

MANILA PRIORY NEWSLETTER

St. Scholastica's Priory
2560 Leon Guinto Street
Malate, Manila, Philippines

Vol. IV No. 3 May 2014

RELOCATION OF THE MANILA PRIORY HOUSE



NEW PRIORY HOUSE TAGAYTAY

Magallanes Drive, Sta. Rita, Silang Crossing West, 4120 Tagaytay City

It was in October 2011, when the Sisters were gathered to discern the qualities of the to-be elected prioress that the idea of moving the Priory House out of Manila germinated in one of the discussion groups. The idea grew stronger among them and it blossomed into a proposal presented at the 18th Manila Priory Chapter of January 2012.

This proposal generated a lot of discussion. Some Sisters thought the idea was timely when the surrounding of the Priory House was getting noisier and polluted each day and the school's expansion was encroaching into the monastic ambience of the priory. Others were saddened by the thought of leaving the beautiful chapel where many had pronounced their vows or celebrated their jubilees, or witnessed the wake of many beloved Sisters at the close of their earthly journey. Others thought of the tremendous loss that would come about by leaving the proximity of St. Scholastica's College or missing the opportunities to enjoy the cultural shows in Manila.

The discussions went on and on with expressions of nostalgia for the rich history that has surrounded the growth of the Priory House in Leon Guinto against the aspirations of some to find and experience a more suitable monastic environment elsewhere for the benefit of the physical and spiritual well being of the Sisters.

Somebody suggested that we simply go on and explore the idea further and no one should fear a sudden change since it would most probably take ten years before the departure of the Priory House from Manila would become a reality. And so the Priory Chapter created a Task Force to study the relocation of the Priory House and appointed no less than Mother Irene Dabalus, Sr. Mary Thomas Prado, Sr. Ana Maria Raca and Sr. Mary Bellarmine Bernas to spearhead the project.

The Task Force fast tracked their search because two members of the Task Force were

leaving for the General Chapter in Rome. Their enthusiasm for finding a suitable place for the “dream priory” waned gradually as they traveled from one prospective site to another and met with frustration and discouragement. Finally, they concluded that perhaps the Lord did not want the Priory House to leave Manila! They decided to stop the search and spend some time in prayer.

Their prayer was brief and to the point. “God show us the way if You would really want the Manila Priory House to be relocated.” The answer came quickly and unexpectedly. From out of the blue the PIME Fathers who knew nothing of the plans of the Benedictine Sisters told one of them that they were moving out of Tagaytay and would like to sell their seminary to another religious institute who could continue to use it as a house of prayer. The Task Force went quickly to see the place and inquired about the financial requirements for the change of ownership. The Task Force reported their findings to the Priory Government and from them on the PG took over the negotiations.

Meanwhile, various changes decided at the General Chapter 2012 had great consequences on the Manila Priory. Mother Lumen Gloria Dungca (who was elected Prioress of the Manila Priory in January 2012) was elected Vicaress General of the Congregation. Mother Adelaida Ygrubay (who had just finished her term as Vicaress General) was elected Prioress at the 19th Manila Priory Chapter of January 2013.

Since the 19th Priory Chapter of 2013 was primarily an election chapter, the new Prioress, Mother Adelaida Ygrubay, called for a business chapter in April 2013. At this chapter the Task Force

reported officially the result of their search. The capitulars were invited to visit the 10-year old seminary which they found in good condition but needing some renovations to make it a more suitable place for a monastic community with some elderly Sisters. The Priory Government created a finance committee to carry out the negotiations of the sale of the property. This committee composed of Sr. Imelda Halili, Sr. Constance Tecson and Sr. Benita Reyes, presented the rough estimates of the possible cost of the purchase of the property. Finally, the chapter voted to allow the finance committee to continue the negotiation for the acquisition of the PIME property

And now, two years and seven months (not TEN years!) after the proposal to relocate the Priory House, the Sisters of the Manila Priory House are about to write a new page in their history. The PIME property has been purchased and is now officially called the PRIORY HOUSE TAGAYTAY and its renovation is almost complete, thanks to the vigilant and efficient supervision of Sr. Benita Reyes. Two elevator shafts are waiting for the arrival of the new elevator. The 45 self-contained bedrooms are ready for occupancy. A comfortable ramp now links the refectory to the main building. The landscaping of the inner quadrangle and the area around the new Priory House has been started. Two rooms for the archive materials and museum artifacts are going through finishing touches. Cables for Internet connection are being installed. A beautiful and spacious convent awaits the 34 Sisters who are ready to move in. Is this not an exciting event for the Priory?

By: Sr. Mary Bellarmine Bernas, OSB

