino authorities who had established a government of their own when the Spanish-American conflict over Cuba came to a head with the blowing up of the United States battleship *Maine* at the Havana harbor on February 15, 1898. War between the two

countries was declared and the US immediately ordered an attack on the Spanish fleet. On May 1, 1898, the American fleet in Hongkong steamed into Manila Bay and in a half-day battle finished off the Spanish way. The American's formal entry into and possession of Manila occurred on August 13 after an agreed sham battle.

Filipino-American hostilities that followed the Battle of Manila Bay made the start of a new school year impossible. The fighting caused grave concern in the Motherhouse for the Sisters' safety. Mother Marie Celestine, Mother Marie Eugénie's Vicar General, approached both British and French consulates for news and to seek assurance that the Sisters would be protected. After difficulties and delays, the Sisters were able to leave the Philippines on June 13, 1898. They arrived in Hongkong five days later. They were recalled to Europe. Thus, the Superior Normal School for Women Teachers in Manila came to an abrupt end.

The Superior, Mother Marie de Perpetuel Secours, together with Sr. M. Nieves, went ahead to Paris. The rest stayed behind and it was not until September that they were able to secure transportation to Marseilles. Sr. M. Guadalupe, who was gravely ill, was left in Hongkong with St. M. Aylpia and Sr. M. Celedonia looking after her. The sisters of St. Paul de Chartres very kindly took them in until Sr. M. Guadalupe's death in December 9 that year. Sr. M. Aylpia and Sr. M. Celedonia, the last two members of the Philippine mission. Finally set sail for Europe soon after Christmas. It was only years later, in 1913, that Mother Hélène Marguerite and Sr. Rosa Maria, on their way home to the Philippines from the General Chapter, could pass by Hongkong to bring back Sr. Guadalupe's remains for burial in Manila.

IT IS DIFFICULT to evaluate the contribution of an educational institution whose life was limited to five years and whose sphere of influence was limited to just a few students by reason of distance and political developments in the country. However, it can certainly be said that despite these adverse circumstances, the Superior Normal School for Women Teachers in Manila played a pioneering role in the field of women education in the Philippines.

"When the Superior Normal School began to send out its graduates, teaching came to be considered as a dignified profession for women. Graduation from the Normal School was deemed a social distinction...She (the teacher) was looked upon as the best educated woman of the community."

The School's directress, Sr. Maria de la Cruz, sought to instill in the minds and hearts of her students a deep appreciation for the teaching profession and a keen realization of their responsibility as the future molders of the youth of the land. She readily saw in the Revolution of 1896 something more than a mere rebellion. She realized very early that Spain would eventually have to relinquish its hold on the Philippines.

"Who knows whether this war that is fast assuming national proportion will change the political status of your country. If that should happen, I shall be obliged to go. Bear in mind, therefore, that it is you who will take our place. Be ready to shoulder with your countrymen the new responsibilities you will have to face."

"Yours is the primary task of forming the characters of the young girls so that the Filipino women of the next generation, imbued with a deep sense of nobility, may be fired with an enthusiasm for higher endeavors and a firm determination to carry through their lofty ideals for God and country.

"As Normal School graduates, you should initiate this movement. Stay together, unite and help each other in propagating the true Faith and the virtues essential to the advancement of your people.

"Set up a high ideal for the future of your country, and prepare yourselves to do all that is within your power to open a new path that will lead to the happiness and glory of your race.

"Ward off that excessive shyness and timidity that hold back the full realization of your ability and strength.

"As long as your women remain indifferent or resigned to what deem as inevitable your progress in the fulfillment of your national aspirations will be hampered. Intensify your endeavors and give all that you are capable of for the good of all that you hold dear in life."

These timely counsels, given to a series of conferences to the graduating class by Sr. M. de la Cruz months prior to the departure of the Assumption Sisters, were carried out almost to the letter by the class of 1898. In the words of Rosa Sevilla (later Rosa Sevilla Alvero), "they took root, blossomed and bore fruit."

As early as 1900, even before peace was completely restored in the country, Doña Rosa's absence; and Dolores Guerrero.

It is worth noting that two years after the establishment of the Republic of the Philippines on July 4, 1948, the Philippine government officially acknowledged Doña Rosa's invaluable service to the country by awarding her the Medal of Merit as "pioneer educator, indefatigable social leader, ardent lover of Filipinism. Leader in the feminist movement, patriot... |

Of her achievement, Paciencia Torre-Guzman wrote:

"Doña Rosa's devotion to the progress and advancement of the Filipino woman may well be added to her long list of outstanding services to the nation.

"This is not at once clear even to one well-versed in the part Doña Rosa has played in women's activities here. One still misses it even one listens to her prate on educational trends, how women should not be prepared as men, and the failure of our educational system to make vocational training really help the masses.

"But a casual conversation with her in her flower-smothered home on España Extension where she has chosen to spend her retirement, gives one an insight and an explanation for the many 'obsessions' attributed to this venerable lady."

"For instance, there's the Instituto de Mujeres, founded on scratch – the symbol of her burning desire to see the Filipino woman acquit herself ably before the eyes of the world.

"I have always rebelled against men taking women for granted, treating them as inferiors, even as chattels," Doña Rosa said. 'I have always wanted the Filipino woman to be conscious of her duties and responsibilities, and so to inspire in the men the noblest of deeds.' "

In the decades that followed, former students of the Superior Normal School for Women Teachers in Manila became founders, directresses and teachers of other private schools in the country. In 1967, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary celebration of the Assumption in the Philippines, Pilar Hidalgo Lim, the president of the Centro Escolar University, accompanied by all the deans of the university, presented Assumption with a plaque of appreciation for establishing the Normal School which was recognized as the

“mother school” of Centro Escolar. Librada Avelino, the university’s foundress, and Carmen de Luna, one of her closest associates, were both graduates of the Normal School.

Two other Normal School graduates who distinguished themselves in the field of education were Sor Micaela Cuenca, RVM, former secretary general of the Religious of the Virgin Mary, and Sr. Patrocinio Carreon of the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres.

The Revolution of 1896 and the Filipino-American War also cut short the life of the Assumption’s Boarding School, Nevertheless, its alumnae remained faithful, and upon the Sisters’ return to the Philippines, and the school’s reopening these former students gladly found their way back to the Assumption for meetings, celebration and retreats. More important, they continued sending to the school their daughters, granddaughters and great granddaughters on to the fourth and even fifth generations.

STRENGTHENING THE FOUNDATION

1904-1940

*"Keep always in mind the same ultimate objective
to help the young discover personally,
according to their own experience of life,
the eminent knowledge of Jesus Christ.
-Blessed Marie Eugénie*

DESPITE THE FILIPINOS' armed resistance to the imposition of American colonial rule, the United States had succeeded by 1901 in establishing a civil government. One of this government's acts was to set up a school system carried on in English, manned by imported American teachers for a start. Special attention was given health and hygiene lessons as these were intended to be passed on to the student's parents as well. On the other hand, the teaching of religion on public schools was explicitly forbidden.

The impact of this course of action of Philippine society was not immediately recognized nor felt, although a few leading Catholic educators like Doña Rosa Sevilla de Alvero, foundress and directress of the *Instituto de Mujeres*, fought valiantly for the restitution of religion on the school curriculum. Two other former students of the Normal School, Librada Avelino and Carmen de Luna, who set up the *Centro Escolar de Señoritas*, a private school for girls, always included religion in their school program.

More than three and a half generation of a godless system of public education would take its toll on Philippine society. The Church, through the years, has tried to fill the void by organizing catechetical instruction in public schools outside the schools hours, but its efforts have generally failed due to the problems of time, place, the student's unwillingness to stay on after school hours as well as the unavailability of catechists at difficult hours of the day.

In 1904, Msgr. Guidi, then Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines, approached Pope Pius X to request the Assumption Sisters' return to the Philippines. Mother Marie Celestine, who succeeded Mother Marie Eugénie as Superior General, agreed to send back some of the Sisters who had been in Manila during the first foundation, among them, Sr. Hélène Marguerite, Sr. Ana Benedicta, Sr. M. Feliza, Sr. M. Leocadia, and a few new ones, namely Sr. Rosa Maria, Sr. M. Piedad, Sr. M. Leocadia and Sr. M. Edmond.

After a six-week voyage from Europe, the Sisters arrived in Manila on May 29, 1904, the Feast of the Blessed Trinity. For this reason, this particular Assumption house is dedicated to the Blessed Trinity, with *Benedicam Domino in omni tempore* (I shall bless the Lord at all times) as its motto.

The Sisters were overjoyed to discover that although the Malate school building was used by the US army as a hospital for wounded soldiers during the Filipino-American

War, it had been well preserved, All the furniture, which was kept under lock and key in the chapel, were perfectly serviceable. A certain Ms. Macleod, a good friend of the Congregation, kept an eye on the property while the Sisters had been away. Isidoro, the school's faithful gatekeeper, took care of the Malate house and was there to joyfully welcome back the Sisters.

THE NEW COMMUNITY quickly realized that the educational system in the country had changed drastically and that the resumption of the Normal School was out of the question. However, the Boarding School could be reopened. In fact, parents were very insistent on an early reopening and hastened the necessary preparations.

By July 1 of the same year, the Assumption's Boarding School opened its doors anew. The opening mass was celebrated the following day by Msgr. Fowler. About 40 students in blue uniforms and white veils gathered in the chapel to hear Mass.

Msgr. Harty, Archbishop of Manila, started at about this time his Sunday visits to the community during which he would assist at the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and then remain with the Sisters for very enlightening exchanges in the cool patio. These Sunday conversation were of great help during the period of transition. The Sisters were informally initiated to American thinking. Through the years, these Sunday visits were continued by Msgr. Michael O'Doherty until the start of the Japanese occupation.

Moher H  l  ne Marguerite’s organizational sense and gift of government, the remarkable competence of the directress of studies and the Sisters’ mastery of English helped much to boost the School’s prestige. By 1907, there were 200 students with the School continuing to grow and flourish, promising to be “a power for good, a fruit of the Cross and of dedication which can only be inspired by Faith.”

Faithful to the educational and social charism of Mère Marie Eugénie, the founding Sisters took it to heart to root the School's educational spirit on faith in Jesus Christ. On this foundation, the children, from early childhood, are formed to an intelligent piety which builds in them convictions and gives principles of action. "Strong principles make strong characters," Mother Foundress used to say to her novices, "What develops character and intelligence? What firmly binds everything one learns into a whole? In a sense, a philosophy; in a wider sense, a passion."

In all Assumption communities, the Eucharist and the World of God occupy the center of Christian worship. The Eucharistic Celebration is the act par excellence by which the students learn to adore God, while the all-day Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament nurtures and sustains their growing faith. Scriptures and the liturgy enrich the students' prayer life as they witness and sometimes participate in the choral recitation of the Divine Office at different moments of the day. Through this liturgical life whose cycle they

experience in their chapel in the course of a year, they acquire a taste for the beautiful prayer of the Church.

Although there was heavy emphasis on religious education, non religious studies were as seriously attended to at the Boarding School. With the consent of the Department of Education, the Sisters set up an effective learning schedule. This comprised four one-hour classes daily, with half-hour study period in between class.

Then day began with morning prayer led by the sister-in-charge of the class. This was always followed by a brief exhortation on the Gospel text of the day. The inspiration thought for each day was always printed on the blackboard where it remained for the entire day. School activities filled the hours that followed and students had the singular grace of receiving the Eucharistic Blessing at the end of each day. During the month of October, everybody gathered for the Rosary before this Benediction.

These traditional spiritual exercises would have a deep influence on the Assumption students even long after they had left school. High School Class '43 shared sentiment during their Golden Jubilee:

"We've all had our trials and triumphs, sorrows, and joys. Somehow, we managed to cope and, as we look back and assess these past 40 years, we realize that we are what we are because of the Assumption Christian education which instilled in us a strong faith and love of the Almighty. That complete trust in Him kept us going though sometimes we faltered...Mother Immaculada always started out the day with a thought or quotation which we found written on the board each morning. It gave us a goal, it gave meaning to our actions, it saw us through the day. And this subconscious practice guided us through the next 40 years.

"All in all, we are proud of those years and today we take time put to say "thank you" we are proud to be from the Assumption.

One detail that has survived the memory of many an alumna was the silence required that had to be observed throughout the day, during study periods and while going from one place to another. Students found the requirement irksome at times, but, years later, many look back at it with gratitude. The painfully acquired but valuable habit of being able to hold back one's tongue has been a saving factor many a time in their later lives.

The students' progress was closely monitored. There was the dreaded weekly "Reading of Notes" presided over by the Superior, during which the students' merits and demerits of the past week were read in the presence of everyone. Thus, the students learned little by little to know and accept themselves; an important lesson which, later on facilitated their living in communion with one another.

School-life was not all work and no play. On the days set aside for them, there were regular sports activities, arts and music as well as little fund-raising enterprises for the benefit of those in need of help, the biggest of which was the annual Mission Day.

With the passing of years, the Assumption moved on to meet new demands and challenges, but these solid beginnings have not been lost sight of and have, for certain, allowed its expansion into wider fields of endeavor.

In 1923, Assumption Philippines had the joy of welcoming for the first time Mother Marie Joanna, the fourth Superior General. Blessed Marie Eugénie, whose last foundations were the Philippine and Nicaragua in 1892, died in 1898. Her successor, Mother Marie Celestine planned to come in 1914 but was prevented from doing so by the outbreak of World War I. Mother M. Catherine, the third Superior General, lived only a few months in office, Mother Marie Joanna's visit was, therefore, the first official visit from the heart of the Congregation to the Philippine Foundation.

MERE MARIE EUGENIE was very much aware and strongly convinced of the social mission of the Christian, The opportunity for the Assumption Philippine Foundation to launch this formally came with Archbishop O'Doherty's request in 1926 for catechetical instruction for indigent children. The alumnae readily responded to the call.

La Cruzada was catechetical organization founded by Esperanza Cu'Unjieng. Mother Maria Angela Ansaldo wrote that it was "her innate love for the poor, coupled with her profound apostolic zeal, that prompted her establish the first lay catechist group for slum dwellers when she was but a young lady of leisure in the early 1920s." The work was a response to the Archbishop's appeal for the catechetical instruction for public school children. Consuelo Araneta, another Assumption girl, continued its supervision and management when Esperanza Cu'Unjieng entered the Assumption Novitiate in 1927. Catechetical centers manned by Assumption alumnae and their friends were established in different parts of Manila.

Another project that deserves mention was the Young Ladies Association of Charity founded by Maria Aurora Quezon. Better known as the YLAC, this association provided Catholic education to children through the establishment and maintenance of schools all over the country. The project continued long after Aurora's untimely death in 1949.

These were small but significant beginnings of the alumnae's interest and involvement in the catechetical apostolate which continues to the present in various forms. In 1929, the National Eucharistic Congress drew the Assumption's students closer to the life of the local church. In 1930, the Catholic Action Movement was launched. Alumnae and students rallied to its support. In 1937, the 33rd International Eucharistic Congress brought alumnae and students still closer to the church.

The alumnae also began initiating a number of social projects. For instance, The White Cross, a preventorium for children of tuberculous parents located in Santolan, San Juan, was founded by Victoria Lopez Araneta and Mercedes Zobel McMicking. The White

Cross later passed under the administration of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.

The Volunteer Social Aid Committee (VSAC), formed shortly before the outbreak of World War II, was another noteworthy project. Established mostly by socially-minded Manila socialites such as Conchita Sunico, Lourdes Reyes Besa, Helen Benitez and Lourdes Alunan Fernandez, VSAC rendered invaluable services to Filipino soldiers during the Japanese Occupation. It also organized various health clinics to which numerous alumnae gave much assistance in the form of food, medicine and nursing care during the bombings.

The Motherhouse kept close contact with the Philippine foundation through two more visits by the Assistant General, Mother Thérèse Joseph, in 1930 and 1939.

In 1938, an auditorium was constructed to accommodate the growing student body's varied activities.

Mother Héléne Marguerite, who reopened Manila Assumption in 1904, passed away in 1927. She was succeeded as Superior by Mother M. Amanda who held office until 1931. Mother Rosa Maria was named Superior in 1931, a post she held until her designation as Vicar for the Far East in 1947. Notre Mère, as she fondly called by her wards, made an impact on their lives. Her inner fire warmed every heart. She made herself "all things to all men that she might restore all in Christ."

Class '32, four of whom are now Religious of the Assumption, namely, Sr. Candida Maria Asuncion, Sr. M. Angela Ansaldo, Sr. M. Agnes Ledesma and Sr. Rosario de Veyra, summed up that Assumption meant to those whose lives have been touched by its educational charism in the Assumption School Song that they presented to Mother Rosa Maria. Sister M. Angela related how the school song came about:

"When Mother Rose took over as Superior of Manila Assumption, she immediately updated the long sleeves and white stockings of our daily uniform, sent seniors off on field trips for social work, made boarders' weekends both instructive and entertaining with art and music, and ... decided that the graduating class should produce a school song! To encourage the would-be composers, she had Mother Philomène Marie announce: 'Permission to leave the 2:30 Study Period for those who want to work on the school song.' All pre-war alumnae remember that 2:30 Study, kept by aged Mother M. Emilia and perennial, 'Mere parece que alguien esta hablando!' In a curriculum of but four lessons a day preceded and succeeded by supervised studies, 2:30p.m. meant siesta time even for the medalists. So, Mary Brown, Lucy Pamintuan and I, usually unemployed boarders anyway, eagerly rushed out of the senior class into the dormitory overlooking the monastery garden.

"There we tinkered away at the piano, toyed with the popular tunes we knew, hummed what we thought sounded original, and ended up most of the time reminiscing over the past and planning the future. Until one afternoon, Mother M. Gertrude emerged suspiciously between the curtains of the cubicle she occupied next door. She gave us the initial push we needed when, informed of the 'legal reasons' for our being there, three at the piano, she suggested something martial like the French Hymn Etendard de la délivrance. Her enthusiasm for this song she knew as a member of the 1,000-voice chorale at Jeanne d'Arts beatification was so contagious that we promptly beat out the first bars of our great composition with precisely the first eight notes of Etendard. Romance only hit us at the ninth note, when we switched from 'fa' to 'do' and tried to be original, Alas, our inspiration was short-lived. Although we had written all the lyrics (revised and improved by Mother Philomène), our melody fizzled out, just when our motto had lifted us 'above all earthly things.' It was during the Christmas holidays that Divine Providence sent the instrumentalist Prof. Jose Silos over to my house. 'Assumption, gold and white and blue' was set up at last, with accompaniment and all.

"A committee of one collected the P5 contribution agreed upon by the members of Class '32 to finance the publication of the school song. My 15-year old brother, Pepe, sketched the black-and-white cover. Catholic Trade oriented it for the then respectable sum of

P120. We, members of the class, beamed proudly as our finished product was presented to the Mothers in the Grand Parloir of the dear Malate Assumption.

"the Assumption School Song has already been reprinted twice, and for the second edition, my piano teacher, Victorina Lobregat, wrote a facilitated accompaniment, Its present attractive cover was designed by Carmelo and Bauermann.

"From this true story you can see that I am not the composer of this song, as many erroneously believe. It was the joint venture of a closely united class helped by two devoted Assumption Mothers and two dedicated musicians. It was, above all, inspired by the alert and energetic spirit of the ever forward-looking Mother Rosa Maria.

"Fidelity to duty!"..."Love of Simplicity!"... may the Assumption Spirit, which we want 'engraved in our hearts till we reach heaven,' make us ever deeply mean what we gladly sing."

The lyrics of the song follow:

All hail! To our beloved Assumption
All hail! The glad echoes ring,
To you our love and true devotion
With grateful hearts we gladly bring,
Your name recalls our Mother's triumph
When borne aloft on angel wings,
Your motto lifts us with gladness
Above all earthly things.

Assumption, gold and white and blue,
To your teaching keep us ever true,
Fidelity to duty, love of simplicity;
May your spirit be engraven
On our hearts till we reach heaven
And may love for you e'er go with that
Of our God and native land.

SHORTLY AFTER THE REOPENING of the Manila Boarding School, the Assumption was given the opportunity to open a second school in the Philippines. Iloilo, the capital of Iloilo province, one of the three provinces in the island of Panay in Western Visayas, was to be the site of this new foundation.

The first request for a school in Iloilo was made by Msgr. Jeremiah Harty, Archbishop of Manila, acting as administrator for the Jaro diocese, whose bishop, Msgr. Hooker, died in April 1909. The Archbishop's petition was heartily endorsed by the future Bishop of Jaro, Msgr. Dennis Dougherty, later Cardinal Archbishop of Philadelphia. Mother Hélène Marguerite received this official letter on the feast of Our Lady of Perpetual Succor, a coincidence considered meaningful by the Sisters. Mother Marie du Perpetual Secours,

first Superior on Manila, had long wanted a second school for the Assumption to complement the Manila institution.

Iloilo at the time had only one girls' school run by the Daughter of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in Jaro. In fact, even then, Msgr. Dougherty was hoping for an Assumption in Bacolod, but Iloilo was given priority. Bacolod was very close to Iloilo and the families there could easily send their daughters to Assumption Iloilo, the church authorities reasoned. The boys in Bacolod were sent to the College of San Agustin directed by the Augustinian Fathers. It was also not unusual for Bacolod families to send their son to Manila to study.

Mother M. Celestine, Superior General, also received the same official request. She approved it in principle, and a few months later, cabled instruction to Mother H  l  ne Marguerite to rent a suitable house in Iloilo. Upon hearing this, Msgr. Dougherty sent a check for P4,500 to cover the traveling expenses of eight Sisters. He also promised to gather as many pupils as the teachers could accept.

The house of Assumption eventually rented was located on General Hughes Street, next to the lot now occupied by the Colegio del Sagrado Corazon of the Daugherty of Charity. It was the ancestral home of the Viaplana family who rented the house to the Assumption Sisters for P225.00 monthly. At the beginning, the family occupied a little corner of the property, but when the remodeling of the house began, even wall pulled down echoed painfully in the hearts of the owners so they were finally persuaded to abandon the premises.

The Sisters set up the school and lived in these quarters for a period of three years. So tight and so inadequate was the installation that Msgr. Harty once remarked, "I am sure the Sisters will have a shorter purgatory because of their cramped accommodations."

In May, Mother H  l  ne Marguerite, helped Sr. M. Patricia and Sr. M. Celedonia, set up work to adapt the house to the needs of the school. Since there were no clear indication that Sisters would be arriving from Europe for the Iloilo foundation, Mother H  l  ne Marguerite lent Sr. Carolina Maria to the new school to serve as the acting directress, together with Sr. M. Alfred and Sr. M. Benedict. To help in initial arrangements, the Bishop gave them his secretary, Msgr. James McClosky, who would succeed him in later years.

On the very day of the Sisters' arrival in Iloilo, the first boarder, Magdalena Kepeler, showed up at the school. Her mother had spent part of the summer in Iloilo to prepare her daughter's school outfit. Unfortunately Magdalena remained only a few months; she had to go back home due to ill health. In September 1911, she and her mother died in a shipwreck.

Although the Sisters designated to constitute the Iloilo community had not arrived, formal classes began on July 15, 1910, thanks to the efforts of Sr. Carolina Maria, Sr. M. Benedict, Sr. M. Alfred, and three Manila alumnae, Rosario Araneta and Manuela and Trinidad Gay.

The next day, the feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Mass was celebrated for the first time in the tiny chapel, thanks to Msgr. McClosky's Mass kit, for as yet the sacristy had nothing. On *El Dia de Santiago*, Msgr. McClosky's feast day, he announced that he would come daily to say mass for the Sisters and the students. Before this, they had to go to the San Jose parish church of the Augustinian fathers. It was only a five-minute walk to the church, but the time and length of the Mass depended on whether there were baptisms, weddings or funerals.

Bishop Dougherty was away on his feast day, October 9, and so the students greeted him through the mail. He acknowledged their greetings with a letter of his own:

Manila
October 16, 1910

My dear children of the Assumption College,

I got with pleasure your kind letter in which you sent me your best wishes for my feast day. I am glad to hear from you, and I thank you for your goodwill towards me.

Were it not that I fear to give you proud thoughts, I would tell you how much I admire the choice English and the elegant handwriting of your letter. I hope that each one of you gets 100% on your examinations for I know you all deserve it.

Msgr. McClosky could not be hard if he tried to be. He is too gentle by nature and he likes all the pupils of Assumption.
I am grateful to you for your prayers which I ask you to please keep up for me.

Be good, be obedient to the Sisters and be humble and God will bless you.

Sending my blessing to each of you and to all your families,

I remain devotedly yours,
D.J. Dougherty

At about the same date, the children who had also written to the Mother General received the following reply:

My dear children,

Continue, dearest children, to pray for me, and believe me already your devoted and affectionate Mother in Christ.

ASSUMPTION ILOILO started with 20 students, but before the end of that first year, enrolment had doubled. On February 27, 1912, the Government granted approval and recognition to the complete elementary and secondary courses as prescribed by the Bureau of Private Schools with emphasis on character formation in line with the

Assumption view of education. The traditional methods used in Assumption schools were adopted, with English as the language of instruction, although the teaching of Spanish was continued. Both languages were used in all literary and musical programs. An example of which follows:

PROGRAM – March 14, 1918

Piano – 8 hands – Bolero – Fanfare – A. David
Recitation “As You Like It” Act I, Scene III – Shakespeare
Barn Dance
Recitation: a) Dolly Rose
 b) A noble Boy
Pianoforte Solo – Fantasia, Op.28 Mendelssohn
Distribution of Prizes: Junior Class
Trios (unaccompanied) a) Twilight
 b) A Laughing Song
Dialogue: Como discurren los niños!
Chorus and Dance – The Zyder Zee
Pianoforte Solo – Valse Impromptu – Raff
Nursery Rhymes – First and Second Grades
Distribution of Prizes” Senior Class

Art lessons, drawing, painting in all media then in use were taught by very gifted professors such as Sr. M. Ethelburga; piano was taught by a graduate of the Conservatory of Madrid, Sr. Antonia Maria, while violin lessons were given by Sr. Francois d’Assise. To monitor the student’s improvement and growth, there were midyear examinations, both written and oral, in addition to the monthly tests. Oral examinations and the General Reading of Notes that was held twice a year were attended by the faculty and student body. These twice-a-year examinations and the Reading of Notes served to evaluate the students’ accomplishments. There were also end-of-the-year exhibits of needlework and art.

On January 23, 1912, the deed of sale for the purchase of a 30,300 square meter lot on Calle Carlos, now General Luna Street, was signed. This riverside property was brought from the Gallero family for P30,000, a sum which Msgr. Dougherty donated. The present school still stands on this site.

On August 25, 1912, the first stone of the future monastery was laid by the Bishop. On May 12, 1913, although construction was not completely finished, Iloilo Assumption moved from Villa Viaplana to the Calle Carlos site to avoid renewing the old lease. The transfer was slow and tedious because only animal drawn carts, kindly lent by friends, were available. Msgr. McClosky lent the Bishop’s carriage to transport the more delicate items. Because of the inadequacy of the finished portion, it was decided to leave the cook and horse-driver behind for a few days. But both helpers would not be left behind, so

Saturnino, the horse-driver, ended up sleeping under the starry skies with Black Beauty at his side. The cook, meanwhile, very adeptly improvised a kitchen also in the open air and regaled the Community with tasty dishes.

The original plan included only the Convent's main building and called for the construction to be undertaken in three installments according to availability of funds. All other structures now existing had not even been thought of at the time. The chapel was a wooden structure on short posts. It was not until 1920s that a semi-permanent chapel was built by Mother M. Amanda, then Superior of the Community. The present cement building was constructed also in two installments by Mother M. Antonia and Mother M. Véronique. The auditorium, St. Anne's Hall, was built by Mother Anne Elizabeth who was Superior up to November 1934.

During the first years of the school's existence, the faculty was mostly composed of Sisters. The general curriculum required by the Bureau of Private Schools, religious education and a few other lessons necessary for the cultural and vocational needs of the students were offered to the young girls who came from the different parts of Panay and the neighboring islands of Negros and Mindanao.

Like the Manila Assumption, Iloilo welcomed Mother M. Joanna, Superior General, in 1924 and Mother Thérèse Joseph, Assistant Superior General, in 1933 and 1938.

AT ABOUTH THE SAME TIME the Assumption was opening its Iloilo foundation, it was also expanding northward, towards Baguio, the Philippine's summer capital nestled in the Cordillera mountains of Northern Luzon.

In 1911, Msgr. Harty, Archbishop of Manila, suggested the purchase of Mount Mary as a summer residence for the Sisters. After lengthy negotiations, the property, adjacent to the Saint Louis University, was bought for the modest amount of P10,000. A simple villa made of light material was constructed on the highest portion of the hill. Instead of the usual individual cells for the Sisters, dormitories were provided and cubicles set up with curtains as dividers. The community room and refectory were spacious, the chapel was conducive to prayer and enabled the Sisters to have the daily Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the Divine Office in the choir.

At the beginning, some 12 young girls spent the holidays with the Sisters, but this practice was stopped a few years later since more accommodations were needed for Sisters.

Mount Mary was an ideal summer home, conducive to the rest, quiet and recollection; isolated yet near enough to the city proper from where the Sisters bought whatever was necessary for daily living. The Sisters enjoyed the delightful walks on the

mountains where they met no one. Igorot villages in the distance awakened their missionary zeal. The tall pine trees invited the *Sursum Corda* and the spacious grounds allowed pleasurable matches of croquet.

From 1911 onwards, Mount Mary was occupied only during the summer months. There was no permanent Community. The house was left to the care of a faithful couple, Felix and Felisa

The War Years

1941-1945

*"To do God's work,
total stripping and detachment
from everything are a must.
-Blessed Marie Eugénie*

ON DECEMBER 8, 1941, at 2:30 a.m. Manila time, the Japanese launched a sneak attack of Pearl Harbor. A few hours later, Clark Field was bombed by the Japanese and the American aircraft based there were mostly destroyed while still on the ground. The Pacific War invaded the Philippines.

In a few days following these surprise attacks, Japanese troops landed at Aparri and Vigan in Northern Luzon and Legazpi in Southern Luzon. After a few weeks of futile fighting to drive back the invaders, the American and Filipino forces defending Luzon retreated to what would become their last stand: Bataan and Corregidor.

Before the year ended, General Douglas MacArthur declared Manila an "open city." On January 2, 1942, the Japanese took possession of the country's capital. Although fighting continued until the formal surrender of General Jonathan Wainwright in May 6, 1942 at Corregidor, for all intents and purposes, the Japanese occupation of the Philippines had been completed.

Like everybody else in the country, the Religious of the Assumption were swept along by the course of events. School was abruptly suspended and the children sent home. The few remaining ones joined the Sisters, some of whom went to Pagsanjan, some to Baguio and others to Cabanatuan. The Pagsanjan and Cabanatuan groups' vehicles were requisitioned by the military and so the Sisters had to take the train back to Manila.

God, ever-watchful and wise, offered the Sisters innumerable occasions to assist and encourage those directly touched by the turn of events, as well as to demonstrate solidarity with them. Early in 1942, Manila Assumption welcomed 60 American Maryknoll Sisters and two Holy Cross Sisters interned by the Japanese in one wing of the school. They remained with the Assumption until 1944 when they moved either to Los Baños, Laguna or to the University of Santo Tomas where all the other American and British nationals were interned. The Assumption Sister considered it a real grace to have another community to God's servants living and praying with them: Maryknoll Sisters and Religious of the Assumption in constant adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and alternately praising God through the Divine Office. Sr. Esperanza Maria Cu-Unjieng was the efficient, discreet liaison between the two communities. Sister Maria Angela Ansaldo had this to say of her: "Of the mettle that thrives best in crucial emergency situations, none but the brave have done

what she did during those dangerous war years. Known as Mother Hope by the American Sisters, women and children interned in the Assumption Convent from 1941 to 1944, she stayed on during the liberation period with only aged Sister M. Daria and Sister Francoise when the building were almost totally occupied by the Japanese High Command.”

Classes were resumed soon after, subject of course to Japanese policies and procedures. For instance, students and teachers alike were required to participate with Radio Taizo every morning, to learn Niponggo and to sing Japanese songs, as well as cover up all dollar signs in mathematics textbooks.

The Japanese government, in an effort to win over the Filipino Religious, sent the group of Japanese Sisters and Catholic ladies to teach the Assumption Sister Niponggo. They became good friends. The Assumption Sisters formed a very special friendship that began in the midst of war would lead later on to the entry of the Assumption in to Japan.

BY THE MIDDLE OF AUGUST 1944, Mother Rosa Maria, sensing that conditions in Manila were no longer certain, sent two groups of Sisters up to Baguio. The first group that left were the novices with Sr. Milagro. A month after, a second group followed. Mother Rosa Maria was forced to join them in October after closing the Malate school. Classes were no longer possible; the situation was becoming too sense.

The Assistant, Sr. Philoméne Marie, returned to Manila to head the group of Sisters sheltered at the Madrigal residence in Paco. Sr. Esperanza Maria Cu-Unjieng took charge of the valiant little group left in Malate to watch over the property, now occupied by the Japanese.

Finding conditions steadily worsening in Baguio toward the end of December, Mother Rosa Maria sent back four young Sisters who had their families in Manila to rejoin the Community at Paco. Her fears, it turned out, were well founded. On December 28, 1944, the evacuation of Mount Mary, the Assumption convent in Baguio, was ordered by the Japanese army. The Sisters, with the help of faithful friends, carted what belongings they could carry to pushcart to the Holy Family Convent where the Belgian Sisters charitably offered the third floor of the newest building.

