

On the Collaboration Between Bishop Constant Jurgens, CICM, of the Diocese of Tuguegarao and the Divine Word Missionaries

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Abstract: The article examines the role of Bishop Jurgens, CICM, in the establishment of the first SVD mission seminary in the Philippines and the SVD missionaries' involvement in northern Cagayan parishes in the 1930s. It makes use of various archival sources to recreate the collaboration between the Bishop and the SVD, shedding light 1) on the SVD's decision to take over parishes in northern Cagayan that belonged to the Diocese of Tuguegarao; 2) on the Bishop's assistance in the creation of Christ the King Mission Seminary in New Manila; and 3) on the roles of various individuals and institutions in making the collaboration between the Bishop and the SVDs possible.

Keywords: missionary work, seminary, parish, SVD Missionaries, CICM Missionaries

Introduction

During the incipient years of the *Societas Verbi Divini* (SVD) presence in the Islands, the *Congregatio Immaculatae Cordis Mariae* (CICM) missionaries assisted the SVDs who were still adjusting to their new mission in Abra. One of the CICMs who established a good rapport with the SVDs in the Philippines and who played a major role in the missionary engagement of the

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Society in Cagayan was Bishop Constant Jurgens, CICM, of the Diocese of Tuguegarao.

This article delves into the role of Bishop Jurgens, CICM, in the establishment of the first SVD mission seminary in the Philippines and in the inauguration of SVD missionary engagement in the parishes in northern Cagayan. The researcher engages various archival sources and weaves the conversations in their written form, between the Bishop and the SVD missionaries, into a narrative. It will also shed light on the reasons why the Society of the Divine Word took over parishes in northern Cagayan which belonged to the Diocese of Tuguegarao and why the Bishop supported the establishment of Christ the King Mission Seminary in New Manila. This research also answers the questions relating to the financial assistance which the Bishop extended to the SVD for the realization of the aforementioned enterprise.

Acquisition of a Property in New Manila

Negotiations on the Purchase

With the increasing number of SVDs, the building in Tayuman, Manila could no longer accommodate both the residents and their visiting confreres causing much discomfort among them. The Regional Superior suggested to have another site outside of Manila for the central headquarters of the Society, a printing press and an apostolic school since the Oroquieta property in Tayuman was not big enough for the aforementioned purposes.¹ The SVDs proposed to buy a part of an estate in the outskirts of Manila and wrote a letter to the

¹Buttenbruch to Hagspiel, 20 August 1929, Manila, Provinciate Archives of the Philippine Central Province (PAPHC), Historical Archives (*HA*), vol. Correspondence with Hagspiel.

Generalate about the proposal which the members of the General Council approved. Concerning the proposed purchase of the property, Superior General Fr. Wilhelm Gier wrote to Regional Superior Fr. Theodor Buttenbruch: "I would like to think that this time everything was carefully deliberated upon so as not to have fear of any subsequent disappointment like the previous plans with the large farm. Since you have the necessary money for the purchase of two hectares (for the purpose of a profitable resale), the General Council gladly gives you the requested permission."² The procurator of the Scheut missionaries, Fr. Karel Beurms, CICM, was instrumental in the acquisition of a property in New Manila in 1929, which was situated just across the road from the CICM missionaries' house. He introduced Fr. Buttenbruch to Mr. José Maria Hemady who was the husband of Doña Magdalena Ysmael Hemady, the owner of the Magdalena Estate that included the soon-to-be Seminary property. Together with Bishop Wilhelm Finnemann, who was newly installed as auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Manila, Fr. Buttenbruch made an ocular visit to the site in New Manila. A deal was negotiated with the Magdalena Estate on the purchase of the property.

²Gier to Buttenbruch, 19 October 1929, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. Letters of Superior General I. The quotation is a translation of the German text. The smaller lots were equivalent to two hectares. See also Gier to Hundt, 19 October 1929, Rome, Archivum Generale Societatis Verbi Divini (AGSVD), Archivio Storico (AS), Raccoglitore (R)730:1925-1929. Fr. Gier wrote, „Auch wir alle freuen uns sehr, daß der Kaufvertrag wegen des Geländes in New-Manila gesetzlich abgeschlossen ist. So haben Sie doch einmal festen Boden unter den Füßen und alles andere wird nur mehr eine Frage der Zeit sein.“ See Gier to Hergesheimer, 18 January 1930, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R730:1929-1935. See also Heinrich Hundt to Generalate, 20 August 1929, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. New Manila.

To defray the cost of the land, Fr. Bittenbruch sought financial assistance from the SVDs in the United States. Fr. Bernard Bonk, writing on behalf of the Provincial Superior in the United States, responded to the letter of Fr. Bittenbruch dated 20 August 1929:

I am in entire harmony with the views of Father Provincial to the intent that in sanctioning the request for such a loan as you mention, the Generalate should properly send a written guarantee for such a loan *prior* to its issuance. Otherwise, there is always a good chance for misunderstandings arising, with subsequent difficulties as to the precise placing of responsibilities in the matter. I feel considerable interest and no little satisfaction in observing your intention to look out for and safeguard your future interests; but I am sure that the procedure should be as stated, in order to leave all concerned in a sound position with regard to such a transaction.

In the second place, I must inform you that at the present time we ourselves are unable to secure 5% money, being required just now to pay some little more than that for our own loans. There is a possibility that we may be able, later on, to obtain money at 5%, but cannot at this writing....

The price on the 15 hectares of land appears to be high to us; but you had competent men with you on this matter in the Belgian Scheut Fathers, and of course we can know nothing of the conditions. If the property value is actually *there*, then of course you are secure in paying that amount.³

The members of the Regional Council in the presence of Visitor General Theodor Kost decided on the purchase of the property owned by the Magdalena

³Bonk to Bittenbruch, 1 October 1929, Manila, PAPHC, HA, vol. New Manila.

Estate, Inc., in a meeting on 21 November 1929.⁴ The contract for the acquisition of the property was signed on 2 December 1929. The property of 17 hectares was valued at 320,000.00 pesos excluding 17 smaller lots which were acquired by the SVD for the amount of 84,825.53 pesos. The smaller lots were intended to be resold to prospective buyers. The SVDs tried fundraising campaigns to secure the needed funds for the payment of the land but the donations were not sufficient so they sought the assistance of the SVD Provincialate in Techny, Illinois to procure for them a loan which was suggested by the Generalate in Rome. After the transactions were concluded, the Certificate of Title No. 16575 was transferred to the Society.⁵

Fr. Battenbruch expressed his gratitude to Fr. Gier: “I thank you for having allowed us to buy 17 hectares of land for our central house in New Manila. The purchase has been concluded, and I believe that this center will be a great blessing for our whole mission.”⁶ With the conclusion of the negotiations relating to the purchase, Fr. Heinrich Hundt wrote a letter to Fr. Bonk concerning the loan on 8 March 1930. In his reply Fr. Bonk put his thoughts on the matter in writing:

I am somewhat surprised about your assertion that you expect arrangements for a loan to be agreed upon between us and our general administration in Rome. I have a letter here written from Rome by Father

⁴Regionalrat-Sitzung, 21 November 1929, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. New Manila. The members of the Regional Council were Fr. Theodor Battenbruch, Fr. Michael Hergesheimer, Fr. Philipp Beck and Fr. Heinrich Hundt.

⁵Hemady to Battenbruch, 17 December 1929, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. New Manila.

⁶Battenbruch to Gier, 1 February 1930, Rome, AGSVD, *AS*, R730:1929-1935. The quotation is a translation of the German text. Grendel, “Gesuch um Genehmigung von Landankauf in Manila”, 8 July 1930, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. New Manila.

Grendel in which he states that the Philippines and this our Province here in America first must agree upon details with regard to the loan and then have these arrangements approved of by the Generalate. These are, to my mind, some conflicting statements and since the receipt of the letter from Rome I have waited for some information and some additional suggestions from your side, but did not receive them until now. Even at this time I am at a loss to understand how you wanted to have the loan arranged. It seems from the tenor of your letter that the land is not as yet purchased but that you will have to pay the purchase price when certain conditions are fulfilled, and that you at present hold a contract to buy and pay later on. Since you do not need the money now it would be imprudent to take up a loan for you and invest the money, and only use it then perhaps after a few years when you will be in a position to acquire the land.

As to your loan, you have no other suggestions than that we should get a loan for you at the rate of five percent and reinvest it for ten percent. You will understand that this is simply an impossibility. First of all, if we could so easily get a loan at five percent rate and could with equal ease reinvest it at a ten percent rate that would be a wonderful thing and a remarkable opportunity for us to make money without doing anything. And on the other hand, if we cannot do this for ourselves, how then can we do it for you. Furthermore, a loan for fifteen or twenty years is entirely out of the question. You must be satisfied to get a loan for from five to ten years and then the rate will not be five percent but with all expenses and everything included I do not think that we can make you another proposition than of taking a loan for you at the rate of six percent.

What are your plans of meeting the interest payments; and also the part-payments on the principal. You will understand that we hardly take any loans for lengthy periods unless promise is made to make some

part-payments on the principal during the course of the years... how will you guarantee this payment to us?⁷

Fr. Bittenbruch also dispatched a letter to Fr. Bruno Hagspiel about the property in New Manila: “We found a beautiful terrain in New Manila with the assistance of the procurator of the Scheut missionaries. By the end of this year, the España Road will be built and so a connection will be made between New Manila and Manila: New Manila is situated three kilometers from our present residence at Oroquieta. Before we signed the contract, Fr. Kost and the Most Reverend Bishop Theodor Buddenbrock inspected the terrain and the conditions of the contract.”⁸ Financial woes, however, continued to delay the payment of the property. Concerning the loan, Fr. Bonk wrote another letter to Fr. Hundt,

I have your letter of May 31st, and your statement, regarding the proposed loan, and the amortization of same. I am afraid we shall not be able to give you satisfaction at the present date. Our funds are pretty well tied up, and we would not be able at present to take up another loan of \$150,000. The plan of such is well thought out, only I do not like the idea, as I expressed myself in my previous letter, that we are supposed to get the money at a low rate of interest, and you get a guarantee at the same time that Steyl will pay you a high rate of interest. I know that we have never had that guarantee before.⁹

Although Fr. Bittenbruch was not successful in securing a loan of 150,000 dollars, he was able to obtain a loan of 15,000 dollars from Techny, Illinois. The

⁷Bonk to Hundt, 7 April 1930, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. New Manila.

⁸Bittenbruch to Hagspiel, 31 May 1930, Rome, AGSVD, *AS*, R730:1929-1935. The quotation is a translation of the German text. The Deed of Sale was signed on 2 December 1929.

⁹Bonk to Hundt, 14 July 1930, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. New Manila.

aforementioned amount together with the return of the smaller lots which were bought earlier was used to pay for the first installment of the value of the property.

