

**PRIDE OF LIBMANAN, GREAT PASTOR OF ILOCANDIA:
SANTIAGO CARAGNAN SANCHO (1880–1966)**

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Introduction

Almost forgotten even by Libmananos themselves was a townsmate, who in his heyday truly proved to be an illustrious member of the Catholic hierarchy in the Philippines, the *Most Rev. Santiago Caragnan Sancho, D.D.*, of San Vicente, Libmanan, Camarines Sur. His ecclesiastical titles should be enough to prove the point: He was named second (first Filipino) Bishop of Tuguegarao in 1917, thereafter appointed Bishop of Nueva Segovia in 1927, eventually becoming Nueva Segovia's first Archbishop in 1951. Libmanan, in itself, would have remained inconspicuous within the purview of *ecclesiastical history* were it not for the fact that it had become the seat of the Prelature created on December 9, 1989, and now the seat of the new Diocese created on March 25, 2009. Libmanan, however, did not have to wait that long for it to have been recognized on the ecclesiastical map. Already in 1917, Libmanan should have grabbed the headlines when its renowned Son in the person of Santiago Sancho had become a bishop, the second Bicolano to be accorded such an honor, next only to Bishop Jorge Barlin of Baao, Camarines Sur. That was not, however, the only time Sancho was to give Libmanan some prominence. In 1951, he gave honor once again to his town when he was appointed First Archbishop of Nueva Segovia, becoming the first Bicolano to be accorded the title of Archbishop.¹ It is just unfortunate that if not for present efforts to restore and revive his importance in Philippine ecclesiastical history, his name has almost been relegated to the dustbin of history.

*Sancho's Early Life*²

Santiago Sancho was born of humble parents, *Basilio Sancho* and *Adriana Caragnan*, in *San Vicente, Libmanan, Camarines Sur* on May 23, 1880 — the second to the last of twenty two (22) children. San Vicente was a little and obscure village, accessible as it was at that time (in fact, for a long time!), along with the town center of Libmanan, only by boat through the

¹ The first Bicolano Archbishop, Santiago Sancho (together with two others, Pedro Santos and Jose Ma. Cuenco), is the third among Filipinos to have been appointed Archbishop. The following is a chronology of the first Filipino Archbishops: *Gabriel Reyes*, Archbishop of Cebu, April 28, 1934 (Archbishop of Manila, December 17, 1949); *Julio Rosales*, Archbishop of Cebu, December 17, 1949; *Santiago Sancho*, Archbishop of Nueva Segovia, June 29, 1951; *Pedro Santos*, Archbishop of Nueva Caceres, June 29, 1951; *Jose Ma. Cuenco*, Archbishop of Jaro, June 29, 1951; *Rufino Santos*, Archbishop of Manila, February 10, 1953; *Teopisto Alberto*, Archbishop of Nueva Caceres, September 7, 1959. Sancho's having become the first Bicolano Archbishop has also been recognized in D. Gerona, *Libmanan, The Cradle of Bikol's Epic, Home to Bikol Patriots (2009)*, unpublished, p. 129.

² Most of the data mentioned in this section were gleaned from a biography entitled, "*Bienhechor de Ilocandia*", written in Spanish by an anonymous author and preserved in photocopy in what looks like a clipping taken from the defunct weekly "*Bicol Pioneer Herald*".

meandering Bicol River. Thus, the young Santiago, a name he must have been given after St. James the Apostle, the Patron of Libmanan, had no choice but to follow the elementary course in his hometown. Besides, Basilio and Adriana, poor peasants as they were, did not have the means to send their son elsewhere, for better opportunities, than those which the schools in Libmanan could offer. They must have known, however, that it was not just about the best secular education that one needed to acquire for one to achieve greatness. For this, something else was more necessary - formation in character and religious conviction. Such must have been the reason why they took upon themselves the task of forming their son according to the tenets of their Catholic religion, instilling in him the faith they have been faithful themselves to all their lives.

At age twelve (12), after graduating from the elementary grades, Santiago enrolled as an extern at the *Seminario-Colegio* in *Nueva Caceres* in July 1892.³ It was here in the seminary where he took and finished high school. It is said that Santiago did not have it easy as a student. There was the financial constraint to begin with, but more difficult to cope with was the demands of his studies, aggravated perhaps by his poor background in a rural elementary school. One of his biographers said that his God-given talents (and certainly his intellectual capacity along with them) failed to manifest at this time.⁴ No obstacle, however, proved insurmountable for as time would show, five years later, in 1897, he graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Arts. Then something happened that would change his life forever. It was at this time when he felt he was called to the priesthood. That same year then (1897), he entered the *Seminario Conciliar de Nueva Caceres*,⁵ this time as an intern seminarian. His diligence must have done him well for this time his genius slowly showed. Soon enough, he was recognized as a brilliant student, proof of which was that he was given the opportunity to assume extra responsibilities in the seminary, alternately that of being an assistant porter and an assistant to the procurator. As if these were not enough to harness his capacity at such a tender age, he was designated professor of the preparatory class from 1898 to 1903.

³ In a brief summary of Sancho's life, it is said that he completed elementary training in 1891 – that would mean at age eleven (11) – the same year. See "Brief Summary of the Life of the Jubilarian," in *Commemorative Book of the Golden Sacerdotal Jubilee of His Excellency, Most Rev. Santiago Sancho* (henceforth *Commemorative Book*), p. 16.

⁴ L. Arnedo, "Msgr. Santiago Sancho, D.D.," in *Hingoa* Vol 3, n. 10, Holy Rosary Minor Seminary, Naga City, August 1976, p. 8 and p. 10.

⁵ Sancho himself attributed the foundation of the seminary in Nueva Caceres in 1865 to Bishop Francisco Gainza (see S. Sancho, "Mensaje", in *Seminarium*, Vol. 7, n. 4 (1951), p. 3: "*Como ex-alumno del Seminario Conciliar de Nueva Cáceres, que regentan los Hijos de San Vicente de Paúl, quiero aprovechar esta oportunidad para render un homenaje de admiración y agradecimiento por el inmenso bien que han hecho en Filipinas al encargarse de la dirección de cinco Seminarios, entre los cuales es el de Nueva Cáceres fundado en Mayo 5, 1865 por el Excmo. Dr. Francisco Gainza, O.P. que tanto trabajado por el mencionado Seminario...*") Sancho must have meant here not the foundation of the seminary as such but the time it was reconstructed and entrusted to the Vincentians by Bishop Gainza. The seminary of Nueva Caceres for sure was founded a century earlier by Bishop Antonio de Orbigo, O.F.M., in 1783 (see P. Fernandez, *History of the Church in the Philippines (1521-1898)*, 2nd ed., Life Today Publications, Manila, 1988, p. 50).