On January 2, 1945, thanks to the efforts of friends of the Assumption, Mount Mary was given back to the Sisters. So the same caravan, now going the opposite direction, returned to Mount Mary. On January 6, 1945, the daily bombing of Baguio began.

In Manila, meanwhile, the situation also started to deteriorate. Trouble came to the Sisters in Paco on February 2, 1945. Unaware that the Allies had already recovered the northern part of Manila and that the Japanese, in retaliation, had begun to massacre

civilians, the Sisters received with relative equanimity the visit of armed and menacing Japanese soldiers. The soldiers searched the Sisters' belongings and questioned the European Sisters and Fr. Sarabia, the chaplain, regarding their nationalities.

Everyone was then ordered to line up and put up their hands while the Japanese soldiers held their rifles ready with the bayonets inches away from the Sisters' hearts. The tension was becoming unbearable when suddenly the commanding officer gave a loud order and all the soldiers left immediately. The Madrigal family, the Sisters learned later, was able to show the officer some papers showing that Mr. Madrigal had business dealings with Japanese companies. That saved the day. The next day, however, the garage of the Madrigal house was set on fire.

February 9 was marked with tragedy for both Manila communities. Early in the morning, during the bombing, Sr. Philoméne Marie was seriously wounded in the leg while trying to rescue a sick Sister who was in the part of the house hit by shrapnel. At the same time, Sr. M. Adelina was wounded on both feet. All the occupants of the Paco house were then imprisoned in the air-raid shelter. Their Japanese guards set fire to the house the following day.

At Malate, all the Sisters, including the many refugees who had sought shelter with them, were ordered to go to Villa Eugénie, the Home Economics building of the School. They were forbidden to bring anything with them, but some managed to smuggle in food and a few pieces of clothing. They were imprisoned in the ill-ventilated basement of the Villa- 250 men, women and children, among them religious of various congregations.

The prisoners were forced to stay in these cramped quarters until February 18. In the heavy shelling that followed, Sister Esperanza Maria took charge of feeding and protecting all who fled to the basement of the Marie Eugénie college. They lived in raw rice, warmed over a candle, a few spoonfuls of Mass wine and few canned goods which went principally to the babies, infants who were denied even the luxury of a good cry. One of the two priests imprisoned with the group went out one day to protest the conduct of some of the guards. He never returned. From their prison, the Sisters, unable to lift a finger to save them, saw their beautiful chapel and the School's main building go up in flames.

On February 11, the war's first victim was claimed: Sr. Philomene Marie. Alone with Sr. Martie Gertrude in the stable of the Madrigal house, she was killed on the spot by a stray bullet. She was buried in the Madrigal grounds. After the Liberation, her remains were transferred to the Congregation's little cemetery in Malate.

The other Sisters, whom Sr. Philoméne Marie had ordered to seek shelter away from her, later attempted to leave their place of safety at the request of the civilians who were with them. The civilians wanted the Sisters to show the American soldiers who were firing at the house that there were non-combatants in the area. However, as soon as the first Sisters emerged with a little child, a volley of shots greeted her. She threw herself on

the ground and played dead so convincingly that the Americans, after the rest of the Sisters and the civilians were able to a safer place, apologized for “killing her.”

After spending an afternoon lying face down in the hot sun with bullets whistling over their heads, all the Sisters escaped unscathed. They were taken by American soldiers to an empty house where they rested, rejoicing in the knowledge that they were being guarded by friendly troops at last.

Later that evening after darkness had set in, the Sisters were gripped by a terrible thirst. To their great joy, they found water in a container and they drank heartily. The next morning they discovered, to their dismay, that the water that tasted so delicious the previous night was, in fact, so dirty it was colored a deep chocolate. But despite the shock, everyone survived.

The Sisters were then advised to go to Quiapo or to Santa Mesa where it was relatively safer. Two among them were cared for by Nieves Tuason Barretto. Some went to the Ansaldo house in San Juan where they waited until Sr. Esperanza Maria sent word for them to join her at Santiago Hospital in San Pedro Makati.

February 18 was a memorable day for the Malate group. On that day, they were liberated by an American army tank which came within an inch of crushing puny little Villa Eugénie under its huge bulk. Thanks to the courage and quickness of a Belgian Sister who rushed out to tell the Americans that only civilians were in the house, the group – and Villa Eugénie – were saved. The Japanese guards had disappeared earlier, never to return.

The Sisters took refuge at Santiago Hospital in San Pedro Makati on the advice of the Apostolic Delegate. There they stayed until better quarters were arranged by Sr. Esperanza Maria for the group.

MEANWHILE, UP IN BAGUIO, the feast of the Our Lady of Lourdes brought a horrible bombing during which the city market and the apartments at the foot of Mount Mary were destroyed. After this nerve-racking morning, Mother Rosa Maria sent some of the Sisters to seek shelter in the sacristy of the Baguio Cathedral which the CICM Fathers very charitably offered.

Another heavy bombing took place on February 22 during Mount Mary itself was mercilessly pounded. At about this time, Sister Mary Agnes Ledesma recalled that a deaf English Sister pulled at her saying, “Come, hurry Sister, this one must be a strong one for even I can hear it.” One enormous bomb crushed the rear part of the sacristy and demolished the kitchen. Another uprooted one of the largest trees on the property, very

near the shelter where the trembling Sisters waited breathlessly for the end. Miraculously, the Sisters escaped, shaken but unhurt.

Mother Rosa Maria then advised the Sisters to go either to the sacristy of the Baguio Cathedral or to Notre Dame Hospital where many members of the Community were already patients. She herself went to the hospital, leaving Sr. M. Marthe, Sr. M. Blanca Perez-Rubio, Sr. Marie de Lourdes and Sr. Paz Escay to watch over the house. The four had volunteered for his dangerous task.

Like the many people sheltered at the cathedral and in the hospitals, the Sisters managed as best they could: cooking in between bombing Sr. M. Jacinta Cleopas once ended up all black with the smoke; running to throw themselves under mattresses at the sound of the air raid signal; getting food and medicine in exchange for blankets and clothing; sleeping on the floor of the sacristy.

On March 13, once again the Japanese army demanded that Mount Mary be turned over to them. The four Sisters left and joined Mother Rosa Maria and the others at the hospital; the smaller one at the Baguio Cathedral's sacristy. But despite the hardship, both groups considered themselves fortunate since they had all the spiritual consolation of daily Mass and Communion.

March 15 marked the start of Baguio's carpet bombing. At 8:00a.m., a bomb hit Notre Dame Hospital, near the ward where the poor Sr. M. Demetria lay, unable to seek shelter. Earlier, she had declined the offer to have herself brought down, saying she was safe with Jesus, having just received Holy Communion that morning. Sr. Lorenza, S.P.C., her nurse, and Sr. M. Inmaculada, the Sisters' information, rushed to save her and Sr. M. Macaria, the other bed-ridden patient. But they were too late to save Sr. M. Demetria; the stairs had caved in and they could no longer reach her. In a quarter of an hour, the whole hospital was reduced to ashes and twisted masses of iron. The refugees who had run to the air-raid shelters had to leave when these, too, caught fire.

The Assumption Sisters spent the whole morning alternately running and lying prone on the street of Baguio on their way to the cathedral at the height of the raid which continued unabated until noon. Upon reaching the cathedral, all the Sisters were finally reunited in the sacristy, their last hope. That night some spent in the sacristy, some in the corridor outside it.

The next morning, they had the great privilege of having three Masses. Again, in early morning the carpet bombing commenced. The Sisters, like the other refugees, spent the morning praying under their mattresses, awaiting death at any moment. After the bombardment, they emerged and gathered together only to get another shock: Sr. M. Eulogia was found seated leaning against the sacristy door, apparently asleep, but a gaping wound on her side and hole in the wall, just at the level of her heart, told a more tragic story. She was buried hurriedly while preparations were made for the exodus to Long-long,

a secluded barrio in the province of Pangasinan approximately 150 kilometers from Baguio where many refugees had already gone.

Under these trying circumstances, Mother Rosa Maria called on their dedicated information, Sr. M. Immaculada, to undertake yet another sacrifice. Four of the Sisters, one of them Sr. M. Alfred who had a broken shoulder blade caused by a failing door, were too sick to walk the long way to Long-long, and someone had to stay with them, Mother Rosa Maria blessed them, little dreaming she would never see the two of them again, These five spent the night in the cathedral where many wounded still remained. Next day, they were brought to Holy Family Convent where the Mother Superior gave them a warm welcome.

THE SISTERS BOUND FOR LONG-LONG could not keep up with the pace of the leaders of the caravan, so night found them still on the road. They decided to follow the lead of the Sisters of Charity of St. Paul de Chartres and slept on the grass. This they did with shells whistling overhead all night.

The next morning, they continued their march and reached Long-long at about 9a.m. There Carmen Rodriguez Lizares offered them space in her cogon and bamboo hut built by Igorots. The Sisters stayed in this hut until the Galatas family offered them another hut to which they transferred. This new hut, was so small that, at night, two Sisters had to remain sitting up.

ON March 24, Passion Sunday, Sr. M. Macaria died at Holy Family Convent in Baguio after receiving the Last Sacraments, On March 28, Holy Wednesday, Sr. M. Gerald also passed away, attended by the parish priest of Campo Filipino and by Sr. M. Immaculada who walked all the way to Long-long with some ICM Sisters to bring news to Mother Rosa Maria. She would travel this route on foot several times during the Sisters' stay in Long-long: first, to accompany Sr. M. Alfred and Sr. M. Cornelia so they could rejoin the Community, then to bring them the provisions sent by faithful alumnae, and, finally, to relay war news brought by guerillas – all encouraging the Sisters to leave as soon as possible. Each time she travelled, Sr. M. Immaculada bravely bartered her way past the Japanese sentinels with *camotes* (sweet potatoes)

Yet another across awaited Mother Rosa Maria at Long-long, Sr. M. Alfred, already suffering from a broken shoulder bone, walked all the way from Baguio to Long-long with an open wound on her back which refused to heal. In Long-long, despite the devoted care of Sr. Lorenza of St. Paul de Chartres and of Dr. Mendoza, she grew steadily worse. Finally, on April 9 she expired, surrounded by all the Sisters who were there. She was buried on top of a hill. After Liberation, Sr. M. Immaculada returned to Long-long with some Franciscan Sisters and seminarians and brought back her remains as well as those of Sr. M. Demetria which were recovered from the ruins of the hospital.

On April 20, General Baba of the Japanese army sent as interpreter to Long-long to tell the refugees that the Americans would reach those mountains in a few days, and if anyone stayed on, they would be considered friends of the Americans and shot. Consequently, all were ordered to leave.

The Sisters provided themselves with home-made knapsacks to sling on their backs and in which to carry a change of clothes and some canned food. Everyone, Mother Rosa Maria included, carried a bag or sack filled with whatever provisions they could carry. They walked for four and half days, through sun and rain, over slippery mountain paths and through thick underbrush, to Tubao, another town in Pangasinan.

Sr. Rosario de Veyra, a novice then, had the courage to put on two habits, thus enabling their postulant, Sr. M. Luisa Locsin, to receive a habit shortly after the Community's reunion at San Pedro Makati. Although several other groups suffered tragic losses along the way – a Sister from another congregation was lost, another Sister's body was found decapitated, two elderly ladies, unable to keep up with the caravan, were forced to drop out and die by the wayside – all the Assumption Sisters survived the 100 kilometers trek and reached Tubao, although feeling dead than alive

At Tubao, the Sisters were overjoyed to see many familiar faces: Srs. Una and Carmencita of Maryknoll and Fr. Arcand, at that time a chaplain in the US army. Fr. Arcand proved a real friend in need by pulling all sorts of strings to get the Sisters out of Tubao and on to Malasiqui aboard an army truck the very next day. This was the second time during those troubled days that the US army clergy came to Sisters' rescue. At the commencement of hostilities, when part of the Community got stranded in Los Baños, Msgr. Howard Casey of the US army very kindly took them under his wing and got them safely back to Manila before Los Baños was cut off from the capital.

The Sisters rested for a week at Malisiqui, overwhelmed by the kindness of the Columban Sisters who had taken them in. It was while they were recuperating there that Fr. Arcand found means to visit the other Assumption Sisters staying at San Pedro Makati to give them the first real news on Mother Rosa Maria and the Baguio group. Before Fr. Arcand's visit, the San Pedro Makati Sisters thought Mother Rosa Maria and all the members of her group were already dead.

On May 1, again with the help of army chaplains, who were the souls of charity not only to the Assumption, but all the Filipinos as well, the Sisters left Malasiqui for Manila in an open weapons-carrier. The eight-hour trip under the tropical sun presented to difficulties to the Sisters, after their four-and-a-half-day walk. These Sisters still remember the US army chaplains with gratitude for their repeated and invaluable help.

At San Pedro Makati, the three groups of the Manila Community found themselves at last reunited. However, one more dear face was missing; Sr. Marta Maria Sanz had contracted cerebral malaria on the way and died a few days after reaching Manila.

THE ASSUMPTION SISTERS ONCE MORE experienced that God is a faithful Father who always comes to their rescue, often in very unexpected ways. The Malate, Paco and Baguio Community at this moment were homeless. But soon after their reunion at San Pedro Makati, a villa by the Pasig river owned by the Cu-Unjieng, the summer-house of the family of Sr. Esperanza, was generously lent to them. They shared it with the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres and few of St. Theresa's College, their co-refugees at the Santiago Hospital – the St. Paul de Chartres Sisters occupied the ground floor, the Assumption Sisters had the second floor. A small pink chalet across the street was transformed into a chapel. Children's school desks became the pews.

This sojourn in Makati was a real moment of renewal: the Sisters enjoyed daily Mass, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Divine Office, weekly Chapters, rest and tranquility that prepared them for a new start.

The Baguio group arrived with Mother Rosa Maria on May 1, and May 12 was the golden jubilee of her religious profession. Ingenious as always. Mother Rosa Maria celebrated it by giving the habit to the Community's postulant, Sr. M. Luisa Locsin. Even the homily failed to mention the jubilee occasion. Archbishop O'Doherty who officiated the ceremony, gave a discourse on Catholic Action. The self-effacement was complete.

Other Religious ceremonies were held during this short stay of the Manila Assumption in San Pedro Makati: June 12, the final vows of Sr. M. Agnes Ledesma; June 27, the first profession of Srs. Rosario de Veyra and M. Carmen Reyes; June 28, Sr. Teresita Maria Ledesma's admission as postulant which was followed later by Sr. Cristina Augusta Ledesma's admission.

THE CLAMOR FRO THE RESUMPTION OF CLASSES, meanwhile, was steadily increasing. Parents and students wanted the Assumption to reopen classes. But where?

A visit to the ruined Malate property broke the hearts of the Sisters. The situation was a call to surmount all problems to be able to find a suitable place. After a futile search, the decision was made to go back to the ruins and start again. Strangely, this gave great joy to all.

Negotiations were conducted with the US army contingent stationed at the property to allow the Assumption to occupy a certain portion of the area and to use the battered auditorium and free school which remained standing. With God's help and that of friends, the US army granted to the request.

Sr. Esperanza Maria was asked to prepare the existing dilapidated structures for school use and to construct a new one of *sawali* and galvanized iron sheets salvaged from the ruins. A relative of Sister Esperanza recalled that the Sister herself “went to the army depot to get discarded crates to use the wood for the school buildings.” Villa Eugénie, meanwhile, served as the Sisters’ residence.

Cablegrams from Philadelphia and from the Spain arrived inquiring about the Sisters. Cardinal Dougherty, via the US army, was able to get through to the Community. Mother Rosa Maria asked for a loan from the Cardinal to enable the Sisters to rebuild, even temporarily, the school structures. His response was to double the amount and to transform the loan into a grant. Little by little, Malate revived.

Sister Maria Angela Ansaldo recalled that “when the Community dared to start a new school year on time for 1945 amid the ruins of Assumption Manila, Mother Rosa turned to Sister Esperanza Maria and leaned almost solely on her for the reconstruction of the totally devastated buildings.”

“Ever as the rubble was being swept away,” observed Maria Angelina Esquivel, “a plan was taking shape in the minds of Notre Mère, Assumption’s Superior, and Sister Esperanza. It would eventually translate into a blueprint for a stately complex of building set amidst the trees, stretched of lawn, ample playgrounds, dormitories and sports facilities. These two formidable woman had a wondrous partnership: one had the vision: the other boldly implemented it. Sister Esperanza is given credit for making reconstruction happen as swiftly as it did. She negotiated the financial requirements, found the architects, recruited engineers and builders from among her own family, and the blueprint materialized into stone and brick, mortar and cement; into classrooms and dormitories, libraries and basketball courts; and for a crowning touch, a glowing chapel.”

The application for the reopening of classes also had to be worked out with the Bureau of Education. Srs. Hélène Marguerite Enriquez and Milagros Dayrit crossed the Pasig river by banca to get the necessary application forms. They waited the whole morning to obtain the precious papers. On their way home, their banca capsized and all the paper sank to the bottom of the Pasig. Upon arriving at Malate, Sr. Milagros Dayrit excitedly narrated their adventure to Mother Rosa Maria, who upon seeing only one Sister (Sr. Hélène had gone to change her dripping clothes) anxiously asked, “Where is the other one?”

Poor Mother! For a split second she thought she would have to send one more cable to the Motherhouse announcing “Sister drowned in the Pasig.” However, all’s we that ends well.

While the Sisters who would teach left San Pedro Makati to start school on July 1, 1945, those who were awaiting their return to Europe remained. These were Sr. M. Agathe, Sr. Milagro Sr. M. de Lourdes, Sr. M. Santiago, Sr. Marie de la Concepcion, Sr. M.

Cornelia, Sr. M. Ethelburga and three other co-adjutrix Sisters. When the last one left on December 8, the villa was closed and the postulants all moved to Villa Eugénie. The US army gave the Sisters jeep boxes with which to construct an annex. Iloilo too came to their help.

THE WAR ENDS also brought difficulties to the Assumption in Iloilo. Formal classroom instruction was suspended at the outbreak of hostilities. At the start of the Japanese occupation of Panay island, Allied nationals were compelled to register. Eventually, Srs. Ethelbulga and Maxima, both British, were taken to the concentration camp.

With the return of the Americans, Iloilo, like other cities in the country, was subjected to heavy bombings. Normal life was restored only after Iloilo's liberation from the Japanese in 1945.

FOR THE ASSUMPTION, even after the end of the hostilities the war would claim one last victim even the end of the hostilities. Sr. M. Gertude, who had been with Sr. Philoméne Marie when she dies in Paco, lived until 1948 but finally succumbed to the illness which started during the war due to the privations she suffered.

But although the war brought a lot of pain and heartaches to the Sisters. It also brought numerous occasions that proved beyond the shadow of a doubt God's loving mercy. *Misericordias domini in aeternum cantabo.* (I will sing the mercies of the Lord for all eternity.)

Reconstruction

1941-1953

*"When God gives, we experience
His Goodness; when He takes back we experience
His Goodness even more because He does not take away
anything from us without giving Himself
more fully in its place."
- Blessed Marie Eugénie*

WORLD WAR II FINALLY ENDED on August 15, 1945 with Japan's unconditional surrender after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and, a few day later, of Nagasaki. Rehabilitation and reconstruction become the order of the day for the Philippines.

After the country was fully liberated from the Japanese by the Allied forces in the Pacific, the Commonwealth government resumed functioning until the establishment of the Philippine Republic of July 4, 1946 with Manuel Roxas as President. To the already gigantic task of recovery was added that of laying the foundation of a dubious democracy, a neo-colonial economic structure whose inherent inequities provided more fuel to the growing unrest among the tillers of the soil who, by this time, had come in contract with Marxist teners. The lack of religious formation for the vast majority of the population, meanwhile, had slowly but surely weakened religious convictions, making most Filipinos ready converts to the gospel of materialism.

Not all was dark, however, for from the ashes of the last war had risen a local Church fully awakened to life's realities and to the people's needs, becoming less and less an institutional church and more and more a true shepherd of the flock.

JULY 1, 1945 MARKED THE DAWN of another beginning for Manila Assumption. The school reopened with 300 students, 60 of whom were boarders, happy to be back even in makeshift structures and facilities. The boarders brought all they needed for sleeping and for making school life as comfortable as possible.

Classes were held only in the mornings; in the afternoons, the auditorium was used by the US army. In the evenings, the Americans troops had movies to which the girls and the Sisters were invited – but only when the commanding officer deemed the picture proper!

In those days, the Manila Assumption's theme song could truly have been, "We're In The Army Now!" The third and fourth year high school students occupied the two-room *sawali* hut, while the first and second year classes were assigned to the patched up auditorium. The elementary school classes were held in the classrooms of the former free-school building, part of which was utilized as a dormitory for boarders.

Life in Villa Eugenie, although cramped for space, was as regular as possible. The best room was reserved for the chapel; during the day a sliding partition allowed it to be used as a parlor and school office. Sometime later, a quonset hut was put up to serve as a chapel that could accommodate the students for Mass and allow the daily adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Traditional celebrations were joyfully resumed. The first Assumption Day after the war was held on August 15, 1945. Mother Rosa Maria's feastday and the delayed Golden Jubilee celebration were simultaneously celebrated a few day later on August 30. When October came, Mission Day was duly held. The French consul came with his daughter, and congratulated Mother Rosa Maria "for bringing a tinge of joy amidst these ruins"

Class'46, the first graduating class after the war, fondly recalls their unforgettable experience:

"Our classroom was a shack made of burnt GI sheets, hot as a stove when the sun shone. We were a very mixed class ranging in age from 15 to 20. We came to school in everyday dresses and when textile became a little more available, we wore the Sunday (white) uniform. We finished our last year in high school under difficult circumstances, marked by the lack of material things, books, clothes and homes. It was the loss parents, brothers, sisters and other loved ones that our classmates bore with such quiet courage.

When we look back we truly claim we were a class of many firsts. We were the first post-war class to graduate, the first to spend our last year in a shack with borrowed desks, the first to graduate on long gowns – many made from the nylon parachutes of the US Air Force!

Class'46 went through a transition period when values changed. We underwent catastrophic upheavals, both global and personal, and we survived them all. The discipline we acquired has served us in good stead. We are going through another transition again and are witnessing big changes. But regardless of what tomorrow will bring, there is one thing we hope will never change - the love that the Assumption gave us. It is a wonderful feeling to know that once an Assumption girl, you are an Assumption girl forever."

THE REBUILDING OF THE MANILA ASSUMPTION began on October 1947 during Old Girls' Day. As in the past, this day brought the alumnae home, but for the old girls this celebration was special because they were able the girls this celebration was special because they were able present to Mother Rosa Maria a check for P45,000 raised from their project, the premier showing of the movie "Swan Fantasy."

Not long after, Cardinal Dougherty of Philadelphia, a faithful friend of the Assumption, sent \$5,000 for the cornerstone of the new building. The Assumption's dream of reconstruction was beginning to take concrete form in more sense than one. On January 24, 1948, the feast of Our Lady of Peace, Archbishop Michael O'Doherty, blessed the first stone for the new high school building in the presence of the Manila Assumption

Community, alumnae and friends. Mrs. Trinidad Roxas, wife of President Manuel Roxas, and herself an alumna, was one of the signatories on the parchment document commemorating the occasion.

By June 7 of the same year, the building was blessed and was ready for occupancy. The college department reopened on June 26, 1948, in its own building opposite that of the high school. The high school and college offices and classrooms were by the now sufficient provided for. The only thing that remained to be built was the badly-needed dormitory. Up to this time, the boarders were lodged in a Quonset hut. A refectory, administrative offices and adequate rooms were sorely lacking.

J.D. Constantino, former college professor at Assumption Malate and San Lorenzo and now Sister Teresa Joseph, O.C.D., wrote of her Herran experience: "I was first introduced to Mother Esperanza Maria Cu-Unjieng in 1949 by Father James P. Moran, S.J. Father Moran had long been one of the dearest friends of the Assumption and was confessor and director to many Sisters. Father Moran's well-deserved reputation for holiness and discernment was widespread. He was considered a kingfisher of souls, he was an aristocrat in matters of the spirit."

"Mother Espie (as we fondly called her) was a no-nonsense Dean. She was one genuine administrator who also succeeded uniquely as true mother to her students...She was the one great factor who truly helped the girls to be honest with God, with themselves, with their parents and with all else. It was this transparency of soul that accounted for the beautiful simplicity of that generation of Assumptionist... Mother Esperanza was most indulgent when it came to providing for everything needed to carry out their extracurricular projects on school and she rightly demanded excellence in all their productions and performances. But she trained then in simplicity and prompt obedience.

"Truly, I can never thank God enough for that marvelous gift of a first experience at teaching in a Catholic school. In fact, my long and abiding faith in the worth and excellence of a good Catholic education derives from this most happy and memorably enriching experience. I recall that the first course I taught were on World Literature (Greek dramas, too) and Contemporary British and American Literature (my major field in Columbia University). I handled a small, post-war class typical of the best of European aristocratic semi-tutorial classes. With only 11 or 12 highly gifted students, sobered by the war, born rich and coming from very well-educated families, extremely creative yet sorrowed deeply and even anguished by the horrors of war, they were souls who were eager to understand the meaning of life and suffering but who were young and irrepressibly buoyant enough to dare to dream."

The dormitory's main building was finally constructed in 1950. The Sisters left Villa Eugénie and transferred, for the time being, to one wing of the new edifice. When Mother M. Baptise, Assistant Superior General, came in 1950 – the first visit from the Mother

House since World War II – she was pleased to see Manila Assumption almost completely on its feet and the school apostolate on full swing and flourishing.

Visits from the Motherhouse always bring gladness and inspiration to the local Community as they are kept abreast of the Congregation's current thrusts and sentiments and are reassured of being in the main-stream of developments. Such visits likewise serve to evaluate the local Community's progress and track record in bringing Christ to His people. These are great opportunities for exchanging ideas, for brainstorming on strategies, for seeking advice and counsel, for sharing the nuances of the local culture, or for simply enjoying each other's friendship.

Newness came not only on buildings and physical facilities. With the birth of the Republic of the Philippines on July 4, 1946, education received a new impetus towards nationalism and Filipinization. While remaining faithful to the Assumption charism of Christian Catholic education, the school's educational thrust slowly but surely changed to integrate itself to the widening needs and calls of a rich Filipino heritage and culture.

This new direction was especially implemented in the religious and spiritual formation of students, in their social development that kept them in touch with the universal achievements and growth of people around the world but which, at the same time, deepened their knowledge and appreciation of their own.

While foreign languages continued to be offered and encouraged –Spanish because of the Philippines' historical past, and French because the Assumption originated from France – Pilipino began to be taught throughout the primary and secondary levels. Today it has become the medium of instruction in some subjects and the young have begun to think in Pilipino as evidenced by their spontaneous reactions to remarks and situations. Some regret that the English language has suffered a setback because of the students' wide use of Pilipino, but are they not primarily Filipinos?

One other development that must particularly please Mother Marie Eugénie is the Assumption students' systematic initiation into the social teachings of the Church and the consequent involvement that their new-found knowledge entailed. Mother Marie Eugénie always viewed education as a social activity, never as an individualistic endeavor.

High school seniors and college students resumed their regular Catechism classes in Manila's public schools in response to a social reality of that time: the abolition of religious instruction in public schools. Visits to poor families, to the sick in homes and hospitals, and organizing activities for their benefit were an important part of school life. Through these simple means, the students were made aware of the social realities around them and their responsibility for concern and action.

ILOILO ASSUMPTION WAS EXPERIENCING the same rapid growth at about this time. After reopening its doors in 1945, the school saw continuous growth both in its enrolment and in the academic and social services it rendered to the different communities from which it drew its students.

In 1946, the Bureau of Private Schools accorded full recognition to the studies offered by the School which reapplied for this accreditation at the end of World War II. In school year 1948-1949, at Mother Rosa Maria's suggestion, the college department started with a one-year secretarial course. The department's course offerings expanded gradually in the following years to include liberal arts, education and commerce.

True to the charism of Blessed Marie Eugénie, Iloilo Assumption also continued to pursue its Christian social mission. Since the 1920s, regular catechism lessons were given in the public elementary school on General Luna St., first lay teachers, then by volunteers from among the third and fourth year high school students. In 1946, the Assumption Catechists' Association for Sunday School was organized with Teresita Montinola (now Mrs. Alfonso) as its first president.

Eventually, the college was authorized by the Archdiocese to give a catechist's diploma to students who had taught catechism either in Sunday School or in the public school during their years with the Assumption.

Inspired by Blessed Marie Eugénie's passion to liberate the individual from every form of oppression and by her vision of a transformed society where people's lives are permeated by the Gospel, the Marie Eugénie Society organized house-to-house visitation to the poor. With the opening of Barrio Obrero, the visits to the homes of the poor were replaced by one afternoon spent every week with the slum children of this barrio. The Dramatic Guild, meanwhile, presented educational plays in different Iloilo towns as vehicles for the propagation of the Good News.

MOUNT MARY, THE ASSUMPTION'S BAGUIO CONVENT, was also rebuilt after the war. When life in Baguio City returned to normal, Msgr. Billet, Apostolic Prefect of the Mountain Province, asked permission to occupy Mount Mary temporarily and made some reparations. By 1948, the house was rendered habitable again.

It was deemed a waste to leave the house idle through the 10 months of school. The idea of putting up a small primary school under the care of responsible lay teachers was seriously considered. Under this plan, the school directress of Manila would go up to Baguio for supervisory visits for time to time.

Thus, the Mount Mary Primary School was born. This school continued operating until school year 1961-1962.

THE CONGREGATION of the Religious of the Assumption, until 1939, had only the International Novitiate to which all aspirants to the religious life were sent for initial formation. This novitiate was in the Motherhouse of the Congregation which had moved early at the turn of the century from Auteuil in Paris to Val Notre Dame par Antheit in the Liege province of Belgium.

A total of 14 Filipino choir Sisters and five co-adjutrix Sisters made their novitiate there. All the Filipino choir Sisters had Mother Isabel Maria of Mira Cruz, San Sebastian as their Novice Mistress, while the co-adjutrix Sisters had Mother M. Garcia.

During World War II, local novitiates were established in several countries, starting with England, followed by France and the Spain.

Because of the impossibility of sending applicants for the religious life to Europe after the outbreak of the war, Sr. M. Agnes du Prexieux Sang (Azucena Ledesma) was received by Mother Rosa Maria in Manila on March 19, 1940, although there was as yet no novice mistress nor a formal novitiate structure. In 1943, an adult from the Holy See allowed the Manila Novitiate to function, provided the local Ordinary consented. Thus, the Manila Novitiate was to take shape with the entry on January 6, 1943 of Sr. Rosario de Jesus (Mary de Veyra) and Sr. M. Carmen de Jesus (Carmen Reyes-Arevalo). Sr. M. Luisa de l'Incarnation (Maria Luisa Locsin) was the first non-Assumption applicant to be accepted.

Sr. M. Milagro was Novice Mistress until the end of the war. The subsequent postulants and novices were successively under Mother Marie Marthe, Mother M. Veronique, Mother M. Rafaela and Mother M. Angela. Meanwhile, in Iloilo, Sr. M. Basilisa was the first postulant received with Mother M. Rafaela as Novice Mistress from 1948 to 1954.

THE ELECTION OF THE MOTHER M. DENYSE as Superior General by the General Chapter of 1953 effected a turning point in the history of the Assumption in general and that of the Manila Assumption in particular. Everywhere, peoples and nations, had by then recovered from the ravages of the war. Mother M. Denyse saw it was the moment to move forward.

Foremost among the moves initiated by Mother M. Denyse was the organization of the Congregation into provinces. Assumption Philippines became the Far East Province

with Mother Rosa Maria as its first Provincial Superior. Mother M. Marthe was named Superior of Manila, Mother Esperanza Maria Cu-Unjieng was designated Provincial Treasurer of the Congregation on the Far East.

Another welcome step forward was the abolition of the two categories of Sisters within the Congregation: the choir Sisters, so termed because they recited the Divine Office in choir, and the co-adjutrix Sisters. Two categories were integrated into one. All were to wear the purple habit, all were to recite the Divine Office in choir.

Mother M. Denyse's election in 1953 and her visit to the Philippines in December 1954 also triggered an expansion of the Assumption not only to other parts of the country but to foreign shores as well. The first foreign foundation that resulted from the expansion thrust of the Philippine Assumption was Osaka Japan.

As early as 1910, the Bishop of Osaka had asked for an Assumption foundation in his diocese. Mother H  l  ne Marguerite, then Superior of Manila, went to Osaka to look until the possibility of establishing a foundation there. However, she concluded that the time was not yet ripe.

In 1942, during World War II, Msgr. Taguchi, Bishop of Osaka, came to the Philippines as one of the goodwill emissaries of the Japanese government. He came to visit the Assumption and was struck by the warm welcome he received, and most of all, by the joyful attitude of the Sisters despite the difficulties brought about by the Japanese occupation of the country. There and then he wished to have an Assumption in Japan. He felt his country was in need of a religious family that radiated joy among the people – joy that results from the total giving of oneself to Christ and to His Gospel.

In 1950, five years after the war, Msgr. Taguchi asked Mother Marie Joan, the Assumption Superior General at that time, through Father Gervais Quenard, Superior General of the Assumption fathers, for a foundation in Osaka. The request, however, was quite vague, so when Mother M. Baptiste, Assistant Superior General, came to the Philippines in 1950, she fully intended to proceed to Japan. She wrote the Bishop about her projected visit, but he was in the United States at that time. Moreover, false rumors of another war prompted her to go back to Europe earlier than scheduled.

Nothing more was heard about the Japanese foundation, until one day, a circular from the Motherhouse in Val Notre Dame mentioned the enthusiasm of the Sisters to offer themselves for a Japan project, The Mother General instructed Mother Rosa Maria to inquire whether the Bishop relayed to the Mother General along with the proposed possible places for insertion.

