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SPC SISTERS' MISSION IN CULION CELEBRATES 110TH ANNIVERSARY

The mission of the St. Paul of Chartres Sisters in Culion marked its 110th foundation anniversary on 25 May 2016. Sr. Lilia Thérèse L. Tolentino, SPC, Provincial Superior, and a number of Sisters from other SPC schools and ministries attended the celebration.

In her address during the Solemn Eucharistic Thanksgiving, Sr. Lilia gave a brief history of the Culion mission:

What a beautiful coincidence that this year, the Jubilee Year of Mercy, we commemorate and celebrate the journey of 110 years of missionary presence of the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres in Culion. Its beginnings and presence through time have been marked by trials and sufferings—segregation, untold loneliness, psychological hopelessness, fire, storm, famine, war, sickness, and death. It is in this heart-breaking scenario where the Sisters of St. Paul have become the visible faces of God's mercy and compassion.



Reverend William J. Wood of the Society of Jesus wrote in the Catholic News of New York the following inspiring portrait of the Sisters of St. Paul at the service of the lepers: "Culion is a leper colony in the Philippines. The Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres have dedicated themselves to the care and nursing of the lepers. I could not name for you any single work of the Missions which is more repulsive, more repugnant... yet more glorious. Lepers, when they reach the advanced stages of the disease, are more helpless than babies. They become blind, deaf, dumb. Their bodies misshapen are covered with ulcers. Priests cannot reach across the chasm of despair, to help them in their final weeks. The Sisters alone through their charity in practice in its purest form---you will find it in Culion. These good Sisters tend and care for the needs of these lepers with such gentle love, caring for them as a mother cares for a child, and in their care bring the message of love across the chasm and into their souls. They need not hear or see—they are aware of that love that love alone can motivate such dedication—and it is the ageless force of Our Lord's love. Almost literally one might say that these Sisters hand a leper's soul into God's hands— they alone could do it."

This touching description of the Sisters speaks most aptly of the prophetic dimension of religious life because the Sisters took the side of God and embraced the alienated, the fragmented, the dehumanized, the forgotten, the least, the lost, and the last. Theirs was a triple transference of Christ, as taught by Bishop Fulton Sheen. It was a physical transference because they became one with the lepers and they had empathy in their engagement; a mental transference because their service to the lepers was a voluntary choice, therefore an ethical choice that was real,

unconditional, and courageous; and a moral transference because they brought newness of life to their patients, creating an ethos that healed and made whole spirits that had been crushed and broken.

The pioneer Sisters—Sr. Sidonie Bureau, the Superior, Sr. Marie du Bon Pasteur Lintot, Sr. Calixte Christen, and Sr. Thérèse de Jesus Fernandez—were the only nurses for the patients in the colony at the start of their ministry. They addressed as well the spiritual, psychological, and social needs of the patients and their families and took care of the education of the children of the lepers. These Sisters and the Sisters who came after them heroically lived out the mission of the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres in the Philippines that Bishop Frederick Rooker gave to the first Community of Sisters in Dumaguete.

In this celebration of remembering and giving thanks, on behalf of the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres, I thank the Lord for the four pioneer Sisters and the Sisters who came after them; for Bishop Ambrose Agius, then Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines, for inviting our Sisters to minister to God’s beloved poor in Culion; for all those who have supported and collaborated with the Sisters in their ministry, especially the Jesuits who would be their missionary partners from the beginning till the present; for Dr. Arturo Cunanan and all medical directors who came before him; for the doctors, nurses, other health care givers, government officials, generous local and foreign benefactors, and friends; and for our past and present Superior General and local SPC communities for their prayers and contributions in various forms and expressions: spiritual, human, material, and financial. I also thank most sincerely our main celebrant and concelebrating priests, the lay ministers, the choir, all of you who have come to this celebration of praise and thanksgiving, and those who would have wanted to be with us now but are unable to for one reason or another.

Today, with only a few lepers left in Culion, the Sisters’ apostolic work has changed. The Congregation has decided to stretch its tents to the inhabitants of the minor surrounding Calamian islands to alleviate their physical and spiritual poverty. Our Sisters missioned in Culion will continue the story and journey beyond our 110 years, “strong in hope,” fired with zeal and tranquil daring to make visible God’s loving mercy and compassion for His poor children. Our holy founder, Father Louis Chauvet, will surely say with pride, “I have no greater blessing than to hear my daughters walk in the truth.”



Sr. Ma. Evangeline L. Anastacio, SPC, SPU Manila President, shares some pictures of their visit to Culion:



Sr. Evangeline (left)
... With Sr. Anunciata



With Sr. Nilda (left)

...Sisters from St. Paul Bocaue

The Sisters have other undertakings in Culion: catechism and functional literacy and livelihood development classes for the Tagbanuas in the islands of Chindonan, Biong, and Bulok-Bulokan, which are part of the Calamianes group of islands. One other undertaking is the collaboration with Loyola College of Culion (LCC). Graduate school faculty members of SPU Manila conduct Teacher Certificate Program (TCP) classes to college graduates of LCC to qualify them to take the Licensure Exam for Teachers (LET), as part of the former's community extension services.



Recently, Fr. Bogs Tapiador, SJ, President of LCC, came to SPU Manila to sign the Memorandum of Agreement renewing the tie-up for the TCP classes.

Photo shows seated: Sr. Evangeline and Fr. Bogs. Standing (L-R): Sr. Angely, Sr. Jesusa, Dr. Reyes, Ms. Aranas, and Sr. Joseline.

ALUMNAE GATHERINGS



Two lunches for balikbayan, Cecilia Reyes-Haynes (HS 1966)

CONDOLENCES

The Paulinian Family condoles with Zenaida Felix-Juanitez (HS 1964) on the death of her husband.