In July 1900, Sancho had to interrupt his ecclesiastical studies because of the American occupation of the Bicol provinces. *Bishop Arseño Campo y Monasterio*, then Bishop of Caceres fled and sailed for Spain because of the precarious situation that ensued. For one thing, there was the anti-friar sentiment to contend with, following the retreat of the Spanish forces from the region and from the whole country. The exodus from all the towns in the whole region spared almost no one, forcing out of the seminary, even the seminarians' beloved professors, the Vincentian Fathers, who had to suffer the same fate as that of their students. The seminario-colegio was thus forced to close.

As calm returned to the political situation, Sancho also returned to the seminary and resumed his theological studies. At this time, Nueva Caceres, having been left vacant on account of the departure of Bishop Campo, was being overseen by newly appointed Apostolic Administrator, *Jorge Barlin*, who took Sancho under his tutelage. Given such tremendous support, Sancho's ability and flair began to shine, on account of which he received a string of excellent marks in Metaphysics and in both Dogmatic and Moral Theology. At the conclusion of his theology course, there being no bishop just as yet in Nueva Caceres, Sancho had to go to Manila, in April 1903,⁶ to receive the first tonsure, the four minor orders, and the sub-diaconate from *Bishop Martin Alcocer*, Bishop of Cebu, who was then also acting as Apostolic Administrator of Manila. Together with him, were seven ordinandi, who were also set to receive sacred orders from the hands of Bishop Alcocer.

Priestly Life and Ministry: Protegé of Jorge Barlin

After having returned to Nueva Caceres, Sancho transferred from the seminary to the bishop's palace. Here, he served as page and secretary of the Apostolic Administrator, *Jorge Barlin*. In September 1903, Sancho was sent back to Manila to receive the sacred order of the diaconate and one month after, on October 4, 1903, the sacred order of the priesthood. He had to be dispensed from the requirement of canonical age and interstice for he was only aged twenty three (23) and had just received the minor orders barely six months hitherto. This time, he received the sacred orders from the hands of *Juan Guidi*, then Apostolic Delegate of the Holy See to the Philippines. Immediately thereafter, Sancho was appointed Parish Priest of the Cathedral in Nueva Caceres⁷ and later as *Capellan de Solio* and *Oeconomus* of the Bishop's Palace.

But more must be said about the background of the circumstances of Barlin's appointment as this definitely had something to do with Sancho's context as well. The cession of the Philippine Islands by Spain to the United States had implications that went beyond the political situation inasmuch as they also had to do with the administration of the Catholic Church which for many years was administered by the Spanish clergy. The Spanish friars over the years have acquired vast estates everywhere in the country and their ownership under the new dispensation could not at once be settled. It was on account of this that

⁶ March 1903 in "Brief Summary," p. 16.

⁷ See "Brief Summary," p. 16.

*William Howard Taft*⁸ led an American delegation to Rome on June 5, 1902, to present to the Holy See the American proposal to buy the friar lands, at the same time with the intent of effecting thereby the definitive departure of the friars from the country. Negotiating with the pontifical commission headed by *Cardinal Mariano Rampolla*, then Vatican's Secretary of State, Taft was able to forge the so-called *Taft-Rampolla Treaty*, according to which agreement was reached to have the friar lands sold to the United States.

The agreement had consequences other than simply transferring mere ownership of the friar lands to the Americans. It also meant that American Catholic clergymen would now take over the Catholic Church's administration from the Spanish friars. The Holy See may have refused to forcibly withdraw the friars from the Philippines, but it became clear that because of the very strong anti-friar sentiment, the policy of sending back the friars to the islands had to be receded or those who still remained had to be withdrawn. As a result, American bishops were appointed to govern the Philippine dioceses: *Bishop Dennis Dougherty* was sent to Nueva Segovia (October 22, 1903), *Bishop Frederick Rooker* to Jaro (October 30, 1903), and much later *Archbishop Jeremiah Jacob Harty* to Manila (January 16, 1904). However, in Nueva Caceres, left vacant by Bishop Campo, no American bishop was appointed. Instead, a Filipino Administrator, in the person of Jorge Barlin, took over. No doubt, Barlin's ascendancy to such an important position could have been a move by the Holy See that was meant to appease the Filipino clergy and to counter the nationalistic movement, *Aglipayanism*, launched by former Catholic priest turned schismatic, *Gregorio Aglipay*.

Such antidote proved nothing but appropriate, if not opportune, for Barlin himself became a staunch adversary of the Aglipayans, a stance that certainly left a lasting impact on his protégé, Sancho. On June 29, 1906, Barlin was elevated to the rank and dignity of the episcopacy (the first time ever such an honor was accorded to a Filipino and Bicolano) and appointed Bishop of Nueva Caceres. By then, Sancho had gained the trust and confidence of the new Bishop of Nueva Caceres. As if to confirm such predilection, Sancho was named *Mayordomo* of the Cathedral and the *Secretario de Visita*.

In April 1909, Sancho accompanied Bishop Barlin, who went on a trip to Rome to make his first *ad limina* visit. As it turned out, it was to be Barlin's only (as it was the first and the last) *ad limina* visit for by that time, his health having unfortunately become frail and infirm. He and Sancho arrived in Rome two months after they left the Philippines, that is, in June 1909. The long and tedious trip must have contributed to, if not worsened, Barlin's deteriorating health condition. Barely completing the *ad limina* visit, Barlin fell seriously ill, making him unable to return to his home country. Sancho remained at his side though, faithfully providing the bishop much needed company. But that was not to be for long for on September 5, 1909, Barlin finally entrusted his soul to his creator.

Having complied with his filial duties towards his bishop, Sancho sought consolation for such a loss of a beloved mentor by going to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes in France,

⁸ William Howard Taft was the Governor-General of the Philippines between 1900 and 1904. In 1908, he was elected the 27th President of the United States.

taking as route the coasts of *Cantábrico* until *Zaragoza, Spain* and returning afterwards to Rome to vacate some curial assignments. It was only in October of the same year, when Sancho returned to Naga. He was to remain there until August the following year.

Having obtained permission from *Clemente Emerenciana*, then Apostolic Administrator of the See of Nueva Caceres, left vacant by the death of Bishop Barlin, Sancho enrolled at the Faculty of Canon Law at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila. In March 1912, he completed his studies, obtaining the degree of Doctor of Canon Law. Upon graduation, he returned to Naga. He was consequently appointed *Secretario de Cámara y Gobierno* by the new Bishop of Nueva Caceres, *John Bernard MacKinley*, thereby becoming a consultant to the American bishop. Sancho was also named Chaplain of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Peñafrancia.⁹

Ascendance to the Episcopacy

Five years later, on February 5, 1917, upon the recommendation of McKinley, Sancho was elected Bishop of Tuguegarao, becoming Tuguegarao's second bishop, succeeding the American *Maurice Patrick Foley* (Bishop of Tuguegarao from its creation in 1910 to 1916). With his nomination to the episcopacy, Sancho also earned the distinction of being the first Filipino Bishop of Tuguegarao and the second Bicolano bishop, next only to Bishop Jorge Barlin. Mention of this at this point is but fitting, since the appointment of Sancho increasingly showed that the Filipinos were now ready to take over the administration of Philippine dioceses, something unthinkable many years back during the Spanish occupation.