Mother Rosa Maria was designated to explore the possibilities. Circumstances, however, prevented her from doing so personally, so she instead appointed Sr. M. Marthe and Sr. M. Inmaculada to go in her place.

In Osaka, the Sisters were very fraternally received by the Adoration Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, whose Superior happened to be Sr. M. Inmaculada's cousin, Msgr. Taguchi escorted them around his diocese, pointing out possible locations for the Assumption insertion. This exploratory visit was reported to the Mother General who approved the foundation within a very short time.

The Financial aspect, however, presented a problem. The Bishop could not commit himself to any financial responsibility. Thus, the Mother General confided the foundation of Japan to the Assumption of the Philippines, both in terms of personnel and finances, Srs. Maria Angiolina and Montserrat from Iloilo, Sr. Cecilia Ines from Madrid and Sr. M. Inmaculada and Sr. M. Jacoba, both from Manila, were chosen as the pioneers.

While all the arrangements were being made, a brother of one of the Sisters in Manila offered to buy a property assigned to her inheritance. The mother of another Sister advanced her inheritance. The mother of another Sister advanced her inheritance. The Mother General authorized the use of these amounts to purchase a piece of land in Mino which had been identified by Msgr. Taguchi as very appropriate for the proposed foundation.

Annals of the foundation carefully note the following:

"Upon arrival in Japan, at the beginning of April 1952, we settled very near the parish of Toyonaka, in a small house belonging to the Bishop who invited us to his diocese. We did not know the language as yet. But we had to earn our living. We started to give private lessons to ladies and young girls: English, Spanish, Italian, stenography, embroidery and sewing."

Sr. M. Inmaculada was named Superior of the Community in August 1952, and in October 1953, Sr. Claude Emmanuel arrived to be her assistant. After a year in the parish of Toyonaka in Osaka, the Sisters moved to Mino on March 9, 1953. An old renovated house welcomed the Sisters. To it was added a small annex which served as chapel and three classrooms to accommodate the first students – 31 boys and girls. On March 10, the named Regina Mundi (Queen of the World) with *In caritate soli Domine testis fidelis* (Faithful in love and witness of the only Lord) as its watch-word.

To construct the primary school was the urgent need, but again, the Sisters did not know where the money would come from. Once more, God the Father, Who wanted the Assumption in Japan, arranged everything.

Assumption Manila was completely destroyed during World War II. The United States government offered a war damage indemnity. The Sisters were aware of the Japanese Foundation's predicament and chose to turn over this amount for the construction of the first building of Mino. Mother Rosa Maria, then Provincial of the Assumption Far East Province, was greatly instrumental in bringing about this fraternal concern for the young Foundation. It was a big sacrifice, for Manila Assumption badly

needed reconstruction itself and was in debt. But, through God's *kagandahang-loob*, the sacrifice was made joyfully and lovingly.

In grateful remembrance, Mino's first building has been named after her: the Mother Rosa building. It house the Mino Grade School. In the years that followed and as the school expanded and flourished, more structures went up: the high school building, the junior college, the gymnasium, and lastly, the chapel.

Living...

CONTINUOUS EXISTENCE AND GROWTH OF ANY UNDERTAKING BRING IN THEIR STRIDE THE URGENCY OF AN UNFAILING AVAILABILITY OF COMPETENT “LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD.” THUS, THE BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHILIPPINE NOVITIATE, VITAL TO THE LIFE OF THE ASSUMPTION, NOT ONLY WITHIN THE COUNTRY, BUT HOPEFULLY, ALSO TO THE WORLD. UNITY IN DIVERSITY WAS ALWAYS IN THE MIND AND HEART OF THE INSTITUTE. WITH THIS IN VIEW, ASSUMPTION COMMUNITIES ALL OVER THE WORLD WERE ORGANIZED INTO PROVINCE. THUS THE PHILIPPINE PROVINCE WAS BORN.

WE SHARE WHAT WE LOVE MOST. AND SO, THROUGH GOD’S KAGANDAHANG-LOOB, ASSUMPTION PHILIPPINES REACHED OUT TO PEOPLES WITHIN THE COUNTRY AND BEYOND. BLESSED MARIE EUGENIE’S END-GOAL OF EDUCATION IS THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIETY ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL. ASSUMPTION PHILIPPINES’ TOTAL ENDEAVOR IS TO EXPLORE EVERY POSSIBILITY FOR LIVING OUT THIS GOAL IN THE PRESENT....

Reaching Out

1954-1974

*"Each one of us has a mission on earth. We must seek how God can make use of us for the spread and realization of the Gospel."
-Blessed Marie Euagénie*

THIS CYCLE IN THE LIFE of the Province echoes the drift of the times and the responsive thrusts of the Congregation as a vital part of the global Church. The Province would, therefore, take a proactive stance in adapting to the socio-political evolutions of its local Communities and adopting their unique cultural traditions as a starting point in faith. In the process, it has become a constant living witness to God's kagandahang-loob.

Fidei Donum largely set off the significant refocusing of efforts and orientations in the early 1950's towards the Third World. A whole new value system evolved. New policies, goals and objectives relevant to the shift in directions were promulgated by the Congregation. As plans were being crystallized in the Philippine Province towards this direction, rebuilding was taking place.

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE MANILA ASSUMPTION was completed with the blessing of the chapel on March 18, 1956 by Archbishop Rufino J. Santos. But the story of its reconstruction would not be complete without paying tribute to the moving spirit behind this endeavor.

Mother Rosa Maria was the indispensable right hand on Mother H  l  ne Marguerite when the Manila Assumption was reinstated in 1904. She was the mother who consistently and painstakingly nurtured its growth through the years, who courageously and dauntlessly steered it during the war years, who saw the school reduced to pile of ruins in 1945, but who, with the same gracious audacity and unshakeable faith in a faithful God, inspired its refashioning into the precious legacy that it is today.

Mother Rosa Maria's country of adoptions (she first came in 1904) officially recognized her invaluable service in the field of education for young Filipino girls in particular when December 8, 1950, President Elpidio Quirino presented her with the Presidential Medal of Merit for Education at Malacañang Palace in the presence of the Manila Community of Sisters, alumnae, students, and friends. Not to be out-done, France,

her country of origin, conferred on her the *Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur* on January 18, 1954.

On the day of the blessing of the chapel of the reconstructed Manila Assumption, the Church, at the instance of all the Manila Assumption alumnae from 1911 to 1956, and through Archbishop Santos, the Archbishop of Manila, awarded to Mother Rosa Maria the well-deserved *Medal Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*.

MOTHER ROSA MARIA was also the first to see the need for opening another school outside Manila, with a larger campus that would be more conducive to serious study. Shortly after World War II, the enrolment at Manila Assumption indicated a progressively rapid increase. For lack of space and facilities, the School could no longer accommodate all the applicants, most of whom were children of alumnae. Mother Rosa Maria, then Provincial of the Far East Province of the Assumption, began considering opening a second school.

At that time, a private real estate company, Ayala y Cia, was developing a vast territory of former rice lands, turning the area, located south of Manila, into subdivision of residential purposes. The company offered a site for a school in one of the villages it was developing in the municipality of Makati in the province of Rizal. In 1954, when Mother M. Denyse, Superior General, visited the Philippines, she was shown the property in question. She immediately approved its acquisition.

Mother Rosa Maria lost no time. She appointed once again Sister Esperanza Maria to handle the planning and construction of the Makati campus. She staged grand production such as "My Fair Lady" in order to help raise some funds for the San Lorenzo project. With the same single-minded resoluteness and high standards of excellence with which she accomplished the Herran reconstruction, Sister Esperanza implemented her Makati assignment.

The new Assumption school was built in San Lorenzo Village in 1958. The first building, Saint Denis Hall, opened its doors to 180 students of preparatory school and elementary levels in June of the same year. During this year, 1958-1959, three pioneering Sisters – Sister M. Antonia, Sister Cristina Augusta and Sister Teresa Isabel Bilbao – commuted every morning from Malate to San Lorenzo to supervise and conduct classes with the help of some lay teachers.

After two other buildings were completed in May 1959, the formal exodus of the San Lorenzo Community from Malate was effected. Mother M. Inmaculada was appointed Superior of Malate. Eleven Sisters left Malate to live in the new Makati convent, named

Milleret Hall. This was the Administration Building, and as such, it housed the chapel, two receiving rooms – the residence of the Sisters in the right wing and the rooms of the college boarders in the left wing extension.

Bishop Hernando Antiporda, Auxiliary Bishop of Manila, blessed the chapel and offered the first Mass celebrated there in honor of Our Lady Mary Help of Christians to whom this foundation was dedicated. The ceremony took place early in the morning with only the Community and a few friends present.

In the afternoon, Rev. James P. Moran, S.J., blessed all the other buildings. A delegation from Malate, headed by Mother Rosa Maria, came to join the San Lorenzo Community. Dedicated primarily to education, this Foundation adopted as its motto “Sanctify them in truth.”

The college department formally transferred to its new site in San Lorenzo in June 1959, occupying Aquinas Hall. It was a modern campus with the latest facilities. An outdoor stage, patterned after the Hollywood Bowl, was of the highlights. A swimming pool, tennis court and a bowling alley were even built to be utilized for the sports program. This was to complement the impressive academic courses being offered by the college department, indeed for the ultimate development of “a sound mind and a sound body.” The Assumption college department ranked among the finest college departments of the leading schools of the country at this time. Sister Esperanza Maria Cu-Unjieng continued to serve as the dynamic head of the college.

Mother Maria Angela Ansaldo, in her later writings, aptly referred to Sister Esperanza thus: “It is to whom credit must be given for the Assumption College San Lorenzo building and academic caliber.”

Sister Esperanza instituted degree programs in the Liberal Arts, Education and Commerce. The excellent quality of such programs was greatly influenced by her own educational background and formidable academic credentials. The college curriculum was heavily Thomistic in orientation. The department had the imprint of her rigorous discipline. Importantly, she provided an environment for both the studentry and the academe where creative talent and social commitment could blossom and flourish.

Dr. Ariston Estrada, who has taught Philosophy at the Assumption in the 1940s, added: “In addition to many things that the Dean provided her college students, she provided them with a rich program of philosophical studies that included Logic, Cosmology, Philosophical Psychology, Epistemology, Ontology, Natural Theology and Moral Philosophy.” This program was deemed necessary for the shaping of the complete woman.

“On the faculty were Dominicans Jesuits (no less than the great Father Angel de Blas, O.P., and the great Father Horacio de la Costa, S. J.),” observed alumna Maria Angelina Esquivel, “liberals and conservatives, creative writers and artists, distinguished

scholars all. There was a fiercely maternal and vigilant protectiveness with which every influence on students' minds was monitored. The students were unrelentingly pushed to discover the limits of their potential." They were strongly encouraged to undertake adventures of the minds, the heart and the spirit. In all Assumption Communities, and in line with Mère Marie Eugénie's philosophy, academic studies are second only to the building of character to eventually "hand to to others the truth which has the power to awaken faith and engage the will."

Simultaneously with the college department, the high school department started its operations, although enrolment was open only to first year students. This was because the Assumpta Hall, designed to house the entire high school department, was still under construction and was not expected to be completed until three years later.

The founding Community of San Lorenzo was comprised of Mother Marie Martha, Superior, Sister Esperanza Maria Cu-Unjieng, Provincial Econome and college dean; Sister M. Luisa Locsin, college professor; Sister Cristina Augusta Ledesma, high school and grade school principal; Sister Maria del Rosario Hidalo, Teresa Isabel Bilbao and M. Clotilde, high school and elementary teachers; Sister Teresita Maria Ledesma, local econome; and Sister Lavinia, Speranda and Ligorina.

In 1960, a recognition took place as a result of the General Chapter of 1959. Mother Marthe was named Provincial in her concurrent capacity as Superior of the San Lorenzo Community. Mother Rosa Maria was appointed Superior of Malate. She stayed on in this position until Mother M. Guadalupe took over the following year. Mother M. Véronique came in as Assistant Superior of the San Lorenzo Community in 1963. During that year, the high school department proudly turned out its first graduates. To the Sisters' joy, two members of this class joined the Religious of the Assumption. They have since been assigned to foreign missions – Sister M. Fidelis Estrada, in Tanzania, and Sister Stella Maria Sanz, in Thailand.

THE 1960S DAWNED WITH ALACRITY, thundering through the consciousness of a people still occasionally hurting from the wounds of time, yet already riding the crest of an imminent regeneration. Change became the norm, arriving with unsettling force as new concepts and a new audacity collided with established systems of thought and action. Some changes were markedly visible, others were subtle. A frenetic new kind of morality began to surface. It was in this setting that the Assumption coped, initiated, innovated, reached out.

The growing student population in all levels in the San Lorenzo campus dictated the need for a school auditorium for the increasing academic and cultural activities. With proper space planning, the land area could still comfortably accommodate another building. Thus, it was decided to start the construction of Mother Rosa Hall.

In record time, the auditorium was completed. When Mother Josefa Ignacia, Assistant Superior General, visited in October 1966, the Sn Lorenzo foundation stood out as an academic and architectural landmark in the burgeoning Makati metropolis.

IN ADDITION TO ITS MAIN APOSTOLIC MISSION – the formal Catholic education of young girls in the elementary, high school and college levels – the San Lorenzo Community pursued other apostolic activities with the collaboration of the lay faculty, parents, alumnae and friends. These activities were conducted in accord with the main thrust of the apostolate of education: to develop social awareness among the students with a corresponding social conscience that would lead to effective action. Projects include the following: Free adult school classes for women which were held in the college department classrooms by volunteer professors and upper classmen; weekly catechetical instruction classes and preparation for First Communion conducted in the public elementary schools of Sta. Ana in Manila and in Pasay City by the catechetics and theology students of the college and the high school junior and senior students; recollection Days for public school teachers as well as for household help, both men and women, organized by the Auxiliary Missionaries of the Assumption (AMA) Club; Saturday catechetical instruction classes conducted for Catholic students of the International School; monthly seminars on religious themes held for mothers of students of the International School; student Catholic Action social extension work undertaken by elementary, high school and elementary students in public schools and charitable institutions, such as the Welfareville Training Center for Girls, Welfareville Homes for the aged and the infirm, Elsie Gaches Village for disabled children and the Women's Correctional Institution (an extension of the Bureau of Prisons); fund-raising projects undertaken by the college department for the building and initial maintenance of a school in Bulacan, an area in the Province of where squatters in Metro Manila had been relocated; Sunday Masses for two groups of foreign residents of San Lorenzo Village (one American and one Japanese); summer Day-Camps organized and conducted by college students in 23 different areas around the country where the Assumption was present; a housing project for 32 squatter families in Malibay, Pasay City, together with facilities for free health services (Saint Martha's Health Center) and human and socio-economic development projects for the residents under the auspices of the Maryville Urban Development Foundation Inc. set up in 1968.

MOTHER M. DENYSE, who became Superior General in 1953, visited the Philippines in December 1954. This, her first visit, triggered an expansion of Assumption Philippines to reach out to the greater majority of the Filipinos, particularly those in the

rural areas. The Assumption began moving away from Manila and other urban centers to wherever Filipinos awaited the fullness of life offered by the Good News. The decision to reach out to the rural areas was also prompted by the observation that while 85% of the Filipinos were Catholics, official Catholicism was not firmly established in the country and that the people were not well instructed as gauged from the following: religious activities were seldom mentioned by barrio residents: there was a lack of church-related organizations and even attendance at religious services was infrequent for most residents: the role of religion remained traditional and pietistic, rather than active and organizational; and although most barrios had chapels, few people were in frequent contact with religious functions.

UP IN THE COOL MOUNTAIN of Baguio City, growth was having an entirely different effect on Mount Mary, the Assumption's summer home. By the early 1960s, the proliferation of houses and the expansion of Baguio's market and commercial district were beginning to disrupt the solitude and restfulness of Mount Mary. Finally, the Assumption was compelled to give up the site to give way to the expansion of its neighbor, The Saint Louis University, at a time when non-sectarian schools and college were being put up all over the Cordilleras. The greater need of the school, the only Catholic university in the region, and as Mother Rosa Maria said, *Sentire cum ecclesia*, prevailed over sentimental reasons for keeping Mount Mary.

Mother Rosa Maria, Provincial Superior at the time, and Sister M. Guadalupe, Superior of Manila, negotiated with Saint Louis' CICM fathers the exchange of Mount Mary for a CICM property in Crystal Cave Subdivision along Sto. Tomas Road. The final agreement covered the construction of a Sisters' convent on the new site, plus a certain amount to help defray the expenses that would be incurred in the transfer.

In 1964, construction of a two-story structure started at the Crystal Cave site with Sister Maria Guadalupe Lama supervising the work. Initial plans called for the Community to use the leftwing of the building and the novitiate, the rightwing. The novitiate, however, never occupied its allotted wing except during holidays. Eventually, this became the retreat house, first for *cursillos*, then for groups of Manila students as well as for seminarians.

The Mount Mary Community moved to Crystal Cave even before the building was completely finished. A 30-day retreat for 10 Sisters was facilitated by Rev. Leo Cullum, S.J. . This was the forerunner of all the retreats that would succeed one another in the years that followed.

The new building was intended to continue as a vacation house for the Sisters who needed to rest after the school year. However, soon after its construction was completed, Msgr. Brasseur of Baguio, requested the use of the house for *cursillos* lay laymen and

women as well as for priests and nuns. Sister Matilde Montinola would go up whenever there was a cursillo scheduled to take care of the house and the needs of the *cursillistas*.

While one wing of the building was constantly kept busy, the other wing remained unoccupied 10 months every year. Since the Mount Mary Primary School fared considerable well, the Assumption decided to start an elementary school in Crystal Cave, but, this time, for a new clientele – the children coming from the Asin Road area and the neighboring villages. Thus was born Saint Martin School.

Since the majority of Saint Martin's student come from the tribal communities of Ibalays, Kankanaeys and Ifugaos, special attention is given to inculturation, both in the liturgy and in the different curricular offerings, particularly in the areas of music, social studies and vocational training. Students are sent in groups to listen to their elders' folk tales and to observe traditional usages and customs.

A background on the psychology of these ethnic groups is important to be able to grasp their reality and integrate Gospel values with their own, or for that matter, enhance such a reality with the Assumption charism. The objective is for a people to be proud of their identity and be able to relate to a loving God, and finally to effect a fusion of God's reality with theirs.

The Assumption Sisters in Baguio continually delve deep into the hearts and minds of the tribal Filipinos of the Cordilleras in the hope that by knowing and understanding their reality, Assumption can better attune educational and apostolic programs directed towards them. Getting to know them is a dynamic process. "Through unconquered till the tail-end of the Spanish period, their identity and cultural values have suffered in the last 50 years of tremendous change," the Sister at Saint Martin said.

Elaborating, the Sister continued: "Uprooted from their land and grafted into the city, they are caught between the values of two worlds: strong communal spirit of the past against individualistic tendencies of modern times; dislocation, disorientation from their cultural values; deprivation of economic security and basic necessities. Thus, they developed an incapacity to cope with forces of society. But there is a strong desire that awakens the people to regain self-determination as community; to work at their own process of development; to respond to change in their own terms and at their own pace. Thus the need to move towards a more meaningful educational program that goes beyond the classroom. The direction, therefore, is towards self-determination in dialogue with society.

"Saint Martin School and tribal leaders now begin to look at education as one of the means of clarifying their vision of themselves and society to equip themselves with values, attitudes, knowledge and skills for self-reliance, right judgment and decision-making abilities as they face change."

This is what Saint Martin School is all about. This is how the Assumption has fashioned it to be, in response to the particular needs of a unique community with a unique destiny. "To create a liberating atmosphere where children are led to full participation in the process of community-oriented subject areas," the Sisters explained. "Community leaders are invited by the school to facilitate this community-based learning. Faculty, administration and staff go through ongoing exposure and formation to enter more deeply into the life of the people."

Hence, activities revolve around the community whose sphere of influence is quite pervasive. "The community becomes a learning center. Tribal leaders pass on their history as a people along with values of community and Christian spirit. It is a center where people make right decisions, where tribal religious expressions are assumed by the Church liturgy because the liturgy is expressive of people's culture. Emphasis is on tribal music, dance, games, and crafts."

Thus, education at Saint Martin becomes a highly participative process where values learned are deeply internalized by students. "The school takes on the role of facilitators, bridging generations: the youth with their past; and the old with today's developing history. This, a response to *liberation* and *self-reliance*. Importantly, community leaders become teachers. The child awakens to his dignity, acquires values, knowledge, skills needed to assume his role among his people.

In the movement to rediscover their cultural heritage and their identity, "it is hoped that they may recognize... the Lord of Truth, the Lord of history, who has revealed and continues to reveal Himself in their culture, in their values, in their need to worship a God: a God who desires to be born in their midst."

This is one distinctive feature of Saint Martin – in addition to the Catholic education it offers- that justifies its continuing existence ever at great cost.

At the end of school year 1970-1971, Saint Martin saw its first class of graduates. One of the graduates was Camilo Ongsit, now a priest assigned to the parish of Abatan, Benguet.

THE REQUEST TO PUT UP A SCHOOL in San Jose, Antique, Assumption's first provincial insertion, came in January 1955 from the Most Reverend Jose Maria Cuenco, Archbishop of Jaro who, at that time, had jurisdiction over the area. Mother M. Denyse, who was then visiting Assumption Iloilo, met and made the necessary arrangements with Father Jose Hinterhuber, MHM, parish priest of San Jose.

In March of the same year, the construction of a small wooden school and convent began on a piece of land in front of the parish church. Sister Rosalina Maria Ladrado, Sister Sinforosa Estoesta and Sister Magdalena Golez, all from Assumption Iloilo, arrived in June to start the school. They were warmly welcomed by the townspeople, headed by their active parish priest. On June 13, a hundred first graders trooped to the school for its opening day.

The biggest even of the first years was the First Communion during which parents knelt side by side with their little ones. Sharing in their children's joy and graces. The Holy Family Church, composed of parents and students, was organized during the year. Working loyally with the school administration, it has been responsible for the steady progress of the San Jose Academy and for the effective implementation of its educational, apostolic and civic ideals.

From 1955, each succeeding year added a higher grade level to the elementary course. By the school year 1960-1961, San Jose Academy had attained its full stature as an elementary school. Sister Rosalina Maria, who had been the principal and Sister-in-Charge of the Community since its foundation, was named Superior in 1958.

In 1961, a first year high school section was opened to girls. By 1964-1965, the high school department was fully established. On May 8, 1965, 35 high school graduates, the School's first group, received their diplomas.

Meanwhile, the school continued to grow with the construction of new concrete buildings, a convent and a chapel. (In 1973-1974, the high school admitted boys to the first and second years.)

Most of the students come from low-income groups. Their parents are government employees, teachers, market vendors, laborers, fishermen, farmers and small businessmen. These Antiqueños want to give their children an education that would improve their social condition by developing their potentials as persons and as economic providers for their families. San Jose Academy provided such an education. In addition, it also directly evangelized its students, teachers and campus personnel, as well as indirectly touched the parents of the students. The materialistic mentality and aspirations for economic and social status had to be counteracted by an effective communication of Christian values.

San Jose Academy faithfully pursued its educational mission as well as other related activities from year to year. The stark reality of being engaged in educational and developmental endeavors parallel to those of the dioceses became an area for serious reflection for the Assumption. San Jose was a small town where the Assumption worked side by side with the diocese. It was the Assumption's first rural insertion and it woke up the Community – very slow and the hard way – to the true meaning of incarnation enunciated by the General Chapter of 1965.

TWO RELIGIOUS IN PURPLE HABIT and cream veil were aboard a passenger jeep bound to Sibalom, a town in Antique. Opposite them were farmers who, undoubtedly, had never seen nuns. "Are they boys or girls?" one whispered to the other. "I don't know," was the reply. Finally, the older one said, "They are boys, just look other at their shoes."

The two religious were Sister M. Carmela Montelibano and Sister Maxima Eugenia Emboltorio, Religious of the Assumption on their way to Sta. Rita Prep School in Sibalom. It was September 1967. Sixty prep school children were eagerly waiting for their teachers. Sister M. Carmela had just arrived from Auteuil, Paris, from her third year formation to take charge of the foundation of the Assumption house in Sibalom.

The school had already started in July with Sister M. Leonie Yusay as Sister-in-charge, accompanied by Sister Visitacion Eugenia Balleza and Sister Maxima Eugenia Emboltorio. The old church building was converted into a comfortable classroom and classes were held every morning.

March saw the graduation of 53 children in ceremonies presided by Msgr. Cornelius de Wit, Bishop of the Prelature of Antique.

Desirous of heeding the challenge of ecumenism in an area where several religious denomination thrived, the Aglipay Church in particular, the Religious of the Assumption founded Sta. Rita Academy after the repeated request of Rev. John Pamer, MHM, then parish priest of Sibalom and Bishop De Wit. The final arrangement was concluded between the bishop and Sister Josefa Ignacia, Assistant Superior General, during her visit to Antique in 1966.

In March 1968, the diocese started the construction of the school building within the site of the present parish church at the heart of town. The building was still being completed when classes opened on July 7, 1968.

By August, the Sisters, who up to this time were commuting from the Assumption Community in San Jose to Sibalom everyday, took up residence in Sibalom. One of the still unused classrooms – measuring all of seven meters by nine meters – served as a dormitory, dining room, kitchen and community room for four.

Life was very simple. The Sisters did their own housekeeping. There was neither electricity nor running water. Every evening, one of the parents sent a gas lamp for the Sisters' use. A man was hired to fetch water from the municipal building or from the convent of the parish priest. Happiness reigned, however, and joy abounded in this new venture for the Lord.

The school was blessed on September 22, 1968 by Bishop De Wit. Two busloads of Sisters, college and high school students from Assumption Iloilo graced the occasion. Present also were the superintendent of schools of the Bureau of Private Schools' Western Visayas district. There were many guests from San Jose and Sibalom.

Right from the start, Sta. Rita Academy served as a symbol of the unity of the people of Sibalom. The Eucharistic celebration that preceded the blessing was attended by Catholics, Aglipayans, Protestants and others, all worshipping God as one family. Those particular Communities chose to place itself under the special patronage of the Holy Spirit and adopted as its motto *Ut Omnis Unum Sint* (That all May Be One), a fitting principle for the Philippine Province's ecumenical insertion.

A GREAT CONGREGATION that razed Iloilo City to the ground brought the Religious of the Assumption and the Auxiliary Missionaries of the Assumption (AMA) to Barrio Obrero, a depressed area at the outskirts of the city.

Barrio Obrero or Workingman's Village is a 26-hectare government land reclaimed from swamps and from the sea where the hundreds of families left homeless by the great fire of 1951 were relocated. It was established on May 4, 1951 by Presidential Proclamation No. 251 signed by President Elpidio Quirino and supported by Resolution No. 570 of the Iloilo municipal board.

Today, Barrio Obrero is occupied by more than a thousand households with a total population verging on 6,000. Eighty percent of the inhabitants are Catholics with the rest made up of Protestants, Aglipayans and members of the *Iglesia ni Kristo* sect.

In contrast to the homogeneous grouping common to rural communities, the people of Barrio Obrero come from diverse backgrounds. Most of them are from the interior towns of the province of Iloilo and the other provinces on Panay island. Others come from the other islands of the Visayas and from as far away as Mindanao. All bear that psychological scars of unpleasant experiences suffered in their previous environments. Barrio Obrero is a people divided, a people suffering from crippling poverty and a loss of identity. It is a microcosm of the larger Philippine society and, thus, manifest the problem which beset the whole nation. It is characterized by dismal housing conditions, unhealthy and unsanitary surroundings, the absence of the most basic of amenities and a general climate of desperation and hopelessness.

While the village has abundant manpower, the unemployment rate is high, running at about 66%. Mothers and children are, therefore, forced to help support the family through scavenging, hawking, doing the laundry for well-to-do families, and for some, even

prostitution. Those who aspire to put to their own small businesses are compelled to borrow their capital from the loan sharks of the highly usurious five-six interest scheme.

The cope with their helplessness many resort to illegal or immoral activities. For these people, drug addiction, violence, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, gambling and other vices have become a way out of their present state. God is looked upon as someone powerful, who decides one's fate, a fate which the individual cannot hope to change.

The Assumption Sisters and their alumnae first came to Barrio Obrero in 1951 to help the fire victims. They also helped finish and furnish the chapel and rectory fronting the village plaza. The chapel, known as Our Lady of the Assumption, now serves as the parish church.

After the fire of 1951, a second one occurred in 1957. On February 7, 1966, Iloilo City was razed by a third conflagration which destroyed property worth P80 million and left hundreds of families homeless.

The great conflagration of 1966 prompted the Assumption Sisters and the AMA to establish themselves in Barrio Obrero permanently instead of just going there for relief activities on scheduled days. At the request of some Assumption alumnae who were concerned with the plight of the displaced families, and with the support of the AMA chapter of Iloilo Assumption, the Barrio Obrero foundation started under the initiatives of Sister Maria Inmaculada. The government donated a two-hectare lot where a school building with six classrooms was constructed. The necessary funding was raised by the AMA, through solicitations of donations and from earnings from the showing of the movie "A Man For All Seasons."

The first building was blessed in February 1968, with Archbishop Jose Maria Cuenco as officiant. By July of the same year, the school opened with an enrolment of 200 boys and girls between the ages of five and six years. In August, the first Community of Sisters arrived. They were Sister Edith Marie Cortez, Sister Maria Olga, Sister M. Celsa Empestan and Sister Filomena Maria Edullan.

This Assumption house by the sea was given the title, Stella Maris, Our lady of the Sea. Today, it carries the name Assumption Socio-Educational Center (ASEC).

BUT WHILE IT GAINED a new foundation, the Assumption lost a major institution. On June 28, 1965, Mother Rosa Maria died. Her passing was deeply mourned by the Assumption Province. *Notre Mère*, who arrived in the Philippines in 1904 as a 31-year-old French nun and who dedicated a life of loving service to a country and people she considered her own, remained a stalwart of the Religious of the Assumption Congregation during all those years. She was a true apostle of Jesus Christ and an effective instrument of

Mère Marie Eugénie in guiding and shaping each one of her hundreds of daughters, arming them for life with enduring Catholic values.

Mother M. Marthe, then Provincial Superior, gave a brief and concise summation of Mother Rosa Maria's legacy to Assumption Philippines:

A long religious life wholly given and dedicated to the service of the Church and of the Congregation, has just been fulfilled before our eyes. To us is left to walk in the footsteps of her who during 61 years was the soul of the Manila foundation and of the whole Far East Province.

Mother M. Denyse, Superior General, echoed the same sentiment when she said, "Mother Rosa Maria has incarnated the spirit of the Church, the spirit of the Assumption, the spirit of the Philippines."

The Manila Chronicle of June 29, 1965 published the following editorial:

"Notre Mère in French, Our Mother in English, Nuestra Madre in Spanish – the expression in any language is beautiful, in sound as well as sentiment. But it was more beautiful and fitting when it was used to identify Mother Rosa Maria during all the three generations that, in peace and war, she literally took by the hand thousands of young Filipino women and guided them through their ABCs to their responsibilities as adult members of a Christian community.

"Thus when she left this world for her just reward in the other, she was an institution, as famous and as enduring as the college to the founding and expansion of which she dedicated her life and her faith. She allowed neither war nor adversity nor even a well deserved fame to sway her from the mission she had imposed on herself, which was to contribute her share to the cause of education.

"She came here from her native France at the turn of the century, but her nationality soon became incidental to her vast feeling for humanity. She was firm and courageous, but she was also kind and generous.

"Above all, she was dedicated. This was why her great service was duly recognized by the country of her adoption and by the land of her birth. But her greatest satisfaction came, we imagine, from the gratitude of her of her wards whose lives became richer because of their contact with a noble and compelling personality."

PASSI, A PROGRESSIVE AGRO-INDUSTRIAL TOWN boasting of two sugar centrals, was the site of the Assumption's third foundation in Iloilo province. Located 70 kilometers from Iloilo City, the town has 34 elementary schools, one national high school, two barrio high schools, one trade school and one vocational school.

Passi also has a very active religious life. The Parish of Saint William has two resident priest and a good number of religious associations – such as the Knights of Columbus, Legion of Mary, Catholic Women's League, Mother Butler Mission Guild, *Adoration Nocturna* and *Barangay Sang Birhen* – attest to the parishioners' involvement in religious activities.

The Assumption came to Passi upon the request in 1968 of the then Auxiliary Bishop of Jaro, Msgr. Jaime Sin, to Mother M. Denyse, Superior General. Accordingly, three Sisters were sent to Passi to start the foundation in 1969. These were Sister M. Paz, Sister

Filomena Maria Edullan and Sister Magdalena Golez. The new community placed itself under the patronage of Mary Mother of Mercy and adopted as its motto *Quid retribuam Domino?* (What thanks shall I render to the Lord?). The three Sisters arrived on June 12, but because the school building was not yet finished, classes started only on July 6 with 68 children, ages five and six, for prep school. Classes were held at the ground floor of the school building. The second floor served as the Sisters' temporary residence. As the school grew to become a complete elementary school, a small residence was built for the Sisters.

Aside from teaching, the Sisters also took an active part in the social development of the people in the town and the nearby barrios. Their social development endeavors took different forms: Basic education for children designed to develop attitudes and skills which will equip them with the appropriate Christian values for life and service in the community; family development program which seeks to assist the family through the child and the child through the family by means of family education through bi-monthly parents' meeting and family counseling through personal consultations with home room teachers and principals and through home visits; human relations and management by way of seminars for youth and parents, involvement in community projects and lectures to civic organizations; and Christian formation and pastoral care through home visits with seminarians and Legionaries, bible sharing with *Barangay Sang Birhen*, formal catechetics in public school, priest-less service in barrios, liturgy renewal, Days with the Lord and other parish activities.