The contract which was entered into between the SVD and the Magdalena Estate Inc. stipulated a cutback in the price of the property. Representing the Magdalena Estate Inc., Jose Cavanna elaborated on the reduction of the value of the estate:

In connection with the consultation on the obligations of the corporation The Society of the Divine Word to obtain the reduction of PhP20,000.00 in which the clause of the contract of 22nd of December 1929 is contracted between Magdalena Estate Inc. and The Society of the Divine Word, I would like to inform you that according to the tenth paragraph in relation to the thirteenth of said contract, it is required: 1.o That the Magdalena Estate Inc. has not realized to connect the city of Manila with España Street Extension on or before the year 1930 and 2.o Assuming that the aforementioned Extension is not connected with the city of Manila with España Street, the entity The Society of the Divine Word, would have built and finished on 31 December 1930 a residence of strong materials of a value not less than Php 7,000.00 on the date of its construction and the abovementioned house must be 15 meters or more distance from the street. Failure to comply with any of these conditions will forfeit the discount of Php 20,000.00.¹⁰

In order to avail of the discount, the SVDs planned to build a small house before Christmas, so Fr. Bittenbruch and Fr. Hundt could reside there. Two German architects were commissioned to design the site

¹⁰Cavanna to Hergesheimer, 22 November 1930, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. New Manila.

development of the SVD property in New Manila.¹¹ On 24 December 1930 the Philippine Steelhouse, Inc. informed the Regional Superior that the four-room house which was bought on 29 November 1930 was ready for occupancy.¹² In the meanwhile, Mr. Hemady in a frenzied race to complete the road project engaged the services of the inmates of the Bilibid Prison. No discount was in the offing. Architect A. Gabler-Gumbert was asked to make the design for the building which was discussed during the regional council meeting from 14-16 January 1931. However, the proposed Gabler-Gumbert design was very expensive, so the CICMs recommended their civil engineer M. Karolchuck who drafted a blueprint with a more reasonable estimate. Both Fr. Bittenbruch and Mr. Karolchuck signed the contract which covered the construction of the building of the mission house on 28 July 1933.

To provide a temporary accommodation for the community, a workplace made of corrugated sheets was constructed in 1931. As the SVDs finally accomplished putting up their temporary quarters, they awaited the approval of the Generalate for the proposed construction of a mission house. The General Council approved the building of a mission house in New Manila during its meeting on 1 July 1931, bringing joy to the SVDs in the

¹¹Bittenbruch to Gier, 5 December 1930, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R730:1929-1935. Fr. Hergesheimer wrote to Gier: „Nun hat die Gesellschaft auch in Neu Manila neben dem schon beruehmt gewordenen „Stahlhaus“ den Anfang gemacht zu den groesseren Gebaeuden.“ See also Hergesheimer to Gier, 12 May 1931, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R730:1929-1935.

¹²Manager to Bittenbruch, 24 December 1930, PAPHC, HA, vol. New Manila.

Philippines.¹³ With the permission from the Generalate to begin the project, Fr. Bittenbruch, Fr. Michael Hergesheimer and Fr. Heinrich Bürschen gave the green light for the community in New Manila to purchase machines and supplies for the carpentry shop and erect a fence around the property.¹⁴ Nevertheless, as soon as the project was headway, financial constraints began to impede the progress of the undertaking. The Regional Superior sought financial assistance from North America. The SVDs in Techny, Illinois could not obtain the needed loan. Furthermore, the German government imposed financial restrictions on 1 August 1931 that curbed the transfer of funds outside of the country.¹⁵

A Prospective SVD Mission Seminary

Bishop Jurgens was informed about the intention of the Society of the Divine Word to establish a mission seminary in New Manila for the formation of SVD candidates. He paid Fr. Bittenbruch a visit on 1 September 1931 and initiated the negotiations for the establishment of an SVD mission in the Diocese of Tuguegarao in Cagayan. On 20 September 1931, the

¹³Hundt asked for the construction of Kommunitaetshaus, Missionshaus und Kirche. See Hundt to Gier, 21 May 1931. Fr. Colling signed the permission of the Superior General on 1 July 1931. See Colling, *Gesuch um Genehmigung des Generalplanes fuer die Bauten in New Manila*, vol. New Manila. Fr. Hergesheimer wrote to Fr. Gier: „Die amtliche Genehmigung des Baues in Neu Manila ist gluecklich hier angekommen, und P. Rektor Puder hat dafuer das Silentium ausfallen lassen.“ See Hergesheimer to Gier, 3 October 1931, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R730:1929-1935.

¹⁴Bittenbruch, Hergesheimer and Bürschen, 31 December 1931, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. New Manila.

¹⁵Telegram, 25 June 1931, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R730:1929-1935. See also Grendel to Bittenbruch, 31 December 1931, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. Letters of Superior General I.

Bishop visited the SVD Generalate in Rome and discussed with the Superior General the pastoral needs of his diocese. He asked for SVD missionaries to work in Cagayan. Fr. Gier, however, could not make any commitment.¹⁶ When the Bishop came to know about the intention of the SVDs to construct a mission seminary for the formation of Filipino SVDs, he showed particular interest in the project. Bishop Jurgens enraptured by his enthusiasm for the mission seminary narrated what he did for the realization of the venture:

When I arrived in Genoa, coming from the P.I., two of my brothers came to meet me. They desired so much to visit Rome, that I yielded to their invitation and accompanied them. At that time, however, I did not yet take up the matter, because I had decided to place the matter first before our Superior General in Scheut. Although I knew that they could not accept my

¹⁶As Fr. Gier enunciated, „Sie verstehen, daß mir und meinen Konsultoren die bewußte Bitte an und für sich recht ungelegen kam; da wir noch immer in allen Teilen der Welt an so großer Personalnot leiden und gerade die neue Mission in Indien auf Geheiß des Heiligen Stuhles noch dazu übernehmen mußten. Am liebsten hätten wir darum von vorneherein absolut negative geantwortet. Aber der außergewöhnlich günstige Eindruck, den der Bischof machte (so gemütlich und bescheiden, dabei aber ein klarer Kopf und ein Mann voll apostolischen Eifers), und noch mehr die schreiende Notlage, in der er sich mit einem so armseligen Klerus befindet, ließen es uns als Gewissenspflicht erscheinen, zur Erfüllung seiner Bitte zu tun, was uns unter den obwaltenden Verhältnissen möglich ist.“ See Gier to Buttenbruch, 30 November 1931, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R738:1912-1959. Bishop Jurgens wrote, “Twee dagen geleden heb ik ten laatste het decreet der H. Congregatio de Seminariis ontvangen, waarin myn wordt toegestaan myn Seminarie ad decennium te sluiten. Dat deze tyd tot een decennium bepaald is, is geen bezwaar. Het is de gewoonte de H. Congregatie slechts voor een bepaalden tyd verlof te geven, om dus de gelegenheid te hebben na verloop van dien tyd te informeren naar den toestand en dan opnieuw naargelang de omstandigheden verlenging van verlof te geven.” See Jurgens to Gier, 6 January 1932, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R738:1912-1959.

proposal, I wished to do so as a dutiful son of that household.

I returned to Rome about Nov. the 15th. I went first to the V.R. Superior General of your esteemed Congregation. Before going I had prayed much and had asked the prayers of many others. I cannot say how happy I was when your Father General told me that he and his council accepted my proposal. I am sure that you have already received the details about this and that the V.R. Father General has written to you about it. I cannot say how grateful I feel toward God and toward the Society of the Divine Word. God has compassion on the poor souls which He confided to my care and I feel convinced that he will bless our future endeavors most abundantly.

Next I went to the H. Congregation of the Seminaries and exposed my plan of closing [down] the diocesan seminary and of introducing with your help little by little priests of your Society into the parishes, later on also Filipino members of your Society. Although my reasons were very well accepted, although I could give a really sufficient answer to all objections, the final approbation was not given so soon. The H. Congregation wished to know the opinion of His Exc. the Apostolic Delegate of the Philippines and the answer from the Philippines was delayed in some way or the other.

Finally, I went to the Holy Father and explained to His Holiness the situation of my diocese and the present plan. The Holy Father listened very attentively and approved my plan saying: *C'est un tres bon projet* (It is a very good plan). I returned to His Em. Cardinal Bisleti and told him all about the audience. The rescript was now to follow soon; nevertheless, I received this just a couple of days before leaving for the United States.

After having given the permission to close my seminary, the rescript says: *Ad cetera quod attinet Episcopus recurrat ad competentem Sacram R. Congregationem; servatis omnibus de jure servandis*

contrariis quibuscumque minime obstantibus. The Congregation of the Seminaries has of course only to decide in regard to the Seminary and left to the Congregation of the Religious the question that religious accept parishes in some dioceses. Before leaving for America I still wrote about this to your Father General, I also forwarded to him a petition for the Congregation of the Religious, but I suppose that this matter is already settled, as your Society just as our Congregation has already said the permission: you administer parishes in Nueva Segovia, in Manila. Moreover, the Holy Father did approve my plan.

I went twice to the National Director of the Opus Sancti Petri and I am glad to say that he also was very willing to help my diocese. He promised to fix everything and I shall be able to transfer the pensions to the native students of your Apostolic School.

My contract with the Rev. Fathers Dominicans expires at the end of the "cursus". I think it therefore necessary that one of these days I write to them a letter telling them about the decision which has been taken. Let us pray that everything will go off smoothly.

Many details will have to be settled, many difficulties to be solved but I trust in our good Lord, in the help of our Beloved Mother and of Little Flower. I shall stay only a few days in America and hope to sail from San Francisco about February the 8th. Of course, I am most anxious to meet you and trust that you will be in Manila during the days of my arrival.

My dear Father, let us pray much for the success of our undertaking: it is the work of God. It is a beautiful work.¹⁷

Several people wrote letters supporting the initiative of the SVD in the formation of local vocations to the religious life. H. A. Campo, the National Secretary of

¹⁷Jurgens to Battenbruch, 18 January 1932, PAPHC, HA, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in New York in his letter to Fr. Battenbruch, gave considerable emphasis on the effectiveness of fostering missionary vocations in the country: "There must be vocations for the missionary life in such a Catholic country as the Philippines and the sooner there will be zealous native missionary priests, the better it will be for the Church in the Philippines."¹⁸ Cesar Maria Guerrero, who was the Bishop of the Diocese of Lingayen, in his recommendation, testified, "It is the first institution of its kind for our Filipino youth and its need has been long felt. And though the obstacles to this pioneer undertaking will be very great, we thank God that after repeated urgings from the Philippine hierarchy the Society of the Divine Word has courageously set itself to the task."¹⁹ Santiago Sancho, who was the Bishop of the Diocese of Nueva Segovia, also endorsed the SVD enterprise: "I desire to recommend to Your Reverence and to the General Chapter the earliest possible establishment of a Mission House for your Society in Manila, the capital of these Islands, in order that to the sons of this land, the only catholic nation in the orient, a greater impulse may be given for entering the Novitiate of the S.V.D. I promise to work, as far as I can, in behalf of this Mission House, and I bestow a heartfelt blessing upon all who shall assist this cause."²⁰

Fr. Battenbruch expressed his gratitude to Bishop Jurgens for giving his support to the project:

Please accept my sincerest thanks for your letter of June 26th. It is a great encouragement for me and gives me new zeal for our mission school and the labors in

¹⁸Campo to Battenbruch, 7 October 1929, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, Box 40, f. Christ the King Seminary: 1931-1986.

¹⁹Recommendation letter of Bishop Guerrero, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, Box 40, f. Christ the King Seminary: 1931-1986.

²⁰Sancho to Gier, 16 June 1932, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, Box 40, f. Christ the King Seminary: 1931-1986.

Your diocese. Your Excellency has no idea how my soul is engrossed with the mission school idea. Oftentimes thoughts come to discourage me as if this project could not be carried through [on] account of the depression. But with the help of Your Excellency, it can be carried out. I can but approve of Your suggestion that Your Excellency write a letter to the Holy Father asking for a loan for this undertaking. We do not need further sanction for such a loan from our General, for we already have his permission, but the permission stipulates that the rate of interest may not be over 5%.

A loan granted us by, or through our Holy Father, would be a great stimulus for us, and it would also move our General Council to grant us such funds as might yet be lacking after receiving such a loan, and it would also be an inducement for them to grant Your Excellency the requested personnel for your diocese.

I can but answer “yes”, do write to the Holy Father for a loan, and I would here mention, would it be possible to obtain a written recommendation of the Holy Father himself for our mission school? I could well make use of such a recommendation in making propaganda for our undertaking.