Sancho took as episcopal motto: "*Forma facti gregis*" (1 Peter 5,3), no doubt expressing his desire to be a model to his flock. It was quite significant that in Sancho's coat-of-arms, the image of *Our Lady of Peñafrancia*, Patroness of Bicolandia was imposed on the dexter side for as its stylist, *Mariano Madriaga* (then Bishop of Lingayen) explained, this was meant "to show the place of origin of Archbishop Sancho and his tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin."¹⁰ Significant still was the inclusion of the symbols (pilgrims' shells and staff) of *St. James the Apostle*, Patron Saint (namesake) of Sancho and that of his beloved hometown, *Libmanan*.

⁹ See F. Scharf, "The Bishops of Nueva Segovia," in *The Ilocos Review*, Vol. 21 (1989), p. 75-122, p. 119-120. Another chronicler also mentioned Sancho's being appointed domestic procurator to the bishop and subsequently secretary to Barlin within the span of 1903-1910 and his having been made a successor of Barlin upon the latter's death. This, however, was very unlikely as Sancho was never appointed the successor of Barlin. See *Brief Summary*, p. 16.

¹⁰ M. Madriaga, "Coat-of-Arms of the Most Rev. Santiago C. Sancho, Archbishop of Nueva Segovia," in *Seminarium*, Vol. 7, n. 4 (1951), p. 4, p. 28.

On July 29, 1917,¹¹ Sancho was finally ordained bishop by *José Petrelli*, Apostolic Delegate of the Holy See to the Philippines, at the Cathedral of Tuguegarao, Cagayan,¹² after actually taking possession of the same See the previous day. Co-consecrators during his Episcopal ordination were MacGinley himself and Alfredo F. Verzosa, by then Bishop-Emeritus of Lipa.¹³

With his episcopal consecration, Sancho took possession of Tuguegarao, a See which he was to govern for ten years. Tuguegarao was not necessarily for him a choice assignment. The diocese was, in the first place, remote from Sancho's vantage point and it was a place where the schismatic church of Aglipayanism also flourished at that time. But all these did not discourage Sancho, neither deterring him from doing the best he could to fulfill his episcopal duties. In fact, during his term, he accomplished many things. Foremost of these was the opening in June 1918 — he was barely one year in office — of the Diocesan Seminary, the *San Jacinto Seminary*, in Tuguegarao which functioned as a Minor Seminary at its inception. Initially, the seminary had sixteen students coming from the towns of Cagayan, Isabela and Nueva Vizcaya. He invited the Dominicans to take care of its administration.¹⁴

In establishing the seminary, Sancho showed that he was concerned about the future of the Church in his diocese and that the only way the future of the Church could be ensured was to provide the means of forming and training the Church's pastors and spiritual leaders in the years to come. In fact, Sancho himself was directly involved in the work of formation. He not only gave financial support but also had a hand in the supervision of the seminary itself. For one thing, he had a decisive voice in the admission and dismissal of seminarians. That is not to say, however, that this left the Dominicans with nothing to do. Far from it, as they took charge of teaching the various courses, of imposing discipline in the seminary community, and made a report on the performance of the seminarians to the bishop at the end of every scholastic term. In the course of time, the seminary grew as the student population increased and the rules and plan of studies got more organized. This development was somehow to be expected, what with the support for the seminary not only of the bishop himself but also that of the parish priests as well.¹⁵

¹¹ June 29, 1917 in "Brief Summary," p. 16. See also F. Scharf, "A History of the Diocese of Nueva Segovia (Vigan)," *The Ilocos Review* 25 (1993), p. 164.

¹² See M. Avenceña, "Biographical Sketch of the First Archbishop of Nueva Segovia," in *Boletín Eclesiástico* 26/283 (1952), p. 23-24.

¹³ J. Quinto listed Bishop Maurice Foley of Jaro as co-consecrator and mentioned Verzosa only as having been present during the occasion (See J. Quinto, *Christianization and Growth*, p. 101). Official records, however, show that Verzosa was co-consecrator (see M. Avenceña, "Biographical Sketch," p. 23-24; see also www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bsancho.html).

¹⁴ F. Scharf, "The Bishops of Nueva Segovia", p. 120. One can surmise that the agreement with the Dominicans regarding the administration of the seminary must have been initially forged during the visit of *Luis Theisling, O.P.*, the Dominicans' Master General at that time, in Tuguegarao on October 17, 1917 (two months after Bishop Sancho's episcopal ordination) when he was guest of both Sancho and the *Campania General de Tabacos de Filipinas*. See J. Quinto, *Christianization and Growth*, p. 102.

¹⁵ J. Quinto, *Christianization and Growth*, p. 102.

Sancho's efforts in taking care of the welfare of seminarians were rewarded for in 1924, he had the pleasure of ordaining eight new priests. By contemporary standards, this is not necessarily a huge number, but certainly at that time, this was already such a good harvest. Even then, given the growing population, the diocese still lacked priests. Indeed, this was the reason why it became increasingly difficult for the bishop to arrest the inroads being gained by the Aglipayans and the Protestants in the diocese. Many Catholics, especially in the villages, were indifferent and ignorant of their faith, making them vulnerable to sectarian prolelytization. Given this situation, the bishop constantly reminded his priests to intensify initiatives of giving religious instruction in their parishes, if not establish catechetical centers in the villages where both children and adults might be catechized.¹⁶

Most prominent, however, of Sancho's accomplishments that could not but attract notice was the holding of the Second Diocesan Synod of Tuguegarao on April 12-14, 1923.¹⁷ As preparation for this big event, the diocesan clergy had a retreat that was facilitated by Sancho himself. Such was his desire for his priests to be properly disposed to ensure the success of the plenary discussions and deliberations. The outcome could not have been more encouraging, that is, the formulation of 136 constitutions spread out under 26 titles, covering nearly every concern of diocesan life.¹⁸

Because of the tremendous importance of this synod which had far-reaching impact on the life of the diocese, and to see further how the synodal participants read Sancho's priorities, it would be appropriate to look into some of these constitutions. Noteworthy among them was one that provided for the Catholic education of the youth, making Catholic education accessible to as many boys and girls that the schools could accommodate. Along this line, he opened a college for girls in Aparri, under the direction of the Religious of St. Paul de Chartres.

Extremely important, however, for Sancho and which was to find expression in the synod was the spiritual growth of the Catholic faithful in his diocese. Thus, the 7th constitution of the synod stipulated as follows:

*One of the most potent means of increasing and strengthening the faith of the people is the use of the spiritual exercises during Lent. Consequently we order all parish priests, missionaries and chaplains, to try by whatever means their zeal will suggest to introduce among their flock this holy practise, so highly recommended by the Church. They will endeavor to follow the instructions which we gave in this regard in Circular no. 14, Feb. 14, 1919.*¹⁹

¹⁶ J. Quinto, *Christianization and Growth*, p. 104.