Cultural development was also given attention by means of a simple creative arts program which fostered participation in cultural shows on the part of the town and in setting up time and facilities for creative drama.

Improvement of the community environment constituted the physical development project. Concerted community efforts, such as the Green Revolution" garden plots for children, were encouraged.

Small attempts at economic development and the fostering of economic productivity through self-help projects were also undertaken.

All these programs served as structures to develop concern and involvement. However, at a given moment they were not all in full swing. They were, in the main, temporary answers to sporadic needs.

IN THE LATER 1960s, a group of Sisters and high school students from Assumption Manila went to Barrio Kapangpangan in the San Andres district of Manila to visit their outreach projects of a day-care center and a clinic. During one such visit, the barrio captain

gave them a letter expressing the desire of his people for a vocational school to be built in their hometown of San Simon in the province of Pampanga.

At about this time, the Mother Rosa Memorial Foundation (MRMF) was taking shape. Wishing to perpetuate the memory of Mother Rosa Maria, who had dedicated 61 years of her life educating four generations of Assumptions girls, the alumnae and friends of the Religious of the Assumption established a Foundation to serve the poor.

The barrio captain's request was presented to the foundation, deliberated upon and approved. The Foundation agreed to direct its efforts to the education of the youth of San Simon and to the community development of the barrio residents. An alumna donated a piece of land in Sta. Monica, one of the barrios of San Simon.

Located about 58 kilometers north of Manila, San Simon is predominantly an agricultural town. Cottage industries, small-scale businesses and employment in local companies are the other sources. The majority of the people are Catholics, while a small group belongs to the *Iglesia ni Kristo* sect.

Sister Milagros Dayrit, who was designated Sister-in-Charge, arrived in San Simon on June 25, 1970, with Sister Magdalena Pia Gonzaga and Sister Melania Sunga. Sister Rosalima Maria Ladrido, who was named principal, arrived the following day. These four Sisters constituted the first San Simon Community.

(The San Simon Community considers as their official Foundation Day June 27, the death anniversary of Mother Rosa Maria.) The Sisters were warmly welcomed by Mr. Batac who graciously lent them a little house. The next day, Msgr. Emilio Cinense, visited the Sisters. He authorized them to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in their little oratory and to look for a priest who would celebrate the Eucharist for them. After the Eucharist was celebrated for the first time in the Sisters' improvised oratory, visitors started calling. These visits made the Sisters feel welcomed and already a part of the community.

Mother M. Marthe, the Provincial Superior and the Sister Francis Joseph came to see the new foundation on July 2 before leaving for Europe to attend the General Chapter. They were accompanied by Sister M. Inmaculada, Sister M. Luisa Locsin and Sister Inocencia Vigilar.

Mother M. Marthe allowed the Community to recite the revised form of the Divine Office – three Psalms for Office of Readings and one Prayed for the Day. On the same day, the Eucharist was celebrated for the first time in the school by Msgr. Baula, Vicar Forane and parish priest of Apalit.

Some 60 barrio folk, the carpenters who built the school and members of the youth club eagerly joined the celebration. A social worker, Sister Feliciano of the Congregation of Saint Joseph came with some boys and girls. Two boys brought along their guitars and

accompanied the singing of hymns during the Mass which was said in Pampanga. A barrio leader led the congregation in the responses and the singing.

Heartened by the participation of the assembly, the Sisters confidently embarked on their mission in San Simon. Among the first non-government organizations (NGOs) to help in San Simon's projects for the farmers was the Philippine Rural Rehabilitation Movement founded by Dr. James Yen. Who had been introduced to San Simon by Mr. Armando Baltazar, a friend of the Assumption.

THE MOTHER ROSA MEMORIAL FOUNDATION, in legal terms, is a social development foundation organized and run by the alumnae and friends of the Assumption in Memory of Mother Rosa Maria. In reality, it is an act of love for a beloved educator whose ideals of service and social responsibility have been concretized by her alumnae and friend through this foundation.

One of the very first projects of the MRMF was the establishment of the Assumpta Technical High School (ATHS) in 1970 in Barrio Sta. Monica, San Simon, Pampanga. ATHS was set up for rural Filipino children who possess the intellectual capacity but lack the financial resources for higher education. It offers technical courses in a Catholic school environment. The technical courses include training in integrated farming (agriculture or animal husbandry), carpentry, electronics, sewing and tailoring, food trade and business distributive arts for running small businesses.

By training the head (academic development), hands (technical and vocational skills) the heart (Christian service and commitment), the school dedicates itself to the total development for the students to enable them to become committed Christians, free and capable of making responsible decisions and motivated to work towards the upliftment of their communities.

The ATHS aims to contribute towards the formation of persons who are rooted in Jesus Christ. Students are provided different outlets for the development of their gifts and talents. These included Dulaang Assumpta Teatro at Sining, a community theater for education and conscientization; a catechetical program conducted in eight public elementary schools by senior ATHS students; a nutrition education program for mothers in four barrios undertaken by senior food trade students; the Parents Continuing Education Program conducted by faculty members and resource persons and dealing with spiritual matters (recollection, retreats), political responsibilities (voter's education), psychology of the adolescent and health education; and the Community Development Worker's Program such as the *Kilos-Dasal Alay sa Kapayapaan, Kilos-Dasal Alay sa Bayan and Kinabukasan (Kilod na Nagmamalasakit sa Buhay at kalikasan)*.

BUT EVEN AN THE ASSUMPTION was reaching out to the country's rural areas, it did not neglect its apostolic duties in the cities. Malibay, a squatter area in Pasay City, has been the focus of the Assumption's social development efforts as early as 1966 when San Lorenzo high school students taught catechism at the Timoteo Paez Elementary School, about 15 minutes walks from the San Lorenzo campus.

Because of its proximity to Makati, Malibay has attracted migrant workers from the provinces who seek employment of all kinds, either at Makati's commercial centers or in the residences at its plush villages. After the big fire in Pasay in 1967, Sister Francis Joseph Scarpello was moved to do something for the increasing squatter population in Malibay. Her idea of putting up homes for the squatter families led to the creation, in 1968, of the Maryville Homes, the first project of the Maryville Urban Development Foundation (MUDF) which was set up by concerned residents of the Makati villages.

Under the original plan, Maryville Homes, a 32-unit project, would be rented out for a nominal fee to Malibay families for a period of 10 years. After 10-year period, the occupants were supposed to moved out in favor of families in greater need. The plan, however, did not work out. The families became so attached to their homes and they refused to part from them.

A new scheme was, then, drawn up. The families were allowed to buy the units over 10 years through a monthly amortization plan. MUDF's relationship with the residents of Maryville Homes now is that of a friend, ready to be the help especially along the line of continued spiritual animation.

The desire of the Maryville Homes parents for a Catholic education for their children gave rise to the establishment of San Juan Nepomuceno School. The only Catholic school in the barrio, it started its operation on August 25, 1969 with 709 kindergarten students from Malibay. A grade school level was added each year until the full elementary school was complete. The lot and building belong to the parish, but all the subsequent improvement were funded by MUDF.

Through the years, San Juan Nepomuceno School grew and number of professionals now count among its graduates. Many of them are now faculty members of the school, other works as staff members of the Maryville Community Development Center, while some are future priests who are still pursuing their studies at the seminary.

The school provided for a feeding program at the beginning because of the serious malnutrition cases among its students. In the course of time, the children's nutrition level considerably improved. Moreover, mothers, who were trained on how to prepare nutritious meals for their children, have already taken over this responsibility.

FOR THE ASSUMPTION, reaching out has not been limited to the Philippines. The Congregation's apostolic zeal has brought Sisters to their parts of the world to try to concretize Blesses Marie Eugénie's vision.

The new foundation in Osaka was already thriving. Mother Guadalupe of Assumption Malate was reassigned to head the foundation. Replacing her at Malate was Mother Natividad. Another key appointment took place in 1966: Sister Francis Joseph assumed the position of Assistant Superior of the Community in San Lorenzo, position she held for four years.

SUMOTO, A COASTAL CITY ON AWAJI ISLAND, near Kobe, is one of the most thickly populated cities in Japan, Cradle of the Japanese puppet play and famous for its bright green and yellow glazed ceramic porcelain were, Sumoto enjoys a unique place in Japanese history for being the origin of the practice of incense-burning. Japanese mythology, in addition, credits Awaji-Shima as being one of the first islands created by their ancestral deities. But to the Assumption, Sumoto is special because it was the Congregation's second insertion in Japan.

In 1956, Father Mercier, Superior of the Fathers of the Foreign Missions in Paris, was working hard at the establishment of a mission post in Sumoto, the principal city on the island of Awaji. In the same year, the directress of the day-care center situated near the church, decided to pass on the responsibility for running the center to other hands. It was a social center, dependent of the Bureau of Welfare and therefore, belonged to the government. After being refused by different congregations, Father Mercier came to see Mother Inmaculada, then Superior of Mino.

Mother Inmaculada, always concerned with the poor, took an interest in the work. She learned that part of the tuition of the students – three to six years of age – was paid by the government. The rest was paid by the child's family according to its financial capacity. The mothers brought their children early each morning and picked them in the afternoon when they came back from work.

Once again, the financial problem loomed, Mother Inmaculada met the former commander of the US navy's Seventh Fleet who was then deputy chief of naval operations. She wrote to him about the small school which had been established for children of parents who were both obliged to work to make both ends meet. The Sisters had the land for a new school, but no money.

Contribution from US naval men were solicited and the amount collected totaled \$25,019.81, the collective effort of many men and many ships. With this amount, the Sisters were able to build the school, with a small portion set aside for their residence.

They called in Nazareth and chose *Ad laudem gloriam Domini* (To the praise of His Glory) as its motto.

The Sisters continue to run this foundation which comprises a day-care center for one to two-year olds. A nursery for three-years olds, and a kindergarten for four to five-year olds. Such little children's centers afford occasion for contact with parents and other adults in the community. The Sunday mass in the parish is also another such opportunity to be with the Christian community.

EVER SINCE FATHER SHIMODA spent six year in France, in the Assumption convent in Auteuil, he had insisted that the Congregation establish a house in Takamatsu in the island of Shikoku. Finally in 1965, Mother M. Denyse acceded to his request. The priest of the dioceses, together with the bishop, took charge of constructing the Sisters; residence and next to it, a kindergarten. Today, a retreat house and a chapel have been added.

In the same year, Japan became a Region with Sister Soledad Eugenia as Regional Superior, but it was still attached to the Far East Province. In 1968, it became an autonomous Province. Considerable native vocations have enabled the Assumption in Japan to further expand: Maru-game was opened in 1971. Nishinari, an insertion among the rag-pickers of Osaka, was opened in 1989. A separate novitiate community and a distinct Juniorate community were also established in Mino in 1992.

Close ties and mutual fraternal support marked the relationship between the Philippine-Thailand Province and that of Japan through the years. In addition to the founders, several Filipino Sisters were sent to help at the start. These were Srs. Basilica Alingasa, Julita Hingco, Gerarda Erasmo, Ludovica Damilig, Beatriz Emboltorio, and later, Srs. Remedios Carmen Locsin and Mary Agnes Ledesma who helped as a school librarian during her stay there. Srs. Ludovica and Remedios Carmen have stayed behind and have been involved with Filipino migrant workers in Osaka. Sister M. Carmen Reyes joined them in 1990-91.

Japanese postulants and novices on their way to the International Novitiate would always pass by Manila and often also on their way back.

INDIAN VOCATIONS PRECEDED the actual foundation of the assumption in India. A felt need for an elderly Sister to form part of the founding Community prompted involvement of the Philippine Province in the Indian foundation. Two Filipino Sisters were privileged to participate in this missions: Srs. Cristina Augsuta Ledesma and Natividad Maria Pamintuan. Sister Cristina herself recalled the first years:

“Looking back to the beginnings of the Assumption in India, I must mention a childhood dream. When I was in grade school in 1934, Bishop Morrow, a zealous missionary in India, came to Iloilo Assumption. His talk sparked my desire to do something for the mission. When Mother Sofia, our Spanish teacher, asked our class to write an essay on “*Mi Sueno Dorado*” (My Golden Dream), I expressed my dream of someday becoming a catechist in India.

“In 1968, I was in the General Council in Paris. At one of our meetings, Mother Marie Denyse informed us that the foundation in India requested by Bishop Vayalil of Palai in Kerala was a call we must answer. She asked me to be one of the foundresses. Then and there I remembered and shared with her my childhood dream. Through her decision and my affirmative answer, the Lord somehow was bringing to a realization *mi sueño dorado*. Little did I suspect the difficulties I would have to hurdle to be a missionary in India.

“The vise was the main problem. One had to present a convincing reason to obtain it. When the time came for the founding group to leave for India, my visa had not yet been granted. The foundresses were six Sisters who had come to Paris from Kerala for their religious formation: Srs. Elsy Thomas, Mary James, Rose Joseph, Therese Immaculate, Ani Jose and Mary Stella (a novice). They had to leave on October 16 without me.

“Elsy Thomas and Marie James were the first two vocations to the Assumption from India, oriented by their brother, Father James Kattackal. He and Bishop Vayalil had met Mother Mary Denyse in Rome during the Vatican Council II. He had told her about the two Sisters who wanted to join a religious congregation. Encouraged by the Mother General, he sent Aly Kutty and Mary Kutty to the novitiate in Auteuil. Soon other young aspirants followed suit.

“Three months before the founding group left in India, Srs. Elsy Thomas and Mary James had the joy of making their final profession on July 7, 1968. Meanwhile, I spent two months taking an intensive course at Alliance Francaise. I decided that to teach French at Alphonsa College in Palai would be a convincing reason for obtaining a visa to India. Waiting for the visa, however, was indeed an experience of patience and utter trust in the Lord.

“The six foundresses were warmly welcomed by Bishop Vayalil, Fr. Thomas Purayido, his secretary, Fr. Matthew Maddathi Kunnel, a very good friend of Mother M. Denyse, and by their families. Helped by Fr. Thomas, they found a small house on a hill, shaded by tall rubber trees, and rented it for 50 rupees a month. It was the dwelling God chose for the beginnings of the Assumption in India, enabling up to live the poverty of Nazareth.

“Toward the end of January 1969, the Embassy of India granted me a tourist visa. It was good to be at last with our founding Community. The Sisters introduced me to our bishop and priest friends who had taken care of the little flock and had facilitated our

initial efforts for the construction of a hostel for girls. This was the apostolate which the bishop had requested the Assumption to undertake.

"I was glad to find the Sisters well and already organized in Community, living an austere, simple life. Rising was at 4:30a.m., Mass at 5 a.m. in the nearby chapel of the Apostolic Carmelites who run Alphonsa College. Occasionally, some of our priest friends would come to celebrate the Eucharist in our tiny chapel. Centered on the Eucharistic presence of Jesus, we built a community with a regular prayer schedule, attending to our daily household chores, enjoying each other's company as we shared our experience with neighbors and construction workers, our adventures with rats during the night, or with a mother hen who insisted on being a lodger under my bed.

"Sister Elsy Thomas gave us glimpses of life in a school where she took handicraft courses. We journeyed with Srs. Rosa Joseph and Therese Immaculate as they prepared for their final profession. The first Assumption profession in India was held on April 7, 1969.

"Since my tourist visa expired at the end of April, I flew to the Philippines with the intention of obtaining a reentry visa. Before I could leave Bombay, the Air France agent almost made me miss my flight, simply because the police in Kerela had approved my papers but had forgotten to affix their clearance stamp. He took me to the police headquarters in Bombay, very far from the airport. Touched by my tearful plea for consideration, the chief of police stamped my papers. We had to rush back to the airport. With frenzied speed, the taxi driver zigzagged through the maze of traffic, ignoring stop signal and got us to the airport barely 10 minutes before take-off.

"It was indeed a great joy for me to return to our dear Philippines and my loved ones. I was able to reenter India with a tourist visa on July 5, 1969, bringing with me beautiful memories of my two months in the Philippines. My high school Class '41 classmates gave me a warm sendoff and gifted me with a lovely tabernacle for our chapel in Palai.

"Upon arrival, I had the joy of finding an additional member to our Community; Sister Alice Augustine had arrived from Paris during my absence. Some Sisters were already taking courses in Alphonsa College. Within the next few weeks, more Sisters came from Paris. Soon it was time for Sister Agnes Jacob's profession of final vows.

"A few days before the ceremony on July 25, Palai was flooded due to heavy rains; the river was swollen and overflowed. Guided by flashlights, we started climbing the hills behind the house at 6:30 p.m. Following the long circuitous trail through the rubber trees, we arrived at Nellyiani Convent safely after two hours.

"During the night, the rain gradually subsided and at dawn we welcomed the soft glow of the sun. It grew brighter when the Eucharistic celebration started at 8:30a.m. on the feast day of St. James. Gratitude filled our hearts as we shared in the joy of Sister Agnes Jacob.

“Before the expiration of my tourist visa, I applied for an extension. The government allowed me to stay for more months, until early December. Meanwhile, construction work at the hostel was progressing. By November 27, we were able to move into the first completed wing and on November 30, we had the joy of welcoming Mother Natividad Maria who came to replace me in the Community.

"Arriving in Paris early in December, I resumed work with the General Council to prepare for the 1970 General Chapter to be held from August to October. Mother H  l  ne Marie was elected Superior General to succeed Mother Marie Denyse. After the General Chapter, Mother Hel  n   Marie decided to send me back to India. Hoping to get a visa more easily in Rome. I went there and waited for a month before obtaining a tourist visa. The Superior General of the Apostolic Carmelites in India had assured us that once I got there she would help me to get a visa of longer duration. Back in Palai by mid-December 1970, I found the Community already well installed in the right wing intended for us. Srs. Rose Joseph, Therese Immaculate and Agnes Jacob had left for the Philippines to take the college courses in Iloilo.

“In January 1971, Mother Hélène Marie undertook her first round of visits to the Provinces of the Congregation. After visiting the Philippines, she was scheduled to arrive in India by mid-February. But in Palai, we received no information as to the exact date of her arrival. We only received a telegram from the Air France office instructing me to meet Mother Hélène in Bombay.

“As the domestic airline was on strike, I went to Cochin, a city two hours by but from Palai, where I could take the train. I spent the 1,000 mile ride sitting for two days and and two nights in a very crowded third class compartment with no space for stretching oneself.

“Arriving in Bombay, I proceeded to the airport to inquire about the schedule of arrivals from the Far East. A plane was coming in only at 1a.m. I had no idea where I could find lodging, At the counter, I met Sister M. Carmel, SSPS, who kindly offered to take me to their convent at the Holy Spirit Hospital. How grateful I was for her kindness!

"After supper, I decided to return to the airport and wait for the 1a.m. plane. It did not bring Mother H  l  ne. It was still dark at 5a.m. when a taxi stopped at the airport driveway and I stepped into it. Great was my surprise and fright to discover a male occupant beside the driver. As soon as we got to the lighted corner of a street in front of a church, I got out of the taxi and rushed to the church. Relieved and thankful for God's protection, I waited there till it was bright and took a bus to the hospital.

“Since the arrival from the Far East were again scheduled during the night, I went to the airport after supper. The second nighty of waiting brought the same disappointment, Sister M. Carmel was very concerned when I told her my plan to try again the third night. This time she insisted on accompanying me, driving us to the airport in the convent’s car.

My joy was boundless when I finally caught sight of Mother H  l  ne. I rushed into the immigration area to embrace her but was pulled back by the guard to the waiting area.

"I will never forget that Tuesday night in February at the Bombay airport. Mother H  l  ne was surprised when I told her of my anxious waiting for her during the past two nights. Manila Assumption had sent a telegram to Palai with the date of her arrival. However, I had already left Palai when it arrived there.

"Indian Airlines could not book us a flight to Kerala the next day as the strike was still going on. The only alternative was the two-day train trip to Cochin. Mother H    ne's scheduled departure for Paris on Friday did not allow for the train trip and the much awaited visit to Palai was given up. I went back to Palai with a heavy heart a week later when the air flights resumed. As I approached the house, the Community guessed something was wrong. With subdued emotions they listened to my story. Together we bore our pain as we accepted God's will.

"During the three days when Mother H  l  ne and I were together at the hospital awaiting her return flight to Paris, she urged me to do everything possible to extend my stay in India. So back to Palai, I started taking Hindi lessons and applied for a one-year visa as a student of Hindi. Mother Natividad also took steps to prolong her stay. She travelled by train for five days to New Delhi and appealed to the Philippine embassy to recommend her request to the Indian government. Her faith and her hardships, and the long months of waiting, bore fruit as she was granted a one-year visa.

“In community, we were edified by her courageous effort to obtain the needed materials for the construction at reasonable rates. Accompanied by Sister Elsy Thomas, she would go on a two-hour bus ride to Cochin to buy the materials. Her friendly contacts with the workers endeared her to them. Not knowing the Malayalam language she communicated with her heart and her smile.

“Toward the end of September 1971, we had the great joy of welcoming Sister Thérèse de Marie Immaculee, a General Councilor, for the first canonical visit to the foundation. We had so much to share with her about the beginnings of the Assumption in India. The three floors of the hostel were almost finished and some young college girls had already come as boarders. We showed her the first little home of the Community.

“Shortly before Sister Therese’s return to Paris, I received notice from Indian government refusing my request for visa extension. I had to leave the country by the first week of November, God knew best in bringing my golden dream to an end. He would carry on His work through the Assumption India.

Mother Natividad stayed in until the middle of 1972 after which she was replaced by Sister Katherine Mary, an American who had been a missionary in the Philippines since 1957 and still is. India is now full-fledged Province with several communities of Sisters in different parts of the country.

THE ASSUMPTION PROVINCE OF NORTHWEST AFRICA has hosted four Sisters from the Philippines: Srs. Josefa Margarita Derayunan, M. Isabel Villacarlos, M. Bernarda Golez and Stella Maria Sanz. The Province of Northwest Africa is made up of three countries, each very different from the other.

Cote d'Ivoire with 12 million inhabitants, of which three million are foreigners, is the largest. The massive presence of immigrants from Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger attests to its great economic potentials, especially in the field of agriculture. Cote d'Ivoire is a major producer of cocoa and coffee. Its capital, Abidjan, is referred to as the "Little Paris." It is the real gateway to Western Africa. Twelve percent of the people are Catholic, 30% to 40% are Muslims, and the remaining 50%-60% believe in an animist or traditional religion.

Burkina Faso, the second member of the Province, is the "Country of the Savane." It is one of the poorest countries in the world. It has very few natural resources. About a million of its 8.5 million inhabitants are out of the country, compelled to seek employment at Cote d'Ivoire where cheap labor is in great demand. However, the Church gives witness to full growth; there are many signs of vitality, pastoral dynamism and a responsible laity. There are many priestly and religious vocations. The Catholics constitutes 10% of the population, the Muslims about 30% to 40%, while 50% to 60% subscribe to an animist or traditional religion.

The third country of the Northwest African Province is Niger. The Assumption has been present in this desert country since 1966. The small communities of Tchirozerine and Zinder, although in the midst of a Muslim country, evangelize through their witnessing of Faith in the unique God dialogues with other religious. Of the 7.5 million inhabitants, 95% are Muslim; only 0.02% are Catholics.

Sister M. Bernarda Golez, who has been in this African Province for the past 21 years, wrote her story.

"We seek to incarnate ourselves in the midst of these people with their diverse cultures. Each Community is aware of the originality of its mission, to live a particular experience. We try to look for the apostolic thrust of the diocese and maintain a strong attachment with the local Church. We are sent to a concrete people in a concrete milieu; therefore, it is urgent to know the milieu and the language spoken.

"The Sisters are involved in direct evangelization through catechesis, formation of catechists and of basic Christian communities, animation of liturgical celebrations, schools, integral human development through literacy programs, promotion of women and others.

"The Africans are a very loving people, long-suffering and patient. During the planting season, the women can be seen working the whole day in the fields, bending and tilling the soil with their hoes, some of them with their babies in their backs, never

complaining always smiling. In the hospitals or in the railroad stations, they patiently wait for hours for the doctors or the trains to arrive. When there is a delay, they do not even bother to ask for the time of arrival; they just wait patiently. No matter how poor they may be, they always welcome visitors and will share the very best they have with them.

“The current belief is that we go on missions to give. We do give, but in reality, we receive a hundred-fold in exchange. I can never thank the Lord for having called me to work in His African vineyard. May He continue calling, the ‘The harvest is great but the laborers are few.’ We ask the Lord of the harvest to send more laborers to His vineyard. Father, may Your Kingdom come.”

Sister M. Isabel Villacarlos, who also spent 21 years in the Province of North West Africa, has been struck by the African’s sense of solidarity, especially in hard times such as the 15-year drought they went through. She talked of her observations:

“Family members would take turns eating, and very often grand-parents would give their food to the younger members, saying they have lived long enough and so were ready to die. The value of the person is paramount so that one is always fully present to the other. They have a very strong sense of the sacred and perceive the Divine with ease everywhere, especially in nature. The African experience has taught me to let go of so many personal securities, of accepting different lifestyle in an international community, and of loving all peoples, regardless of language, appearance, customs and beliefs. I am very grateful for my 21 years of missionary life in Africa.”

Sister Josefa Margarita Derayunan, who proceeded to Sweden, also spent a few years in Daloa, Northwest Africa. She had just made her perpetual vows, and upon arrival in the mission said, “ I had my share of culture shock considering the drastic change from seven years of early religious formation and enclosure in the convent to the open environment of the missions. However, Daloa played big role in opening my inner eye to the invisible.”

THE 1960s, ENDED WITH UNREST swelling in the hearts of men and women across the continents, young and old, laymen and clergy, students, professionals, tillers of the soil. A new spirit was struggling to break loose.

When the Second Vatican Council opened the windows of the Church through the *aggiornamento* of Pope John XXIII, the Assumption Congregation “reviewed their priorities to discover what it was the people of God needed from them.” A General Chapter was called in 1970. Mother Hélène Marie was elected Superior General of the Congregation. Reassessments and reassignments were part of the agenda. Immediately, they embodied their response in a new Rule of Life, a result on intense collective prayer and thought and a steadfast commitment to profoundly unite their Communities in the “liberty of the Spirit.”

In the words of Mother H       Marie, "This was perhaps the most demanding insight to come out of the chapter: It is not by a set of rules that we are to live, but according to the prompting of love, in response to each day's needs. Living in the liberty of the Spirit, with fewer formal obligation, we have to be more generous than before. Since, if we are attentive to Christ, we shall be continually dislodged from the complacency of a familiar routine."

She further stressed that the work of the Assumption, wherever its Communities may be found, is education. "In the past, this meant school-teaching. Nowadays there is greater awareness of the potential benefits of education, which is also thought of as continuing beyond school. This is why, to promote the development of the whole human person, we are working in so many different ways: with children, young people and adults; with those whose poverty is the emptiness of their lives in the midst of plenty; and those whose wealth is poverty of hearts."

Father Ernesto Javier, S.J., observed: "What strikes those who have followed the life of the Assumption Congregation is how far ahead of the rest of the Church they actually were. For them, familiar phrases like 'promotion of justice,' 'preferential option for the poor,' 'genuine liberation,' 'renewal' – all these were already part of their legacy from their Foundress who more than a century ago already saw very clearly the social implication of the Gospel."

In the same 1970 General Chapter, a milestone for the Philippine Province was the appointment of its first Filipino Provincial Superior – Mother Maria Angela Ansaldo, it was a direct response to the *aggiornamento*. This was inculturation concretized. This was God's kagandahang-loob at work. Other reassignments included: Mother Marie Marthe, who continued as Superior of the San Lorenzo Community; and Mother Loreto Eugenia Mapa, designated Novice Mistress.

It was indeed very timely to have a Filipino heading the Philippine Province because of the critical years and the crises that would have to be tackled in the years to come.

IN October 1970, Pope Paul VI visited the Philippines, the first Sovereign Pontiff to come to the country.

Barely a year in office, Mother H       Marie came to visit Assumption Philippines, arriving on February 5, 1971. Those were joy-filled days. Little did the Sisters guess that the forthcoming years would be tumultuous.

Into the Crucible

1972 -1985

*"I believe that God wants to create
by the law of the Gospel and the Redemptive
action of Christ a society where no man will be oppressed
by another, and the only suffering one will have to
endure will be those that come
from natural calamities."
-Blessed Marie Eugénie*

IN A DECADE that startled the world with a clamor for freedom – freedom of the spirit, political freedom, freedom from injustice and poverty freedom to explore the limits of the universe – a spiritual holocaust was about to begin. In the Philippines, the decade of the 1970s was an era of turmoil.

September 21, 1972 was a black day for democracy in the Philippines. On this day, President Ferdinand E. Marcos, invoking a provision in the 1935 Constitution, declared martial law and installed a virtual dictatorship in the country – with himself at the helm. Claiming that the Republic was seriously threatened by an imminent Communist rebellion, Marcos padlocked media offices, thus, effectively muzzling what was previously the freest press in Asia; abolished the bicameral Congress to pave the way for the creation of a subservient *Batasang Pambansa* (National Assembly); and ordered the arrest and subsequent imprisonment of opposition leaders, among them Senator Benigno S. Aquino Jr., Senator Jose W. Diokno and Joaquin “Chino” P. Roces, the publisher of *The Manila Times*, then the most widely read newspaper in the country.

Marcos insisted that the declared martial law to save the Philippines from the growing Communist threat. In fact, the September declaration was precipitated by a mock ambush on then Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile by members of the New People’s Army (NPA), the military arm of the Community Party of the Philippines. Enrile, needless to say, survived the ambush.

(It is perhaps poetic justice that years later, Enrile would figure in a military mutiny that would lead to the toppling of the Marcos government in February 1986.)

But whether or not the Communist threat was indeed real, it could not be denied that by declaring martial law and making himself a dictator for all intents and purposes, Marcos succeeded in holding on to power well beyond the Constitutionally allotted two terms. Marcos, vowing to “Make this country great again,” was first elected President in 1965. He defeated Sergio Osmeña Jr., son of a former Vice President, in the 1969 polls to become the first Philippine Chief Executive to be reelected. Under the 1935 Constitution, Marcos, already a two-term, could no longer run in the 1973 election. After declaring

martial law, Marcos skirted this legal impediment through the simple expedience of abolishing the 1935 Charters and replacing it with the 1971 Constitution that made him President and Prime Minister at the same time.

The early 1970s was truly a period of unrest in the country. Student activism reached a peak during the so-called First Quarter Storm – a period from the late 1960s to just before the declaration of martial rule – when demonstrations that became increasingly violent paralyzed Metro Manila and other urban centers almost daily. The restiveness was caused partly by Marcos' growing authoritarianism and partly by the rise of the Communist Party of the Philippines whose ideology and strategies attracted the youth who clamored for drastic change in the socio-political system. The situation worsened as the martial rule of Marcos turned increasingly despotic.

FOR THE PHILIPPINE CHURCH, the 1970s was likewise a turbulent period. Priests and nuns, who sincerely believed they were ordained to give their lives "for the liberation of the people, to have nothing to give everything," began clamoring for reforms within the Church itself. They wanted the Church to take a role active in the social and political developments sweeping the country. This trend towards greater social and political commitments on the part of the Church gave birth to progressive and radical groups among the Religious.

Father Antonio B. Lambino, S.J., a professor of moral and pastoral theology at the Ateneo de Manila University's Loyola School of Theology, explained why many Religious were attracted to the Left:

"One very important reason is a blending between the preference for the poor, and very problematic social situation we have today. The preference for the poor is one of the themes that comes out clearly in the Bible. God is partial to the poor, to the marginalized, to the oppressed. That was the tradition of the prophets, that was how Jesus spoke, acted, made decisions, lived, suffered, died. The most glorious moments of Church history were when she was found to be clearly on the side of the poor.

"Given that, and the social situation we have where there is injustice, discrimination and inequality – and with the Marxist's or even just the plain revolutionary's burning desire to change society, to orient in more towards the needs of the poor – you can see how these two facts can be put together in the mind of the revolutionary. He or she experiences a renewal of faith from the ideological contribution and you will hear revolutionaries saying that they never had realized the meaning of their faith until they took up the revolutionary commitment.

"...There are systems and institutions that prevent society, including the Church, from being truly and radically on the side of the poor. No matter how much the Church

preached and tries to serve the poor, within the structures of capitalism, her action become just palliatives. Unless these structures and institutions are overturned, the problem of oppression and injustice will remain. That is why (the revolutionaries) see it as an imperative of faith that they take a revolutionary stance towards the status quo.”

During the martial law years, the Marcos dictatorship charged 93 priests, nuns and ministers – 67 Filipinos and 26 foreigners – for fighting against the government. Many Religious joined the Communist Party of the Philippines and even its military arm, the NPA. Not surprisingly, a few gave up their lives fighting for the reform the earnestly believed in.

Of those who decided to take up arms against the government, perhaps the most widely known is Conrado Balweg. Ordained a priest of the Divine World Order, he served as an NPA spokesman for many years. In 1979, he went underground to elude arrest by Marcos troops. Together with a few hundred guerillas from the Cordillera region, he later separated from the CCP-NPA, and formed the Cordillera People’s Liberation Army (CPLA).