I also wrote Your Excellency from Vigan asking for your own recommendation in writing with a photograph. Would Your Excellency please furnish me such recommendation?

Our Regional Council here has decided that I should sail for Rome on July 4th in order that I might present our plans and need to our Father General anew, before our General Chapter convenes. In Rome, I will insist on keeping the agreement of our Society with Your Excellency, to send you one S.V.D. Father yet this year. When our General Council learns of Your Excellency’s interest and endeavors for our New Manila undertaking, I am sure that they will reciprocate and carry out their agreement.”²¹

²¹Buddenbruch to Jurgens, 1 July 1932, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

Bishop Jurgens was a staunch advocate of the venture: “For my own part I pledge you all the aid that in me lies, knowing as I do that this is a work of the greatest concern for the Catholic Church in the Philippines. Your Mission House shall certainly be a challenge a trumpet call that shall awaken many a vocation.”²² Peter Joseph Hurth who was bishop emeritus of the Diocese of Nueva Segovia wrote,

It is high time: that such a Mission seminary be founded in this archipelago, so that in the near future, Filipino religious priests may also labor at the front for Holy Mother Church: that well-trained and properly educated native missionaries fill the gaps of the many orphaned parishes throughout the Islands: that missionaries may be raised up amongst this people, and of this people, who will labor incessantly that the inheritance of the true Faith, which through 300 years of arduous labors the Spanish religious missionaries brought to great prime, may be retained for this people, for the enemies of our Holy Faith are but too numerous.

It is also to be desired that Filipino religious missionaries go out to the great heathen nations of the Orient, to China and Japan. The Blessings for such enterprise and sacrifices would be strengthening of the Faith in the homeland; the Church would grow stronger; would be better able to withstand attacks and storms that may yet come over it; be better able to cope with the situation, should it ever come to pass that Europe and America be unable or prevented from sending further missionaries to these shores.

Therefore I cannot but bless this bold undertaking of erecting the first Mission House in the Philippines, and

²²Jurgens to Battenbruch, 5 July 1932, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, Box 40, f. Christ the King Seminary: 1931-1986.

beg God to grant it abundant success.²³

To reinforce the establishment of a mission seminary, Archbishop Michael James O'Doherty of Manila pointed out the conspicuous lack of Filipino membership in the Religious Orders: "I may add that the paucity of Filipino vocations is more marked in the Religious Orders than among the ranks of the Secular Clergy."²⁴

Financial Constraints

The Philippine Region at that time did not have the financial resources to defray the cost of the construction of the building as well as to pay the Hemadys the remaining balance of the value of the property. The Regional Superior sought the help of the Provincial Superior of the North American Province. Fr. Hagspiel could not lend a hand. He threw light on the financial crisis in the United States during this period:

You, in the Philippines, have no idea in what a miserable financial and economic condition the U.S. is since last September. I have written about [the] affairs here so frequently to different parts of the world that I am already sick of it; much you, no doubt, must have read in the papers. As to the loan of \$100,000, that we tried to secure for you, let me say the following: In the months of August and September, we were practically sure there would be no difficulty whatever in obtaining a loan of one hundred thousand dollars for you and of twenty thousand dollars for Monsignor Reiners in Nagoya. We tried, however, to get this total amount as

²³Recommendation letter of Archbishop Peter Joseph Hurth, 3 August 1932, Manila, PAPHC, HA, Box 40, f. Christ the King Seminary: 1931-1986. After his retirement, Peter Joseph Hurth was conferred the Titular Archbishop of Bosra.

²⁴O'Doherty to Battenbruch, Feast of the Transfiguration 1932, Manila, PAPHC, HA, Box 40, f. Christ the King Seminary: 1931-1986.

a loan, pure and simple, without any mortgage on any of our properties which so far are free from the burden of mortgage, which of course, gives us a wonderful credit in the financial world. As time went on, we found it harder and harder to obtain any big amount whatever and so finally we came to the conclusion that we could get this big loan only by taking at least a mortgage on the property at Techny. Of course we had to have permission from Rome for this purpose and we got it after a protracted correspondence, but only for \$200,000, which we found, we could not accept whatever, because if we only took a mortgage of \$200,000 on our big property, it would be impossible later on, in case of need and distress, to get a second mortgage of a much bigger amount on the same property... in the meantime we had been working for a mortgage loan and here to our great consternation and disappointment, we had to find out that absolutely no money could be had ... for the simple reason that the banks don't have the money nor is it possible to get a sufficiently great amount from individuals (the rich are bankrupt or suffered otherwise tremendous reverses). We simply have to face now the abnormal conditions that under the prevailing circumstances it is impossible to get a decent loan on such a favorable mortgage proposition as ours actually is. In other words, not until this abnormal depression period will be over.... Never in our lives have we experienced such conditions as they now exist. In Chicago alone, we have even now some 637,000 unemployed; in Chicago and Cook County included; we had over ninety bank failures, and there is no telling how much misery has come upon the people because of them.²⁵

In the meanwhile, Bishop Jurgens informed Fr. Bittenbruch about his plans concerning the eventual closure of the Seminary in Tuguegarao:

²⁵Hagspiel to Bittenbruch, 27 January 1932, Manila, PAPHC, HA, vol. New Manila.

I have announced the decision about the future closing of the Seminary to the priests of the Diocese and to the Seminarians. As far as I can judge at present, the news has been accepted well. Of course, I expect to meet with difficulties, but I trust in God's providence who has guided me so sensibly.

You can imagine that I am very anxious to have a long talk with you and I would be glad to know when it will be possible for you to come to Tuguegarao. I trust that you will not postpone this so long, not until you will make a short survey of the Diocese. Even a visit of one day would do a lot of good. I would come myself to you, but you know, how impossible for me at present. We have to talk over the loan and many other things.²⁶

In view of the financial difficulties, Fr. Bittenbruch made an earnest request to the Generalate: "Fr. Rector Bürschen still asks especially your help so that we can soon build a mission house in New Manila. The vocations are waiting for the opening of this house. It is a large sum of money that we are asking, but it is for the highest duties for the Church, and the promise we have given Bishop Jurgens that drives us to initiate the mission house. The plans are ready, the terrain is there, what is needed is money."²⁷ To work out a solution to the financial hurdles, the regional superior also sought the assistance of the SVDs in the United States, but to no avail because of the ongoing economic depression.

The Bishop dropped a line to Fr. Bittenbruch and informed him about the closure of the Seminary which was administered by the Dominicans:

I quite understand that it was impossible for you to come to Tuguegarao, as I had so much desired, and I do

²⁶Jurgens to Bittenbruch, 25 March 1932, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

²⁷Bittenbruch to Gier and the Members of the General Council, 30 March 1932, Rome, AGSVD, *AS*, R738:1912-1959. The quotation is a translation of the German text.

appreciate your willingness of coming as soon as possible. You will be free to come after the 28th. I shall be most pleased as we have to talk over many things. I plan to give a retreat for the High School girls of Tuguegarao and surroundings, starting on the eve of the 27 and terminating on the morning of the first of May. If it is convenient for you, I should be glad to see you here on the evening of the 30th.

It is very probable that I will continue the minor Seminary for one year in Tuguegarao. The rev. Father Professors requested me to continue the Seminary at least for some time. The news of the future closure of the Seminary had come so suddenly and they also expressed the hope that the College of San Jacinto for lay students might be reopened if the Superiors had more time for preparation. After having received indirectly the approval of the Superiors of the Order regarding these proposals, I have expressed my willingness to do so and am waiting for the definite answer.

I shall be glad to have your visit and am looking forward to it. Do you plan to see some parishes in the North?²⁸

The Bishop also mentioned the reason of the closure of the minor seminary in his diocese: "I began with the implementation of my plan to reform the clergy as the first step in relation to the future establishment of the S.V.D. apostolic school that I announced the closure of my seminary."²⁹ Fr. Battenbruch was still worried about the finances. Waging an almost desperate solution to

²⁸Jurgens to Battenbruch, 17 April 1932, PAPHC, HA, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

²⁹Jurgens to Gier, 16 May 1932, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R738:1912-1959. The quotation is a translation of the Dutch text. Bishop Jurgens wrote, "[D]it is een allerprachtigst werk welk ryke vruchten zal dragen. Inlandsche religieuze priesters zyn hier noodig en hun invloed zal groot zyn op de seculiere priesters." See Jurgens to Gier, 16 May 1932.

the fiscal crisis, he sent a telegram to the Generalate: “Techny cabled financing impossible hundred twenty thousand dollars needed immediately otherwise court proceedings have answered Techny.”³⁰ In response to the appeal of the Regional Superior concerning the financial problem, the Generalate made the recommendation to secure a loan with the Oroquieta property as mortgage. Bishop Jurgens also expressed his concern. As a gesture of support to the project of the SVDs, he proposed that the Society should try Msgr. Wilhelmus Marinus Bekkers, the Director of the Opus Sancti Petri in the Netherlands (Pontifical Work of St. Peter the Apostle which supported the formation of seminarians, novices, clergy and religious all over the world) in order to make a loan for the undertaking in New Manila, and the Bishop sent him a letter in this regard.

Meanwhile, Mr. Jose Maria Hemady of the Magdalena Estate complained about the delay of the payments: “The amount could not be paid during January, and you promised again by February, then March, and then April, and every time you made your promises, we transmitted same to the Philippine National Bank who, it seems, got tired of waiting and finally decided to take the matter to court if the amount is not paid before the 20th of the present month. As stated above, we have requested the Bank to delay any action until the money is received during this month.”³¹ In the meantime, Fr. Bittenbruch left for Tuguegarao on 11 May 1932 to meet Bishop Jurgens and requested him to obtain a loan in the Netherlands to be used for

³⁰Theodor Bittenbruch, Telegram, 17 May 1932, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. New Manila.

³¹Hemady to Bittenbruch, 18 May 1932, Rome, AGSVD, *AS*, R730:1929-1935. The Philippine National Bank issued the Hemadys a loan with the SVD New Manila land as mortgage.

the erection of a mission seminary in the Philippines with the Catholic Trade School in Oroquieta as mortgage.³² On 27 June 1932, the Generalate sent a cable informing the Regional that because of financial restrictions, it was impossible to obtain money from Europe.³³

Concerning the needed money to finance the construction of the building, Bishop Jurgens made an offer to help: "I shall write from Bayombong to my brother about the same matter: the only thing which preoccupies my mind is that shares have gone down so much in value and that it is therefore so much harder to put up a guarantee."³⁴ He once again corresponded with Fr. Battenbruch and offered a glint of hope:

Your letter was forwarded to me and I received it on the first of this month; as my answer could no more reach father Superior while he was still in the Philippines, I sent the letter of recommendation to his address in Rome. Yes, indeed, I recommend this work most heartily, as I am convinced that it will yield the best fruits for the Church in the Philippines. For my own diocese I regard it as a work of greatest importance and of real necessity. While I was in Naguilian I had written a letter to Father Superior and had proposed him to request the loan for the Missionhouse from the Holy Father himself. A couple of days I received his answer and I am very glad that he accepts my proposal so enthusiastically. Deus providebit. We meet all kinds of obstacles, but God will help us out, this work will materialize. Immediately after my return to Tuguegarao I shall write the letter to the Holy Father, who was so heartily in favor of my plans and I trust that Holy Providence will take care of the rest. I shall

³²Battenbruch to Jurgens, 27 May 1932, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

³³Telegram, 27 June 1932, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. New Manila.

³⁴Jurgens to Gier, 5 July 1932, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R738:1912-1959.

request Msgr. Eras to present the letter to His Holiness. Let us pray and ask St. Teresita to show her mighty intercession.