¹⁷ On this see J. Quinto, *Christianization and Growth*, p. 102.

¹⁸ The synodal constitutions were submitted to Rome and officially received by then Vatican Secretary of State, P.C. Gasparri on December 14, 1923. See J. Quinto, *Christianization and Growth*, p. 103.

¹⁹ L. del Rosario, "The Spiritual Exercises and the Philippine Hierarchy," in *Philippine Studies* 4/2 (1956), p. 291-298, p. 296.

For the same purpose of ensuring spiritual growth, the synod encouraged the faithful to observe the “*Forty Hours Devotion*” and to hold votive masses in honor of the Blessed Mother on Saturdays.

The synodal constitutions further mandated that Christian doctrine be effectively taught through suitable means. Displaying his concern for priestly vocations, Sancho made sure the synod encouraged the faithful to foster vocations to the priesthood and to support poor but deserving seminarians. Not only were poor seminarians to be financially supported but the seminary itself as well through the creation of a permanent committee tasked to find means of augmenting the seminary funds. Curia support for the seminary was also assured as the synod, in an appendix, detailed and fixed the rate for parochial contributions from the stole fees or the *arancel* to the curia. Parishes, for one thing, as another synodal constitution stipulated, were to be managed and administered in compliance with canonical requirements.

As far as the priests were concerned, the synod encouraged them to persevere in meditation as a means to sanctification and to continuously foster the habit of study especially of the ecclesiastical sciences. Again, this manifested Sancho’s solicitude for his priests, given the fact that it was his conviction that the future of the diocese depended heavily on the kind of priests the diocese had.

On the whole, the synod was an opportunity for the bishop, the clergy and the faithful to discover and provide means of carrying out the mission of evangelization, of fostering Catholic practices aimed at the sanctification of the people, and of effectively discharging the temporal responsibility of administering the diocese and the parishes. One of the tangible results of the synod was the reorganization of the diocese on July 25, 1923, with Sancho effect changes in the diocesan and parochial assignments of his clergy. He reorganized the Vicariates Forane, in the process creating the new vicariates of Echague (Province of Isabela) and that of Aparri in the Province of Cagayan.

Even before the synod, Sancho had already a keen eye for the physical needs of his diocese. This was evident in his causing the repair of various Churches in the Batanes Islands destroyed by the earthquake of 1920 and the reconstruction of various Churches, numbering as many as twenty of them, in the Province of Cagayan which were destroyed by the typhoon in 1924. The synodal provisions for the upkeep of churches and convents only galvanized Sancho’s determination to see to their being fulfilled. For all his efforts, Sancho gained the respect of both the clergy and the faithful. In deep appreciation for all his works and labor, one priest said of him:

*The improvements of various churches and convents and especially those of the seminary, and among others, the new and beautiful chapel give eloquent testimony of his intense labor, activities and zeal. May God bless and keep so worthy a Prelate, and so loving Father and Pastor for many more years.*²⁰

²⁰ Quoted in J. Quinto, *Christianization and Growth*, p. 104.

Furthermore, Sancho organized pious associations (religious organizations), particularly the *Defensores de la Libertad*, a strong lay Catholic organization²¹ whose purpose was to safeguard Christian doctrine. On the whole, Sancho encouraged his priests to activate parish organizations as a means of fostering spiritual consciousness among the members and inspiring them to cooperate and participate in parish activities. Such was his appreciation for what these groups could do for the Church. In April 1925, he made his first *ad limina* visit to Rome on the occasion of the Holy Year. In the name of the Archbishop of Manila, he led on that same occasion the *First Philippine Pilgrimage*, one such religious group, to Rome, directing the pilgrimage thereafter to France, Spain and finally to the Holy Land.

Transfer to Vigan, Ilocos Sur

With the See of Nueva Segovia becoming vacant on account of the retirement of *Peter Joseph Hurth, C.S.C.*, Sancho was named Bishop of Nueva Segovia on April 27, 1927, becoming Nueva Segovia's first Filipino bishop. He subsequently transferred there and took possession of the diocese on July 10, 1927. This was the second time Sancho was taking over a diocese succeeding an American and becoming therein the first Filipino bishop. A rarity at that time, this was something truly significant as people had already gotten used to associating high offices in the Church with Caucasians. That a Filipino was taking over Nueva Segovia contributed to debunking the myth that the indigenous clergy were incapable of high ecclesiastical responsibility. It also was providential that a Filipino was accorded such prominence as a Church leader as it came at a time when the Aglipayans, motivated by the nationalist spirit and yearning for independence, resented the Filipino Catholics' subservience to foreign ecclesiastical superiors.

In any case, Sancho's entry into Nueva Segovia was marked by a grand celebration. He was accompanied by the Apostolic Delegate, *Guillermo Piani* and the Bishops of Jaro, Calbayog and Lipa. Everywhere these Church dignitaries passed, they became the object of enthusiastic manifestations of faith and piety. Both the faithful and the clergy accorded them such affectionate homage.²²

Upon assumption into office, Sancho found no time to waste. Almost as immediately after taking over the diocese, he made his first pastoral visits of the towns of Nueva Segovia. These visits must have made him realize how vast his diocese was and that there was a need to create a new diocese out of its jurisdiction in the South. The wait for this prospect

²¹ This organization was later supplanted by the Knights of Columbus (K of C). See M. Avenceña, "Biographical Sketch of the First Archbishop of Nueva Segovia," p. 23.

²² One anonymous chronicler described such affection as follows: "*Sobre todo en Vigan, lo mismo el clero que el pueblo, puede decirse que dieron un elocuente testimonio de respeto y de amor por el Santo Padre y por los Prelados que en su nombre los visitaban. Verdaderamente hay fe en el pueblo filipino y Dios quiera que se conserve y fortifique siempre.*" See "Obispado de Vigan", in *Boletín Eclesiástico* 5 (1927), p. 490-491.

to happen was not to be for long since on May 19, 1928, Lingayen was created a diocese, thereby becoming a suffragan of Nueva Segovia. Sancho then entrusted the parishes of Pangasinan and some parishes in Zambales, Tarlac and Nueva Ecija, which originally formed part of Nueva Segovia, to the Apostolic Administrator of the new diocese, *Michael O'Doherty*.²³ Also separated from Nueva Segovia in 1932 was the vast territory of the Mountain Provinces in the Cordillera which was constituted as the Apostolic Prefecture of the Montañosa under the care of the Belgian and Dutch Scheutist Missionaries (CICM).²⁴

Duplicating his experience in Tuguegarao, Sancho subsequently convened and presided over the Third Diocesan Synod of Nueva Segovia in May 1930. In this synod, Sancho once more reiterated his desire to provide his faithful with opportunities for spiritual growth. In the 172nd constitution of the synod, he declared:

*The spiritual exercises are in the words of our present Pope, His Holiness Pius XI, "a treasure-trove of God," and as such they are a very effective means for the conversion of sinners, for the perseverance of the just, and for the acquisition of perfection in Christian living. Consequently we order that every year at Lent the spiritual exercises be held in all parishes and missions for a space of from three to five days, in the form and manner recommended by His Holiness in his encyclical Mens Nostra.*²⁵

On December 9–12 of the same year 1930, Sancho celebrated with great solemnity the First Diocesan Eucharistic Congress at the Cathedral of Vigan, Ilocos Sur.²⁶ Proof of the magnitude of this event was that no less than the Delegate of Pope Pius XI, *William Pani*, and a host of bishops, priests, and prominent lay faithful, came to grace the event. As in any convocation of this kind, the center of all the activities was the Eucharistic liturgy and the procession and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Expectedly, the conferences included discussions on ways and means of fostering devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and on the need and usefulness of frequent holy communion, a practice encouraged by Pope Pius X. It was on this very occasion when Sancho made the petition to celebrate the International Eucharistic Congress in the Philippines.