Balweg expounded on the collaboration between the radical elements within the Church and the Communist Party of the Philippines: “The Church had been used throughout history. During martial law, the Marcos government found an ally in the Church. Many in the hierarchy agreed with the imposition of martial rule and took quoted from the Bible about ‘obedience to rulers.’ Few priest really talked against the dictatorship. The Church is the cultural expression of the political power. Its other identity is that of a business corporation. The Communist Party of the Philippines, on the other hand, found many allies within the Church, While the (the communists) were backstage, they put the Church up front. The Church effectively forwarded the party objectives. In many aspects of Philippines social life, the Church has broken through to the people.” Balweg said the CPP wanted to get individuals in the Church involved in its struggle. He maintained, however, that there was a conscious effort on the part of the Party to destroy the Church which it views as “an enemy od the people.” He said, “The CCP hits the Church for being feudal, The Church is better the the Party because of human factor. The CCP has no spirit, no life – it is all material. The Church is everlasting, while the deified Party temporary.”

But while admitting that the Church id better than the Party, Balweg believes it should do more. He said: “The Church is so sacramental, it doesn’t express the progressive aspirations of the people. The Church should be militant – in active defense of the oppressed. It is in dogma. We must recognize the dignity of every individual. The Church does is out of mercy – when it is its responsibility. Those involved in liberation are isolated from the mainstream of the institution. This separation polarized others from the mainstream, causing a struggle with the Church.”

This polarization and this struggle did not spare the Assumption. Neither the school gates nor the convent doors could keep away the virus of activism. Some of the students conducted sporadic rallies within the Assumption campus. Others joined the peers from other schools to stage street demonstrations.

Clearly, the youth were frustrated and disillusioned with the times. Their dreams of a “Camelot” could not materialize in an atmosphere distrust, oppression, fear. They could not visualize a future where they could fit in. They were confused about the emerging value system that had no place for honesty, integrity and respect for the dignity of man. They were shocked and angered by the complacency of their elders.

Within the confines of the Community, a parallel turbulence was taking place in the hearts and minds of a handful of young Sisters. Highly intelligent, idealistic and consumed by a commitment to transform a society plagued by suffering and injustice, they were also vulnerable. They readily identified and cooperated with their counterparts from other religious organizations with whom they shared the same ideologies. Their own questionings, fired by ideas and concepts of Leftist proponents globally, caused them confusion, pain and deep spiritual and emotional scars.

A great effort was exerted towards patient dialogue to clarify real issue from pseudo issues. But the communication process at the time was still defective both ways. Thus, tension and discontent peaked to a point of these Sisters’ active involvement in subversive activities, endangering their own lives and the Community to which they still belonged at the time. The rest of the Community intensified their prayer life together, focusing on Christ as they continued with their vision and mission, and as they “steadily walked in the light of Vatican II, step by step with the Church’s directives, in constant dialogue with its prophetic voices.”

This very human experience in the life of the Assumption Philippine-Thailand Province came at a time when other equally pressing problems simultaneously confronted the Institution along with diverse changes in orientation, outlook, target-mission, lifestyle. It awakened the Province to a realistic and objective examination of its “strength and weaknesses, its givens and limitations: Tremendous responsibilities will have to be confronted in the coming years and only truly-committed, radically-converted Religious women will be able to assure them the truth, We will have to be adults, free from psychological blocks and unadmitted effective needs, so we can be ‘open to God in order to be open to the world.’”

THE FIRST FILIPINO PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR of Assumption Philippines, Mother Maria Angela Ansaldo, who was appointed in 1970, assumed her leadership position at a crucial time, just a few years before the onset of martial law. External and internal problems beset the Assumption Community in the Philippines, Mother Maria Angela had to steer her ship through the storm continually feeling her way through, groping at very step of her journey in darkness. While planning for the Institution was imperative, she had to adopt a flexible approach to the volatile socio-political situation, Fortunately, Filipinos are known to be resilient race.

Critical collaboration was the order of the day. The Sisters shared the nation's life on uncertainly, insecurity, sufferings, courage and unfailing hope. Intense prayer for divine discernment was experienced. This prompted the Community to be always alert for a serious analysis and evaluation of prevailing conditions coupled with a strong determination not to be carried away by pressure groups, trusting fully to God's abiding power and care. There were moments of serious and prayerful study of socio-political developments at home and abroad in the light of the teaching of the Church.

God must have chosen Mother Maria Angela to lead her Community during those trying times because of the characteristic forthrightness, maturity and presence of mind. Her spiritual realism provided her the ability to see events clearly and objectivity. These were several options for the Assumption at the time: one was to halt all activities until the setting was safe; another was to simply continue what was tried and tested; there was also the option to proceed with one's plans and programs and continue innovating and expanding apostolic involvement despite the dangers posed by an unstable political future.

The spirit of the Assumption is dynamic and thus the Sisters could never be paralyzed by fear and inaction. Mère Marie Eugénie concept of asceticism must have influenced the Sisters at this juncture of their life as a cohesive Community: "Asceticism has one clear purpose and that is to render the spirit supple and ready to do God's will – today we would say to enable the redeeming power of the Cross to penetrate the deepest center of one's being and liberate the dynamism of the Spirit... it is a means of emptying oneself for the influx of the divine life such that nothing must be allowed to remain within that world hinder the free action of Christ."

Mother Maria Angela's administration coincided with those tumultuous years, marked by upheavals and uprootings.

A major uprooting occurred early in the decade. Over the years, drastic changes had taken place in the Malate area where Manila Assumption was located. From being one of the most upscale residential district of Manila, because of its proximity to Manila bay, Malate had become a tourist area; worse, it was rapidly earning a reputation as a red light district. It was certainly no longer the appropriate site for a school for young Catholic girls. The question of moving out of Malate, the Assumption's home since 1895, began to be studied and prayed over. Finally, in March 1973, the decision to sell the property and to transfer the school to a more suitable locale was made. While the San Lorenzo campus in Makati could accommodate some of the Malate students, it soon become evident that not all could be taken in. Clearly, a larger site was necessary, particularly for the growing elementary school. For this purpose, a property in Antipolo, a town bordering the eastern edge of Metro Manila, was purchased.

To most Filipino, Antipolo means Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage whose centuries-old statue is enshrined in the town church. This statue, the beloved object of

many a religious pilgrimage traditionally held in the month of May, accompanied the Manila galleons on their voyages to and from Acapulco, Mexico, during the first two centuries of Spanish colonial rule. Antipolo evoked memories of picnics at the famous *Hinulugang Taktak* water fall and other May festivities of yesteryears when religious pilgrimages always ended up in social gatherings graced by young women in colorful *balintawak* (a Filipino dress) and young men in elegant *barong tagalog* (a special Filipino man's shirt with long sleeves). Antipolo conjures up images of steaming *puto*, *cuchinta*, *bibingka* (delicious Filipino rice cakes) and other natives delicacies, golden mangoes and crisp cashew nuts, as well as the *hamaka*, a large hammock borne in the shoulders of two men which was once the fashionable way of going around the town. It is at the heart of Antipolo, a town steeped in tradition, that the Assumption decided to put a modern grade school.

Although construction started in 1973, it took almost a year before the facilities for the basic needs of the school could be readied. "It takes real faith to believe a school will be standing here in a year's time," remarked one Sister as she stood on the hilly site at the start of construction. Designed specifically for children, classrooms were grouped on clusters of four, open to one another to create a feeling of freedom and relatedness.

The Sisters were allowed to remain in the Malate property for another year after the purchase of the Antipolo site while construction was going on. Thus, it was still from Malate that dear Mother M. Veronique went home to the Father.

IMMORTALIZED IN THE HEARTS of all who knew her, the soft spoken Provincial of the Philippine-Thailand Province fulfilled her own assumption into Heaven on July 31, 1973. Mother Marie Marthe was the epitome of gentleness. Her smile always radiated an inner glow. Assumption students of all ages, her own Sisters in the Community and a great number of friends of the School have been touched by the tender love she had for everyone that she never quite ran out of. The little children would flock around her when they saw her in corridors or when she graced their school programs. In every encounter she was genuinely interested in the other person. Such was her impact on those around her.

This was how her leadership of the Province and of the San Lorenzo Community was characterized. This is how she will always be remembered by her students and the alumnae to whom she has bequeathed a legacy of strength born of love, gentleness and kindness that all emanated from Jesus Christ.

In May 1974, the Community assigned to Antipolo moved in, occupying the living quarters formerly used by the construction supervisor. This building still serves as the Sisters' home today, although it has since been enlarged and furnished with better facilities. At the time of the transfer Sister M. Carolina Nieva was in Paris, attending a

Superior's conference; thus, Sister Remedios Carmen Locsin was named Sister-in-Charge of the Community.

School year 1974-1975 marked the formal closing of the Assumption in Malate even as it marked the start of Antipolo Assumption. On September 29, 1974, the Antipolo grade school was blessed. Classes started on the same day, although construction still continued for some time. Right from the beginning, the Sisters found joy and inspiration in their new home. Writing during those pioneering days, one Sister said:

"Up here on the hills, life is simple. So much of nature around us just blends with and shapes the life we live. Having grade schoolers all over the place adds to the quality of lightness and joy. Children do have a way letting the Child in you come out.

"In a set-up where everything is still on the road to completion, Saint Francis' hymn 'Build It Slowly and Surely' is literally lived. It likewise helps keep ones' gaze forward-looking and makes one appreciate each feature of the plan as it unfolds. This December, it was with thanksgiving that we welcomed electric power into the site. No more noisy generator drumming on one's head and ears; no more getting ready each morning by the flickering light of candle. At the moment, one sees bulldozers and graders all around as the development of the subdivision around the school goes on. Soon, the roofless Multi-Purpose Building will get her much-awaited headgear, while the Administration Building is still in its skeletal stage."

But even while the building were still being completed, the grade school was already operating in full swing, Another Sister wrote:

"We're constantly kept our toes by the one-thousand-and-one activities that make a grade school: from Pilipino Week to United Nations Day, to the weekend camping of troop after troop of Girl Scouts and section after section of retreats. After each intensely-lived day, we wave off the last school bus at 3:45p.m. and gratefully enter into the stillness that settles in. Each Sister simply drinks in her time of presence before Our Eucharistic Lord. This year of Mother Marie Eugénié's beatification, the Mother Marie Eugénié Club was born, made up of members ranging in age from six-year-old first graders to seventh grade girls in their teens, all wishing to live out more intensely the spirit of Mother Marie Eugénié. Each Saturday, a group of them go to Tejeros, Sta. Ana to handle floating nursery classes for the squatter children."

The sprawling hilly terrain overlooking the city, the wide open spaces, shady lanes and lush greenery of the new site make it conducive for family gatherings. Hence the start of what is now as Antipolo Assumption tradition – Assumption Family Day. On this day, the Family Council prepares a whole-day program for every member of the family – including the nursemaids and drivers who usually accompany the school children to school. There are game booths, cartoons, puppet and magic shows, and even a variety show.

For the first Assumption Family Day, the variety show's finale had the drivers and *yayas* dance the *Singkil*. (During the initial years of the school, to save gas, the drivers as well as the nurse maids remained the whole day in school.) While the dancing was going on, one parent, obviously impressed, was over heard asking, "But where did the School get those professional male dancers?"

Sister Magdalena Pia Gonzaga was the moving spirit behind the program to involve the drivers and *yayas* in school activities. On one occasion, she together with father Arguelles, spent a day encounter with them and helped unravel their personal problems by making them aware of their responsibilities to themselves, to others, to Gods. *Pananagutan* was the theme of the day. Sisters, teachers and students offered *palancas* for the drivers and *yayas* and the ended in deep joy for these often-taken-for-granted people. Beautiful gift of this Christian community experience was the baptism of a driver

and his four-year-old son at the Church of Antipolo. Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage must have looked down with love as Mother Church welcomed home her travel-weary son.

Blessed with an ideal setting for quiet contemplation and communion with God's creation, evoking wonder, appreciation and reverence for all things given the gift of life, and in response to the call for renewal and refoundation, the Antipolo Community has committed to transform itself into a PACEM Community – a Renewed Community immersed in Peace And Care for the Earth Ministry.

It endeavors to realize renewal and refoundation in a three-fold manner: *Personal transformation* through prayer and contemplative experience for one cannot hope to achieve peace and harmony with the environment and with the human community without first centering one's self on Jesus Christ, the Source of Peace, of Loving and Caring; *building community* which entails caring for the earth and caring for all men – nurturing, healing, assisting, developing not only the earth's natural resources but, most especially, her human resources; undertaking the *mission or apostolic engagement* to promote earth spirituality or reverence for nature as a way of life – fostering harmony with nature, with one another, among nations and with God.

June 26, 1983 was a significant day of the Church of Antipolo. On this date, Msgr. Protacio Gungun was installed as its first Bishop. Antipolo had been part of the Archdiocese of Manila for the 400 years. At the instance of His Eminence Jaime cardinal Sin and the Bishop Conference, the Holy See made the eastern part of Rizal into a new diocese. Antipolo has come of age. Assumption Antipolo, as a result entered a new phase of her existence.

Moved by urgency of sharing the benefits of development with those within its reach the school launched, an adult education program as launched by the school. A good number of men and women from the neighboring *sitios* come regularly every Friday afternoon. Lessons in dressmaking, cooking and the three R's are given by volunteer teachers and parents.

This adult education program has grown to become a community education program. Enrolees now number some 300, including adults, grade school children and pre-school children who come with their mothers. The number of teacher volunteers has doubled from the original 20 to more than 40. The program too has expanded to meet the people's expressed needs. Tailoring is taught by two master-cutters from the neighborhood. The school's technician teaches practical electricity. Public school graders come for language and mathematics enrichment. Pre-schoolers learn their A-B-C, play and get a supplement to their meager diet: a bowl of rice soup and bread or biscuit. Adult literacy classes are conducted on a one-to-one basis. The teachers are happy and so are their students, Meanwhile, the Sisters, teachers and students continue catechetical instruction in San Isidro Elementary School.

God has blessed the Assumption's effort as a school to reach out to the poor close to the Community. The program has become part of the grade school. To serve has become a need. A desire to live more simply has been awakened. The joy of having time and talent has been experienced. *Deo Gratias!*

In the course of time, a Center for Social Concern was also put up to help women in the neighborhood engage in livelihood activities. There they learn to do different kinds of handicraft, are kept busy, and are initiated to engage in small businesses that can contribute to the family income.

What was originally intended to serve as the Assumption Antipolo's administration offices was found too far from the classroom cluster, so the increasing demand for retreat and seminar houses gave birth to the idea of turning it into a retreat/seminar house in the 1980s. The house has since proven to be of great service to young and not-so-young groups who look for a quiet place that is not too far from Manila where they can study and reflect on current issues and developments. So great is the demand for accommodations that the facilities are always fully-booked. In this manner, it serves, in an indirect way, in promoting both the spiritual and human growth of people.

THE SCHOOL WAS NOT the only Assumption institution to undergo uprooting. The Philippine Novitiate also had to move; in fact, it transferred a number of times during the period. Because of the unstable political conditions prevailing after the declaration of martial law, Metro Manila was considered a danger zone. Thus, the Novitiate was moved to Sibalom, Antique, with Sister M. Editha Luciano as Novice Mistress. Later it was moved to Crystal cave in Baguio under the direction of Sister Eloisa Maria Hervas (now Sister Cecilia Agustina). The Sister Loretto Mapa and her novices transferred to one wing of the convent in San Lorenzo. Two years later, the Novitiate moved to Antipolo, in a tiny house partly occupied by the family of the school technician.

It was during this time that a decision to construct a Formation House was made. Construction at the Antipolo property was made possible with the help of the Province of Japan. Antipolo provided a beautiful setting for the Novitiate. It gave the novices the needed silence and space. But soon it became evident that the House was too big to be maintained by a small group. There were never enough novices to warrant such a big place. In addition, the House was some distance away from the Sisters' Formation Institute where the novices go to lessons. In Antipolo, the Novitiate depended in the school for security, light and water. It was difficult to maintain the House without a helper, a vehicle and a gardener.

Thus, the Assumption Provincial Chapter, inspired by the Spirit decided to transfer the Novitiate once more, but, this time to a locale where a simpler lifestyle could be lived. The Novitiate looked for a house they could rent. A simple house on Aliw Street in

Mandaluyong, Metro Manila was found. The matter was discerned and prayed over, and the proposed action was submitted to the General Council for approval. As soon as the permission was granted, the Novitiate moved to its new home on Aliw. It was the beginning of another kind of lifestyle for the Sisters. They were living in a house like all their neighbor in Mandaluyong, doing their own household chores such as cooking and laundering. They did away with their vehicle. The novices went to Sisters' Formation Institute or elsewhere by public transportation. The Novitiate was inserted into the parish.

Proximity to the people allowed the Sisters to be formed by their environment. The difficulty of commuting by public transportation enabled them to feel the struggles their neighbors have to go through to earn their daily bread. The small house allowed them to experience the lack of privacy and space, but this very limitation made their Community life more intense. They learned to pray with the noise from outside. The novices who resided on Aliw look back to their days there with fond memories. All confess that their experience there was a big help to their formation.

IN 1975, AN OUTSTANDING and singular event in the annals of the Assumption occurred, temporarily turning the Sisters' attention away from the routine demands of running a school apostolate. For many years, Assumption Foundation all over the world had been earnestly praying for the beautification of their Foundress, Mother Eugénié Milleret de Brou. On June 11, 1959, Mother Marie Eugénié was declared "Venerable." This meant that her virtues have been recognized and approved by the Congregation of Causes of Saints.

Following her declaration as Venerable, the cause for her beautification was formally taken up. Finally, early in 1975, Mother Hélène Marie, Superior General of the Assumption, joyfully announced her beatification which was set for February 9 that year. Assumption Philippines organized a pilgrimage for that occasion, headed by the Mother Maria Angela Ansaldo and composed of Sisters, alumnae, students and friends – totaling 120 in all – who anted to be present at the Beatification Rites which would take place at St. Peter's Basilica.

The preparations and the actual celebrations fostered intense study of and love for Marie Eugénié, especially with regard the timeliness of her social orientation to education. Aside from the Beatification Rites proper, meaningful activities were prepared at different places during the days preceding February 9. Noteworthy was the cultural presentation of the delegations from the Assumption all over the world held at the Sports Palace in the suburbs of Rome. The Philippines contribution was the "Christianization of the Philippines" in dance, choreographed by Leonor O. Goquinco. It received a standing ovation, especially at the moments when the Cross was brought in to the music of the *Marcha Real*. The Spanish delegation, one of the biggest, led the frenzied applause.

Dawn of February 9 found all Assumption pilgrims at the door of the St. Peter's, anxiously waiting for it to open for the Beatification Rites scheduled at 9 a.m. The most moving moment occurred when the curtain over the *Glory of Bernini* was drawn and revealed the lifesize portrait of Marie Eugénié, now declared "Blessed" by His Holiness Paul VI, for the pilgrims and for the whole world pay homage to.

The Beatification Rites were followed by days of reunion and meeting among Assumption Sisters from the different Province of the Congregation. Vatican City overflowed with the purple habit; the fraternal feeling of oneness exuded everywhere. Truly, it was a joyful experience to be in Rome at the time.

The Sister in the Philippines, wherever they were, held their own local celebration of February 9. The return of the pilgrims was the occasion for a Solemn Eucharist celebration at the Manila Cathedral on March 9, 1975 which was attended by delegation from the different Assumption Communities in the Philippines, alumnae, lay collaborators, friends and students. The next day, March 10, another reunion was held to celebrate Blessed Marie Eugénié's first official feast day.

THE EARLY YEARS OF THE 1970s ushered in new orientations geared towards the evangelization of the poor. A greater awareness of the changing needs of a developing country was urgently felt. In Iloilo, there was a very evident proliferation of Catholic women's colleges: the University of San Agustin, St. Paul College of Nursing, De Paul College and two colleges of the Daughters of Charity. All this seemed to indicate that the Assumption college in Iloilo was no longer answering the apostolic need of the times. Its phasing out was studied and discerned, and the decision taken by the Provincial Council was approved by the General Council.

Iloilo Assumption has long assumed its share of reaching out to the larger mass of the people awaiting full human development both within and beyond the Philippines. San Jose Antique's foundation was largely worked out by Iloilo which also provided the personnel for its first community. The same can be said of the Barrio Obrero and Passi Foundations. Significant too was the fact that Iloilo lent India its first three Superiors. Sisters Cristina Augusta Ledesma, Natividad Pamintuan and Katherine Mary. In time, Iloilo welcomed Assumption's India Sisters who came to the country to take up further studies. These were Sisters Therese Immaculate, Rose Hoseph and Agnes Jacob. Today, all the school buildings are occupied by the pre-school with 556 boys and girls; the grade school with 1,239 students, one third of whom are boys; and the high school with 465 young girls. The school staff is made up of seven Sisters, 63 teachers, 20 auxiliary personnel and 17 custodial help. Desirous of further academic competence which would enable its graduates to meet more efficiently the demands of a technologically geared world, the high school

department sought and was granted permanent membership on the Philippine Accrediting Association of School, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU) in 1975.

The curriculum is basically that prescribed by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS). It is, however, enriched by courses in religious education, computers and social orientation activities. Through organized days of sacrifice for the benefit of the less privileged, programs are implemented towards interaction opportunities for children and people of all walks of life, immersion experience, sharing of knowledge of Jesus Christ and of useful skills.

One of the tangible effects of the education received by the Iloilo alumnae has been their establishment and maintenance of the Assumption Socio-Educational Center (ASEC) in Barrio Obrero which benefits not only elementary school children but also the adult members of their families who receive in that rapidly developing port area training in health education, decision-making and formation in the faith.

RAPID DEVELOPMENT took place simultaneously at the Assumption foundation in Baguio. The Marie Eugénie Community Center (MECC) was put up in April 1975, a few months after Blessed Marie Eugénie's beatification, with the assistance of the Christian Child Welfare Association (CCWA), a funding organization based in Tokyo. Its main objective is to help indigent children obtain an education and to provide all the members of their families opportunities for full human development into productive and constructive citizens.

The Center has helped several village communities to get on their feet. These included the communities of Pukay Village, Bakakeng, Balacbac, Crystal Cave, Marcos Highway and Asin Road. It is still helping Irisan (a depressed area in Baguio), Agupan, Bontingan, Taloy, Tabaan – involving about 300 families in all, 200 of whom have CCWA – sponsored children. The people are now engaged in livelihood activities that enable them to meet the challenges of creating a more human way of life. Evangelization goes hand in hand with human development activities, although religious affiliation is not a requisite for participation in the program. The Good News is made available to all who want to hear it.

In 1976, the Assumption's Baguio Community became involved with the San Pablo Seminary. Its involvement came about when the Northern Luzon Bishops, Inc. represented by its chairman, Msgr. William Brasseur, requested the Assumption to help in the San Pablo Seminary, the regional seminary of Northern Luzon bishops, for the formation and training of future diocesan priests of the Archdioceses of Nueva Segovia, Lingayen-Dagupan, Tuguegarao, San Fernando in La Union and Iligan, Prelatures of Bangue and Bayombong, and the Vicariate of the Mountain Province. He asked for Sisters who could be faculty members, procurators and house-mothers.

The Assumption willingly accepted to be of service to the Church in one of its most important missions: that of forming holy, generous and responsible future diocesan priests. The Sisters helped as procurators and house-mothers during the first years after which the seminary was expected to manage on its own. Teaching Sisters, however, remained in service long after initial years. Today, the seminary priests continue to provided the sisters with Mass on weekdays, and the Sisters are always ready to lend a hand in one way or another when needed, no longer on official status, but as good friends.

The Baguio Community apostolates, along many lines, call for a re-study because of recent developments of late: religious, social, economic. The stand at the crossroads; there are diverse opening and possibilities. Which ones should they pursue because they are the most urgent and within the Communities' capabilities and lifestyle? These are questions the Baguio Community has to pray over and resolve.

Along the same line, the Community also has to take a second look at Saint Martin School. Because elementary school have already been set up in most of the villages where cultural minorities reside, these minorities no longer need to look for schools for their children elsewhere. A survey made recently of Saint Martin's school population of 255 students revealed that a good percentage were lowlanders. Given the high cost of financing the school and the families' limited capacity to pay adequate tuition, and the fact that catechetical instruction is now available to public school children through the services of professional catechists, the validity of going on with Saint Martin School is another matter for discernment for the Community to undertake.

CHANGE HAVE LIKEWISE MARKED the growth of the San Lorenzo Community. Mother M. Marthe, Superior of the Community, became seriously ill in 1972. Sister Loreto Eugenia Mapa was appointed to take her place. Other changes followed soon. Sister Esperanza Maria Cu-Unjieng's health demanded her being relieved of heavy responsibilities, especially during those difficult years after the imposition of martial law in 1972. Thus, Sister M. Carmen Reyes became the President of the college and Sister Gloria Ines Jalandoni, the Provincial Econome.

The school, meanwhile continued to grow. Its population reached 1,620 students, comprising college, high school and grade school. The number of lay faculty members increased accordingly. Space was beginning to be a problem again A high school library and an audio-visual room were constructed adjoining Assumption Hall.

The early 1970s was a critical period because of martial law. The heightened restiveness of students in the college department hat to be continually tempered during those years. Dialogues were initiated by the college President, Mother M. Carmen Reyes, with student agitators as well as with their sympathizers. The matter was handled delicately bit firmly in a spirit of peace. She appealed to their sense of responsibility and

fairness as mature adults. Talks were never confrontative nor emotional. The rules violation of the rules were also discussed. The message that was put across to the studentry was clear: as adults, they were free to choose the options before them and they were responsible for their actions.

In addition to student activism, the government imposed new restrictions which were too rigid and curtailed academic freedom. This aggravated the campus situation nationwide. Nonetheless, the Assumption school went on despite many restrictions. The political-social situation brought to the fore realities already existing, but which had not till then surfaced sufficiently. Education took on a stronger social thrust in view of the blatant violations of social justice and human rights. Fields of interest and action changed as the months and years unfolded. Education towards an evangelical transformation of society loomed clear as the urgent challenge.

In the meantime, adjustments were being effected as a consequence of the sale of the Malate property. A fusion between the Malate and San Lorenzo schools was gradually carried out. While awaiting the completion of the new school plant in Antipolo, the grade school of San Lorenzo moved to Malate temporarily. The high school of Malate, on the other hand, joined that of San Lorenzo. Finally in September of the school year 1974-1975, the transfer was completed: the high school was in San Lorenzo while the grade school was in Antipolo.

The oil crisis in the late 1970s, however, would prompt many parents to request San Lorenzo to take back elementary school students while those in Antipolo asked that the school go on to high school. The clamor would continue until 1986 when San Lorenzo would open its doors again to the primary grades and Antipolo would begin its own high school. Today both school have complete elementary and high school departments.

Meanwhile, the San Lorenzo Community Apostolate continued to evolve. The General Chapter of 1970 defined the new thrust of the Congregation for the coming years: Jesus Christ brings a liberation that transforms society. This pointed to new directions for the apostolate: Education for freedom – a liberating education: Action on behalf of justice with a focus of Third World setting.

Apostolic works which were no longer in accord with the new thrust and the new directions were evaluated and gradually dropped. New calls, arising from actual need-situations were considered and responded to with discernment and discretion. Other existing works in line with the new direction were pursued and/or expanded. Accordingly, some changes were introduced both in the formal school set-up as well as in the social action and outreach activities.

Within the formal school set-up, a new organizational structure integrated lay faculty members with administrative responsibilities; parents and students were invited to share their views in the formulation of school activities. The experience was first

introduced in the high school department, then in the college department as well. Preparation for accreditation by Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU) set in motion and facilitated a thorough evaluation of the school, its purposes and objectives, faculty, instruction, library and laboratory facilities, physical plant, student services, administration and its involvement in the life of the larger community.

Social action and outreach activities are part and parcel of the total educational program, organized and carried through the Center for Social Concern in the college and the Alay Kapwa Center in the high school. Formation precedes and accompanies social concern activities and involvements. Students go through systematic conscientization modules which included actual immersion experiences revealing dehumanized living conditions, violation of human rights, social injustice graft and corruption practices. Efforts at heightening the youth's level of social awareness seem to have moved a good number of high school graduates to choose service-professions, oriented to the needs of the people. With the cooperation and assistance of sister Communities that help facilitate such social-awakening activities, the Assumption sees hope for the dawning of Blessed Marie Eugénié's vision of a society transformed by the Gospel where no one suffers from other human beings except through natural calamities and disasters.

The history of the San Lorenzo Community during the second part of the 1970s was strongly shaped by events and developments on the local as well as on the international scene. The visit of Mother Hélène Marie and Sister Clare Teresa in February 1977 influenced decisions taken regarding the school apostolate. Mobilization of Sisters towards the evangelization of the poor resulted in the creation of the Malibay Community in Pasay City, as well as the fielding of more Sisters to the rural areas.

San Lorenzo also become a *Welcome Home* for Sisters of the entire Philippine Province whenever they are in Manila. This was an added responsibility to the Community running the school. The situation called the creative adjustments and modifications. Team management involving lay collaborators in school administration was initiated in line with the movement of the Church of Vatican II towards collegiality and co-responsibility.

The more systematic sharing of responsibility with lay collaborators brought about a resurgence of hope. But the school population which had grown well above 2,000, proved too heavy to shoulder together with the responsibility of welcoming the Sisters who come to the Provincial House from the different Communities. In 1980, it was decided to split the San Lorenzo Community into two: one Cana, would be responsible for the school; the other, Emamaus, would do the welcoming in accord with traditional Filipino Assumption hospitality.

SAN LORENZO CANA COMMUNITY was born on May 25, 1980. As the school community, the Cana Sisters are the waiters commissioned to fill the water jars with water and to fill them up to the brim. Then Jesus will come and transform the water into wine. Cana will be repeated again and again. To prepare themselves to effectively fulfill their mission, the Cana Community seeks to enter more fully into the life of the people they serve through varied activities: exposure to the realities of Subic, Olongapo and Morong Refugee Camps; immersion among barrio people in Baguio and the Visayas; acculturation and inculturation experiences, like cock-raising, the Punta Sta. Ana indigenized liturgy, the Aguinaldo masses in Las Piñas, the Export Processing Zone in Baguio; participation in rallies; availing of all forms of media – television, radio, nationalist plays, documentary, video cassette recorders, newspapers, magazines, etc; inter-action and communication with faculty, staff, students, parents, friends, campus personnel; visits to provincial communities in Antique, Lanao Cagayan de Oro, Cebu.

The busy life in the school campus and its varied demands call, more the ever, to living a life of prayer and discernment. The last is fostered through meetings on all levels and with the different sectors in the campus – Board of Trustees, commissions, committees, associations of all kinds – to be able to discover the Spirit's action and to enable the Community to act accordingly.

The administration of the college and high school is Cana's priority. Aside from the pursuit of academic excellence to the extent possible, each department gives special attention to the social education of the young. The center of Social Concern is the college's main arm for this, while the Alay Kapwa office is that of the high school. These organizations concretize Mother Marie Eugénie's educational principle of enlightening the mind as well as the heart. In the same measure, they stress that intellectual development should always be directed to service, never for oneself and vanity.

Visits from Assumption schools abroad are occasions for a lively exchange and sharing of educational experiences, Japanese professors and students particularly appreciate the climate of faith that prevails in the daily life in Assumption Philippines and are led to reflect seriously on this dimension of life. The Filipino's ease and simplicity, as well as their resiliency on meeting changing situation also attract them. Meanwhile, French visitors and friends are amazed at how Mother Marie Eugénie's charism – especially her concern for the poor – has taken root in the life of the Philippines alumnae, the lay collaborators and the students. They have organized these genuine efforts to share the gifts of development with them.

Both the college and high school participate in the activities of the local Church. Both are active in the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines, Council of the Laity in the Philippines, Veritas and lately, the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting.

At the start, the Cana Community shared the Sisters' residence of San Lorenzo, but in 1985, a house with its own oratory for the school community was constructed. College students can stop in during the day. They join Emmaus Community or daily Mass in the main chapel.

THE SAN LORENZO EMMAUS COMMUNITY is Cana's twin. It was named after a village in Jerusalem where Jesus took supper and stayed with the disciples after His Resurrection. At the beginning, the San Lorenzo Sisters' residence was shared by the two Communities with separate sleeping quarters, refectory and community room. They, however, had the chapel in common for daily Mass and the Divine Office, except for the Night Office which each Community prayed separately at the end of their activities. Sunday evenings were always get-together suppers.

Emmaus' priority mission is that of welcoming all Sisters of the Philippine Province who for one reason or another come to Manila. Sisters from abroad are also welcomed and so are all Religious from any congregation who ask for hospitality. Emmaus has welcomed a good number of Sisters, either as transit visitors or for longer stays. The Emmaus Sisters have become experts in airport, pier and bus station standard operating procedures. They do not only welcome visitors; they also see Sisters and guests off. Missionary send-offs very often take place in their chapel, sometimes simply, sometimes very solemnly.

Students and professors from Assumption school abroad, Japan and France in particular have been welcomed. With their Japanese friends, Emmaus shares God's gift of faith to the Filipinos. Not a few have been graced by their visit to the Philippines and have asked for Baptism. At least two received the religious vocation. With their French brothers and sisters, Emmaus Shares, in a very special way, God's gift of Marie Eugénie; together they exchange views on how best to allow her educational charism to permeate schools for the good of the youth of today.

Religious profession of the Sisters, especially those in the Luzon area, often take place in San Lorenzo. Sisters' periodical assemblies are also hosted. Thus, the welcoming Sisters are always on their toes throughout the year in this beautiful fraternal act of welcoming and bidding Sisters and friends "Godspeed" and "Until we meet again."

Although welcoming and seeing off guests are full-time jobs, some Sisters still find to help in part-time occupations, like teaching in the college department, caring for the Provincial archives, moderating the newly established Affiliates of the Assumption (an association of laywomen who try to live Marie Eugénie's spirituality) and supervising catechetical funding for public schools. Participation in the life of the local Church, especially in its task of vocation promotion and in its campaign for justice and peace, are

given much attention. And of course, on occasions like papal visit of John Paul II in 1981, the Sisters go all out to be one with the Universal Church.