I am glad that the Tuguegarao seminarians made a general good impression. May the last retreat bear excellent fruits. I shall go, Deo volente, to Vigan during the last part of August, as I am anxious to talk over many details with his Exc. the Bishop and with the Fathers in charge. I regret not to be able to talk with you personally.

Be sure, dear Father, that my prayers accompany you on your voyage and that I especially recommend the interests of the General Chapter to the Holy Ghost. I trust that you will be back soon in our beloved Philippines.³⁵

On the Collaboration with Bishop Constant Jurgens

Superior General Gier informed Fr. Bürschen about the visit of Bishop Jurgens: "Msgr. Jurgens was four or five times here with me and expounded in detail the need of his diocese. I could not give him a binding promise for the very pressing lack of personnel everywhere."³⁶ A positive response to the request of the Bishop was given in 1932. With this development, new commitments for the expansion of the SVD mission were in prospect.³⁷ In his letter to Fr. Hergesheimer, Fr.

³⁵Jurgens to Bittenbruch, 14 July 1932, PAPHC, HA, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

³⁶Gier to Bürschen, 12 January 1932, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R736:1924-1975. The quotation is a translation of the German text.

³⁷Fr. Gier wrote, „So fangen Sie jetzt allmählich an, in Freuden zu ernten, was die sel. PP. Beckert und Scheiermann in Pilar und auch noch die Missionare der folgenden Jahre mit Tränen ausgesät haben. Wie ganz anders sieht sich doch jetzt die Arbeit unserer Mitbrüder auf den Philippinen an als damals, wo wir auf einige arme Dörfer in Abra beschränkt waren!“ Gier to Bürschen, 12 January 1932.

Gier also informed him about the visits of Bishop Jurgens to the Generalate: "I also had very thorough discussions with Msgr. Jurgens five times and then I gave him in writing, at his request, what we can and will do to fulfill his wishes. He was very happy with it. I will send a copy to Reverend Fr. Superior and I hope that he will also be happy with it. God willing, we will send you this year 7 new priests: 2 from Techny, 2 from Argentina and 3 from St. Gabriel."³⁸

While Bishop Jurgens showed interest in the establishment of the mission house, Fr. Bittenbruch disclosed that help for Bishop Jurgens was promised under three conditions: "Bishop Jurgens wanted to have help at once. I told him that I could give him help under three conditions: a) that we have to fill in our need in the S.V.D. work in the Philippines first b) that Reverend Fr. Superior General sends us extra personnel for the work in the Diocese of Tuguegarao c) that we can build the S.V.D. mission house in Manila."³⁹ Bishop Jurgens expressed the urgency of his request: "I got no answer yet on my letter wherein I requested the help of two priests of your Society for this year. I asked answer by cable. I trust that you will do all your best to obtain this at once. You realize the difficulty of my position. I would like to show to my priests that what I have said is true and that your Society accepted my proposals as it really

³⁸Gier to Hergesheimer, 24 February 1932, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R730:1929-1935. The quotation is a translation of the German text. Concerning the encounter with Bishop Jurgens, Fr. Gier recounted, „Msgr. Jurgens kam oft zu uns und machte einen vortrefflichen Eindruck, so einfach und gemütlich und dabei sehr intelligent und von apostolischem Eifer erfüllt, man merkte immer wieder klar, er weiß, was er will und es kommt ihm nur darauf an, durch Hebung seines armen Klerus die anvertrauten Seelen zu retten.“ See Gier to Hergesheimer, 24 February 1932.

³⁹Bittenbruch to Gier, 19 March 1932, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R730:1929-1935. The quotation is a translation of the German text.

did. Please help me, I need them so badly. I again trust that you will work hard for the two brothers who are able to do cement construction work; it is another crying need. Please, do your very best. My present Pastoral Visit convinces me more and more that the diocese is one of the very finest missionfields in the world.”⁴⁰ Fr. Bittenbruch requested Bishop Jurgens to secure a loan for the Society because the prospective mission seminary would provide missionaries for the SVD missions to be established in the Diocese of Tuguegarao. Bishop Jurgens already showed interest for the request and told the regional superior that he would write to his brothers about it. In the meantime, Fr. Gier notified the Bishop that he would appoint SVDs in 1932, and the regional superior could then assign some of them to the Diocese of Tuguegarao.⁴¹

Bishop Jurgens once again expressed his interest in the establishment of the Mission House:

On the first of this month I received the letter of father B[ü]rschen together with the letter of recommendation for the Mission House. As you were leaving on the second of this month my letter could no more reach you and I send this to Rome. How heartily do I recommend this undertaking! I have again three young priests under investigation for immorality and I fear much that the charges will be true. It is heartrending and a reform through the formation of

⁴⁰Jurgens to Gier, 5 July 1932, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R738:1912-1959.

⁴¹Fr. Gier wrote, “Quapropter coactum me video, in illa persistere sententia, quam Excellentiae Vestrae proposui in litteris Romae datis die 30 Novembris superioris anni. ‘Si Deus voluerit, anno 1932 itemque singulis annis sequentibus sex vel septem sacerdotes novelli in Philippinas dirigentur. Ex quorum numero si Superior Regionalis potuerit et voluerit quosdam Excellentiae Vestrae assignare, libenter consentimus.’” See Gier to Jurgens, 24 June 1932, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R730:1929-1935.

religious priests is absolutely necessary; I am convinced that it is the effective means to better conditions.⁴²

Bishop Jurgens pointed out what would be the role of religious priests in his Diocese:

When I look at my Diocese, I am firmly convinced that religious priests who are formed in your Society, will be the measure for the reform of my clergy. With a bleeding heart, I have to admit to you that the reform is absolutely necessary. Unfortunately, many of the younger priests follow the poor example of the elderly [priests] and, although the elderly [priests] have returned from their bad ways, this is all the reason that the people have largely lost their reverence and trust for their priests. The only way to improve this situation and win thousands and thousands of souls for God is the formation of religious priests. The spiritual formation during the novitiate, the vigilance and guidance of older confreres later during the ministry will accomplish this with God's mercy.⁴³

On that same day, Bishop Jurgens penned a letter to Fr. Bittenbruch:

The original letter I sent to Monsignor Eras, Rector of the Collegio Olandese, procurator of the Dutch Bishops and my friend. He lives in Via Salvator Rosa, San Saba, not far from the house of your Society. Please go and visit him. I did not explain to the Holy Father the details, the conditions of the loan, but referred to you. Neither did I request a letter of recommendation because it did not fit in so well with my letter, but I requested Msgr. Eras to ask this to the Holy Father.

I made a letter for my brother, making proposals about the security for the loan in regard with my

⁴²Jurgens to Gier, 5 July 1932.

⁴³Jurgens to Hoogetwaarde Algemeene Overste en zeer eerwaarde Leden von het Kapittel de Societeit Verbi Divini, 6 August 1932, PAPHC, HA, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao. The quotation is a translation of the Dutch text.

personal capital, but I am sorry to say that after mature deliberation I did not send it. You will not doubt my most hearty interest in the realization of the Mission House: it is my first intention in all my prayers, and I would be willing, if needed, to make any reasonable sacrifice for its realization, but my own capital is not so large. Had I not invested, prior to our plans, so much in connection with the College of the Sisters in New Manila, I could perhaps find a way, but when I looked at the remainder of my capital together with the depreciation of the shares, it seems impossible to arrange this with my brother with one simple letter and not without writing and answering and writing again. Moreover, the loan is a long-term loan and I would hereby tie up my capital for more than my lifetime and be unable to do other works. You will understand that this is not unwillingness, *procul absit*.⁴⁴

Bishop Jurgens also sent a letter supporting the project: “After praying I have come to the following conclusions: the missionhouse is the will of God: the repeated declarations of the Holy Father indicate this clearly; so then we must carry that out as far as we can possibly do so. It seems impossible to obtain a loan in Europe and America, therefore I will personally grant the loan as far as I possibly can do.”⁴⁵ In another letter he wrote, “My dear Father, I feel convinced that God is with us and that your Society will do an immense good if it carries out the wish, the command of the Holy Father. I am so grateful to God for your determination to carry out this splendid work.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴Jurgens to Bittenbruch, 6 August 1932, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

⁴⁵Jurgens to Bittenbruch, 1 December 1932, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

⁴⁶Jurgens to Bittenbruch, 5 December 1932, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

The desperate need to secure financial assistance to pay off the remaining balance of the land was further aggravated by the Philippine National Bank's insistence on the payments on the part of the Society. In the meanwhile, Fr. Bittenbruch wrote to the German Currency Control Commission in Berlin with a recommendation from the German consulate in Manila. He mentioned this course of action in his letter to Mr. Hemady: "Now, may I ask you, to wait for the answer of the Currency Control Commission and according to the reply and favor, this Commission would give us to export money from Germany, I would place the allowance in your hand. As long as I do not receive from the Currency Control Commission I cannot give you a date when I could pay my debts to you. The P.N. Bank ought to have an understanding of the 'force majeure' of the situation of Germany as well as in many other nations. The Society of the Divine Word is able to pay and being a religious Society, she will pay, but we should take into consideration the very abnormal times."⁴⁷ Fr. Bittenbruch dispatched a letter to the Superior General about his concern if an immediate remedy was not conceived:

It is frightening that the National Bank is pursuing us in writing. The last one [letter] is dated 2 January 193[3]: 'We feel we have waited long enough for the settlement of this account, and unless specific arrangements are made for its liquidation in the earlier part of next year, we believe we shall be justified in foreclosing the mortgage executed in your favor on December 2, 1929 and assigned to this bank on July 31, 1931.' We have to pay the interest to Mr. [José Maria] Hemady on 15 May.... I am writing this matter today because I cannot often sleep when I think of the great

⁴⁷Bittenbruch to Hemady, 7 January 1933, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. New Manila.

responsibility and of the consequences if we do not pay the interest on 15 May.⁴⁸

The situation had worsened as expressed by Fr. Hergesheimer in a letter to Fr. Grendel:

It is regrettable that Mr. Hemady has lost his confidence in the SVD: so many promises, letters, cable messages, and at the end of last year, an offer of the method of payment to the bank in Germany; and this does not seem to work. Unfortunately, he does not believe us anymore. Fr. Regional Bittenbruch is now a persona non grata by this man and his wife, Gemahlin the Doña Magdalena [Ysmael Hemady], has already been hostile to him from the beginning when Fr. Superior built the famous 'steel house' in a frantic race to have ₱20,000 cancelled from the contract. He lost. Resentment, however, remains in these people. We must now rightly be ashamed to set our eyes on them.⁴⁹

The foregoing financial concern disturbed the Regional Superior. To encourage him, the Bishop remarked that "financial reasons hold us back to put up the Mission House-building, but we can start the Mission House, that is to say the formation of a religious clergy, the extension of your Society for the Filipinos: I am willing to buy the Seminary of Tuguegarao and offer it to your Society in order to use it temporarily as their Mission House."⁵⁰ Fr. Hagspiel could not offer financial assistance: "It would be a pity indeed if you had to give up New Manila completely. Is it really not the will of God that we should keep it? We have prayed and

⁴⁸Bittenbruch to Grendel, 8 January 1933, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R730:1929-1935. The quotation is a translation of the German text.

⁴⁹Hergesheimer to Grendel, 18 February 1933, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R730:1929-1935. The quotation is a translation of the German text.

⁵⁰Jurgens to Bittenbruch, 20 February 1933, Manila, PAPHC, HA, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

worked to the best of our ability to get a big loan here, not only to help ourselves but you likewise, but all our efforts were in vain and will most probably remain in vain along these lines.”⁵¹ When the creditors, however, saw that a building was being constructed in the property, they could not believe that the Society did not have the money to pay them.