Further carrying out his duties, Sancho created more new parishes, and gave financial aid to needy priests. Moreover, he opened various colleges and parochial schools, fourteen in all, under the direction of the religious which he invited into the diocese, most notable of whom were the St. Paul Sisters, the Holy Spirit Sisters, the Belgian Fathers and Sisters and the Steyler Missionaries (SVD Fathers). Actually, long before the war, Sancho already brought into his diocese two religious societies of nuns, the Carmelite Sisters, whom he helped acquire a sizable piece of property in Caruked, Laoag from a generous benefactor,

²³ See F. Scharf, "The Bishops of Nueva Segovia," p. 120.

²⁴ Much later during Sancho's episcopal reign, in 1955, the Province of Abra was separated from Nueva Segovia to become the Diocese of Bangued. See F. Scharf, "The Bishops of Nueva Segovia," p. 120; F. Scharf, "The History," p. 165.

²⁵ L. del Rosario, "The Spiritual Exercises," p. 296.

²⁶ See "The First Diocesan Eucharistic Congress of Nueva Segovia," in *Commemorative Book*, p. 63–64, 76.

and the Benedictine Congregation of nuns, whom he also helped found an abbey in Pantay, a small village situated some two kilometers West of Vigan and elsewhere.²⁷ Sancho was the co-founder of another congregation, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.²⁸

Apart from those schools administered by the religious, Sancho also established parochial schools which he entrusted to the secular (diocesan) clergy. That establishing colleges and schools formed part of Sancho's priorities did not surprise anyone, let alone his relatives, for he had such a high regard for the teaching profession. One of his grand nephews, *Rosalio Sancho*,²⁹ used to recount later that his uncle Santiago asked him one day what he wanted to become when he grew up. When he replied that he wanted to become a teacher, his uncle approvingly said, "*Muy bien, muy sublime!*"

Most important, however, among his foundations were the establishment of the Minor Seminary in Laoag on April 6, 1947,³⁰ and the reconstruction of the Major Seminary (founded in 1822 by *Bishop Francisco Ablan, O.P.*) and the construction of a new building for the Regional Seminary in Vigan (*Seminario Regional de la Inmaculada Concepción*),³¹ about which more will be said later. It would suffice to mention at this point that his having established the Minor Seminary, being one of his pioneering projects in Nueva Segovia, was wholly expected because recruiting vocations for the priesthood was always on top of his agenda. He knew all too well that the Church needed priests as more and more of his flock were being swayed by worldly concerns and drawn to the enticements of other sectarian groups, notably the Aglipayans. Thus, he intensified efforts to attract vocations despite the "irresponsive silence of indifference of young men to the call of Christ."³² To assist him in this endeavor, he counted on the help and prayers of the Benedictine nuns and the Carmelite community.³³

In the many years of his administration of the Diocese of Nueva Segovia, he reconstructed major parts of the big Churches which were in the state of ruin, notable among which were the Church in Batac (hometown of *Gregorio Aglipay*) and the Cathedral in Vigan. The repair and embellishment of the premier Church in the diocese, costing huge amounts of money, was actually prompted by the impending celebration there of the First Diocesan Eucharistic Congress. So interested was Sancho in the construction of churches that he sent one of his

²⁷ The other Benedictine foundations were in Baguio, Santa Maria (Ilocos Sur), and Laoag (see F. Scharf, "The History," p. 167). See also "One of His Noblest Works," in *Commemorative Book*, p. 68–69; "The Carmel of the Sacred Heart of Jesus," in *Commemorative Book*, p. 73–74; M.P. Dacanay, "Starting Afresh: The Religious of Nueva Segovia," in *Daliasat, A Church on Pilgrimage 1758-2008*, Vigan City, p. 64–70.

²⁸ M. P. Avanceña, "Biography of Archbishop Sancho", in *Seminarium*, Vol. 7, n. 4 (1951), p. 2.

²⁹ Rosalio Sancho did become a teacher in Calabanga, Camarines Sur. Rosalio was the son of Jose Sancho, one of the sons of Santiago's brother, Casimiro.

³⁰ See "The Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary," in *Commemorative Book*, p. 70–71.

³¹ See "Two Seminaries," in *Commemorative Book*, p. 77–84.

³² See "Our Jubilarian," in *Commemorative Book*, p. 8.

³³ "Our Jubilarian," p. 9. See also "One of His Noblest Works," in *Commemorative Book*, p. 68–69; "The Carmel of the Sacred Heart of Jesus," in *Commemorative Book*, p. 73–74.

young priests to study engineering at the University of Santo Tomas.³⁴ It is said that during Sancho's time, all churches within his jurisdiction were painted with the same color.

As preparation for the next International Eucharistic Congress which was to take place in the Diocese of Nueva Segovia, Sancho called for the celebration of two Provincial Eucharistic Congresses in Abra and in Ilocos Norte. He also convened Interparochial Congresses in the towns of San Fernando and Luna in La Union, in Candon, Ilocos Sur and various Eucharistic Congresses in almost all the towns of the Diocese. The last one of these, which served as the culmination of all Eucharistic Congresses in the whole diocese, was held in Cabugao, Ilocos Sur.

In Laoag, Ilocos Norte, the cradle of the *Aglipayan schism*, Sancho celebrated in February 1932 a Marian Congress, the first of its kind it seems in the whole country. The Apostolic Delegate of the Holy See, *Guillermo Piani*, the Archbishop of Manila, and five other bishops of the Dioceses of the Philippines all came for the big event. The fruits of this first Marian Congress were manifold, foremost of which was the conversion of more than a thousand Aglipayan schismatics, counting among them children and adults, both men and women. The conversion inspired by the congress also became cause for the legal validation of marriages of more than seven hundred couples.