When the day is far spent, feel welcome to break bread with the Sisters in Emmaus, and together recognize Him in the breaking of the bread.

THE DECADES OF THE '70s AND THE 80s saw profound changes taking place in the Assumption's provincial foundations. For instance, in San Jose, Antique, Assumption Philippines' first provincial insertion, the desirability of having only one Catholic school on different levels became more and more evident. The diocesan educational institution, Saint Anthony's, and Assumption's San Jose Academy served basically the same class of students both in the elementary and secondary levels. Both aimed to provide a Christian education in collaboration with the local Church of Antique. A combined effort through sharing of personnel, facilities and financial resources was deemed normal for the best service of Catholic education in the same locality.

A letter from the parish priest of San Jose to the Community of San Jose expressed the desire of the local Church authority to involve the Assumption beyond the confines of San Jose Academy.

"The charism of the Assumption is to be a Christian teacher. These skills of teaching with Christian dimension should be shared with the Catholic schools of Antique. Here is a great task for your apostolate. This is also the wish of Msgr. Cornelio de Wit."

This first sounding of possible fusion of schools dated back to January 1973. The process that effected the final fusion in 1985 was long, complex and, at times, painful. The principles and the mechanics involved had to be carefully worked out. Finally, an arrangement was arrived at: one grade school, St. Anthony's College Grade School. Would occupy the former San Jose Academy's physical plant and facilities; San Jose Academy's grade school students and their faculty would be integrated with those St. Anthony's College; one high school, St. Anthony's College High School, would be maintained within the St. Anthony's College campus; San Jose Academy's high school and its faculty would also be integrated with those of St. Anthony's. The Sisters would work in any or all three departments – elementary, high school or college - depending on their qualifications and availability. At present, the principal of the grade school is a Religious of the Assumption. Sisters are engaged in part-time involvement in the college as professors, guidance counselors or campus ministry services; one sits in the Education Commission of the diocese and helps in all the diocesan schools. Some former high school staff of San Jose Academy are members of the administrative team of St. Anthony's College High School.

"The fusion had to happen: Assumption is meant to 'die' in order to be life giving in San Jose... It is in a humble, powerless presence that Assumption can serve, no longer the Assumption that reaped rewards and championships. All the pain and suffering came from a resistance to this new direction the Lord was shaping for Assumption... a resistance that came from both Sisters and alumni and students and yet now we see that this is the way."

In the spectrum of Assumption insertions in the Philippines, San Jose stands out as living the call to being one with the local Church. May the Lord be praised!

THE ASSUMPTION'S EXPERIENCE IN SIBALOM, Antique, where it put up Sta. Rita Academy, has been equally enriching. Since the school's opening in 1967, one grade level was added each succeeding year so that by 1973-1974, Sta. Rita Academy was offering a complete elementary course. Both the kindergarten and the elementary department were fully recognized by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports. Sta. Rita Academy today is the only private Catholic school in Sibalom. It is one of two private elementary schools in the whole province of Antique.

Next to that of the parish church, Sta. Rita Academy seems to be the best kind of presence for the Catholic Church in Sibalom. The school has become a center for Christian education where Gospel values are passed on to the homes. It is one of the best means of proclaiming the World and of fostering ecumenism.

Because members of the school community belong to different religious denominations, the school is a fertile ground for ecumenism. It has smoothed relationships between Catholics and members of other religious sects, especially the Aglipayans. The experience of Sta. Rita Academy has proven that the profession of different religions is not a hindrance to people's joining together to work toward a common goal.

Catholics are no longer a minority in Sibalom. They continue to increase in number because of conversation taking place through the school. Many parents of first communicants have decided to renew their marriage vows in Church so that their children can make their First Communion. Brothers, sisters and other relatives of first communicants often ask to be baptized in the Catholic Church. Thus, the First Communion becomes a unifying factor in the family's religious life.

The school serves as an arm for the parish. The parish of Sibalom has had only one priest until today. He has numberless concerns to attend to and many barrios to visit; Sibalom in Antique's largest town. The presence of the Sisters helps much. When the priest is not around, the Sisters pitch in: blessing the dead, bringing the Eucharist to the sick and dying, leading the *Panimbaho*n, or the so called "dry mass," when a priest is not available on Sundays.

It is also through the collaboration of the school and the Sisters that catechetics is organized in the parish. Sta. Rita students and alumni take active part in parish activities. They make up the choir that sings during Sunday Mass and on big feasts. Many of them are members of the parish youth organization *Kristianong Pamata-on Kang Sibalong* which

takes an active part in parish activities. Many alumni have also become active lay leader of the parish.

The school teaches Christian education and values, reaching out to homes, and influencing the lives of the many people it touches. This is proven by the presence of five alumni among the school's teaching staff. After graduation from college, they returned to Sta. Rita Academy to serve the school and to commit themselves to the service of their own people. It is heartening also that the spiritual encounters and friendly atmosphere of the school offers have helped many of the faculty members to remain in Sta. Rita Academy. Most of the teachers have been with the school for seven to fifteen years.

Convinced that the family is the primary educator, the Sisters, the lay faculty and the Auxiliary Missionaries of the Assumption (AMA) volunteers work in close collaboration with the families of students in the hope of building a community founded in Jesus Christ where the Gospel values are lived.

A generation has elapsed since two Assumption Sisters took that fateful jeepney ride to Sibalom. Now, almost everybody in Sibalom knows what nuns are. The people see them going around – marketing, talking, laughing, teaching, praying – proving to all that they are no different from the rest of humankind. And yet the people of Sibalom continue to treat them in a special way. One parent explained why. “Because,” she said, “they are close to God.” So be it.

THE ASSUMPTION SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL CENTER (ASEC) in Barrio Obrero, Iloilo City has likewise made significant headway towards bringing the people there closer to God. The holistic education or total human development envisioned at the start was caught, nurtured and developed by ASEC into a vision of thriving basic ecclesial communities of people living as church and working for the transformation of society. This vision puts emphasis on education in both its formal and non-formal aspects. The Assumption educational philosophy is “to allow the good every person to break through the rock that imprisons it and bring it to light where it can blossom and shed its radiance.”

ASEC envisages that this helps community of helpless people to become in God, an enlightened, organized, participative and self-reliant community able to identify its own problems and provide for them. How does ASEC en flesh this vision?

First, through the child. ASEC elementary school offers a community-oriented Christian education facilitated by community-based volunteers and staff. An average of 500 children who belong to urban poor families are subsidized by generous friends and alumnae of the Assumption. The school's mission is to respond to the call with knowledge, attitude and skills necessary for him to respond to the call of his community, based on the following perceived needs: eligibility for high school education; practical skills which he

makes use by assisting his family meet their basic needs; basic health knowledge and skills in the home and in the community; the exercise of his Christian conscience by making free choices that are consistent with his awareness of his dignity, freedom and responsibility; responsiveness to his family needs and awareness of community realities, and the need to make future commitments for service; ability to show his knowledge and love of God by being happy, honest, respectful, non-violent and prayerful.

Second, ASEC touches the youth and adults through the Social Development Programs:

The Human Resource Development of the training component of ASEC. It facilitates leadership formation of youth and parents, to equip them with proper values, attitudes and knowledge that will enable them to assume their roles and responsibilities in the various community-based organizations. It also offers skills training for livelihood projects.

Another is the Institutional Development which is the organizing arm of ASEC. It facilitates the capability-building of community-based organizations such as the Barrio Obrero Multi-purpose Cooperative, Inc., the Assumption Parish Pastoral Council, the small youth communities and the household groups, empowering them to become self-reliant, community-managed groups moving towards the fulfillment of the basic Ecclesial Community vision of Barrio Obrero.

Lastly, the General Services facilitates the temporal needs of the community, such as the high school and college scholarship offered to poor but deserving students of the village, loan assistance for individuals or groups to venture into micro-enterprises and extension of emergency assistance for hospitalization, instances of calamity and other immediate basic needs.

ASEC also affiliated with the Christian Child Welfare Association, Inc. (CCWA) in 1979, a Tokyo-based social welfare funding agency. CCWA's goal of peace, brotherhood and a dignified human life is consistent with ASEC's goals. This is a partnership that continues to the present.

The ASEC AMA Volunteer is another important group. For the Auxiliary Missionaries of the Assumption, Inc. to work with their alumni as volunteers; for the Religious of the Assumption to see the laity assume their role in building the local Church, and to see the young in action, sharing their missionary zeal, are all experience in fruitfulness.

What is there in ASEC that its graduates as young professionals come back for? What is there in Barrio Obrero, in its people, that these young professionals choose to live and work with them? ASEC is responding to the same call heard and answered by the Assumption Sisters and the AMA, Inc. more than two decades ago. It is in fact a continuing response to a continuing call of the Holy Spirit to build the Kingdom of God in Barrio Obrero.

THE ASSUMPTIN ALSO CONTINUED to respond to this call in San Simon, Pampanga, where, in 1970, it established the Assumpta Technical High School. In 1972, out of the ravages of the great flood of that year, the San Simon Integrated Rural Development Program (SSIRDP) for the total development of persons and communities through non-formal education became a reality. The two projects are partners in social development through formal and non-formal education. This is the contribution of the Mother Rosa Memorial Foundation (MRMF) to the development of a comprehensive rural development strategy, a strategy now being replicated in other areas of the country.

In San Simon, the MRMF celebrates the history of people who have risen from the helplessness of poverty and ignorance to the dignity of self-reliance and self-respect. In this quiet Central Luzon town, the MRMF chronicles what can happen when different sectors of society, inspired by a common vision, unite for a common purpose. For the people of San Simon, the MRMF, through s faithful and generous members, has become a symbol of hope.

Over the years, the Assumpta Technical High School has grown to become a significant force for the betterment of the community it serves. Starting in 1970 with only 90 students, the school now has a population of roughly 500 young boys and girls from 21 barrios of three municipalities, and a teaching and auxiliary staff of 34. Its graduates bear witness to the harvest of a generation od quiet and consistent efforts by Assumption alumni and other noble individuals and organizations.

At present, more than half of the faculty of Assumpta are alumni. Four have been ordained to the priesthood, five are physicians, one a dentist, and two are now novices of the religious of the Assumption. Many others, wherever they may be, are witnesses to the Christian values imbibed in Assumpta, putting to use the skills gained for the good if their families and communities. For all, Assumpta has transformed them to do the same for others.

The San Simon Integrated Rural Development Program, which views development from the perspective of the totality of the human person in his socio-cultural, economic and spiritual dimension, has six major components: community education, agribusiness development, health and nutrition, Christian value formation, and organization and cooperative development.

Once considered a poor credit risk, the *Ugnayang Magsasaka ng San Simon, Inc.* (UMSSI) Cooperative established a 100% repayment rate. As a result, it gained the thrust of both national and international funding agencies such as the Quedan Guarantee Fund Board, Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), the Department of Agriculture, Planters Development Bank and Land Bank of the Philippines.

Under the Aquino administration, President Corazon C. Aquino herself would go to San Simon to dialogue with *Ugnayan* farmers in recognition of their considerable feat. Romeo Angeles, a former *Ugnayan* chairman, would be appointed sectoral representative to Congress. And in 1990, the UMSSI would with the Aurora Aragon Quezon Peace Through Development Award.

On a piece of land the farmers themselves purchased, a 25,000 cavan warehouse was constructed. The farmers also put up a rice mill, an agricultural crop store, a loan window and a farmers training center where groups from all over the country come to learn from the UMSSI experience and to share their own.

The *Ugnayan* has expanded into a federation of 274 members with over a thousand other farmers in 15 associations. It has expanded its operations from primarily non-formal education and organization of farmers to their education of landless rural workers, tricycles drivers, women children, out-of-school youth and other low-income groups. When asked why they continue to look for means to help others, the farmers have only the Gospel message as their answer, "We have received freely; we cannot but give freely."

The Mother Rosa memorial Foundation, meanwhile, continue to extend consultancy services on institutional organization capacity-building and development to other non-government organization (NGOs) from all over the country. These included the first Farmers Human Development Foundation, Inc. in Bacolod City; Kabalaka Development Foundation, Inc., in La Carlota City, Negros Occidental; Grassroots Organization Volunteers Association, Inc. in San Fernando, Pampanga; Tarlac People's Economic Council Foundation; Lubao Livelihood Foundation in Pampanga; and Meralco Foundation in Jala-Jala, Rizal.

The Total number of organizations and associations assisted under the ISSRDP rose from the original four barrio association in San Simon, Pampanga to 46 barrio associations broken down as follows: 18 in Pampanga, five in Aurora, 20 in Nueva Ecija, 17 in Tarlac, and one in Davao Del Sur.

This is the MRMF story, a story of men and women who have committed themselves to the Gospel imperative of making the lives of their fellow brothers and sisters more in accord with the plan of the Father. It is also the story of a community of people, who after having received from the goodness of others are now beginning to share the same graces with their less fortunate brothers. It invites other to join them in their story.

THE ASSUMPTION'S EXPERIENCE in Malibay, Pasay City is yet another story of continuing hope. After construction the 32-unit Maryville Homes in 1968 and establishing the San Juan Nepomuceno School in 1969, the Maryville Urban Development Foundation

(MUDF) started having problems. Thus, the entry of the Christian Children's Fund (CCF) in 1973 was a gift straight from heaven.

The CCD offered to sponsor the development of children from economically depressed families. This gave rise to the Maryville Family Help Project which was placed under the umbrella of the MUDF.

The Maryville Family Help Project, in turn, gave birth to the Maryville Community Development Center. The Maryville Family Help Project's main activity was the human development of CCF-sponsored children and their parents. Adult education in the form of seminars on varied areas of interest were offered with the aim of turning the participants into self-reliant and productive members of the community. As the project grew, it evolved into the Maryville Community Development Center that opened up for the Malibay residents more opportunities for growth with help of various non-government funding agencies.

Today, Malibay families, aided all along by the Maryville Community Development Center, have put up their own cooperative and are engaged in livelihood projects. They operate a rice trading organization. A smaller group, made up of about 200 families, has put up a housing project for which it acquired a lot and a housing loan. Thus, these families' dream of having their own house and lot has been realized through their own communal efforts.

The Center maintains close relationship with the Juan Nepomuceno School, extending to it support and assistance whenever needed. Meanwhile, to help solve the growing social problem of street children, CCF has shifted the focus of its sponsorship program to these unfortunate young ones.

The Assumption first attempted to set up a Community of Religious in Malibay in June 1977, in line with the efforts of the Philippine Province to mobilize additional manpower and potential Community witness in an urban poor area where the Assumption already had a presence through the MUDF's Maryville Homes, the San Juan Nepomuceno School and the Maryville Family Help Project, apostolic works conducted by the San Lorenzo Community.

"Our immediate goal is to build a home for the Lord where He would be the first, where He would be honored and where He would be its reason for being; hence, a home where everyone is welcome and where goods, both material and spiritual, are shared."

The Sisters rented a small house in front of the school which belonged to certain Lola Maria. The members of the Community were Sister Anunciata Malvar, Sr. Marianne Eulalia Araojo, Sr. Maria Anicia Asuncion and Sr. Perpetua Enarsao. However, because of unforeseen adverse developments, the first Community insertion had to be closed after two years. The Sisters involved in the Malibay apostolate rejoined the San Lorenzo Community.

THE ASSUMPTION'S EXPANSION into the rural areas continued in the 1970s and early 1980s. New insertions in the provinces followed one after another: Santiago, Isabela in 1974-78; Kadilingan, Bukidnon in 1977; and Puerto Rivas, Bataan in 1978-80. For two years Kadilingan was the lone Assumption Community in Mindanao. It was deemed desirable to have other Communities in the region. Thus, Kauswagan in Lanao del Norte was opened in 1980 and Cagayan de Oro on the Xavier University campus in 1983.

Assumption's four year sojourn in Santiago, Isabela, from 1974 to 1978, was an experience of what it means to help one another grow into a community of love. Santiago is one of the first towns of Isabela that greet the traveler from Manila. When the Assumption went there, the town was not yet the urban center that it now is. There was no running water and electricity was not yet available at all hours. Roads were mostly unpaved, so a generous helping of dust was the Sisters' lot as they walked or rode in tricycles to and from work.

How did the Assumption find itself in Santiago in the first place? Isabela is the religious territory of the La Salette Fathers and Santiago is one their largest centers. The Fathers had put up the only Catholic educational institution in that town, comprising all levels: primary, secondary and tertiary. For 18 years, the Maryknoll Sisters ran high school and the college departments which were located in different campuses. There followed the expansion of the Maryknoll missions in Mindanao which called for additional staffing; and the inability to renew their Santiago commitment.

In 1973, Rev. Efren L. Musni, M.S. Rector of La Salette of Santiago, approached Mother M. Angela Ansaldo, then Provincial Superior, regarding the possibility of the Assumption taking over the administration of the La Salette High School and College in Santiago. After a province-wide discernment, the Assumption Provincial Council accepted the La Salette Father's proposal.

Sister Monica Eugenia Dualin, the Community's bursar, and Sister Melania Maria Sunga, a full-time student of La Salette College the the pursuing a degree in education, arrived in Santiago on Holy Saturday, 1944. They took up residence in the two-storey convent built by the La Salette Fathers for the Maryknoll Sisters in 1956. The convent was situated in the high school campus was comfortably furnished; the Maryknoll Sisters had been gracious enough to leave behind curtains, lines, dishes, kitchenware, books, sacristy materials and various decorative items.

Five days later, on April 19, Sister Maria Estela Infante joined the two Sisters. She was accompanied by Mother M. Angela Ansaldo who was visiting the place for the first time. Sister Ann Ellise Gallagher, M.M., outgoing dean of La Salette College, was on hand to acquaint the Sisters with the school set-up. Summer classes were in full swing, and a few days after her arrival, Sister Maria Estela Infante started reporting regularly for work.

Sister M. Fediles Estrada, the designated high school principal, and Sister M. Patricia Martinez, religion coordinator, completed the Community in May 19, after their summer classes in Manila. The former was pursuing a master's degree, while the latter was preparing herself for religion coordinatorship.

The La Salette College populations was comprised of young men and women from the lower-income families of Santiago and the neighboring towns. The courses offered were Commerce, Liberal Arts, Education, Pre-Nursing and Secretarial. A degree in agribusiness and a special farm technician course in cereal growing, poultry and piggery were added later. When the Assumption left in 1978, the course offerings had been expanded to include Engineering and Criminology. A graduate school was likewise opened.

New buildings were constructed, including the administration offices, engineering building, a learning center which serves as the practice school for the education majors. The college was accredited by the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities.

There existed a healthy relationship between the faculty and the students and Sister Maria Estela's main thrust during the first was to initiate the faculty and students into meaningful Eucharistic celebrations which were held weekly by the entire student body and periodically by the individual classes. Complementing this thrust were efforts directed towards relevant religion classes, the conduct of students' recollection days and occasional prayer meetings.

Meanwhile, the La Salette High School's 1948 faculty members welcomed the Religious of the Assumption with openness and much warmth. A co-educational campus, La Salette High School is considered one of the best, if not the best, educational institutions in the Cagayan Valley. Although there are handful of students who belong to Santiago's affluent families, the majority come from the lower-income bracket, children of farmers who depend on the harvest for tuition money.

Sister M. Fidelis Estrada chose to give priority to the training of the faculty and staff during her first year. An unwritten intention of the La Salette Fathers was to prepare the groundwork for the eventual turnover of the key administrative offices to qualified and dedicated laymen. It was necessary that time, effort and care be spent to help create an atmosphere of trust and mutual acceptance among the members of the academic staff. Thus, regular gatherings were held where teachers and the principal had the opportunity to share, reflect and look at questions and problems together. Weekly prayer meetings with the teachers, regular Eucharistic celebrations for the staff, as well as moments of recreation together, helped create the desired atmosphere. The students had a similar need: to know themselves as part of a larger body and, therefore, responsible to and for one another.

The religion coordinator helped the religion teachers prepare regular and meaningful Eucharistic celebrations. During the second part of the year, a number of these

liturgies were celebrated in the parish Church, educating the students and teachers alike on their roles and responsibilities towards the parish. Parish celebrations, like the Novena masses in preparation for the feast of Our Lady of La Salette, of Saint James (patronal feast), and Christmas saw the students taking an active part.

In 1975, the Office of Assistant Principal was abolished in favor of an administrative coordinator. The position was assigned to a lay faculty member.

Religion teachers gathered together every week to experience the Good News they would be called to proclaim in between sharings. This led to a greater understanding of and appreciation for prayer. Today, a number of teachers animate prayer sessions among their students. The liturgy has become more meaningful such that feasts like Rector's Day, Assumption, and significant moments like birthdays, *despedidas*, as well as death, are celebrated with communal prayer and often given prime time.

On the academic scene, efforts towards greater integration of related subject areas were initiated by the Sisters. To correct the impression that school was a ghetto, opportunities to relate what was learned in school with life in the town were sought after and made use of. A program for faculty development provided opportunities for teachers to learn from one another through periodic sessions prepared and handled by them, as well as from resource persons from the larger community.

La Salette High School has grown considerably since the Daughters of Charity took over after the Assumption left. There are more buildings, including an adequate functional library.

The barrio apostolate started by the Maryknoll Sisters was continued by the Assumption. This consisted of animating the Eucharist celebrations on Sundays in three barrios. Whenever no priest was available, the Sisters conducted the liturgical service, gave the homily and distributed Holy Communion.

Visits to the barrios gave rise to another apostolate, that of giving spiritual comfort to the dying and preparing them for a peaceful death. Soon some Sisters – Patricia Martinez, Monica Dualin and Gabrielle Mendoza – dedicated their Friday morning to visiting the sick and giving Holy Communion in four Santiago hospitals and clinics. In coordination with the parish priest, the Sisters joined a team which conducted Pre-cana instruction, marriage encounter and responsible parenthood programs.

Although the Assumption had been asked by the La Salette Fathers to assume only the administration of the high school and the college departments and to take charge of the religious education programs in both campuses, the witness that shone through to the school community and beyond was that of a praying and loving community: "See how they love one another...! The Religious of the Assumption taught us how to pray!"

Santiago was the Assumption Philippines' first experience in working closely with another Religious Community. Working together with the La Salette Fathers and La Salette Sisters was enriching experience. So enriching and positive was the relationship between the two Religious Communities that the former Sa Salette General, then assigned to Santiago, teased the Assumption Sisters about forming the first mixed congregation in the Church and naming it The RA+MS.

Assumption's work contract with the La Salette Fathers expired in 1976. It was renewed for another two years, after which the Sisters went on to leave in favor of Mindanao which was beckoning them to Kadingilan.

KADINGILAN, ASSUMPTION'S CHOICE for its insertion in Mindanao in the late 1970s, is located some two-and-a-half hours away from the mountainous border of Bukidnon and Cotabato. The Assumption's decision to go there was in answer to the Church's persistent call to every Christina to help where help it is most needed. It was also a response to the challenge of the Congregation's General Chapter of 1976 to mobilize the Assumption's force towards the service of the poor, as well as to Bishop Claver's invitation to his prelature in Bukidnon. Bishop Claver personally toured two of the Provincial Councilors around this mountain diocese so they could see its different needs and gauge how the Religious of the Assumption might serve its people. Two more visits, more extended this time, by Sisters who might possibly be fielded there, confirmed the choice of Kadingilan before Mother M. Angela Ansaldo and her Council gave his first Mindanao community its go-signal in May 1977.

Kadingilan's population of of 16,000 at that tie was spread out in 16 barrios on a 30-kilometers radius from the *centro*. An agricultural population, it is, like the rest of Mindanao, predominantly made up of immigrants – it was a mixture of Cebuanos, Boholanos, Ilonggos, Warrays, Ilocanos and Igorots. The native Manobas are a small minority. Visayan (Cebuano) is the main dialect used. Kadingilan, as a municipality, was only six years old then, being once part if the municipality of Kibawe, 12 kilometers away through a canyon.

The basic problem of the people is their low income due to the low selling price of the corn they produce in one-to-three hectare lots. Prices are controlled by Chinese and Filipino traders with outlets in Cagayan De Oro who got hold of the farmers' produce through the sale to them of fertilizer on credit. These fertilizers distributors are also the corn mill owners and the truckers; they are also the political leaders of the town. Thus, even with the rich Bukidnon soil that allows three corn crop a year, the majority of the people continue to live a hand-to-mouth existence. The people know they are being manipulated and exploited, but they were not sufficiently organized to launch any effective action.

In addition, the people suffer from poor roads – with limited means of transportation to the barrios – and from a lack of water – there is only one artesian well in the entire town. The existing health service is poor, resulting in a high infant mortality rate due to *el tor*, cholera and malaria. Usury rates average 10% a month.

The political and economic problems of Kadingilan merely reflect the greater Bukidnon economic-political-cultural-religious reality where a powerful minority of five people controlled the entire province.

The stand and thrust of the Kadingilan Church is that of the Bukidnon Church which is, in turn, that of the Mindanao-Sulu Church: to build communities working toward justice and love. To this end, there is critical collaboration, on one hand, and critical opposition, on the other, by the local Church. There are eight organized church groups in Kadingilan: the Seventh-Day Adventists, the United Church of Christ, *Iglesia ni Kristo*, Four-Square Gospel Church, Fundamental Baptist, Moncado, PBMA, and the Philippine Independent Church. There are also several groups of *espirituales*. Superstition and spiritism abound. But the big majority continue to be Catholic.

Kadingilan has been a parish since 1963 and a core group of dedicated and loyal leaders has been formed. There are two priests: the parish priest and his assistant. The parish priest concentrates most of his efforts on the 11 far-flung barrios he covers and on the formation of the barrio *alagads* (lay leaders). There are several mandated organizations: the Catholics Women's League, Apostolado, Cursillo, BIL (the Junior Cursillo group), the Catechists. The primary involvement of the Sisters is in the parish high school which is eyed to become a center of activities in the parish.

Sister Ebrard Elisa Cañouero, Sister Catalina Maria Silva and Sister Inocencia Vigilar left San Lorenzo in Makati on a Friday evening to embark on a 30-hour non-stop trip to Cagayan de Oro City, the gateway to Central and Northern Mindanao. On the way to the pier, the jeepney bringing the few personal belongings of the Sisters and the *baul* (chest) containing the most basic utensils necessary for survival in the hinterlands, broke down in the middle of Metro Manila's heavy traffic. A quick decision had to be made right there and then: to wait for the jeepney and its cargo which meant missing the one and only trip to Mindanao that week, and, therefore, as well as also the important parish meeting the Sisters needed to attend or to hail a passing taxi and board the boat on time which would leave behind the precious *baul*. In short, to take the second option was to plunge headlong into the material poverty the Sisters were invited to share with the people of Kadingilan.

Not without some trepidation, the Sisters took the second option, picked up their sling-bags and rushed to the pier, arriving just minutes before the boarding bridge was detached from the *Doña Florentina*. And so it was that the Kadingilan Foundation was marked from the very beginning of its existence with poverty, the quality which the Lord Himself had chosen when He first came to live on the earth.

From that first decisive choice flowed the Sisters' first deep joy in Mindanao, that of seeing the town's people welcoming them into their hearts and homes in genuine gratitude for the Sisters' having taken the option to go and live with them in an out-of-the-way town, to share their life and their aspirations. Knowing the plight the Sisters were in, the parish leaders who welcomed them, all rushed back to their homes to bring back a utensil or two for the Sisters' kitchen in the tiny three-room house the parish had rented for the fabulous amount of P50 a month. By the time the visiting Jesuit scholastic brought a burning brand from the parish's stove with which to light the Sisters' own, there were enough pots and pans with which to cook their first meal and enough plates and bowls for their first supper. That evening's Compline overflowed with thanks from three grateful Religious of the Assumption.

The days that followed brought a constant stream of people from the surrounding barrios who wanted to pay their respects to their *madres*, and thus the Sisters' tiny cupboard was filled to the limit for many days.

Aside from faith, work was the only abundant thing in that little town. And yet, it was this poverty that freed the Sisters' spirit to meet the Lord in prayer. Out there, in the stark solitude of Kadingilan, at the height of martial rule, in constant danger from the hands of the abusive military, God's presence was the only reality that one could hold on to and from which they could derive the faith and the courage to go on working for truth and justice, to continue upholding the dignity of man despite all odds, to keep on believing that God's goodness will triumph in the end.

When the Assumption opted to go to Kadingilan, it thought it had much give the people there. As it turned out, Kadingilan taught the Sisters that they still had more to learn, and that the meager book learning they brought the people was nothing in comparison with the Gospel values, the trues wisdom the Sisters learned from them.

The people of Kadingilan came from all over the country. They came as settlers, mostly by virtue of the Homestead Act promulgated during the term of President Ramon Magsaysay. The students have only a faint remembrance of where their parents came from and, even less, of their cultural background. So, for one Foundation Day, the Sisters decided to encourage them to go back to their roots through a cultural show of their respective ethnic dances in their native costumes.

When the day of the cultural show came, one of the Sisters could not attend; she was down with chicken pox. But the Manobos would not allow her to miss the dance they prepared. They came over to the Sisters' house, and on the street, they performed their dance and sang their songs for the sick *madre* to enjoy. That gesture of thoughtfulness was the manifestations of another cultural value.

The main apostolate of the Sister in Kadingilan is the administrative of the San Isidro High School and the supervision of its branch in Barrio Malipayon, a distant village reachable only via very poor roads.

ASSUMPTION PHILIPPINES witnessed the ending of the 1970s with the Province scarred, like the rest of the Filipino people, by the turbulence that continued to engulf the nation. Yet it "...remained freely bound to the Church with whom she sensitively walks, retaining that climate of faith that Blessed Marie Eugénie considers must be the air that the Congregation breathes and is most at home in."

Mother Hélène Marie, addressing the Provincial Chapter of 1979 in which Mother Maria Angela Ansaldo turned over the governance of the Philippine Province to Sister Maria Estela Infante, had this message: "... during these past nine years, such an important change was made, and very well made, in the Communities. Your Province has lived a tradition of fidelity, spiritual vigor and apostolic newness."

As one season ends, another begins. The 1980s heralded the inauguration of an era of hope for the country and for the Assumption, even as it carried the burden of martial rule. Mother Maria Angela Ansaldo's parting words as Provincial Superior rallied the Congregation: "Let our spring-board be the present which contains all that is eternal in past and future. Together, let us continue living the mystery of the Holy Spirit. A new humanity is coming into being and women Religious are involved in fostering it"

"It is significant that the Assumption's new leadership is assumed in the Year of the Child by a Provincial bearing Mary's name as star: Sister Maria Estela e l'Enfant Jesus. It was a Star that led Gentile but wise leaders to recognize in the poverty of Bethlehem the Child, Adorer of the Father and Savior of men, in the arms of Mary His Mother." Indeed, this was auspicious for the Assumption Province and for the Philippines. God's *kagandahang-loob* was weaving a new destiny for His people.

The path of martial rule that Ferdinand E. Marcos paved since 1972 had not changed direction. Heinous crimes were becoming the rule rather than the exception. Boys in their teens found themselves recruited in the army and sent to distant Mindanao, considered the military graveyard. Meanwhile, in Metro Manila, outrage was mounting in the hearts of young and old alike as oppositionists were, one after the other, incarcerated: unemployment was becoming a social monster; inflation was getting out of proportion; the problem in insurgency was posing a threat to national security.

The new Assumption Provincial assumed office amid a highly volatile period in the nation's history. Tension was mounting outside and within the convent walls. But God knows best for He placed the Province in the hands of a pacifist. Sister Maria Estela's charism, rooted in peace and a genuine love for people, had a neutralizing effect on her constituents. She was a friend to everyone. Her childlike candor and cheerful disposition enabled her to integrate well with people of varied types and temperaments. Her disarming nature was an asset whenever tensions had to be eased between individuals and or sectors within the Communities. God's *kagandahang-loob* was working full time.

BATAAN: THE NAME immediately brings to mind the Filipino-American forces' last stand against the Japanese; the export processing zone in Limay and Mariveles and the oil refinery of the Philippine National Oil Company; the controversial Philippine Nuclear Power Plant and the refugee center in Morong. All these placed Bataan in the limelight during the last 50 years. Industrialization brought with it the concomitant problems of migrant workers being exploited, congested housing and squatting, and the spiraling cost of living.

Puerto Rivas is a fishing village at the outskirts of the town of Balanga, capital of Bataan. It has three sectors: Tortugas, Ibaba and Itaas. Fishing provides the people with their main source of livelihood; unfortunately, the meager income they earn makes them the easy prey of unscrupulous usurers and middlemen. Different religions thrive in Puerto Rivas because, for years, religious formation was neglected. The people are spontaneously religious and so are easily misled by any new religious sect. Popular religiosity abounds. But there is a sincere hunger for God as evidence by the people's request for a parish priest.

In 1978, Bishop Cesar Guevara asked Mother M. Angela Ansaldo, the Assumption's Provincial then, for the presence of some Sisters to do pastoral work in his diocese. After a number of visits to Bataan, the Provincial Council chose Puerto Rivas as a possible site where the Assumption could offer some assistance.

The Sisters were to stay in Puerto Rivas for two years to help the people prepare for a parish. They would conduct catechetical work in the public schools and animate church organizations. Whenever possible, they were to help the Bishop give retreats to various groups of the diocesan level.

The Assumption Community composed of Sister Josefa Margarita Derayunan, Sister Gabrielle Annunciata Mendoza, Sister M. Virgilia and Sister Monica Eugenia Dualin, arrived in Puerto Rivas in June 1978. The sacristy was their little home, in the absence of a parish priest. They lost no time getting acquainted with the people who were warm, friendly and happy with the arrival of the Sisters.