Mr. Rafael Corpus, President of the Philippine National Bank, sent a dispatch to the Regional Superior: “We have a report from the Magdalena Estate, Inc. to the effect that your account with them for the purpose of a big tract of land in New Manila covered by document of sale dated April 10, 1931, is very much overdue as shown by the attached statement. As this account has been assigned to us by the Magdalena Estate, Inc., we are writing this to request you to advise us when we may expect payment of this account.”⁵² Failure to pay the bank meant foreclosure of the mortgage within two weeks. As a consequence, the Society would not only lose the property in New Manila but also the Catholic Trade School in Manila. Fr. Hagspiel held out to the Regional Superior a flicker of hope:

I think I have some good news for you. You know that Frank Murphy, the former mayor of Detroit, was appointed the new Governor General of the Philippines. Two days before he left Detroit for the Islands I succeeded in getting an appointment with him through the intervention of Bishop Gallagher and his chancery in Detroit.... Mr. Murphy is a real Irishman, only forty years old, and single; he's known as a splendid orator and a quick, efficient worker. As I was introduced to him by His Excellency's secretary, Mr. Hill, a

⁵¹Hagspiel to Bittenbruch, 1 May 1933, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. Correspondence with Hagspiel.

⁵²Corpus to Bittenbruch, 3 May 1933, Rome, AGSVD, *AS*, R730:1929-1935.

Protestant, (but one of the finer type of Protestants), I presented to His Excellency a copy of my book on the Philippines, which he said he would read on his trip to Manila, and told him briefly on the work of our missionaries and of our Society in the Islands.⁵³

In his letter to Fr. Hagspiel, Governor General Frank Murphy wrote, "I want you to know of my appreciation of your visit to Detroit and of my real regret that I was so busy that it was impossible for me to have more time with you. I realize that you went a great deal of trouble to see me and I am honestly sorry that our interview was so brief.... [I] shall look forward to the letter you said you would write me presenting your problem in detail. You may be sure that I wish to co-operate in every way that I can."⁵⁴ Meanwhile, Bishop Jurgens informed Fr. Battenbruch about the loan amounting to ₱60,000 which he obtained from the Netherlands. He immediately notified him about it and instructed him to send a copy of the prescribed mortgage together with the draft of the proposed agreements between him and the Society. The Bishop was also informed about the situation between the Society and Mr. Hemady who was not satisfied with the explanation concerning the foreign exchange ban which was imposed by the German government. Mr. Hemady insisted on his demands and indirectly threatened that he would press charges against the Society. Bishop Jurgens came to the rescue.

The Regional Council decided to accept the loan from the bishop with the condition to use the amount of ₱33,000 to pay the Philippine National Bank. The

⁵³Hagspiel to Battenbruch, 17 May 1933, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. Correspondence with Hagspiel.

⁵⁴See Murphy to Hagspiel, 27 May 1933, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. Correspondence with Hagspiel. Frank Murphy (1891-1949) from Michigan was Catholic. He was the mayor of Detroit before he became the Governor General of the Philippines (1933-1935).

bishop, upon learning that Fr. Bittenbruch returned from Europe on 9 May 1933, inquired whether the latter received the money from the Netherlands. Fr. Bittenbruch wrote, “The good bishop, who had promised his money *only* for the *Mission House*, gave [the loan] after a long hesitation. And so we could pay the interest and satisfy our creditors first.”⁵⁵ Bishop Jurgens met with Mr. Hemady and agreed that 33,000 pesos of his money – which was meant for the house – be used to pay the creditors.

The bishop also inquired whether the construction of the building began already: “I am anxious to write to the Holy Father and thus to give him joy. Most hearty thanks for your prayers during the novena to the Holy Ghost and in return I wish to assure you that the Mission House and the Noviciate [*sic*] are the daily object of my prayers.”⁵⁶ As the financial worries continued to hound him, Fr. Bittenbruch dispatched a letter to the Bishop: “Altho’ I should feel ashamed, I frankly decided to come again to Your Excellency to get your blessing and final help. There is no other way, and no other person who could really bring this project to a fact than your Excellency. Your Excellency pushed the work going to our Superior General and asking the Holy Father for His approval; and then when we found the tremendous difficulties with securing the building funds, we again received your help and my private audience with His holiness who commended me to build the Missionhouse as the most important work in the P.I., this again I owe it to Your Excellency. So I feel

⁵⁵Bittenbruch to the Generalate, 12 July 1933, Manfred Müller Papers (MMPs). The quotation is a translation of the German text.

⁵⁶Jurgens to Bittenbruch, 7 June 1933, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R738:1912-1959.

confident that you will grant us this great and last favor.”⁵⁷

Fr. Bittenbruch knew full well that the realization of the project depended on the Generalate in Rome: “Although the building fund is covered by borrowing and by our current revenue, the start of the construction depends on the conditions which only the Generalate can meet, that is, the grant can only be guaranteed by Rome. The solution to our financial crises is subject to the fulfillment of these conditions.”⁵⁸ Fr. Bittenbruch conveyed the gravity of the situation:

These sources will continue to remain closed to us as it was unfortunately the case for more than a year, so a financial catastrophe in our Region is inevitable whether we build or not because by a negative decision we have to repay the money to Msgr. Jurgens and we do not know how to prevent bankruptcy without foreign help. As stated above, the terrible seriousness of our situation is clear and we would like on behalf of all confreres in the Philippines to kindly request the Generalate to prevent, through extraordinary help, a bankruptcy that would destroy a major part of the work in the past 25 years.⁵⁹

The Regional Council held a meeting in New Manila from 10-13 July and decided unanimously that the proposed construction of a mission house would also become the central house of the Society.⁶⁰ The transfer of the central house of the Society from Oroquieta to

⁵⁷Bittenbruch to Jurgens, 23 June 1933, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

⁵⁸Bittenbruch to the Members of the General Council, 12 July 1933, MMPs. The quotation is a translation of the German text.

⁵⁹Bittenbruch to the Members of the General Council, 12 July 1933. The quotation is a translation of the German text.

⁶⁰Bittenbruch to the Members of the General Council, 12 July 1933.

New Manila was recommended for the following reasons:

1. For three years now, the expensive property, which also spends so much interest annually, remains useless.
2. Our Society here in the Philippines with fifty priests and fifteen brothers necessarily needs a central house for the growing community, for confreres who travel and a place where new missionaries can stay to prepare themselves for missionary work. Our buildings in Manila and New Manila are unfortunately too small and inappropriate for a religious community. No religious Order stands so poor with respect to housing like the members of the SVD. It is a fact that it is a constant threat to the good spirit and religious life.
3. The central house will be connected with the mission house which the highest ecclesiastical authority (Pope Pius XI [Ambrogio Damiano Achille Ratti]) described as our most important task in the Philippines.
4. Our relationship with Bishop Jurgens compels us to fulfill our promise in the near future.
5. We should take advantage of the current circumstances and the reasonable prices of building materials.⁶¹

On 27 July 1933, Fr. Bittenbruch wrote to Mr. Hemady on the construction of the building,

With this letter I am going to write you some confidential information about our Seminary building which I promised you to start very soon. Since I paid a visit to you and Mrs. Hemady, I tried to come to an agreement with our German Architect. But the estimate of the building costs was too high and I decided to postpone the project. Then, I was called to Tuguegarao and you know very well how interested the Right Reverend Bishop Jurgens is in this institution. He advised me to change the architect and give the building to Mr. Karolschuck, who is working on the Belgian church of Paco at present. This new architect

⁶¹Bittenbruch to the Members of the General Council, 12 July 1933. The quotation is a translation of the German text.

then worked out other plans of a much cheaper estimate. Bishop Jurgens urges me to start the building immediately. But I remember that I would show you our plans and to give you an opportunity to bid on the building. Although Mr. Karolschuck is very interested to be the contractor for this seminary, I would like to comply with my promise and ask you to give me your estimate. I enclose herewith the plans and specifications. I am satisfied with a rough estimate and I would ask you to rush your answer, as I have to decide the building bids tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock, i.e., July 28, 1933.⁶²

The financial worries of the Regional Superior were far from over. Even the North American Province of the Society could not provide financial support.⁶³ On 4 August 1933, the construction of the building of the mission seminary began with the SVD Brothers taking a major role. Br. Arnulf Rademacher supervised the work. The furnishings were taken care of by Br. Richard (Heinrich Hütte). Fr. Bürschen acknowledged the invaluable contribution of Bishop Jurgens in the realization of the undertaking: "It is a happy double blessing that the procure of the Belgian Fathers, where Bishop Jurgens stays when he comes to Manila, is just across from our mission house which is still under construction and so he can see his 'life's work', which he has put so much hope, and hear the chants of the SVD seminarians

⁶²Buttenbruch to Hemady, 27 July 1933, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. New Manila.

⁶³Grendel to Buttenbruch, 27 July 1933, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. Letters of Superior General II.

from his room.”⁶⁴

How to get the needed financial support for the ongoing project was still a major concern for the Regional Superior. Fr. Bittenbruch was told to make a request to the Opus Sancti Petri (Pontifical Work of St. Peter the Apostle) in Rome. In his letter to Bishop Jurgens, he wrote,

Your Excellency would expect from me the request for a recommendation letter for the Holy Father or for the Cardinal [Carlo] Salotti, the president of the Opus Sancti Petri in Rome, which I mentioned in Manila to you. But, I thought it over and I agree to the suggestion of your Excellency to write, first for information to Msgr. Eras, asking him how to proceed in order to gain result from the Opus Sancti Petri. I would remain very grateful to you if you would do this favor for me. A Mission Seminary is, and will remain a great financial burden and we should secure a financial basis in order to have the blessing and result with this so very important enterprise. As far as I know, the Opus Sancti Petri does not require security-papers as the banks do; here it is the Bishop in whom they place all their confidence. And as I have the approval of the highest Superior of our Society, therefore the Bishop would not endanger himself, to head this loan for the mentioned purpose.

Here I come with my great request. Would your Excellency not be willing to try this way in order to secure the loan? It would mean for me the greatest blessing and I would be free from the great heavy financial burden. And we could throw open the doors of the Mission Seminary, even to the poorest boy, in order

⁶⁴Bürschen to Grendel, 6 August 1933, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R736:1924-1975. The quotation is a translation of the German text. Bishop Jurgens supported the establishment of a mission house by allowing his own seminarians who opted to join the Society of the Divine Word to enter the SVD seminary. See Jurgens to Bittenbruch, 30 September 1933, Manila, PAPHC, HA, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

to educate him and make him a religious priest. It would mean that we would have a financially sound basis for the whole enterprise.⁶⁵

In the meanwhile, K.H. Hemady, who owned the estate which was purchased by the SVDs, wrote to Fr. Buttenbruch,

I have just received a letter from the Philippine National Bank, enclosing a copy of a letter received by them from the Deutsche Bank Und Disconto-Gesellschaft, Filiale Hamburg, in which they stated that there are no foreign exchange regulations existing at present in Germany which forbid the entry and disposal of U.S. dollars on free accounts of foreigners held in Germany. So it shows clearly that if your Rev. Superior General Father Josef Grendel send the money from Rome to the Deutsche Bank Und Disconto-Gesellschaft Filiale Hamburg, there will be no trouble in disposing of the money in favor of the Philippine National Bank of Manila.⁶⁶

True to his word, Bishop Jurgens secured a loan to defray the cost of the ongoing building project. He transmitted his reply to the letter of Fr. Buttenbruch:

Please find herewith enclosed a cheque of ₱6000 – a loan to pay your obligations with the architect, etc. It would be good to send soon the receipt of this amount, expressing the conditions under which it was received; also for the former ₱20,000. It is pleasant when such things suffer no delay then our books keep in order.