Perhaps, owing to the success of the event, the holding of such gatherings, including the regional celebration of the feast of Christ the King, had become a yearly tradition. On such occasions, representatives from all over the Ilocos provinces and Abra would flock, this time to Vigan, to attend the mass gatherings and the celebration of the Eucharist. In all these, Sancho's aim was to win back into the Church those who have fallen into the fold of the Aglipayans. Such aggressive stance on Sancho's part towards the Aglipayans was expected for he must have acquired such disposition from his experience of how his former bishop and mentor, *Jorge Barlin*, fought against the breakaway religious sect.

Indeed, it should be recalled, one of Barlin's most significant accomplishments was his successful campaign to combat the Aglipayan schism. Invited by Aglipay himself to be the schismatic church's *Obispo Maximo*, Barlin emphatically refused such enticement saying, "*Prefiero ser lampazero a ser la cabeza de su jerarquía cismática.*"³⁵ When the question of the ownership of Church buildings was subsequently raised on account of the occupation of the Lagonoy church by the renegade priest, *Vicente Ramirez*,³⁶ Barlin asserted and defended the rights of the Roman Catholic Church, bringing the case to the Court of First Instance in Ambos Camarines, and eventually earning from this venerable court a decision in favor of the Catholic Church in 1904. When the Aglipayans appealed the case to the

³⁴ M. P. Avanceña, "Biography of Archbishop Sancho," p. 2.

³⁵ See D. Abella, *Bikol Annals, A Collection of Vignettes of the Philippine History*, Vol. 1, Manila, 1951, p. 205; J. Esplana, "Barlin, The Pride of Bikolandia", in *Kaiba Magazine*, The Official Yearbook of *Kausaran sa Ikararay ka Baa*, January 1996, p. 44; C. Sarte, "Barlin to Varela", in *The Rainbow* (May 1967), p. 8, 13.

³⁶ See J. Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy, The Filipino Clergy and the Nationalist Movement, 1850-1903*, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City, 1981, p. 235-236.

Supreme Court, Barlin continued his relentless defense of his Church's rights until the Highest Court in the country sustained the decision of the lower court granting ownership of all Church buildings in the region to the Roman Catholic Church.³⁷ As a result, the Aglipayans were banished from all Churches in the region and elsewhere in the whole country.³⁸ This must have had such tremendous impact on Sancho. He could not but have learned from this experience, the same aggressive posture, emboldening him to emulate Barlin's example, though this time in some other more subtle ways. Indeed, one of the reasons why Sancho took pains in organizing congresses and mass gatherings was that he wanted to attract the schismatics back into the Catholic Church.

The First Bicolano Archbishop, the First in Ilocandia

Sancho's efforts as a bishop were soon to be rewarded with another honor being eventually accorded to him. With the elevation of Nueva Segovia to the rank and status of an Archdiocese on June 29, 1951, Sancho was named its first Archbishop, twenty three years into his ministry here as Bishop. With that promotion, he also became the first Bicolano to have ever been given such an honor. Two of those who were raised with Sancho to the title and dignity of Archbishop on the same date were also Filipinos but they came from elsewhere, *Pedro Santos* of Pampanga, appointed Archbishop of the new Archdiocese of Caceres, and *Jose Ma. Cuenco* of Iloilo, appointed Archbishop of the new Archdiocese of Jaro.³⁹ Along with Nueva Segovia, Nueva Caceres, Jaro and Cagayan de Oro were also elevated at the time to the rank and status of Archdiocese.⁴⁰

Sancho's installation as Archbishop of Nueva Segovia was expectedly festive. The day before this took place at St. Paul's Cathedral on October 11, 1951, guests started arriving. There was a civic parade around the main streets of Vigan. Among the guests who arrived was the Apostolic Nuncio, *Egidio Vagnozzi*, who came by way of a motorcade from the town of Banaoang. A short program participated in by different schools was held to welcome the nuncio and a state dinner was tendered by the government officials of Ilocos Sur in his

³⁷ See Supreme Court Decisions of 1906 9N. 2832, November 24, 1906), Barlin vs. Ramirez et al. in *Philippine Reports*, Vol. 7, p. 11-65, p. 65, see also p. 41.

³⁸ J. Schumacher, *Readings in Philippine Church History*, 2nd ed., Loyola School of Theology, Quezon City, 1987, p. 332.

³⁹ See Pius XII's papal bull, "*Quo in Philippina Republica*" issued on June 29, 1951, which partly read: "*Hinc venerabiles Fratres Jacobum C. Sancho, Episcopum Novae Segobiae, Petrum Paulum Santos Songco, Episcopum Cacerensem, Josephum Mariam Cuenco, Episcopum Jarensem seu S. Elisabeth, Jacobum Thomam G. Hayes, Episcopum Cagayanum, eorumque in pontificatu successores, Archiepiscoporum titulo posthac decorabuntur, cum peculiari facultate deferendi ante se intra fines cuiusque archidioecesis Crucem et Sacro Pallio utendi, sicut ceteri archiepiscopi, postquam tamen hoc in Consistorio postulatum et obtentum fuerit.*" (Cf. "Bula de S.S. Pio XII", in *Boletin Ecclesiastico* 26/283 (1952), p. 1-5, p. 3.

⁴⁰ See "Decretum, Novae Segobiae, Cacerensis, Jarenensis, Cagayanae erectionis provinciarum ecclesiasticarum", in *Boletin Ecclesiastico* 26/283 (1952), p. 7-9. See also "Decretum exsecutorium, Novae Segobiae erectionis provinciae ecclesiasticae", issued by the Apostolic Nuncio, Egidio Vagnozzi on October 3, 1951. Cf. *Boletin Ecclesiastico* 26/283 (1952), p. 10-11.

honor and that of the other guests. Gracing the Archbishop's installation the following day were Church dignitaries that included *Gabriel Reyes*, Archbishop of Manila, and *Pedro Santos*, newly appointed Archbishop of Caceres (Naga). The installation rites were preceded by a solemn procession from the episcopal palace to the cathedral and a liturgical reception thereat of the new Archbishop of Nueva Segovia. Following the usual parts of the ritual, the Decrees of the Consistorial Congregation and that of the Apostolic Nuncio were read, followed by the enthronement of the new Archbishop and the subsequent homage paid to him by the clergy. The installation rites concluded with the addresses of Sancho himself and the Apostolic Nuncio. The whole day celebration was punctuated by a literary-musical program in honor of the new Archbishop and his guests.⁴¹

Named Archbishop at age 71, one might have expected Sancho to have physically slowed down a bit. But Sancho's zeal and enthusiasm hardly waned. In fact, it was during the same year that he was named Archbishop that he vigorously pursued to the end his project of constructing a new building for the Regional Seminary in Ilocandia (now named Immaculate Conception School of Theology), of which he is considered as the great founder.⁴² The project was necessitated in the first place by the increasing population that the seminary had to accommodate over the years.⁴³ For this project alone, Sancho had to raise PhP 400,000, the cost of the construction, which at that time was certainly already such a prohibitive amount. The project could have cost more had it not been for *President Elpidio Quirino* (the 6th President of the Philippines, 1948–1953) and his family who provided financial assistance for the construction of the chapel.⁴⁴

It might now appear that Sancho had so much concern for infrastructure, in particular, the physical improvement of the seminaries he built. He was nonetheless also concerned about the quality of education and formation being provided there. He saw to it, for instance, that the study of the Spanish language was part of the curriculum. He had such love for Spanish literature and the matching skill for Spanish oratory. But his having built seminary edifices in his jurisdiction was motivated more by his desire to attract more vocations to the priesthood as already mentioned. That he caused the establishment of seminaries wherever he went, first in Tuguegarao, and then in Laoag and Vigan, was a manifestation of his deep solicitude for priestly vocations. In fact, he tried though in vain, to persuade his relatives, one of his nephews, *Zacarías Sancho*, and another grand nephew, *Renato Sancho*,

⁴¹ On all these, see E. Abaya, "Solemn Erection of the Archdiocese and Installation of the First Archbishop", in *Boletín Eclesiástico* 26/283 (1952), p. 21–22.