Living closely with the people taught the Community to be like them: to live poorly, to share in their simple joys, like a good catch of fish, and to supper with them. Their simplicity crept into the Sisters' fraternal life and the Community learned to be open to one another, to depend simply on God when under stress. Entering into the people's rhythm meant for the Sisters acquiring patience and to forget to count time.

The people of Puerto Rivas and the situation encountered there gave the Sister golden opportunities for learning the will of God, for reading His plan for them. As a result, their contemplative life took on a deeper meaning; the Word of God and the Rule of Life became existential, embracing not only their life but that of the people too. The more they discovered God's Presence, the more they were graced to experience the living Church in the midst of a people in community.

Difficulties, like the lack of privacy for moments of formal prayer, made the Sisters reflect on this as their asceticism of place and space and made them understand more deeply their poverty. A monthly subsidy of P700 from the Bishop made the Community self-reliant and gratefully dependent on the generosity of the people.

Conscious of the fact that by 1980, the Puerto Rivas Community must be relatively stable to form themselves into a parish, the Sisters implemented the following actions: ongoing formation of lay leaders; mobilization of the people through parish activities; documentation of research done on the socio-economic and religious socio-cultural profile of the people. A Parish Council was set to facilitate the formation of lay leaders who would constitute the umbrella group for the different committees. Old Church organizations were re-oriented towards the new thrust. Bible studies were organized. Recollection were made available to high school students and teachers as well as to young professionals. The whole of Puerto Rivas was awakened to a participation in Church life.

Since the plan called for the Sisters phasing-out, activities in the community were given more and more to the lay leaders with the Sisters simply providing support. A series of meetings were held to evaluate the work in the community and how they could be made better. After sufficient reflection and prayer, the decision that the people were ready to be constituted into a parish and have their own parish priest was arrived at.

The Assumption Community of Puerto Rivas look back to their brief sojourn in this fishing town as a real grace, the grace to experience the Church, to have touched her. In the process, God has made possible that initial step of turning the Sisters into the women that Mother Marie Eugénie dreamed her Assumption Religious would be: women given to Jesus and to the extension of His Kingdom, living in the midst of a people in community.

KAUSWAGAN IS THE ASSUMPTION'S second insertion in Mindanao. It is a coastal town on the northern tip of Mindanao, 21 kilometers from the industrial city of Iligan, the capital of Lanao del Norte. Kauswagan is a fifth class municipality with a population of 9,700. Around 75% are poor farmers, 7% are poor fishermen, 5% are professionals and office workers, 3% are engaged in local trade and commerce, 10% are unemployed.

The town 53 square kilometers in land area, is essentially agricultural. There are nine villages in the municipality. Two of these are Muslim villages. Five are along the road, while four are interior villages located between the Christians and the Muslims areas. In general, the two groups respect each other's beliefs and, thus, co-exist.

The population is predominantly Christian, mostly Catholic. The parish of St. Vincent Ferrer, founded by a Columban priest in 1960, is the parish of Kauswagan. It is one of the parishes in the Prelature of Iligan. Msgr. Fernando Capalla, its Bishop, is the overall head and coordinator of the various apostolates and programs. Kauswagan has one Catholic high school, the St Vincent Ferrer Academy, located within the parish compound.

The Assumption came to Kauswagan in June 1980 upon the pressing invitation of Bishop Capalla. He wanted a contemplative presence to witness to the value of prayer among his flock. In his invitation, he wrote:

"I would like to Assumption to come to my Prelature primarily to deepen in our local Church its contemplative dimension... To a Church that took as a primary task the pursuit of justice for its people, it must necessarily be a Church that prays."

A house of bamboo and wood, answering the Sister's need for space and privacy while remaining a realistic insertion within the community, welcomed the pioneering group of Sister M. Carmela Montelibano, Sister Visitacion Eugenia Balleza, Sister Perpetua Enarsao and Sister Virgilia. The house was solemnly blessed by the Vicar General, in the absence of the Bishop who was out of the country at the time. The blessing, of course, ended in a *salò-salò* (party or gathering) attended by the town mayor himself.

The Sister called their new home *Galilee* and adopted as their motto "He went about doing good." The house was well-furnished, with beds and other furniture electric stove, plates, glasses and silverware. Praise the Lord!

Since its founding, the Kauswagan Community has journeyed with the people, slowly learning to enter into their culture and building with them a Christian community. The Assumption's humble beginnings enabled the Sisters to live in solidarity with the people of Kauswagan, experiencing especially their lack of water. They also shared their fears when the community witnessed the massacre of several families in February 1981.

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal group contributes to the growth of the Christian community as they eagerly but slowly integrate into their lives the Gospel values which alone can reconcile men with God and with one another.

Through their collaboration as the St. Vincent Ferrer Academy, the parish high school, the Sisters remain in contact with the young, the lay faculty and the parents. At the start, the Sisters simply helped by giving some lessons. However, when the Bishop assigned the principal to another post in the diocese, the Sisters were asked to assist in the administration of the school as well. They decided that the best way to do this is to create an administrative team responsible for the school's direction. Two Sisters are members of this team. The chairperson is a lay faculty member.

The Sister's presence at the Parish Council and at prayer meetings of the Charismatic group, enable them to support the laity in their efforts to develop their potential for the service of the Kingdom. The Assumption contributes to the human and spiritual development of adult women by working them at the Parish Center in implementing the diocesan program of the Catholic Relief Service. This program benefits 500 women and their children. Among them are volunteer workers who assist in the regular distribution of foodstuffs and the weighing of babies.

Another activity of the Center is vocational training. A Sister gives dressmaking lessons to the St. Vincent Ferrer Academy seniors and directs a group of women to become expert dressmakers for export purposes. A public school teacher gives basic training in carpentry to the senior boys.

An important program of the parish is the teaching of catechism in the public schools in the poblacion and in the barrios. Coordinated by a Sister, the activities have encouraged about 80 high school students of St. Vincent Ferrer Academy to join the dedicated adult catechists.

One of the latest activities of the Kauswagan Community was the hosting of the immersion groups of the San Lorenzo college department's Center of Social Concern. During the summer break, groups of students are immersed in the peoples' life so then can experience the social realities of the Philippines today and be spurred towards concerned involvement and action. A Sister of the Community accompanies them in all their activities and outings, and animates the evaluation of their experience in a climate of prayer.

THE ASSUMPTION'S JOURNEY through the 1980s was as exciting as it was challenging. Responding with courage and conviction to the problems posed by prevailing conditions was herculean task. Assumption was in deep financial crisis brought in mainly by the general economic malaise being felt by the entire nation.

The new president, Sister Luz Emmanuel Soriano, a hands-on administrator, immediately rolled up her sleeves and tackled with tenacity the problems that confronted her, managing the institution much like a business corporation. A power-house Finance Committee was formed composed of astute banking specialists and business industrialists such as alumnae Ma. Lourdes Mirasol Luchangco, the late Jaime V. Ongpin, Ramon del Rosario, Jr. and Xavier Loinaz. This committee formulated and operationalized a fast-track bail-out scheme and a Five-Year Financial Plan which stabilized finances by 1985.

Once the balance sheet was no longer in the red Assumption undertook full institutional development. Renovation and physical plans, put on hold in the past, now went into full gear in both the San Lorenzo and Antipolo complexes – buildings, roads, perimeter walls were constructed and meticulously supervised.

For the first time in the history of the Philippine Province, an institutional integrated Five-Year Development Plan for Assumption College which was research-base and participatory in process was formulated and implemented. "The College felt a need for a redirection of its thrust, as well as redefinition of its goal to contend with changes in values and lifestyle and to meet the variegated social problems that have resulted from development."

“The times called for a new school atmosphere, new learning programs, acquisition of new skills and perspectives that would bring about the development of comprehensive and systematic ways of looking at needs and potentials. Setting of priorities for the future and creative planning for needed changes were imperative. This move was a timely response to the New Rule of Life of the Religious of the Assumption which reminded the Sisters that new problems and discoveries call for on going study and reflection in the light of faith and asked them to have courage to make periodic re-evaluation of their attitudes, methods and institutions so as to respond more effectively to the needs of a constantly changing world. An honest evaluation would result in great harmony between the objectives of the Congregation and the development of the use of material resources.”

Sister Luz Emmanuel adopted a proactive, pace-setting stance for the college during these challenging years. This innovative, vision-oriented approach characteristic of the Assumption culture is a priceless legacy handed down by our Foundress, Mère Marie Eugénié, to her daughters all over the world. Indeed, Gods unexpected goodness was frequently felt throughout the 1980s.

ANOTHER STATWART OF THE ASSUMPTION passed away on September 23, 1982. Mother Esperanza Maria joined her Creator. Fifty-five years of her life were fiercely committed to her mission of building a strong faith and a strong character in the thousands of Filipino women she educated. She sparked their lives with Gospel realities and faithfully adhered to what our Mother Foundress taught her by example – to fix one’s gaze on Jesus Christ. Hers was an indelible stamp on the society in which he wielded a great influence, The tribute accorded her in 1975 by the De La Salle College, when her health started to wane, recognized the many roles she played in character-formation and nation-building:

“WHEREAS, Mother Esperanza Maria of the Religious of the Assumption and member of one Manila’s illustrious clans, has embodied in her humble person the finest example of ‘leaving all things for Christ;

“WHEREAS, this gifted Filipina, fortified by the mysterious transformation wrought by the spiritual discipline of the religious life, has made unique and substantial contribution to Philippine society as Dean for 25 years of the Assumption College;

“WHEREAS, this remarkable exponent of the best in Philippine culture has profoundly influenced those young women who have come under her tutelage through her strong personality, complete womanliness, lofty urbanity, and refined gentleness;

“WHEREAS, this noble Religious, through her guidance has imbued others with like sentiments and has established in our midst a veritable array of cultured women who reflect in their own personal lives the ideals inspired in their minds and hearts by their formation;

WHEREAS, this Filipina Religious of the Assumption has continued to be and will remain an inspiration to thousands of Filipina women through the education that she has directed, both by the schooling that is uniquely that of the Assumption Convent and by the labor of the remarkable faculty of distinguished scholars whom she has persuaded to contribute to the educational development under her aegis;

“The board of Trustees, the Administration and the Faculty of De La Salle College, on this quadricentennial anniversary of the Christianization of the Philippines, are honored to confer upon Rev. Mother Esperanza Maria, illustrious Filipina, dedicated spouse of Christ, unique educators, guide and mother for countless Filipinas, the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Education.”

CAGAYAN DE ORO is the premier city of Region X or Northern Mindanao. Made up of seven provinces and seven cities and boasting of a population of 3.5 million people, Region X is envisioned to become a major agro-industrial center in Southern Philippines. Cagayan de Oro, the region's business and educational center (it has 10 colleges and one universities) plays an important role in fulfilling about this vision.

The Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro has a population of over 800,000 Catholics. There are 50 diocesan priest in 45 parishes, 45 Religious men (34 Jesuits and 11 Missionaries of St. Columban) and 18 religious institutes of women with a total of 140 Sisters.

Xavier University, the largest of the five Ateneos run by the Jesuits in the Philippines and the first university in Mindanao, is a dynamic institution committed to the integral development of the nation's youthful leaders, particularly in the Northern Mindanao region. Its impact and influence, however, are felt beyond its portals through its outreach and community development projects, and through the achievements of its graduates as leaders in various fields. Xavier hopes to grow in quality and relevance, "educating men and women for others" convinced that the guarantee for peace and democracy lies in the solid formation of the youth in faith and justice.

The Religious of the Assumption's insertion in Xavier University began in June 1983 when, at the invitation of Father Ernesto O. Javier, S.J., the university president, two Sisters from the Assumption Community in Kauswagan came to give a religious presence on the campus and take an active involvement in the Xavier Campus Ministries (XCM)

The XCM main tasks are: to provide a chapel management team for the daily Eucharist celebrations, liturgies and sacraments held at the University Chapel of the Immaculate Conception; to give Ignatian Spiritual Exercises to the college students population, faculty and staff through retreats and recollections; to organize XU-United Religious Organizations as venues for formation and action among members of the 11 XU-ORO groups.

On a sunny morning in May 1983, Sister M. Paz and Sister Inocencia Maria Vigilar waved goodbye to the Kauswagan Community as they boarded a jeepney for Iligan City where they would take the mid-morning bus for Cagayan de Oro. Sister M. Paz had P200 in her pocket while Sister Inocencia Maria had two plastic plates and two spoon-and-fork set tucked away on the bag slung over her shoulder. These, plus a big load of love and confidence in Divine Providence, constituted all the Sisters had to begin the foundation of a new insertion in Northern Mindanao – the Religious of the Assumption Community in Xavier University.

The house intended for them at the edge of the campus has not yet been vacated by the Office of the Center of Industrial Technology when the two sisters arrived. Where were they find lodging for that evening? The Lord's Providence inspired a friend to offer them a room. The second night found them in a new friend's house at the outskirts of the city. Before they fell asleep, both Sisters vowed to speed up the preparations of their little house so they could move in and begin the work for which they had been invited. The following day, armed with brooms, mops, dust cloths, a water hose and an effective detergent, they set to work with the aid of two janitors recruited from among the janitorial staff of the university.

When Father Javier heard the Sister's plan to stay in the half-finished house, he insisted that they go up to Searsolin as guest of father Masterson, the dean of the College of Agriculture and the Searsolin complex. In the company of Sister Cecilia Hervas and Sister Loreto Eugenia Mapa who came from Lanao del Norte to see how the Sisters were faring in Cagayan de Oro, they were treated to VIP quarters and brought back I style to the university campus the next day to finish their final preparations for moving into their new house.

In the meantime, Mr. Larry Mariano, assistant to the Xavier University president, scoured the city stores for the things most needed by the Sisters to begin their own housekeeping.

Thanks to the solicitude of Fr, Mariano Valera, Executive Vice President and the Sisters' immediate boss for Campus Ministries, a small room of their house was transformed into a prayerful little chapel. There, many students, faculty members and other friends would often seek out the Lord in solitude and prayer. The blessing of the chapel of the Madonna Della Strada (Our Lady of the Way) took place on September 8, 1983, feast of Our Lady's Nativity.

The Sister's initiation into the seemingly complex yet so surprisingly simple set-up of Xavier University began. They were introduced to the different sectors of the university and given opportunities to meet the students, faculty members, staff, other personnel in the campus, and, on certain occasions, even the students' parents who attended the university meetings.

It is the main task of the XCM to build up the spiritual atmosphere and to facilitate the spiritual life of the whole university community. This task is carried out through the four trunks of Campus Ministries: the Regency which provides the priestly link between the Campus Ministers and the different units of the universities; the Chaplaincy which covers all Sacraments and whatever activities take place in the campus chapel; the Retreats and Recollections Section which organizes and follows up the psycho-social-spiritual activities which are intended to facilitate the development of the whole person; and the XU-United Religious Organizations which forms the umbrella office of all recognized religious

organizations that train their members and give opportunities for actual service to others in diverse ways.

The Religious of the Assumption are directly in charge of organizing, facilitating and following up activities regarding retreats and recollections of students, faculty, administrative and office staff members of the university. From time-to-time, other schools or groups in the city and surrounding provinces invite the team to share the same activities with their faculty and staff.

Gradually, as the Sisters become more familiar with the customs, traditions and procedures of the university, they became more adept at organizing groups for different levels of retreats and recollections, both inside and outside the university. There are also many chances of working with other Religious and priest on the diocesan and parochial levels, not only in Cagayan de Oro itself, but in order surrounding towns and provinces as well. Always, the Sisters work as members of the Campus Ministries staff of XU.

As an outflow of these activities, the Sisters participate in the work of the other XCM's trunks. They serve the rest of the university community as guidance counselors during the days when they are not directly giving or facilitating retreats or recollections. Non-Catholics and even non-Christians are welcome to these activities. Many of them voluntarily come for guidance and counseling after the retreats or recollections. In many cases, those who do not sign up for the initial groupings join others after the favorable impression of their friends are shared with them.

The psycho-social-spiritual dynamics that form part of each year level's activities are geared towards building the personal relationship of the participants with the Lord, with others around him, as well as with his own self.

The good number of participants who avail themselves of the Sacraments of Reconciliations and the Eucharist at the end of the day (and thereafter, Sisters hope), as well as the continuous flow of counselees who drop in at the guidance offices of the team members after the retreats and recollections provided concrete evidence of the effect of these attempts to make the life of spirituality concrete and relevant in the lives of people.

The relationship of confidence which develops between the retreatants and the facilitators enables the latter to bridge the gaps or be the links between administrators and faculty between staff and students. It provides an atmosphere wherein the growth of a Christian community is facilitated in the university.

The Religions of the Assumption's spiritual life in the campus is greatly aided by Jesuit spirituality to which the Sisters are much exposed. They have easy access to the Sacraments within the campus and participate in whatever spiritual enrichment the university affords them, in Mindanao itself or in other provinces wherever Jesuit schools are found.

Most of all, they have plenty of opportunity to work, not only with the students, but also with the young professionals in XCM itself as well as those they come in in contact with in the retreat and recollection groups.

After hearing about the Auxiliary Missionaries of the Assumption (AMA) and the work they do in Assumption mission schools, Father Valera requested Sister Inocencia Maria Vigilar to set up a chapter of the AMA under the umbrella of the XCM. A good number of young girls gathered twice a month at the Sisters' residence for meetings, sharings and prayers, and took up a little apostolate among the street children who hang around the university campus.

THE ASSUMPTION CONTINUED to reach out to peoples beyond the Philippines in the 1980s. At the beginning of the decade, the Congregation was given the opportunity to go to Thailand. The decision to establish a foundation in this Southeast Asian country was partly prompted by the realization that as the only Catholic nation in Asia, the Philippines was called upon to share the Good News with its neighbors, the teeming millions who have not as yet heard of it. Pope Paul VI's visit to the Philippines in 1970 and the International Congress sounded another call for the Philippine Province to take an active role in the rest of Asia.

The Asian Mission Congress of 1979 brought three Bishops from Thailand to the Philippines. One of them, Bishop Caretto, brought up the possibility of an Assumption foundation in his diocese. A preliminary exchange of views took place.

At about the same time, several Thai Sisters studying in Saint Louis University in Baguio became good friends with the Assumption Sisters in Crystal Cave. Their friendship began when one of the Thai Sisters lost her luggage upon arrival. The Sisters of San Lorenzo were requested by the Salesian chaplains to help the Thais. This first encounter led to the flowering of a real friendship. Today, the Thai Sisters know they are always welcome to any of the Assumption convents in the Philippines; the Assumption Sisters, in turn, know they always have a home in Thailand.

The first Christian missionary arrived in Thailand about 400 years ago but the first Catholic mission was established only a hundred years later. There are today some 200,000 Thai Catholics out of a population of approximately 50 million. With 10 dioceses, 10 bishops and about 400 priests, the Catholic Church is spread all over the country. Though relatively small, the Church has been making itself known to the public through 230 schools, 10 hospitals, welfare and development organizations and many other activities. Many of its schools are among the best in the country. The Church enjoys satisfactory relations with the government and is well accepted by national and local authorities.

In the eyes of the average Thai, the Catholic Church is rich, powerful and Western. It has not yet succeeded in being properly inculturated although serious efforts towards this end have been made in the last few years. The image remains. The Church seems to care much for its security, searching at the same time for its own identity. The situation is complex.

The possibility of the Assumption establishing a foundation in Thailand started to concretize during the General Plenary Council of 1979 when the Provincials of Asia decided to work on the projects together. On their way home from the Council, Sister Makoto, Provincial of Japan, and Sister Maria Estela Infante, Provincial of the Philippines, passed by Thailand to study the conditions there. It was agreed that the Philippines would assume the new foundation and provide the pioneering Community, while Japan would help financially during the first years. The General Council approved the opening of a foundation in Thailand. It said:

"It is with great joy that we welcome the desire of the Philippines to share their faith with Asia. The foundation of Thailand is for us a sign of hope which concretizes this desire; we are happy that Japan should collaborate in this foundation on the economic level."

After a beautiful liturgical missionary send-off presided over by Bishop Tudtud of Marawi and which took place in the San Lorenzo chapel, Sister Deanna Maria Combong, Sister Mary Cecilia Claparols and Sister Catalina Maria Silva flew to Bangkok in June 1980 accompanied by a Thai Sister of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In Bangkok, they were warmly welcomed by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart. Up to the present, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart reserve one of the rooms in their guest house for the Assumption.

The Assumption Sisters spent their first year in Bangkok attending language school. They lived in a small house within the compound of Don Bosco School run by the Salesian Fathers. All the while, they were searching through prayer and dialogue with Bishop Caretto where they could best be of service to the diocese. Many possibilities within Archdioceses of Surat-thani were presented to them.

As soon as they passed the government examination which qualified them to teach, the Sister left for Surat-thani where they remained for a year teaching English in the School of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and helping in the Diocesan Social Center.

Their next move was to the village of That-thong, about five kilometers from Surat-thani. Here they remained for seven years living in a small house among the villagers. They continued to help at the Diocesan Social Center while working with the people, living hidden and silent among Buddhist and Muslim brothers. This is the Church in Thailand, in Asia where Christians are minority, called upon to be poor, powerless and defenseless.

"Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion is to take off our shoes for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on men's dreams. More seriously still, we may forget that God was there before our arrival."

After seven years, the sisters felt they had begun to understand a little bit more what taking off their shoes meant and implied. More important, they are encountered and discovered God who was there before them.

The Sisters have moved back to Surat-thani, to a newly-erected building of the diocese to take charge of a hostel. They occupy the third floor. The second floor is the hostel for some 20 college students. On the ground floor is a kindergarten run by the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart.

THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING AFRICAN PROVINCE of Kenya-Tanzania has also welcomed Filipino missionaries. Sister Socorro Lee, Sister M. Catalina Montelibano and Sister Mary Fidelis Estrada were in Kenya from 1980 to 1988. Sister Maria Estela Infante is still in Kenya. After her return from East Africa, Sister Mary Fidelis Estrada wrote:

“ I really thought Filipino hospitality as acclaimed by visitors to our country was tops... until I was exposed to African hospitality. The Kenyan and Tanzanian brothers and sisters I lived with consider any visitor a blessing from God, and so anytime is a good time to welcome visitors. Visiting hours do not exist in the tribe I lived with because God's blessing were welcome anytime!

“Furthermore, I did not notice different types of welcome that more or less depended on who the visitors was. The simplicity of life and spontaneity of relationship also struck me. The sense of sharing a common humanity with another, no matter what his color, race or religion, is still very strong among most Kenyans.

“The Face of Christ revealed to me during my time in Kenya was that Son and Brother...inviting all, no matter what creed, color or culture, to recognize in God Our Father, and to see in one another a brother and sister. The small corner of Africa I lived in was certainly far from being 'dark'; many Gospel values, truths are being lived quietly and simply. The Church workers' task is to identify these, together with our Kenyan brothers and sisters, as the seeds of Life and Truth bearing witness to the fact that Christ came so that all 'might have life, and have it to the full.' “

Sister M. Fidelis Estrada has gone back to Africa, this time to Tanzania.

SISTER M. CARMEN REYES' brief interlude in Rwanda completes for the moment the Philippine-Thailand Province's participation in the African missions. She spent three months in that dear country as an educational consultant. Rwanda is a young nation,

struggling to take its place among the many and varied African states. The population is more than 75% Catholic who were evangelized by Belgian missionaries. The young usually alert and eager to come in contact with other peoples. The African's capacity for long suffering and patience are reflected in their meticulously artistic handicraft.

A few years ago, Sister Venantie of Rwanda spent almost a year in San Lorenzo's Cana Community.

DENMARK IS ONE OF TWO SCANDANAVIAN countries where the Assumption is present. Sister Pilar Emmanuel Wijangco has been in Denmark since 1979. She was recently joined by Sister Ana Maria Melocoton.

Sister Pilar Emmanuel's Wijangco's Danish apostolate encompasses the whole of Christian life. Every Saturday afternoon she holds Catechisis for children and for adolescents and prepares them for First Confession and Holy Communion. Home visitations put her in contact with more that 50 Filipino families of migrant workers in for or five adjacent neighborhoods.

Many marriages have been regularized and the baptism of their children attended to. Religious organizations have been set up; as of today there exist a presidium for the Senior Legion of Mary and another one for the Junior Legion of Mary. The Eucharistic Crusaders is open to children who have made their First Holy Communion. Prayers group have also been formed for married couples, for young people, and for teenagers. These meet every two weeks in homes chosen by turns.

Mass attendance on Sunday has grown from five people in 1979 to about two hundred or more today. Liturgical animation on Saturdays and Sundays take the form of dramas and interpretative dances. There is a warm fraternal encounter after Sunday Mass. Days of Recollection and Retreat opportunities are also provided. Even the Wednesday Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help has found its way to Denmark's Filipino community.

SWEDEN, THE LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN, has been Sister Josefa Margarita Derayunan's home since 1984. She wrote about her experiences in her apostolate:

"I too am affected by the stark cold and dark winter months of Sweden. I, too, go into darkness. I feel like the 'deep calling to the deep.' And yet it is that experience in winter time that gives inner strength to my life for the rest of the year.

"It is also Sweden where I experienced Church, a church which consists only of two hundredth percent of a population of eight million. Moreover, the majority of the Catholic population are foreigners: Croatians, Hungarians, Poles, Spanish-speaking Chileans and

Columbians, the different Asians – all the group together. We are aware that the gift we have – One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism – has a corresponding responsibility, which is to work for unity in the one Church of Jesus Christ. We try to take small steps to experience that worshipping God together, socializing and learning together can be more of a pleasurable human experience than a threat. We try to be open to one another, to know each other's culture and to try to enter into the culture of the Church of Sweden."

Sister Mary Joseph Concepcion, who joined Sister Josefa Margarita Derayunan recently, is in charge of a unique apostolate: a book café situated in the church cellar. It is a little center for those who wish to know more about the Christian-Catholic faith, to talk about the great questions of life, or to simply be with others. It is a library where one can borrow or read Christian books and papers. It is also a place where one can have a cup of coffee and have a personal talk with a Sister. The café also sells Catholic books and articles (it is the only Catholic bookshop in the city). It is a very cozy corner, filled with a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Sister Jo will meet you when you come to visit.

ASSUMPTION PHILIPPINE HAS TWO SISTERS in the United States. One, Sister Loreto Eugenia Mapa, is Superior of the Assumption Community in Merion, Pennsylvania. The other, Sister Cecilia Agustina Hervas, is in Worcester, Massachusetts, engaged in campus ministry at the Assumption College of the Assumption Fathers.

Amigos (friends) is the key to understanding Assumption College's Mexico Mission. Since the mid-1980s, over a hundred students and staff from Assumption have spent two weeks during May, living and working among the poor in Mexico. There, either in the high desert country north of Mexico, San Ildefonso village, or in a crowded *colonia* (colony) in *La Ciudad* (The City) itself, San Pedro Martir, Assumption College people have been finding new insights into the gift of friendship.

The Assumption's program includes reflection at the end of each day and the celebration of the Eucharist, usually with the people of the village. The power of community is discovered and experienced, an encounter lead to the discovery of one another and of self.

Some volunteers have gone on to further involvement: one is an Auxiliary Missionary of the Assumption on Argentina, one a Jesuit novice, others are with the Peace Corps working in Appalachia or in the West Indies where the poverty is stark. They all said their experience in Mexico was what inspired them to continue their volunteer work.

"We started with 23 students and now are preparing for 35 people," Sister Cecilia Agustina Hervas said." My problem is having to say 'no' to the growing number of applicants each year."

In addition, Sister Cecilia organizes groups for spring break to do volunteer work in West Philadelphia where Assumption Sisters and the local community collaborate, in New York City where Assumption Fathers serve a Hispanic parish, in East Harlem where the Little Sisters of the Assumption are active, and in the Appalachia in Eastern Kentucky where poverty is depressing.

The Sisters' daily work on campus means being with the students and getting involved in some of their activities in school as well as in liturgical worship. The Community believes that it should introduce the students to a much bigger world, linking them to the needs of today's world.

ASSUMPTION SISTER FROM VARIOUS PARTS of the world are always welcome to the Philippines and to the local Community's hearts and homes. In 1970, the Iloilo Community had the joy of having the first Indian Sisters. Sister Rose Joseph, Sister Therese Immaculate and Sister Agnes Jacob came over to pursue different college courses and stayed with the Iloilo Sisters for the duration of their studies. Much later, two others came for their Juniorate formation: Sister Asha and Sister Aphy who both eventually made their final profession in Antipolo before returning to India. Of her stay in the Philippines, Sister Asha wrote:

"I was indeed struck by the hospitality, sense of belonging and family ties of the Filipinos. In that sense, there is a similarity between the Indians and the Filipinos."

"What I gratefully remember are the tremendous possibilities of learning new things, new skills and new everything under the sky. People are very creative and artistic. There is a sense of art in everything one does. The love for music is an aspect of this."

"In the Assumption, I found that the elderly Sisters were imbued with the spirit of the Mother Foundress. The love of the Foundress was very striking. I found it less and less with the younger generations."

"What I regretted a bit was the tendency to imitate the Western culture in the way of living... and to such an extent of not being aware of the working class people there."

Sister Erika from Scandinavia spent her sabbatical year with the Community in San Simon; Sister Susan of the English Province spent her Juniorate in the country; and Sister Chieko from Japan spent two years with the Iloilo communities.

During the last 15 years, the Philippines has had the grace of having several African Sisters from Kenya and Tanzania in some of the Communities. Sister Anna Sarah recalled during her three-and-a-half years spent with the San Lorenzo Community while pursuing a college course her experience of a loving people, of the international spirit of the Community, her discovery of Mother Marie Eugénie, especially at the moment of her beatification, the spirit of discernment during the period of social unrest and martial law.

Sister Costaricia, now Provincial of East Africa, lived several years with the San Simon Community in Pampanga and relished the living of the traditions of the Congregation. Her own Province is relatively young compared to that of the Philippines.

She was particularly struck by the care with which these traditions were passed on to lay collaborators, friends and students. The experience of a Christian holistic education given to the students of Assumpta technical High School was described by the students, one of whom told her; "What we are now, we owe to Blessed Marie Eugénié and to the Religious of the Assumption. I know you will bring with you the spirit of Assumpta and through you we can multiply a hundredfold."

The Antipolo Community was Sister Victoria's first Asian home. The Filipinos' faith through thick and thin, nourished by persevering prayer at home and in churches which were always open and welcoming, inspired her with courage and hope. Joy amid struggles and difficulties was contagious for Vicky, a joy that had its roots in faith, hope and love. She found the Filipinos very warm and simple. "From time to time," she wrote, "I still sing your song."

The International Juniorate brought Adria to the Philippines where she stayed for two years. She too experienced internationality living in a local Community and was affirmed in her love for her Congregations. In the Philippines, she came to know Marie Eugénié more intimately. Filipino spirituality and devotion to Mary impressed her. She felt very much helped by the psycho-spiritual sessions she was able to participate in, the various lectures and conferences on spirituality, and the community sharings. "It was good to be there: she said, summing up her Philippines experience. God's *kagandahang-loob* shines through all these opportunities provided the Philippine-Thailand Province for universal deepening and growth. As is always true when relating with God, one always receives the hundredfold of what one gives, God really cannot be outdone in graciousness and generosity.

Envisioning....

WE ARE WITNEES TO THE FAITHFUL *KAGANDAHANG LOOB* OF GOD AS THE FUTURE OF THE ASSUMPTION PHILIPPINE-THAILAND PROVINCE CONTINUES TO UNFOLD THROUGH HIS LOVING GOODNESS.

THE FUTURE STILL HAS TO BE LIVED, BUT HE HAS FULLY EMPOWERED US WITH A LAKAS NG LOOB THAT WILL ENABLE US TO *BUHOS-NA-LOOB* STRIVE TO BE HIS KA-LOOB IN ALL THINGS....

Towards Refoundation

1986 – 1992

*Beyond your difficulties in loving,
You can be sure to have the unfailing love of Jesus Christ,
Ho whom nothing daunts, nothing discourages
Nothing stops. Let us go to Him when our love
Runs dry. He will teach us that zeal,
Like love from which it springs,
Never says, 'I have done enough!' "*
- Blessed Marie Eugénie

THE YEAR 1986 marked a turning point in Philippine history. It was the year when “people power” toppled a dictatorship to restore democracy in the country.

The year began with the nation caught in the heat of election fever. President Ferdinand E. Marcos, faced by almost daily demonstrations against his administration, had called for snap election, confident that with all the forces of Government on his side, he would easily win another mandate. He had, after all, unlimited money, machinery, the media. The opposition, at the time when it needed to field its strongest candidate, turned to a simple housewife with no political experience, no campaign organization and no political machinery – Corazon “Cory” Cojuangco Aquino, the widow of the slain Senator Benigno Aquino Jr. Thus were the battle lines drawn.

The civilian population geared itself to ensure an honest election and organized itself into the National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), ready to work, to challenge the might of the dictatorship and to die, if need be, in order to preserve the sanctity of the ballot. The election was held on February 2, 1986 and, despite the presence of foreign observers, including an official American delegation headed by US lawmakers, the Marcos government resorted to massive fraud.

Undaunted, the people continued to press the fight for an honest election. This national effort culminated in the dramatic and heroic walk-out on February 9 of Commission on Elections computer workers who refused to be a party to the tampering of electoral returns. Support from the Catholic Bishop’s Conference came in the form of a pastoral letter condemning the fraudulent polls.

Despite these protest, the Marcos-controlled Batasan Pambansa proclaimed the strongman the victor. Cory responded by convening a “Peoples’ Victory Rally for Civil Disobedience” at the Luneta of February 16. On February 22, Defense Minister Juan Ponce

Enrile and General Fidel V. Ramos, Vice Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, declared a mutiny, announced their non-support for Marcos and asked him to resign. Jaime Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila, upon Enrile's Ramos' request for help, called on the people to gather on EDSA (Epifanio delos Santos Avenue) in front of Camp Aguinaldo, a military camp in the heart of Metro Manila where Enrile and Ramos, together with a small group of soldiers who wanted to reform the armed forces, were holding out.