With regard to your request for what possible help I could give with respect to a loan from Opus St. Petri or other sources, I am of course most willing, but I see

⁶⁵Buttenbruch to Jurgens, 14 November 1933, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R738:1912-1959.

⁶⁶Hemady to Buttenbruch, 17 November 1933, PAPHC, HA, vol. New Manila.

several difficulties: nevertheless let us place our full confidence in Divine Providence.⁶⁷

Fr. Bittenbruch and Fr. Georg Puder signed a document concerning the loan of P26,000.00: "I, the undersigned superior of the Society of the Divine Word in the Philippines, declare herewith, that I received P26,000 from his Excellency, the right Rev. C. Jurgens as a loan, under the following conditions. The P6,000 I received at the end of the month of November and I promise to return this P6,000 in the month of July of 1934 and pay 3% interest. The P20,000 I received at the end of October and I promised to return this P20,000 after three years and pay 7% interest.⁶⁸ In another letter Hemady further mentioned some information from the Deutsche Bank relating to the transfer of money:

We have yesterday received another letter from the Philippine National Bank, enclosing a letter which they just received from the Deutsche Bank Und Disconto-Gesellschaft Filiale Hamburg, which we copy as follows: 'Dear Sirs: Further to our letter of October 10, 1933, we beg to inform you that we received today a letter of the Reverend Superior General Father Joseph Grendel in reply to ours of Oct. 10, stating that he was quite aware of the possibility to pay in Dollar – amounts with us for

⁶⁷Jurgens to Bittenbruch, 20 November 1933, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R738:1912-1959. Fr. Grendel had this to say about Bishop Jurgens: „An Msgr. Jurgens lege ich Ihnen einige Zeilen bei; wollen Sie ihm dieselben bitte übermitteln. Überaus freue ich mich, dass Sie mit dem Hochst. Herrn so gut bekannt geworden sind, und dass er soviel Vertrauen und Wohlwollen für unsere Mitbrüder dort hat. Er ist ein überaus klarer und kluger Kopf und ein Mann von höchster Energie, wie ich selber wahrgenommen habe, wie er hier war. Für seine Hilfe in finanzieller Beziehung können wir ihm nicht dankbar genug sein.“ See Grendel to Bittenbruch, 2 March 1934, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R730:1929-1935.

⁶⁸Bittenbruch and Puder to Jurgens, 10 December 1933, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

your account without restrictions, but that there are no Dollar amounts at his disposal. In case, the payments for their independent province on the Philippine Islands could be effected only in Reichsmarks. Such remittances in favor of foreign accounts, however, are only allowed, according to present legislation, with special consent of the German Currency Control Commission.'

If the only obstacle to obtain a special consent of the German Currency Control Commission in Germany is the foregoing reason, we think that your Rev. Father Superior General Joseph Grendel can obtain same by stating the important reason that more than P200,000.00 had been invested in the land and building, and in order to avoid the loss of this amount, the balance should be paid. This is a very important reason which, in our belief, would not be overlooked by the German Currency Control Commission.⁶⁹

Fr. Bittenbruch explained the underlying circumstances which brought about the delay of payments:

In answer to your inquiry, I wish to state that there is no restriction for the banks of Germany to accept money from foreign countries, but the Government laid an embargo on money leaving Germany.

You are well-informed, that we belong to the Society of the Divine Word with the financial resources in Germany. The headquarters of the Society are stationed in Rome, as this is the custom in the Roman Catholic Church to have the headquarters of religious orders in the Eternal City.

It is, probably, a misunderstanding on the part of the bank, that they forgot that we have our resources in Germany and that we are bound by law, not to send our

⁶⁹Hemady to Bittenbruch, 24 November 1933, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. New Manila.

money out of Germany in order to pay you the debt for the property in New Manila.⁷⁰

The remaining balance of the property was not yet fully paid, and Mr. Hemady informed Fr. Bittenbruch about an imminent foreclosure of the mortgage: “We are in receipt of a letter from the Philippine National Bank, reading in part as follows: ‘We feel we have waited long enough for the settlement of this account, and unless specific arrangements are made for its liquidation in the earlier part of next year, we believe we shall be justified in foreclosing the mortgage executed in your favour on December 2, 1929, and assigned to this bank on July 31, 1931.’”⁷¹ In the meanwhile, the construction of the building was underway. Fr. Bittenbruch gave an account of the progress of the work:

The building goes on nicely, and I am assured that we can begin the Missionhouse next June. The only difficulty is the floor slab. As the Good Shepherd Sisters complained so much about the sinking of the filling of their house, I rather prefer to have a first class reinforced slab placed into our building. This slab will stand any weight and I think this is very important for an institution of learning. The architect made the estimate for this work and figured the expenses at P16,000. This is too much for me and I will leave the ground floor in natural condition and have the second and third floor ready for use next June. The ground floor has to wait until a benefactor will send me the P16,000.⁷²

⁷⁰Bittenbruch to Hemady, 7 December 1933, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. New Manila.

⁷¹Hemady to Bittenbruch, 2 January 1934, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. New Manila.

⁷²Bittenbruch to Jurgens, 16 February 1934, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

Through his classmate at St. Wendel in Germany, Fr. Hugo Bücking, Fr. Bittenbruch tried to get a loan in France but was rebuked by the Superior General. Mr. Hemady forewarned Fr. Bittenbruch that the President of the Philippine National Bank would hand the papers to the lawyers if arrangements for the liquidation of the account were not made by the end of the month. He further advised the Regional Superior, "As you can see, the Bank has now definitely decided to hand the papers to their attorneys unless a substantial payment is made by you on or before the end of the present month. Therefore, we earnestly request that at least ₱100,000.00 be paid within the next two weeks in order to avoid court proceedings which will cost you not less than 25,000.00 for attorney's fees."⁷³ A telegram was dispatched to Rome: "Bank presses two week payment threatens foreclosure personal interview president granted two months help immediately letter follows."⁷⁴ Since the Regional Superior was not in Manila at that time, Fr. Josef Klekamp answered the letter of Mr. Hemady:

As Very Rev. Father Superior is at present in Abra on his official visit I am answering your letter in his name. Referring to our conversation and the visit we made to the President of the Philippine National Bank, I want to state once more that there is no way to get money out of Germany and that we tried every possibility that seemed to exist, but [to] no avail.

Furthermore, I want to state that [until now it] was impossible to secure a loan in one of the European countries or in the States due to the fact that we can offer only securities which are within the boundaries of Germany. We ourselves surely are interested more than anyone else in such a loan as such, a loan if it could

⁷³Hemady to Bittenbruch, 14 April 1934, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R730:1929-1935.

⁷⁴Telegram, 17 April 1934, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R730:1929-1935.

only be procured would hardly cost us more than six percent interest and might even be as low as four percent.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned facts we received a letter from our headquarters at Rome that they intended to start negotiations [anew] to secure a loan in Holland. This letter we received about ten days ago. But as I stated in our conversation I do not think [there is] sufficient time to bring these negotiations to a successful end if the Bank does not grant 2-3 months more. In accordance with our conversation I cabled to Rome as follows: BANK PRESSES TWO WEEK PAYMENT THREATENS FORECLOSURE PERSONAL INTERVIEW PRESIDENT GRANTED TWO MONTHS HELP IMMEDIATELY LETTER FOLLOWS.⁷⁵

Notwithstanding the financial worries of the Regional Superior, Fr. Bruno Hagspiel in his letter to Fr. Bittenbruch put in a good word for the latter's efforts: "How glad I am to know that your central of the S.V.D. is progressing. You have undertaken the whole building operation, because the Holy Father told you to do so, and thus we all hope and pray that God's blessing be and remain upon it."⁷⁶

⁷⁵Klekamp to Hemady, 17 April 1934, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. New Manila. Germany imposed stringent currency controls that impeded the transfer of money from Germany to other countries. This measure greatly affected the missions of the SVD around the world because Germany was the main source of the funding for the missions of the Society.

⁷⁶Hagspiel to Bittenbruch, 19 April 1934, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. Correspondence with Hagspiel.

Intervention of Gov. General Frank Murphy

In a letter to the President of the Philippine National Bank, Fr. Battenbruch gave the reasons for the delay of the payment of the property:

The Society of the Divine Word obliged itself by contract to pay Mr. Hemady for the property bought in New Manila [in the amount of] 210,000 [pesos] on December 2, 1931. Up to this date the mentioned Society is unable to comply with the contract and the greatest obstacle is the Currency Control Commission established in Germany since 1931. This Currency Control Commission does not allow any German citizen to withdraw from his bank money to be sent into a foreign country unless it be used up for his living support only and it may not exceed the amount of 200 marks monthly. This Currency Control [Commission] does not allow [the] transfer [of] money of a German citizen from the deposit of his bank in favor of your correspondent bank in Hamburg. This restriction law prevents us, up to this date, to pay our obligations.⁷⁷

After giving details of the reasons why the Society could not fulfill its obligations, Fr. Battenbruch proposed the following: “1) to try to get a loan from Holland. Our Very Rev. Superior General residing in Rome, Italy is still working for a loan in our favor and has good hopes to reach a successful conclusion. 2) I, the Superior of the Society, sent an official request, together with a recommendation of the German Consul of this City, to the President of the Currency Control Commission at Berlin, Germany in order to get a special permission to withdraw from our bank in Germany the

⁷⁷Buttenbruch to the President of the Philippine National Bank, 27 April 1934, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. New Manila. The total price of the property was 320,000.00 pesos. The first installment was paid in the amount of 110,000.00, hence the balance of 210,000.00

money needed to cover our debts. If all our efforts fail, then, I promise: 1) to pay regularly, as I did in the past, the interest of the capital of P210,000. 2) to begin with paying off the capital, i.e., P25,000.00 yearly, beginning the 1st of July of 1935.”⁷⁸ This situation prompted Fr. Bittenbruch to have recourse to Governor General Frank Murphy who at that time was recuperating in Baguio City. The Regional Superior, accompanied by Fr. Bürschen, paid the Governor General a visit in order to make an appeal. He had this to say about the encounter:

But what fear I had to put up with. The [Philippine] National Bank really wanted to impound us. I received a letter from the Bank with the condition: either pay or in 14 days I will bring the matter to court. What should I do now? Then I remembered your conversation and the letter from the Governor General. I received these orders in Baguio, and Governor Murphy was also in Baguio. I, together with Fr. Bürschen, went to see him – it was said that he was not feeling well – and yet we were received at 5:30 P.M. He lay in bed and wanted to help us. I showed him first his letter which he wrote to you on the ship. And then I showed him the letter from the Bank. At the spur of the moment, he said to me: ‘Father, I am not the Director of the Bank; but I tell you, you go to the Secretary of Finance and tell him that I sent you to arrange this matter with the Bank.’ Then he told me that he would see the Secretary on the following Friday and he would then personally recommend our cause. ‘Be rest assured I shall help you.’ These words still ring in my ears.⁷⁹

⁷⁸Bittenbruch to President of the Philippine National Bank, 27 April 1934, vol. New Manila.

⁷⁹Bittenbruch to Hagspiel, 15 May 1934, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R730:1929-1935. The quotation is a translation of the German text. Fr. Bürschen also narrated the same encounter with the Governor General in his letter to the Superior General. See Bürschen to Grendel, 22 May 1934, MMPs. Fr. Bürschen wrote, „Hemady schuldet der Bank u. hat auf unsere Versprechen u. Schulden hin sein Geld von der Bank erhalten, das die Bank heraushaben will.