⁴² See F. Scharf, "The History," p. 165. According to Scharf, Sancho is also remembered for having opened the big convent of San Vicente as shelter for the Chinese seminarians who came from communist China (F. Scharf, "The History," p. 167).

⁴³ On this, N. Wagner wrote: "Desde unos años a esta parte, se va haciendo más imperiosa la necesidad de un nuevo edificio. Es urgente construir un nuevo Seminario porque el presente caserón no podía albergar a todos los seminaristas que esperamos en los años futuros. Contamos este año con 130: 78 menores y 49 mayores... Con estos seminaristas el edificio está sobradamente ocupado; y no habría sitio en caso de que un número crecido de nuevos seminaristas se presenten." See N. Wagner, "El Seminario Arquidiocesano de la Inmaculada Concepción", in *Seminarium*, Vol. 7, n. 4 (1951), p. 5.

⁴⁴ M. P. Avanceña, "Biography of Archbishop Sancho," p. 2.

to pursue the priesthood.⁴⁵ While both did enter the seminary, they did not persevere. In any case, in a message he wrote for the periodic review *"Seminarium"*, Sancho expressed such concern:

Teniendo en cuenta que esta Revista (Seminarium) es la única en su género que se publica en Filipinas, debe desempeñar un papel muy importante para fomentar y promover los intereses de los Seminarios diocesanos de nuestro país, dado el exiguo número de sacerdotes que todos lamentamos. Basta tener en cuenta que para atender a más de 16 millones de católicos no tenemos mas que unos 2,250 sacerdotes, incluyendo los Religiosos que no se dedican al ministerio parroquial.

Gracias a Dios se va notando un aumento consolador de vocaciones eclesíásticas y religiosas y nuestras familias van apreciando más el inestimable honor que Dios N.S. les concede llamando a algunos de sus miembros al servicio de la Iglesia y trabajar por la salvación de las almas. Es pues un deber urgente que nos incumbe a todos los católicos de trabajar en todo tiempo para fomentar y promover las vocaciones eclesíásticas y ayudar a los Seminarios para que lleven una vida próspera, ya que sin ellos no podemos esperar abundantes santos y sabios sacerdotes que, llenos del espíritu de Dios, trabajan ardentemente y con celo verdaderamente apostolico para la preservación de la fé católica en este extreme Oriente.⁴⁶

Not contented to simply provide the infrastructure, that is, for the material needs (e.g., provision of food) of the priests and seminarians to be attended to, Sancho also asked the Benedictine nuns of the Monastery of Our Lady of Fatima nearby to assume this responsibility. It comes as no surprise then that a Steyler missionary priest (SVD) assigned in the seminary at that time,⁴⁷ *Narciso Wagner*, extolled Sancho when he referred to the seminary he built as *"Nuevo semillero de santos y sabios sacerdotes y monumento duradero del apostolado de Mons. Santiago Sancho, D.D."*⁴⁸ Wagner saw the seminary as indeed a *"monument which would proclaim in the times to come the zeal and untiring work of the first Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Nueva Segovia."*⁴⁹

As years progressed, Sancho's health deteriorated. This was perhaps the reason why he built a vacation resort and retreat house in Baguio where he could go every now and then to take much needed rest. One should not forget though that another reason why he built it was to provide a facility where his priests and seminarians could hold spiritual activities away from the usual noise and disturbance at home. Poor as his health might have become, he continued looking after himself. His favorite pastime was to take long walks into the

⁴⁵ Zacarías Sancho was the son of Santiago's brother Casimiro, while Renato Sancho was the grandson of Casimiro and son of Alfonso Sancho, brother of Zacarías.

⁴⁶ S. Sancho, "Mensaje," in *Seminarium*, Vol. 7, n. 4 (1951), p. 3.

⁴⁷ In 1925, the administration of the seminary was entrusted to the Steyler Missionaries, the Society of Divine Word (SVD).

⁴⁸ N. Wagner, "El Seminario Arquidiocesano de la Inmaculada Concepción", p. 5.

⁴⁹ N. Wagner, "El Seminario Arquidiocesano de la Inmaculada Concepción", p. 5: "... será la realización del más ardiente anhelo de nuestro amado y anciano Arzobispo quién abrigó siempre para el Seminario y sus seminaristas el más tierno y paternal cariño; y será a la vez un monumento duradero que pregonará la celosa e incansable labor del primer Arzobispo de la Arquidiócesis de Nueva Segobia."

country side, especially along the seashore. He loved the tranquility of the sea so that when his health weakened further as to prevent him from taking the usual promenade on foot, he continued his visits there by car.

Prior to his eventual retirement, Sancho had the fortune of having been able to celebrate two jubilees, first on July 25, 1952, the silver jubilee of his episcopal ministry in Nueva Segovia (1927–1952), and second, the golden jubilee of his sacerdotal ordination (1903–1953). So beloved was Sancho in Nueva Segovia that during his silver jubilee as a priest, the local government of Vigan passed a resolution declaring him an adopted son of the municipality. The tribute rendered him on this occasion said it all:

*Por cuanto durante dichos veinticinco años, el Mons Sancho, como Obispo primero, y hoy como Arzobispo, se ha captado el afecto, la admiracion y veneracion de todos los catolicos de la Archidicosis, por su trato afable y por su brillante ejecutoria, habiendo reconstruido iglesias y conventos y fundado escuelas y colegios, incluyendo el Seminario del Inmaculada Concepcion de Maria en Laoag, Ilocos Norte.*⁵⁰

The rest of the resolution practically extolled Sancho's accomplishments, citing in particular the beautification both of the exterior and interior of the Vigan Cathedral, the construction of the three-storey edifice of the Regional Seminary in Vigan (already mentioned earlier), and the celebration of the Eucharistic Congress in Vigan way back in 1930.⁵¹

One year later, in 1953, the same year Sancho was appointed *Assistant to the Pontifical Throne* by the Holy See in recognition of his exemplary service to the Church,⁵² he also celebrated the golden jubilee of his sacerdotal ordination. Celebrated on October 4-8, 1953, the jubilee celebration was made to coincide with the First Diocesan Congress for Ecclesiastical and Religious Vocations in the Archdiocese of Nueva Segovia.⁵³ Thus, not only were the activities focused on the person of Sancho himself, but they were also more so meant to foster vocations to the priesthood and the religious life, a concern so dear to the Bicolano Archbishop's heart. (Quite deservedly, it was generally recognized already by that time that no other bishop who had ever set foot in Nueva Segovia could surpass Sancho's predilection for the promotion of priestly vocations.⁵⁴) The opening day of the congress on October 5, 1953 was dedicated to students of Catholic Schools and the

⁵⁰ "Resolucion No. 98, Extracto de las actas del consejo municipal en su sesion extraordinaria celebrada el 24 de Julio de 1952," in *Commemorative Book*, p. 17.

