

THESIS ABSTRACT

(83)

Title: The History of the Discalced Carmelite Friars in the Philippines Up Until the Birth of the Philippine Commissariat (1947-1977) No. of Pages: 399 379

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Statement of the Problem

Main Problem:

The thesis deals with the missionary beginnings of the Discalced Carmelites friars in the Philippines. The tension between contemplation and action has characterized the history of the Discalced Carmelites as a Religious Order in the Church. The OCD friars in the Philippines had to grapple with the same issue and tension as they engaged in their missionary work in the Philippines. The study generally belongs to the area of Church History.

As the Church embarks on a renewal during the Third Millennium, the need to clarify the apostolic-contemplative role of the Discalced Carmelites in the life of the Church becomes necessary. A survey of the history of the OCD friars and their pastoral involvement in the Philippines, from the beginning of the missions until the creation of the Philippine Commissariat may be of help in this task of renewal. It is within this context that the subsequent study has been undertaken.

Sub-Problems:

Through a study of the history of the OCD friars in the Philippines, the author hopes to arrive at a specific and unique identity of the Filipino Teresian Carmelite. In doing so, it will hopefully provide the Filipino Carmel with an enlightened direction as he collaborates with the Local Churches in the Philippines in the various areas of apostolic service and ministry.

Procedure

The study employs the descriptive method in an effort to present a history of the beginnings of the Filipino Carmel. The author limits the scope of the study by considering only the period when the Teresian Carmelite friars in the Philippines started in 1947, up until the time when the OCD Philippine Commissariat was established in 1977.

Treatment of Data

The study traces the historical roots of the Discalced Carmelites as a Religious Order in the Church up until the creation of the Washington Province in 1947.

Earlier on, different circumscriptions from many countries in Europe had established and founded several mission centers in the United States. Moreover, it also shows that the Washington Province was formed from the fusion of the monasteries coming from the Catalanian and Bavarian province.

The treatment of the data was greatly helped by presenting the operative Theology of the Church and Mission of that period and how the OCD friars in the various mission stations expressed them.

Findings

After the over view of the history of the Discalced Carmelites as a Religious Order, the author proceeds to present the general condition of the Catholic Church in the Philippines after the Second World War. Philippine society and the Church for that matter suffered severe damage due to the Pacific War. Hence, there was a great need to re-organize both its structure and manpower.

Post-war Philippines, with its accompanying task of reconstruction was the context for the Teresian Carmelite friars' beginnings in the country. The Diocese of Lipa, which was among those that continued to reel from the effects of the war, became the preferred site. Thus did the friars initially establish their missionary presence in the towns of Infanta and Baler.

In the beginning, the friars had to contend with various challenges in their respective mission stations primarily: the tropical climate, geography and language; financial, transportation and communication problems that the friars had to contend. Nevertheless, the friars' courage and deep commitment enabled them to serve and deepen the people's faith. The celebration of the sacraments and other church services became more available to the people. Despite their few numbers, the friars extended and expanded their ministry by initiating the catechetical, education and the other ministries.

Eventually, the Discalced Carmelite mission in the Baler-Infanta area was raised to the status of a Prelature. The missionary work of the friars began to expand. As the needs of the new Prelature of Infanta increased, Discalced Carmelite friars from the other provinces came in order to augment the small number of men in the prelature.

Meanwhile, influential Church authorities invited the Discalced Carmelites from the Anglo-Irish province to start a foundation in the country. Thus were the houses in Jaro, Iloilo City and Quezon City established. The friars of the Washington province for their part started a foundation in Bago City, Negros Occidental with the prospect of starting a Retreat House.

The Teresian Carmelites were beginning to expand their presence, not only in the Prelature of Infanta, but also in Western Visayas and in Metro Manila. This development necessitated the integration of the different houses from the different ecclesiastical regions, with their respective apostolates, into a single unified group. This development

paved the way for the creation of the Philippine Commissariat of the Discalced Carmelite friars in 1977.

Conclusion

The study is a modest attempt to provide a descriptive historical survey of the various pastoral ministries of the Discalced Carmelite friars, from both the Washington and the Anglo-Irish provinces, during the early stage of their missionary work in the Philippines.

Since the presence of the friars in the country started within the context of a post-war Philippines, they were confronted with the challenge of being part of the rebuilding and restructuring the Filipino nation and the Church. This was the core and the substance of the early missionary years of the Discalced Carmelite friars in the Philippines. True to the missionary spirit of St. Teresa, and her classic "determinada determinacion", the friars were able to sustain their passion and zeal for the ministry. Even with their limited human and material resources, they were able to cope up with the challenges of the mission and significantly move forward.

Undaunted, the friars confronted the many pastoral challenges in their respective mission stations. In the midst of all these, the contemplative dimension of the Carmelite lifestyle continued to beckon on them. Hence, Regular Observance continued to be a concern even in the missions. The age-old tension between contemplation and action was an ever-present issue.

Due to the tireless efforts of the missionary friars, the Filipino Carmel has been established. At the same time, their zeal, solicitude and concern for God's people have resulted in the creation of praying and prayerful communities and individuals, throughout the many Local Churches in the country.

Recommendation

The study limited itself to a descriptive survey of the history of the Discalced Carmelite friars in the Philippines from 1947-1977. The friars' untiring efforts are no doubt, exemplary. Praying and prayerful communities have been established and they continue to flourish. Pastoral services and initiatives were continuously offered to the people.

Moreover, vocations to the Order as: priests or brothers; cloistered religious or as secular members continued to flourish. It is important to note however, that within the period of thirty years, and of the many reported aspirants to the Order, it only yielded seven (7) priests and one (1) religious brother. Of this number, the first four Filipino Carmelite priests received their formation outside the country. In effect, the formation program of the Discalced Carmelite friars in the country, from the 1960's until 1977 yielded three (3) priests and one (1) religious brother.

In this light, it is necessary to conduct a historical analysis, on the root causes of the difficulties, conflicts and limitations of the friars in the early years of the missions. This may lead to a better understanding of certain realities that continue to be present in the Filipino Carmel today.

Moreover, it is also necessary that a historical survey of the individual houses/monasteries that belong to the Philippine Commissariat be made. It is important to note, that each foundation is an autonomous and a unique entity. Each Carmel then will always have its own unique expression of the Order's charism as it situates itself in a particular Christian community. A history of each individual monastery will provide valuable information of the diversity of the expression of the Order's one charism.