After their meeting with the Governor General, Fr. Bittenbruch entered into an agreement with the Finance Secretary, who was also the Chairman of the Board of the Philippine National Bank, to pay the interest on 15 May 1934 and to pay ₱25,000 for the succeeding years. The Society also had to pay the 8% interest. The Secretary agreed, but he asked the Regional Superior to secure a loan, which he did. The Director of the Bank had already received the approval from the highest authority, and he was very friendly and took the same conditions which Fr. Bittenbruch had agreed upon with the Finance Secretary. Fr. Bittenbruch could only express a sigh of relief: "I was relieved from a heavy burden. And I am very grateful to you for your great help because you have enabled us to establish a connection with the Governor General. We will be inviting the whole family of the Governor General during the blessing and inauguration which will take place in October."⁸⁰ Governor General Murphy visited Christ the King Mission Seminary on 6 January 1935. The Society finally paid the Philippine National Bank the remainder of its debt during the Second World War.⁸¹

Wenn Hemady es nicht aufbringen kann, dann greift er zum Aeussersten u. geht zum Gerichte von der Bank getrieben. Die Drohungen sind ja schon alt, die bald von der Bank bald von Hemady kamen; aber vor einem Monat wurden sie so drohend, dass je ein Kabel u. Brief das nachher berichtet haben. P. Regional u. Ich nahmen dann unsere Zuflucht zur hoechsten Autoritaet zum Generalgovernor Frank Murphy; der Gott sei dank ein praktischer guter Katholik ist u. der Kirche hilft wo er nur kann." See Bürschen to Grendel, 22 May 1934.

⁸⁰Bittenbruch to Hagspiel, 15 May 1934, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R730:1929-1935. The quotation is a translation of the German text.

⁸¹See Müller, *The Founding of Christ the King Mission Seminary*, 124n.

SVD Missionary Engagement in Cagayan

Fr. Battenbruch in his competency as Regional Superior sought for the realization of the establishment of a seminary for the formation of Filipino SVD candidates by requesting the authorization of the Superior General. After receiving the necessary permission, his next concern was how to obtain the necessary funding for the acquisition of a property in New Manila as well as how to defray the cost of the construction of the building. Bishop Jurgens expressed his support for the project.

Let me first tell you that I was so grateful to the Holy Father for having called you and expressed His wish in regard to the Missionhouse. We know now the will of God and we must go ahead. The letter to Father Rector shows you that I am going ahead. I think that I better ask my brothers first to help me. I am sure that the Bank mentioned would give the loan if I put up the guarantees, but the trouble is just in putting up the guarantees: if one puts up a guarantee in shares and a little later the shares drop in value, the Bank will ask so many more shares and probably more than I possess. I prefer to be in the hands of my brothers, than in the hands of the Bank. I feel most confident that my brothers will do what I asked. I trust to have an answer very soon, as I asked the answer on my letter by cable. As I say I want to go ahead, and you said that you desire to begin the building as soon as possible: that is why I am so desirous for your return to the Philippines. WE SHOULD START NEXT YEAR. If you must not do special propaganda work for the maintenance of the Missionhouse, I should like to see you back very soon.

Yes, I trust that your Society will give me priests next year without any failure. I should be grateful, then plans will begin to be realized. Please, for heaven's sake do so; you know how I have spoken about it, let us show that it is true. Moreover, I need the priests so badly.

My dear Father, I feel convinced that God is with us and that your Society will do an immense good if it carries out the wish, the command of the Holy Father. I am so grateful to God for your determination to carry out this splendid work.⁸²

Bishop Jurgens, having been informed about the predicament of the SVDs, proposed that he would help make loans needed for the project and in return the Society would send SVD missionaries to his diocese. It was the bishop's desire to have priests who belonged to religious congregations to work in his ecclesiastical jurisdiction. He also envisioned that Filipino priests who had their formation in their respective religious congregations would take charge of the parishes in Cagayan. He was the key figure in the foundation of the SVD mission in the Diocese of Tuguegarao.⁸³ The Regional Council, during its meeting on 13 and 22 May 1933, discussed the proposal in which Bishop Jurgens would secure a loan of sixty thousand pesos with 5% interest for the construction of the seminary building and with the Catholic Trade School in Manila as collateral for the loan and in return the Society would provide SVD missionaries for his diocese.⁸⁴

Having accepted the offer of Bishop Jurgens, Fr. Battenbruch reminded the Superior General regarding

⁸²Jurgens to Battenbruch, 5 December 1932, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

⁸³The Diocese of Tuguegarao included the civil provinces of Nueva Vizcaya, Isabela, Cagayan and the Babuyan and Batanes islands. Bishop Maurice Foley, an American, was the first bishop of the diocese when it was erected in 1910. He was transferred to the Diocese of Jaro in 1916. Bishop Santiago Sancho succeeded him. When Bishop Sancho was transferred to Vigan in 1927, Bishop Constant Jurgens became his successor. Bishop Jurgens resigned as bishop of the Diocese of Tuguegarao on 6 May 1950.

⁸⁴Manfred Müller, "The Entry of the Society of the Divine Word into Cagayan 1933," *Ilocos Review* 15 (1983): 65.

the commitment made by the Society to the bishop: “We must also begin in the Diocese of Tuguegarao this year which we ourselves have committed in writing, that is, the Generalate sent Bishop Jurgens such a document.”⁸⁵ In order to expedite the realization of the project, Fr. Bittenbruch prepared the draft of the contract between the Society and the bishop: “I am sending you a draft of the contract with his Excellency Bishop Jurgens. We must start in his diocese this year and send him two missionaries. Thus, the Regional Council, together with Bishop Jurgens, has agreed to the conditions set down in the contract. We are in favor of these stipulations; so far no bishop in the Philippines has offered us such good working conditions.”⁸⁶ Fr. Bittenbruch further wrote, “I am beseeching your Reverence to examine these conditions, and you can also make the necessary corrections. I am also requesting your authorization for this contract.”⁸⁷ These negotiations between the Bishop of Tuguegarao and the Society of the Divine Word were concluded with a two-page document written in Latin by the General Council. The contract was valid for twenty years which was renewable at the discretion of the bishop. In December 1933, Bishop Jurgens received a copy of the contract. He sent a letter to the Superior General in which he introduced a phrase in the contract regarding the number of missionaries to be assigned to his diocese. The clause was inserted in the contract

⁸⁵Bittenbruch to Grendel, 26 June 1933, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R736:1924-1975. The quotation is a translation of the German text.

⁸⁶Bittenbruch to Grendel, 11 July 1933, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R738:1912-1959. The quotation is a translation of the German text.

⁸⁷Bittenbruch to Grendel, 11 July 1933. The quotation is a translation of the German text.

during the bishop's visit to Rome.⁸⁸ In the conclusion of the contract on 7 December 1935 in Rome, both the Superior General and the Bishop agreed that at least four priests from the prospective apostolic school in New Manila, insofar as it would be possible, would be assigned to the Diocese of Tuguegarao every year.

Arrival of the SVD Missionaries in Cagayan⁸⁹

The first SVD missionaries to work in Cagayan were Fr. Michael Anspach and Fr. Wilhelm Schlombs who departed from Manila on 17 November 1933 after their retreat in Baguio City. On 19 November, they arrived at the Bishop's House in Tuguegarao where they met Bishop Jurgens who took obvious delight in their arrival: "I greatly rejoiced at the arrival of the two Fathers. Blessed be God and may God bless your Society. The two Fathers made the best impression and

⁸⁸The contract stipulated, "Ex communi deliberatione, habita die 7. Dec. 1935 in Urbe, cum Sua Excellentia, Rev.mo Domino C. Jurgens, Episcopo Tuguegaraoano in Contractu praejacenta sub n. 2 b prior textus restitutus est, addendo tamen post verbum 'sacerdotes': 'et eos quidem inquantam fieri potest', ita ut textus huius numeri 2 b sit: Si Deo adiuvante futurum sit, ut in schola apostolica S.V.D. Novae Manilae erecta numerus sufficiens juvenum indigenarum ad sacerdotium eleventur, Episcopus Tuguegar. poterit, si ita voluerit, quovis anno saltem quattuor vel plures etiam sacerdotes *et eos quidem inquantum fieri potest* [italics mine] indigenas S.V.D. obtinere." See "Ad Contractum Episcopi Dioecesis Tuguegaraoanae et Societatis Verbi Divini," Rome, AGSVD, AS, R:738:1912-1959. The phrase in italics was inserted in the contract. Bishop Jurgens returned the modified contract with his signature. See Jurgens to Grendel, 11 December 1935, AGSVD, AS, R738:1912-1959. Fr. Grendel acknowledged the changes made to the contract. See also Grendel to Buttenbruch, 14 February 1936, Manila, PAPHC, HA, vol. Letters of Superior General II.

⁸⁹Müller, "The Entry of the Society of the Divine Word into Cagayan 1933," 57-72. See also Antonio Alagao, ed., "The Divine Word Missionaries in Cagayan," *The Ilocos Review* 33 (2010): 1-101.

we have talked much about Claveria and the work to be done. They left this morning for Aparri. I trust that everything will turn out alright and anticipate no troubles.”⁹⁰ After their sojourn in Tuguegarao, they left for Claveria. Fr. Manuel Apostol, a Filipino diocesan priest, met them in Aparri and accompanied them to Claveria on 21 November 1933. He soon left Claveria paving the way for the two SVD missionaries to start their mission. Fr. Bittenbruch had this to say:

It gives me great pleasure to inform Your Excellency about the good news from the Fathers in Claveria. I received the second letter from Father M. Anspach yesterday. Both letters state that there was nothing of a protest or unwillingness [on] the part of the people to accept the missionaries. And Father Anspach lauded very much the attitude of the Parish Priest who gave the S.V.D. Fathers a fine introduction everywhere. The Fathers are not disappointed with the conditions they found. There is much mission work for immortal souls to be done, but they found a good cooperative spirit among the Christians in Claveria as well as in Sanchez Mira. With this good will of the people, there is hope of great success in the work for souls.