⁵¹ See also "Discurso pronunciado por el Alcalde Municipal de Vigan, el Sr. Lorenzo Formoso, en el banquete del 4 de Octubre de 1953, 50-Aniversario de la Ordinacion de Sacerdocio del Sr. Arzobispo Santiago Sancho," in *Commemorative Book* (page number illegible).

⁵² "Brief Summary," p. 16.

⁵³ See "General Program of the Golden Sacerdotal Jubilee Celebrations of His Excellency, Most Reverend Santiago C. Sancho, D.D., Archbishop of Nueva Segovia," in *Commemorative Book*, p. 19. See also "The First Archdiocesan Congress for the Increase of Religious and Ecclesiastical Vocations," in *Commemorative Book* (page numbers illegible).

⁵⁴ "Two Seminaries," p. 84.

subsequent two days to the priests, the religious, their parents, and ultimately to the seminarians as well. The penultimate day of the celebrations on October 7, 1953 (on the *Feast of the Most Holy Rosary*) saw the blessing and inauguration of the new edifice of the Regional Seminary in Vigan.

But this was not to be Sancho's most singular achievement. In a message sent particularly for the occasion, *Egidio Vagnozzi*, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines at that time, also recognized Sancho's valiant efforts to combat Aglipayanism, when in a message he said:

When we consider, especially, the trying and delicate period of the history of the Church in this land which is embraced by this span of fifty years, the significance of the lifework of Archbishop Sancho becomes more apparent. As a young priest in Nueva Caceres he witnessed the beginnings of the attack made on the Church— from within and from without— under the false guise of patriotism. As bishop, first, of Tuguegarao and afterwards of Nueva Segovia, he was in the forefront of the fight to preserve the Catholic life and traditions of our people.

In the section of Northern Luzon where His Excellency has spent thirty-six years as Bishop and Shepherd of the flock of Christ, the spiritual confusion induced by the political changes was especially widespread. Happily, today, the clouds of misunderstanding are being dissipated and the Church is emerging from the conflict with renewed strength and vigour. That this is so, is due, under God, to the many zealous labourers in the vineyard of the Lord, and amongst these, Archbishop Sancho will ever hold a principal and special place of honor.⁵⁵

Pedro P. Santos, then Archbishop of Caceres, for his part stated in his greetings that Caceres, Sancho's *diocese of origin*, joined the chorus of magnificent praises in honor of the jubilarian, who to him was truly a legitimate pride of the Bicolano clergy, and – it must now be said – of his humble town of Libmanan as well. Santos knew that even as a young priest in Caceres, Sancho had such priestly maturity, the fame of which, exceeding the limits of the vast Bicol diocese, moved the Supreme Hierarchy of the Church to accord him the plenitude of the priesthood by appointing him Bishop of Tuguegarao. Sancho's having been exalted to the rank of First Metropolitan Archbishop of the vast Ecclesiastical Province of Northern Luzon (Nueva Segovia), Santos said, was a fitting recognition of what he worked so hard for to strengthen the Catholic faith in a region that was cradle to the Aglipayan schism.⁵⁶

Not long after the festive jubilee celebrations, that is in 1957, the moment of retirement had finally come. Actually, as early as 1947, even before becoming an archbishop, Sancho already needed help in the administration of the diocese. He was thus given an auxiliary bishop, *Juan Sison* of Villasis, Pangasinan, appointed in such capacity on May 20, 1947. Becoming more feeble in old age, Sancho had to give way to Sison who was appointed

⁵⁵ See "Message of the Nuncio," in *Commemorative Book*, p. 24.

⁵⁶ See "Message from Archdiocese of Caceres, No. 794/53," in *Commemorative Book*, p. 34.

Coadjutor Archbishop of Nueva Segovia on August 20, 1956 and who eventually was made administrator of the archdiocese *sede plena* in 1957.⁵⁷

After having served *sixty three* years as a priest and *forty nine* of these years as bishop and archbishop, Sancho's energy predictably drained out. Advanced in age, his health had to give way. The inevitable had finally come. Early on October 12, 1966, Archbishop Sancho, at age 86, went back to his creator, giving up his last breath at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Mandaluyong, Rizal. Without delay, his body was brought the same day to the Cathedral in Vigan, where final internment took place. The faithful of Ilocandia, in the hundreds, came to pay him homage. To many of them, this was truly an opportunity not to be missed to pay him their last respects. For to them he was a great man, truly deserving the tribute being accorded to him. Indeed, here was a man, who left behind him a legacy that was difficult to replicate in the Ilocos region for many years. The *Bicolano* and *Libmaneño* at heart had truly become a "*Bienhechor de Ilocandia*".⁵⁸

Conclusion

It is such a pity that given such an array of accomplishments, and after giving such honor and prestige to his hometown, particularly his humble village of San Vicente, his name now hardly rings any chance of being recognized and remembered. What seems to have contributed to this unfortunate state of affairs is that no relatives, even the most remote ones, have remained in Libmanan to perpetuate his memory. Not even his maternal home could be located, it having disappeared with nary a trace of its existence.

But history cannot afford to be completely oblivious of this otherwise great and eminent Libmaneño. With his hometown Libmanan becoming the seat of the then Prelature that has now most recently become a new diocese, the question of when it will ever have its own native Libmaneño as bishop will surely not escape being raised. In the twenty four years or so of its existence, Libmanan, as an independent ecclesiastical jurisdiction, has had two bishops, both of whom have come from elsewhere: one from Bombon, Camarines Sur (*P. Arellano*), and the other from Bato, Catanduanes (*J. Rojas*). Remembering Sancho should for now offer some consolation that Libmanan has produced at least one bishop (let alone who became an archbishop), and a great one at that, among her distinguished ranks.

For all that has been said, his name, *Santiago Caragnan Sancho* (1880-1966), is worth remembering not only by the Ilocanos, whom he served so well, but also by Libmaneños as he truly has been a "*Pride of Libmanan*".

⁵⁷ F. Scharf, "The Bishops of Nueva Segovia," p. 120.

⁵⁸ See footnote 2 above.