The crowd that gathered on EDSA soon swelled as Filipinos from all walks of life decided to finally make a stand against the dictatorship. The handful of people who gathered by the gates of Camp Aguinaldo became an army and what started out as a show of support for a band of mutineers grew into the "People Power Revolution." Men and women, young and old, rich and poor, stood shoulder to shoulder for four glorious days with their rosaries and flowers to fight the dictatorship. Armed only with an abiding faced battle-tested soldiers who had guns and tanks. It was a most uneven confrontation. The dreaded military machine of the dictatorship did not stand a chance.

On February 25, 1986, Corazon C. Aquino was sworn into office as the new President of the Philippines. That evening, Ferdinand Marcos his family and his closest entourage, fled from the country. That day Philippine democracy was reborn.

THE ASSUMPTION, constantly one with the people, was profoundly affected by these dramatic events in the country's history. During the last years of the Marcos regime, as the clamor for change became more intense, the Assumption plunged head on into the swirling issues and events. In solidarity with the different sectors of society, the Assumption Sisters, students and alumnae took active part in non-violent rallies, demonstrations, and protests. The alumnae, in particular, organized themselves into an association the named MARIA which stood for Militant and Responsible Involvement of Assumption Alumnae. MARIA was founded to work for the transformation of Philippine society.

For the snap election of 1986, Assumption Sisters, headed by Sister Luz Emmanuel Soriano, students and alumnae all over the country volunteered their services to NAMFREL before, during and after election day. There were instances, as in Passi, Iloilo, where Sisters hugged the ballot boxes as there were transported all the way from the barrios to the municipal center to ensure that there could be no tampering. In Antique, Sisters joined the "NAMFREL Marines," a corps of volunteer poll watchers in critical spots. Sure enough, the tires of their vehicles were punctured to prevent them from reaching their assigned election precincts, still managed to arrive on time for the opening of the polls.

Cardinal Sin's call for "People Power" brought the Sister of San Lorenzo, Antipolo, San Simon and the Novitiate in Mandaluyong to EDSA, all ready to be with the

Filipino people in life or in death. In fact, the Sisters in San Lorenzo made their Act of Reparation and asked for the Superior's blessing before setting off just in case they would not be able to return alive. The more elderly in the community kept the home fires burning in a vigil of prayer. The novices spent the night on the streets. The San Simon congregation came with farmers and brought food for the soldiers at EDSA. A large number of Assumption alumnae also gathered on EDSA, offering food and personal services during those four memorable days. Those were contemplative moments in the country's history; a foretaste of what the Filipinos could be as a people if they lived their Christian Faith as the Gospel bids them to do. The Assumption look back to Mary's dramatic visitation, a distinctive mark of God's *kagandahang-loob* to His Filipino children, humbly grateful, renewed, and with its hope greatly affirmed.

THE PHILIPPINE'S READJUSTMENT to a democratic way of life was not easy and was marked by ups and downs. To add to the difficulty, calamities, both natural and man-made, visited the country. Soldiers, wishing to grab political power for themselves, mounted seven coups against the Aquino government. Each one was crushed by troops who remained loyal to the government but the uncertainties and fears these coups generated held back the country's development.

In the name of national reconciliation and peace, the Assumption became active in the anti-coup d'état multisectoral network – the KATIPUNAN – and initiated and participated in interaction programs with some sectors of the military, whose estrangement from the civilian government brought of the coups and threatened the newly restored democracy.

During the same period, super typhoons hit the country, a killer earthquake devastated Baguio on July 16, 1990, and on June 12, 1991, the volcano, Mount Pinatubo, dormant for 600 years, erupted and buried Central Luzon in ash and lahar – the biggest, most savage eruption the world had seen for centuries.

The Assumption, San Lorenzo and San Simon communities in particular, harnessed all their resources – manpower and material – to aid the victims of these calamities. With God's help, the nation survived and the Filipinos' hope for a brighter future never faltered.

THE FILIPINO NATION has been subjected to a kaleidoscopic history of extreme height and depths in the short span of a decade. After undergoing the tail-end of martial rule, a euphoric EDSA, the shocking coups and nature's wrath, the Filipino people have learned to live with whatever crises may come their way. This was the country's scenario the close of the 1980s when Sister Josefina Magat was placed at the helm of the Assumption Philippine-Thailand Province.

An intensified apostolate, a conscientized studentry, an invigorated academic program and a deepening of the philosophy of education according to Mère Marie Eugénié were thrusts pursued and systematized by Sister Josefina for the Assumption since 1988. God matches the Assumption Provincial Superior's capabilities with the temper of the times. Decisive, determined and democratic, the Provincial Superior continues to guide her Province through paths that lead to greater service for the people of God. Together with her Sisters and lay collaborators, Sister Josefina is ever alert and open the new and better ways of concretizing the Church's option for the poor. This is Assumption's major role for the 1990s.

In conjunction with the thrusts of the Province is Assumption College's vision for the 1990s: a Christ-centered school community celebrating life to the fullest. Sister Fe Emmanuel Beltran assumed the presidency of the college in 1991. She brings to her post an innovative spirit and an orientation towards service and apostolic work.

AS THE ASSUMPTION looks back at its involvement in the recent events that have shaped the country's history, it finds itself asking a question which its founder, Blessed Marie Eugénié, first raised: Can education not start a radical conversion from the most deeply-rooted habits and mental attitudes of present-day society?

For Mother Marie Eugénié, "the earth cannot be place of exile. It is the place of God's glory." She believed in the future of mankind:

"I believe that we are here on earth precisely to work for the coming of the reign of the heavenly Father over us and over all men."

"I believe that Jesus Christ has delivered us from sin to make us free to work so that the Divine Word He brought to us might become a reality."

"I believe that everyone has a mission on earth. To be a Christian is basically not to seek only our own salvation but to seek how God can use us for the spreading of the Gospel and its incarnation in the lives of men."

"There are some who talk of a beautiful utopia. That remark scandalizes me. For who can dare doubt that the goal of the world is the reign of Jesus Christ?"

"To make Jesus Christ known as a liberator and king of the world is for me the beginning and the end of Christian education."

To form men and women so filled with the spirit of Jesus Christ that they could act as leaven in their milieu – this is the tough challenge facing Assumption education today. This *mot d'ordre* of the Foundress, the Assumption has always tried to live in its educational apostolate, but in an increasingly intensified manner, especially during the last 50 years. To do this, Assumption Philippines has adopted various forms of action through the years.

At the root of violent and non-violent struggles in the present day world is the felt absence of values inherent in the very nature of every man, that are not lived. To mention a few, people encounter and experience in varying intensities discrimination in place of equality, injustice instead of justice greed which counts solely on oneself and on material possessions in opposition to detachment from inordinate earthly possessions and power

arising from a full trust in God's Providence, hostility and suspicion instead of fraternal relationship, self-service as against service to others. More can be enumerated, but these are some of the more obvious.

In its varied educational apostolates, Assumption Philippines has adopted some "clear-cut actions in a small sphere" such as:

Prayerful study of Scriptures, especially the Gospels through Bible study sessions, shared prayers, daily morning reflections on the Gospel text of the day, retreats and recollection days. These are part to school's program in which students and faculty are involved. They are also conducted in Community Development Centers for social workers and for lay leaders in their respective communities. Of late, the Affiliates of the Assumption (AFA) has been organized. They, too engage in similar activities.

Catechetical apostolate in public schools and parishes. This is one of the first school apostolates which includes formation of catechists, organizations and supervision of catechetical instruction in public schools or parishes by students and faculty, and lately, facilitating days of recollection and retreats.

Campus ministry at Xavier University. Assumption Sister live and work among the 5,000 youth at the university, accompanying them in their personal, religious and spiritual growth through retreats and recollections, involvement in different religious organizations, counseling, or by just being their friends, gradually leading them to commit themselves to be men and women for others.

The AMA (Auxiliary Missionaries of the Assumption). In 1960, Mother Marie Denyse founded the Auxiliary Missionaries of the Assumption in France in response to the Church's call for lay missionaries. Assumption Philippines initiated AMA among its grade school, high school and college students, sending graduates to Japan, Africa and several Assumption communities in the country.

Iloilo AMA. A group of women in Assumption Iloilo decided to answer God's call to love. The beginnings saw them sharing the Word and praying together. Then they started to organize retreats and days of recollection for their families and friends. The construction of a retreat house also became part of the plan. This project never materialized because the greater concern for the plight of the homeless residents after the big fire in Iloilo in 1966 became the priority undertaking.

AMA membership increased, thus the organization was given a name – AMA, Inc. – and a definite individual character. In 1983, AMA's membership was opened to all – men and women whose involvement may come in the form of providing some kind of support by way of investing time, talent and treasure in the planning, programming, implementation and evaluation of activities in the school and community

In 20 years, AMA, Inc., through close collaboration with the Religious of the Assumption, has turned a helpless community of hapless fire victims into a barrio of residents ceaselessly in dialogue over their problems, threshing these out, looking for and finding solutions to their troubles by themselves, articulate in organizing themselves for better communication and interaction for efficiency in working out project and for effective results.

Looking over the years following Vatican II, the Synod of Bishops held in Rome in 1987 verified how the Holy Spirit continues to renew the youth of the Church and inspires new aspirations toward holiness and the participation of so many lay faithful. For this reason, the Church has given more attention to the young as her active collaborator in the Mission of Jesus Christ by providing them a venue where they can channel their talents, by training them as the apostles of their age and time, and by organizing and directing them toward making an alternative response in a changing society. In line with the spirit of Vatican II, and in answer to the needs of the country, the Assumption in the Philippines has taken this challenged and responded to the call.

In October 1979, a group of college students of Assumption San Lorenzo started helping in the urban poor communities. They regularly immersed with the residents and taught the children of the communities in Pansol, Bayanan, Landless, Malibay and Pandacan. Seeing the need for a venue where Assumption college graduates could concretize their faith through service, the Center for Social Concern of Assumption College organized the AMA Service Program (ASP). With six young graduates and a professor, the ASP was launched in Jun 1989, sending volunteers to Barrio, Obrero, Baguio, Negros, San Simon and Manila for a year of service.

In the summer of 1985, a group of young men and women gathered together for an alumni workshop in Assumption Socio-Education Center (ASEC), a project of AMA, Inc. at Barrio Obrero, Iloilo City. This experience led to a response to a call to serve as volunteers of ASEC, giving birth to a lay missionary program for the youth of the community known as the AMA Volunteer Program. Subsequent years led to a community experience of young lay people who would like to inspire other young people to a vision, a mission and a way of life.

October 1989 saw the gathering of the AMA Service Program of San Lorenzo and the AMA Volunteer Program of Barrio Obrero in mid-year retreat and community experience. The joint sharing lead to a common call to join together as one national body. The first National Assumption Volunteer Program Congress brought together representatives from various service programs of Assumption throughout the country. A decision was made by all to organize as one national Volunteer Program under the guidance of the Religious of the Assumption, Philippine-Thailand Province.

The AMA is a community of young men and women who share a common vision if a transformed society. They work together toward becoming a community of prayer and

service. The community shares in the missionary life of the Assumption Sisters, living the charism of Mother Eugénie by being men and women of faith and action, attuned to the call of their times, in love with freedom, inspired by the Gospel values, their life of faith is deeply rooted in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ and His Church.

The AMA Volunteers Program is an option for service-oriented young professionals who are willing to offer one or two years of service through teaching or community work in different Assumption communities and apostolic ministries of the Church throughout the country. Its main apostolate is the education of the poor and the young. The volunteers wish to form a community of young people committed to freedom, love and the growth of each member; a community where Christ is the center of everyone's life and the person who binds each of the members together despite differences in personalities and backgrounds.

Assumption College Center for Social Concern. The Center for Social Concern was set up in 1975 as a response to the need to adapt college education to the emerging changes in the Philippine social setting. The injustice inherent in existing social structures were becoming increasingly manifest. Grassroots organizing work by community workers resulted in raising the level of political awareness among students and among the marginalized sectors, composed mainly of workers, farmers and fisherfolk. It was swiftly dawning upon the people's consciousness that the relationship between the various sectors showed a definite bias for the elite. Economic and, therefore, political power was in the hands of the top 20 percent of the population who used this power to promote their own vested interest at the expense of the rest of the citizenry.

In addition, the prevailing culture was heavily influenced by consumerism and materialistic values. From the Church, the resounding cry was for true Christians to go back to the Gospel values and to lead the struggle to correct the social injustice. The call was to reach out and to dialogue with the poor and the marginalized victims of these injustices.

It was at this point that Assumption College began to re-assess its curriculum. The cry of the Church echoed precisely the goal that Marie Eugénie had set for Assumption education: the formation of woman who would work for the transformation of society and the realization of God's Kingdom here on earth.

Were the college students being prepared to live their Christianity? Were they being made aware of the seriousness of human existence beyond their own secure milieu? Were the programs awakening in them a sense of justice in the face of the human misery which they have to see?

In order to work for the transformation of her society, the Assumption student would have to understand why the existing social structures were violating the principles of Christianity.

To be impelled to act, she would have to meet face-to-face with the victims of injustice. She could have to experience something of the lives of the majority of her fellow countrymen in order to appreciate their situation: the day-to-day realities which keep them mired in their unfortunate state. To do this, she would have to venture beyond the confines of her secure environment.

If the College was to be faithful to the spirit in which it was founded, if it was to remain true to its *raison d'être*, then it had to find a way to adapt its curriculum to the challenge of the times. Education had to be made relevant and the vehicle for this would be the Center for Social Concern.

At the on set, the Center for Social Concern met innumerable obstacles: the faculty needed to be convinced of the urgency of extending learning beyond the traditional framework; the goal of academic excellence could not be sacrificed; students had to be stirred out of their complacency. In addition, the socio-political climate was very turbulent at the time, The Communist movement was growing. Militarization was increasing. Martial rule had been imposed. Understandably, parents were reluctant to allow their daughter to participate in activities that might threaten their safety or that might be viewed by the authorities as subversive.

A fortunate entry point was provided by the Department of Education when it issued a requirement for students to spend a certain number of hours per school year in civic service. From here, the Center proceeded to find creative means of infusing the curriculum with the spirit of social responsibility.

Those who conceived of the Center and carried it through with faith and perseverance must be credited for what it is now. For today, 15 years after its inception, the Center for Social Concern pulsates with the fervor and dynamism of the young staff members who are themselves products of its program. The clarity of vision and the strength of conviction of those who kept the Center alive during the uphill struggle for the integration of its thrust into the curriculum must be saluted.

Today, it is the faculty who serve as the frontline for initiating student involvement in social work. Parents and alumnae are also becoming collaborators in increasing numbers, students are beginning to express appreciation for opportunities given them to expand their understanding of the world into which they will venture after their graduation.

Today, the challenge has happily evolved from the seeking of acceptance for the Center's program to that of being creative in responding to the increasing demand for social action projects that can be linked to the various academic disciplines.

At present, the Center sustains the following programs:

The Campus Conscientization Program.

- *Exposure trips* – visits to urban poor communities around Metro Manila, institutions for abused women, homes for street children drug rehabilitation centers, centers for juvenile delinquents.
- *Immersion* – living with host families in rural areas for one week or two weeks and providing some form of training when requested by the community.
- *The Integrated Summer Studies Program* – earning up to nine credit units for a six-week module that included two-weeks of immersion in a rural community. The substitution, however, is only applicable to courses which are directly related to the study of social problems.

Catechetics – a project in which students volunteer to teach catechism to elementary school children in nearby public schools.

Relief and Rehabilitation - projects that provide students with a channel for assisting victims of natural calamities.

The Munting Tindahan – a small store near the student lounge which serves as an outlet for the products of the income generating projects of the various Assumption communities.

The Student Volunteer Program – answer the request of students who want to do volunteer work directly with the Center.

Community Extension Program – adoption of the communities of Malibay and Eureka. Projects include livelihood programs, a day care center, housing loan assistance, adult education modules.

AMA Volunteer Program – provides the vehicle for graduates who want to do a year's volunteer work in social development with any of the Assumption communities in the country.

S.E.N.D.(Support Education for National Development) – The founding members of the Assumption College Scholarship Fund (ACSF) was set up by a group of graduating students from batch '92 as a response to the need to promote the education of less privileged youth belonging to the adopted communities of the Assumption College that they had visited in their immersion program. Their exposure to these communities opened their eyes to the need to reach out to others and help improve the quality of life in their respective communities. S.E.N.D. is a fund-raising activity which aims to help the individual members of the communities through education so they can enrich such communities.

Assumption San Lorenzo High School Alay Kapwa Program. True to the call of the Church to “do justice in behalf of the poor” and to Marie Eugénie’s vision of education as a liberating factor for a transformed society, the Assumption High School of San Lorenzo responds through the Alay Kapwa Community Education and Social Action Program, an important dimension of the school’s social orientation.

The high school department is committed to the formation and academic education of girls who come from the upper and middle classes of society. Its clientele come from families with resources. The students are educated from a type of leadership steeped in Christian values and principles so that, after four years, they will be not only academically

prepared to meet the challenge of higher college education but will also be morally equipped with a social conscience.

Because of the students' social status and future level influence, the school tries to widen their sense of community beyond the school, their families and immediate surroundings. Therefore, the curriculum, designed particularly for them, provides structures of linkages with other sectors. The major areas for their outreach experiences are their year level sister communities: Year I – San Juan Nepomuceno School, Malibay, Pasay City; Year II – San Simon, Pampanga: Assumpta Technical High School and *Ugnayan Magsasaka ng San Simon*; Year III – Barrio Obrero Community School in Iloilo (ASEC); and Year IV – St. Martin School, Crystal Cave, Baguio City.

Each year level follows a different module to relate with its sister community and this is integrated with the Alay Kapwa Community Education syllabus. As a subject, Alay Kapwa Community Education is a component of Religious and Values Education which is one of the eight major subject in the high school curriculum.

The majority of the activities experienced by the students in the context of relating with their sister communities is undertaken through the clubs and the Alay Kapwa modules.

The Alay Kapwa Community Center, with faculty, staff and students involvement plans, implements and evaluates students activities.

Teachers and staff members act as co-facilitators and chaperones in the students' exposures and immersions to urban and provincial areas during the school year and during the summer immersions in the Visayas.

Community Development Apostolates have been set up in different parts of the Philippines: the San Simon Integrated Rural Development Program of the Mother Rosa Memorial Foundation, the Maryville Community Development Center in Malibay, Pasay City, the Assumption Socio-Educational Center in Barrio, Obrero, Iloilo City, the Assumption College Extension Service and the Eureka Community. Eureka is a depressed area located at No. 1888 Eureka St., Barangay La Paz in Makati. The Assumption Center for Social Concern has set up with this community a holistic integrated program addressing its economic, social, cultural, spiritual and political needs since 1989.

Assumption Alumnae Association. Long before school guidance programs became established in the educational field as necessary student activities, and long before such guidance programs provided a counselor for every class, the Assumption communities all over the world had already implemented their Mother Foundress' realization that there has to be a way of personalizing education, of reaching each individual and attending to and building upon her uniqueness. If the school is truly entrusted with the aspect of parenthood, then it must somehow, in Mother Marie Eugénie's educational vision, fulfill

certain role of parenthood – character development guide and disciplinarian, confidante, source and objects of affection – all these complementing its mission of educator. Thus, the Assumption school have had traditionally their Mistresses of Class.”

It is no wonder then that Assumption alumnae maintain close ties with the Community, adopting for themselves the unique name of “Old Girls.” The term may amuse strangers to the Assumption family but it speaks of an affection and special relationship between the Assumption and its students that is sustained in the heart and the mind, somehow inexpressible in words.

As far back as 1924, the Old Girls kept their close contact with the community through the leadership of alumnae organized into the Solidarity of the Blessed Virgin Mary with Mrs. Annie Macleod as its president. Alumnae were urged to participate in the Catholic action activities offered by membership in the Catholic Women’s League, the Young Ladies; Association of Charity, the White Cross, the *Cruzada de Amor*, the *Damas de la Caridad de San Vincent de Paul*. Alumnae and the religious community found a strengthening of their affection for each other in working together for the good of their less fortunate fellowmen.

Annual homecoming, fondly called “Old Girls’ Day,” offer alumnae the opportunity to exchange reports on social action activities, *veladas*, news of developments within the Congregation of the Assumption. It is a welcome chance to wear the old uniform again, complete with flat black shoes and socks, to play with their daughters or granddaughters as “fellow students” under the shady trees. “Assumption meat,” sotanghon (a Filipino noodle dish) and memory-nudging “Assumption tarts” have become traditional items in the launch menu for Old Girls’ Day.

The 1950s saw the organization of two alumnae association: the senior alumnae with eight board members and and junior group, composed of post-war graduates, with representatives for each class. Social service activities again were emphasized, and to the list of those already mentioned, were added the Legion of Mary, visitations to and extension of aid to Welfareville, the psychopathic and orthopedic hospitals, the leprosarium and the prisons. Annual retreats were also sponsored for the alumnae.

In 1965, younger Old Girls felt there was a need to organize more formally, and thus the Assumption Alumnae Association came into being. Younger alumnae organized themselves under this name with a constitution and by-laws proposed by Gloria Litton, elected first president of the organization, then senior and junior alumnae agreed there was a need for one overall alumnae association. Thus, a formal merging was agreed upon. Elections were held under the organizing genius of Conchita Sunico, and the first formal Alumnae Association became a reality with Zenaida Quezon Avanceña as president.

At this same time, college alumnae from Herran and later, San Lorenzo, had been keeping in touch also with their beloved Dean, Mother Esperanza. Responding to her

challenge to continue their educational progress and learning beyond their formal school years, they organized themselves into the Milleret de Brou Circle with its twofold aim of intellectual and social development. By 1963, Assumption San Lorenzo High School saw its first class of graduates. These two groups have been formally incorporated into the Alumnae Association.

The Alumnae Association was finally incorporated on August 14, 1988 with the very capable help of lawyer Lila Quirino of High School Class'60. It was named the Assumption Alumnae Association (Manila), Inc. The association publishes quarterly the Assumpta Alumnae Magazine. Finally, in recognition of excellence on a particular field, the association's board decided to confer a Marie Eugenie Outstanding Alumna Award.

PHILIPPINE DEMOCRACY, once more, faced a crucial moment in the May 1992 national and local elections. This time, it was the organized Parish Council for Responsible Voting (PPRV) that rallied the people to the nation's service. Again, Assumption Sisters, students and alumnae gave their all, not only by watching the voting and the canvassing of ballots, but actually manning the precincts when the public school teacher assigned there had to be relieved because of exhaustion. San Lorenzo Assumption also lent its school parlor to the "Quick-Count" volunteers during the week that followed the May election.

THE WORLD NOW STANDS at the threshold of the third millennium. During this century which is coming to a close, tremendous upheavals in every field of human endeavor have been experienced. In the political arena there was the break-up of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the consequent discrediting of Communism. Economically, recession signs are being felt in the capitalist world, in the United States in particular. Socially and culturally, Asia and Africa are now asserting their social and cultural structures. In the area of religion, diverse religious sets have appeared, all appealing to man's desire for fulfillment and his search for the meaning of life.

For those who live in Faith, the Lord of history continues to work even greater marvels, hidden at times, to the naked eye. God's gracious goodness has no equal and is inexhaustible. What will the third millennium bring? This is still subject to many conjectures. One conviction, however, stands clear and definite, although its realization may now necessarily come about during the third millennium. It may still be a long way ahead, but it will definitely take place: the Reign of Jesus Christ.

This justifies Assumption's visioning; why it is concerned with the refoundation of the existing way of life; why it wants to participate fully in this event of events as it moves in a changing world.

Refoundation for the assumption means grasping the profound identity or charism of its Foundress in such a way that if it is able to realize for our time and our society what Marie Eugénié did for her society of the 19th century. Refoundation is more than renewal, more than a mere revival of what was. It is more than adaptation which normally implies dropping some elements of the original and adopting new ones.

Refoundation is a re-definition of one's way of life to be able to give an effective response to the demands of the times. It is faithful to reality – to the reality of the country where one is, of one's people and of one's self; faithful to Jesus Christ and His Gospel so that His supreme liberating act for making attain completion; faithful to Mother Marie Eugénié's vocation and charism which is the restoration of the Gospel in the life of society through education in Faith; faithful to the local Church who shows the way and the broad means to take in the universal task of evangelizing society; and finally, faithful to the historical present, to the here and now as the venue and moment of action.

Concomitant with these five-fold fidelity is the Assumption's unity of life which must be guarded, maintained and fostered – a harmonious way of living out the contemplative, apostolic and community dimensions of the Assumption's daily life – at all times and in every circumstances and situation in which the Congregation finds itself.

A clear concept if the new Model of the Church will prove very invaluable to the Assumption's refounding efforts vis-à-vis the Church of today for it will be a Church that is neither homogeneous nor monolithic, but rather, heterogeneous, understanding human situations born of men and women's limitation and weaknesses; it will be a pluralistic Church, even with contradicting aspects at times because differences are also gifts of God. It will be a Church that is both ideal and real; ideal, because of the dignity of its members – a communion of mutual servants, and is the work of the Holy Spirit – but also real because of the incoherences arising from tensions between the teaching and the acting Church, between the active and the passive Church, between a Church still preoccupied with itself while the world is going through a deep and rapid transformation.

The Assumption's refoundation will certainly be within the context of the Philippines Church. Again, God's *kagandahang-loob* is so timely as it always is. The second Plenary Council of Bishops, Clergy and Laity which took place in 1991, offers very clear guidelines as to the orientation and direction the local Church is taking.

The Philippine Church wants to become truly the Church of the Poor, that is, a Church detached from worldly possessions, relying on Jesus Christ alone; whose leaders have a professional love for the poor and live in solidarity with them; who denounces exploitation of the poor; where the poor are not discriminated against and have the right to receive in abundance the help of spiritual goods; where the poor are evangelizers; who tilts its center of gravity in favor of the needy; and who is willing to follow Jesus Christ through poverty and oppression. How the Religious of the Assumption will enter into this orientation of the Philippines Church which is also of the Congregation's through adopted

at the General Chapter of 1988 is the object of earnest prayer and search, of discernment, of a continuous endeavor to be attuned to the leadings of the Holy Spirit, recognizing this movement as a distinct call of God to the times.

The Council points to Areas of Renewal for the Philippine Church. The Assumption feels committed to those particularly constitutive of its apostolate, like Catechesis, this time, with an accent on inculturation, that is, of inserting the Gospel into the local culture and expressing it through the elements of that culture. This implies a serious study of Philippine culture in the light of Jesus Christ, as Mother Marie Eugénié has always recommended, to be able to recognize and reinforce the presence of the Gospel or the need of purifying the same culture where the Gospel is lacking or absent.

An analysis of structures also reveals sinful structures now in existence, and so the Council strongly recommends a social transformation, also by the light of the Gospel. Mother Marie Eugénié's conviction more than a still holds true and perhaps, more than ever. The urgency of a social conscience, a conscience concerned not solely and exclusively with its own salvation, but rather, with that of everyone is an imperative.

For this, a prayerful and serious study of the social teachings of the Church will bring to light the Assumption's responsibility for the integral development, the respect for the dignity of every man and women, and its obligation to live in solidarity with them. The Assumption shall understand more fully the universal purpose of earthly goods and private property, social justice and love, the value of human work, the integrity of creation and people empowerment. This is a real challenge to the Assumption's apostolate of education.

In the choice of priorities, the Philippine Church's special concerns include those of the Religious of the Assumption: children and youth, women, the poor, the tribal Filipinos.

That the Laity has come of age is a joyful experience with Assumption's collaborators, alumnae, alumni and friends. They now play a leading role in the task of evangelization and transformation of society. It is a real grace for Assumption to support them in their generous endeavors, learn from their experiences, encourage their Christian presence in society and guide them in the search for a lay spirituality.

The country's Catholic institution have undeniably contributed much to keeping alive the Faith in the Philippines, The Plenary Council of the Philippines, however, after serious study, feels the need for some reforms like making religion truly the core of the curriculum, giving special attention to the ongoing Christian formation of the faculty including their exposure to the poor; a clear vision-mission statement; and close coordination with parents.

In the final analysis, Christian witnessing and preaching of the Word is the main means of evangelization. The Eucharist and the Bible remain the centers of Catholic piety. The importance of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Confirmation are to be affirmed.

Value clarification along the lines of justice and charity, preferential love for the poor, dialogue as the Christian way of solving conflicts must be clarified. The urgency of foreign missions awaits stepping up.

The Assumption has re-read God's walking with her, the Assumption and valuable extended family of friends, alumni/alumnae, collaborators, students throughout these one hundred years. She has marveled at His immense bounty and compassion. She has pondered His faithfulness expressed in diversely inconceivable ways, perceived the wealth of resources, especially human, abundantly placed at the service of mankind. For all these, the Assumption offers Him humble and profound gratitude.

The Assumption has also reviewed her commitment to the charism and grace of Blessed Marie Eugénie, re-dedicated herself to living these to the full amid the changing demands of time and situations.

The Assumption has looked into the local Church, studied her calls and concerns to make these her own.

It is within the context of these varied life situations that the Assumption and her collaborators seek to realize the Kingdom of Christ. The challenge is great and momentous. Three lines of action seem to surface in the course of the Assumption's return journey over the hundred years traversed:

- A very strong invitation to take seriously the Congregation's preferential option for the poor and all that this option entails in terms of mission and lifestyle. Again, the Assumption clearly experiences God's *kagandahang-loob* isn't this also a priority of the Philippine Church – to be truly the Church of the poor? God not only inspires, but affirms and facilitates the doing of His will, Man may not clarify once and for all what this call entails. God asks man only to be open and attuned to His Spirit who will lead him from moment to moment, to live in a state of discernment; in other words to live contemplatively.

- An urgency to fidelity, to deepening the contemplative and community dimension of the Assumption's religious life, precisely to be able to respond to the Spirit at work in each Sister and in each Community, to live and act always on the level of faith.

- *Sentire cum ecclesia* - feel with the Church. This has always been at the heart of the Congregation and as Province. Anywhere the Assumption finds herself, she feels bound to help build the local Church.

This is the Assumption's vision. Its concrete expression will vary with the reality she loves and the lead of the Spirit. All those whose lives she touches and whose lives touch hers will be brought into the surprising graciousness of God's untiring accompaniment. The Assumption has every reason to count on it. God's love is more deeply felt at every new experience. In the meantime, together as an Assumption family she endeavors to continue maturing as Christians to arrive at an authentic integrated life so that God can make use of her as an instrument for the establishment of His Region.

In the mind of St. Clare Teresa, the Assumption's present Superior General, refounding means that the Congregation will allow itself to be seized by Christ and to be led by His Spirit. It is a spiritual experience of the love of Christ and of His Gospel, of the love of God for the world and for humanity created and redeemed by Him and which He wants to fill with His life. The Spirit opens each one to Christ and to others, leads one to experience how the Gospel is truly Good News for our times, and how this caring and more in conformity with God's loving design.

This is the Assumption's way of working so that the Kingdom may come. And each one called to bring his or her stone to the edifice.

EPILOGUE

A STORY of *kagandahang-loob* cannot have an epilogue. The experience of High graciousness and goodness is never ending and ever new.

It certainly is not pure coincidence that the Assumption's centennial year open also into new phase of the history of the Church in the Philippines. The refounding call of Assumption's 150th year as a Congregation and of its 100th years in the Philippines coincide almost verbatim with the aspirations and decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines. Truly, it is the Holy Spirit at work, and again, a mark of Gods *kagandahang-loob*. This gives the Assumption assurance, courage and great love.

This, in this centennial year, the Assumption in the Philippines commits itself to the task and challenge of being one with the Church as she strives to become the Church will not only render preferential service to the poor but will practice preferential reliance on the poor in the work of evangelization that embraces the Gospel spirit of poverty which combine detachment from possessions with a profound trust in the Lord as the sole source of salvation.

On its 100th year in the Philippines, the Assumption also commits itself to the tasks and challenge of being one with the Church as she endeavors to become a Church of the People; one that is dedicated to forming and allowing the laity to assume their baptismal responsibility of active communion in the Church, to be one with clergy and the religious in the mission of building the Kingdom within the country and beyond, wherever the Good News still has to be brought; a Church that will truly become a communion, a sign and instrument that will bring about the unity of the entire Filipino nation.

FOUNDATION OF THE PHILIPPINE-THAILAND PROVINCE

SUPERIOR NORMAL SCHOOL FOR WOMEN IN MANILA, 1892 TO 1904

HERRAN, MALATE, 1895-1974

ILOILO, 1910 – present

BAGUIO CITY, MT.PROVINCE, 1911 transferred to: Crystal Cave, Mt. Province: 1964 – present

OSAKA, JAPAN, 1952

SAN JOSE, ANTIQUE, 1955 – present

SAN LORENZO, MAKATI – 1959 – present

SIBALOM, ANTIQUE, 1967 – present

MALIBAY, PASAY CITY – 1968 –present

BO. OBRERO, ILOILO, 1969 –present

PASSI, ILOILO, 1990 – present

SAN SIMON, PAMPANGA, 1970 – present

SANTIAGO, ISABELA, 1974 to 1978

ANTIPOLO, 1975 – present

KADINGILAN, BUKIDNON, 1978 – present

PUERTO RIVAS, BATAAN, 1978 to 1980 present

KAUSWAGAN, 1980 - present

THAILAND, 1980 - present

CAGAYAN DE ORO, Xavier University 1983 - present