Missionaries are accustomed to poverty and when the churches and conventos look like ruins, this aspect will not discourage the zealous priests, especially if he finds good will and cooperative spirit of the people. And once they meet the first needs and accommodate themselves to the place, then the upbuilding of the parishes will begin and with the help of the Bishop, of the Missionaries and of the people there, it will be easy to restore in Christ the Church of the Cagayan Valley.⁹¹

During the Holy Week of 1934, Fr. Bittenbruch was

⁹⁰Jurgens to Bittenbruch, 20 November 1933, Manila, PAPHC, HA, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

⁹¹Bittenbruch to Jurgens, 10 December 1933, Manila, PAPHC, HA, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

in Claveria and Sanchez Mira: “It was a great pleasure for me to do missionary work again. It is a wonderful people, especially in Claveria. We hear more than three hundred confessions and nearly all of them were really ‘eastern-confessions’. Sanchez Mira will come back to the Catholic Church, as soon as we have a church and a resident Catholic priest. They all are willing to help and once we shall have more men in that district, the Catholic religion will bring the people back to Christ again. It is a wonderful mission for our Fathers.”⁹² Besides their mission in Claveria, the missionaries also took charge of the town of Sanchez Mira. When the SVDs started their mission in this town, there were only thirty Catholic families since many of them were Aglipayans. For a long time, there was no resident priest which explained the reason why there was only a provisional chapel without a rectory. Soon the missionaries began the construction of a church in Sanchez Mira, and it was consecrated on 16 August 1935. The parish rectory, however, was not yet finished.⁹³ The work of the missionaries not only included towns but also far-flung villages which they also had to visit. Many of these communities could only be reached on foot. Fr. Karl Pütz, who was assigned to Cagayan wrote, “Wearing black cassocks, they visited 30 villages that were part of Claveria. They trekked for kilometers under a hot tropical sun, over a narrow turf and between ricefields to celebrate the Holy Mass for

⁹²Buttenbruch to Jurgens, 12 May 1934, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

⁹³Anspach to Buttenbruch, 16 August 1935, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R738:1912-1959. Anspach reported, „Der convento hier [ist] immer noch nicht fertig, es geht uns halt wie allen armen Leuten, müssen uns nach der Decke strecken, doch hoffe ich, die wichtigsten Arbeiten noch vor dem Regen fertig zu bekommen.“ Anspach to Buttenbruch, 16 August 1935.

their faithful.”⁹⁴

Fr. Philipp van Engelen described the trip to Cagayan from Manila during that time:

My trip to Claveria even brought a certain thrill. The first leg of the journey was by train and the rest of the 300 kilometers was by means of a truck which was one half filled with baggage and the other half with people. Three days were needed for the whole trip. In two places, we had to wait for a connection. We had to traverse a hilly terrain, close to the sea, through rivers and derelict bridges. The roads were particularly bad in the north, so you were extremely shaken.⁹⁵

The First Alumni of Christ the King Mission Seminary

The first students of the newly established seminary were members of the Mission Club of the diocesan seminary in Vigan. They arrived on 24 May 1934 at Christ the King in New Manila. Those in first year

⁹⁴Karl Pütz, „50 Jahre Steyler Missionare in Cagayan, Philippinen,“ Sankt Augustin, Steyler Missionswissenschaftliches Institut, Josef Schmitz Papers, 4. The quotation is a translation of the German text.

⁹⁵The quotation, which is a translation of the Dutch text, was taken from the travel diary of Fr. Philipp van Engelen on his voyage to Manila from 13 August to 29 September 1935. See the travel diary of Philipp van Engelen, Teteringen, Provincialate Archives of the Netherlands-Belgium Province, p. 27. As Fr. van Engelen recounted, “Als de hellingen te steil waren, moesten we loopen, we hebben een kwartier tussen rollende keien gezeten, [w]aar we eerst na veel hotsen en slingeren weer uit vrij kwamen ect ect. Ik kan ieder, die last heeft van zijn zenuwen zoo'n tochtje aanbevelen: als hij erdoor komt, heeft hij geen zenuwen meer!” See Travel Diary of Fr. Philipp van Engelen, p.27. Fr. Philipp van Engelen was a Dutch SVD missionary. He boarded the steamer *Trier* on 13 August 1935 from Rotterdam and arrived in Manila on 29 September 1935. See *Verzeichnis der Reisenden*, Teteringen, Provincialate Archives of the Netherlands-Belgium Province (PANEB).

college were Ceferino Leonen, Constante Floresca, Anselmo Bustos, and Santiago Leones from the Diocese of Nueva Segovia who took up Latin in the seminary in Vigan; Jesus Gaffud, Eduardo Molano, and Jose Lazo from the Diocese of Tuguegarao who also learned Latin in Vigan; and Frederico Limon from the Diocese of Lingayen who studied Latin in Binmaley Seminary.⁹⁶ Those in the first year high school were Quintin Terrenal, Manuel Villaruz and Juan Cachero from the Diocese of Nueva Segovia, Domingo Galicia from the Diocese of Lingayen, Salvador Lazo and Pio Morales from the Diocese of Tuguegarao.⁹⁷ The School Year began on 8 June 1934 on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The curriculum was patterned after the curriculum of St. Mary's Seminary in Techny, Illinois. The students had to finish four years High School, attend two years in college and then the novitiate. They

⁹⁶*Catalogus Sodalium Societatis Verbi Divini* (Mödling: Domus Missionum ad S. Gabrielem Archangelum, 1936), 153-154. Cf. *Liber Votorum et Liber Ordinationum*, Manila, PAPHC, HA. See also Constante Floresca, "Christ the King Mission Seminary: 1934-1937," Manuscript, MMPs. These students came from the following provinces: Constancio Floresca from Naguilian, La Union; Jesus Gaffud from Echague, Isabela; Jose Lazo from Faire, Cagayan; Ceferino Leonen from Bangar, Ilocos Norte; Santiago Leones from Bacnotan, La Union; Frederico Limon from Mangaldan, Pangasinan; Anselmo Bustos from Macabebe, Pampanga. Santiago Leones is not written on the record book of the list of CKS List of Students/Seminarians. Cf. CKS List of Students/Seminarians, Manila, PAPHC, HA, Box 62-B.

⁹⁷*Catalogus Sodalium Societatis Verbi Divini* (Mödling: Domus Missionum ad S. Gabrielem Archangelum, 1940), 176. These students came from the following provinces: Quintin Terrenal from Tayum, Abra; Manuel Villaruz from Pilar, Abra; Juan Cachero from Naguilian, La Union; Domingo Galicia from San Carlos, Pangasinan; Salvador Lazo from Faire, Cagayan; Pio Morales from Abulug, Cagayan. Bruno Lopez and Filemon Molina are on the CKS List of Students/Seminarians. Cf. CKS List of Students/Seminarians, Manila, PAPHC, HA, Box 62-B.

had to complete three years of Philosophy and one year practicum before they were sent to North America for their theological studies.⁹⁸

Fr. Constante Floresca, one of the first students who arrived at Christ the King, described the new SVD foundation in New Manila in this extensive quote:

At the time when we entered Christ the King Seminary, the main building was standing, with castle-like facade with six towers. But within the building itself there were no partitions from end to end – only three walls, because the rear part of the building consisted of open veranda-like corridors. We occupied the western part of the third floor for our dormitory and for classes.

Besides the main building, there were the steel house, and the carpentry shop about fifty meters behind the main building. In the first months we used as chapel a part of the carpentry shop. Later, the western part of the first floor of the main building was set up as chapel.

At that time, there were no buildings near Christ the King. Our nearest neighbors were the St. Paul Sisters in Gilmore, and Camp Murphy. To go to Manila, we had to hike to N. Domingo to take a bus that passes through San Juan del Monte and Sta. Mesa.

Behind the seminary were bushes until San Francisco del Monte. At that time the creek which serves as the boundary of Christ the King property was still clear and sparkling, and we used to take a swim there in the afternoons. For our walks we used to go to the bushes and pick guava fruits. Sometimes we crossed the bushes to visit the Franciscans who had also started their seminary.⁹⁹

⁹⁸Buttenbruch to Hagspiel, 15 May 1934, Manila, PAPHC, *HA*, vol. Correspondence with Hagspiel.

⁹⁹Floresca, “Christ the King Mission Seminary: 1934-1937.”

The rector and prefect of the seminary was Fr. Heinrich Scheffers who taught Latin. The teacher for both German and Algebra to the first year class was Fr. Josef Bette. Fr. Ludwig Meissner taught first year Latin while Fr. Antonio Albrecht taught Spanish. English was taught by Fr. Lawrence Bunzel. Fr. Buttenbruch gave lessons in Sacred Scriptures. Br. Richard was in charge of the carpentry shop while Br. Jerome was responsible for marketing.

Fr. Buttenbruch also consulted Bishop Jurgens concerning the novice master: "Next year I intend to open the noviciate [sic] and How do you like to appoint Father Hettegger as the novice master. He knows the boys and Filipino character and his educational work in Vigan Seminary prepared him for this most important task."¹⁰⁰

On 21 April 1935, the Generalate in Rome decreed the erection of the Mission House of Christ the King in New Manila.¹⁰¹ The obstacles toward the completion of the Mission House were surmounted through the courage of Fr. Buttenbruch and the generosity of Bishop Jurgens. Fr. Karl Pütz acknowledged the assistance of the bishop: "His inheritance and the help of his wealthy brothers made it possible for the construction of the Steyler Mission Seminary."¹⁰² Fr. Buttenbruch was very grateful to Bishop Jurgens for his financial assistance

¹⁰⁰Buttenbruch to Jurgens, 12 May 1934, vol. Correspondence with Lipa/Tuguegarao.

¹⁰¹The Decretum Erectionis stated, "In honorem Sanctissimae Trinitatis, ad bonum Sanctae Ecclesiae Catholicae et nostrae Societatis et praecipue ad promovendum opus eiusdem missionarium; invocatis caelestibus Societatis nostrae Patronis in urbe NEW MANILA in insulis Philippinis sita domum Societatis ad Christum Regem nominandam hisce canonice erigo erectamque declaro." See "Decretum Erectionis," *NSVD* 2 (1936): 238.

¹⁰²Pütz, „50 Jahre Steyler Missionare in Cagayan, Philippinen," 1. The quotation is a translation of the German text.

and for his encouragement and support for the realization of the establishment of the seminary. He expressed his gratitude in this letter:

I thank you again for your congratulations to the silver Jubilee you extended to me so heartily. It will be for me a happy remembrance this day and I thank God, that he gave me this great favor to see realized the Mission Seminary, an enterprise which caused me so much worry and it was for the great help and encouragement of Your Excellency that inspired me to carry this project thru. Therefore I thank you again and ask your prayers for the mentioned institution. With this letter I send an enlargement of the Mission Seminary together with a photo of the novices for the Holy Father. Really it makes me proud to think, that the Holy Father will see this seminary and will bless us again.¹⁰³

The regional house of the Society was transferred to New Manila. On 21 April 1936, the first regional council meeting was held at the new regional house at Christ the King Mission Seminary in New Manila.

Conclusion

The excellent relations between the CICM Bishop of the Diocese of Tuguegarao and the missionaries of the Society of the Divine Word resulted in the missionary

¹⁰³Buttenbruch to Jurgens, 25 October 1935, Manila, PAPHC, HA, Box 19, Cagayan Mission/Bishop Jurgens: 1936-1941. Fr. Grendel also expressed his gratitude to Bishop Jurgens: „Wie ich zu Gott hoffe, ist dadurch jetzt sowohl der Diözese von Ew. Excellenz wie auch den Bedürfnissen unserer Region auf den Philippinen Rechnung getragen. Nochmals kann ich Ew. Excellenz nur recht von Herzen danken, daß Sie in so väterlicher und wirksamer Weise besonders die Sache unseres Seminars in New Manila unterstützt und gefördert haben.“ See Grendel to Jurgens, 10 December 1935, Rome, AGSVD, AS, R738:1912-1959

engagement of the SVDs in Cagayan and the establishment of the Christ the King Mission Seminary in New Manila. Bishop Jurgens, who at that time experienced problems concerning the members of his clergy and the lack of personnel to take charge of the far-flung parishes of the Diocese which were situated in northern Cagayan, sought the assistance of the Society of the Divine Word for its members to work in his Diocese. In his opinion the religious priests could bring back to the fold those who left the Church as well as to edify the members of the local clergy. For this undertaking to materialize, the Bishop offered financial support for the construction of the building of Christ the King Mission Seminary. During that time, the SVDs experienced financial difficulties in view of the restrictions that impeded the transfer of funds from Germany to the Philippines. Hailing from a well-to-do family in the Netherlands, the Bishop came to the rescue by providing financial guarantees in the form of personal loans with low interest rates. The assistance of the Bishop in the emergence of an SVD mission seminary originated from an urgent need of his Diocese. The Bishop agreed to help on the condition that some SVD missionaries who would finish their studies at the mission seminary would be assigned to Cagayan. Fr. Bittenbruch, who regularly corresponded with the Bishop, took charge of the project and saw to it that the loans were fully paid. Since the funds were, in the first place, not taken from the coffers of the Diocese but from the personal funds of the Bishop, the Diocese of Tuguegarao cannot claim ownership of the Seminary.