

Ina ng Buhay Parish: Thirty-two Years of Faith and Formation (1986-2018)


Jejomar PALMA

University of Santo Tomas
MANILA

ABSTRACT

Aiming to trace the growth and development of Ina ng Buhay Parish, Novaliches, Quezon City from its establishment in 1986 to 2018, this study highlights the different projects, programs, and activities spearheaded by the parish priests with the Parish Pastoral Council. Ina ng Buhay had 7 parish priests and 8 different Parish Pastoral Council Administrations with different styles of leadership and spirituality that helped the parish develop to what it is in the present. Guided by Anthony Giddens' Theory of Structuration which puts the agents and structures in a complementary relationship, as structures enable and constrain social action giving the agents the ability to change these existing structures and Arnold Toynbee's Challenge-And-Response Theory which attributes the continuity an institution to respond to posing ascribes that come its way, this historical study used analytical, descriptive, and narrative techniques. Written sources from souvenir programs and parish newsletters and oral history (by interview) are gathered as primary data.

Keywords: *Ina ng Buhay*, parish, parish priest, Parish Pastoral Council, structuration, challenge-and-response

he Catholic Church calls and urges her faithful to be essentially one in their faith. This call to be one and the call for active participation is so because her faithful are considered the Body of Christ. The Vatican says:

“It is the whole community, the Body of Christ united with its Head that celebrates. "Liturgical services are not private functions but are celebrations of the Church which is 'the sacrament of unity,' namely, the holy people united

and organized under the authority of the bishops. Therefore, liturgical services pertain to the whole Body of the Church. They manifest it and have effects upon it. But they touch individual members of the Church in different ways, depending on their orders, their role in the liturgical services, and their actual participation in them." For this reason, "rites which are meant to be celebrated in common, with the faithful present and actively participating, should as far as possible be celebrated in that way rather than by an individual and quasi-privately."¹

It is therefore the right and obligation of every faithful, being a community baptized into the Catholic Church, to actively, consciously, fully and wholeheartedly participate in her celebrations to manifest their unity and their being the one Body of Christ. It is to say, indeed, that the people, the community, the faithful, are the Church.

It is because of this need to fulfill the role of the faithful as the Body of Christ that she is organized into institutions called parishes. As one of the primary religious institutions of the Catholic church, it is in the parish where one experiences the 'community' aspect of the faith first-hand. Therefore, it is a serious responsibility of a parish community to embody the faith and the oneness of the Church with Christ. One cannot do this alone, which is why in the definition of a parish we find the laity and the clergy as active participants in the life of a parish. Indeed, a priest cannot sustain a parish alone without the faithful; and neither can the faithful do so without a priest. It is from this relationship that the parish goes beyond its religious functions to assume a social dimension.

The parish priest is put in an arduous role of taking care of souls entrusted to him by teaching, sanctifying, and governing² the parish. He is seen as the shepherd of the flock—what the flock needs he provides. Most Rev. Orlando Quevedo emphasized that humility, self-abnegation, sacrifice—*kenosis*—should describe the very being of a priest and that the call to be servants is fundamental to priestly life and ministry.³ The role of the lay faithful is looked upon with as much importance as the clergy for they share the same mission as baptized

¹"Catechism of the Catholic Church", The Holy See, Retrieved from http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s1c2a1.htm accessed February 4, 2015

² "Catechism of the Catholic Church," The Holy See

³ Most Rev. Orlando Quevedo, O.M.I., D.D., "Pastoral Priorities and Seminary Formation," *Kalatog: Theology in Context: Select Perspectives* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2003): 11.

Catholics. The clergy and the lay must, therefore, work hand-in-hand to bring about the actual embodiment of faith in the parish.

It is emphasized in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* that the Church, striving to proclaim the Gospel to all people, has had the single aim of fulfilling her duty of being the messenger of the Good News of Jesus Christ⁴ and that evangelizing is the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity⁵ This implies that the whole corpus of the Church is geared towards the very mission of evangelizing and that this evangelization is not only something that the Church must do but also something that the Church must *be*.

The laity shares this mission of evangelization and sanctification of men, but differs from the clergy in such a way that they penetrate and perfect the temporal order through the spirit of the Gospel.⁶ This is to say that the laity, themselves living in the midst of the world, is given the task to bring down Christ's salvific message to their secular social environment. In this way, they are sent to continue the redemptive work of Jesus Christ in the temporal order,⁷ thus proving that the Church lives in the world even if she is not of the world.⁸ The complementary roles of the clergy and the laity are manifested in the parish where both parties work as a single body to carry out the mission of the Church.

Upon this philosophy, *Ina ng Buhay Parish* (INBP) operates as a religious institution. Though still young at 32 years, INBP has been the center of religious *cum* social interaction—between parish priests and parish leaders, parish priests and parishioners, parish leaders and parishioners, and between co-parishioners. As a literal temple for religious-social exchange, INBP is witness

⁴ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Retrieved from http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html, Accessed on May 2, 2016

⁵ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.

⁶ Pope Paul VI, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Retrieved from http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html, Accessed on May 2, 2016

⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*. Retrieved from http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html, Accessed on May 2, 2016

⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, Jn 17:16 as cited in the same work of Pope John Paul II. Similarly, St. Augustine of Hippo asserted that the earthly city can never become the city of God because of the presence of the worldly citizens whereas the city of God is understood to be "perfect" whose citizens are followers of God, although he did not discredit the fact that there are people in the earthly city who exhibit characteristics that make them worthy of belonging to the city of God. That the Church "lives in this world" is seen in the efforts of the faithful to spread the Gospel, while also acknowledging that the Church is "not of this world" as it is of the city of God that every Catholic faithful must aim to reach after their earthly lives. See St. Augustine, *City of God*.

to the phenomena as mentioned above. This makes her a rich repository of religious and social thought worthy of a critical study.

Presented in this paper is the general history of Ina ng Buhay Parish, and detailed accounts of parochial affairs seen through the perspective of structure-agent relationship, which warrants the discussion on the different parish administrations and the evolutions it has undergone since its establishment.

I. Establishment of Ina ng Buhay Parish

Desiring to culminate the commemoration of the 2000th birth anniversary of the Blessed Virgin Mary on 1985 by building a national shrine dedicated to her, His Eminence the late Jaime Cardinal Sin personally surveyed for the possible area where the church, and consequently a new parish, will be built. Cardinal Sin opted to name the new church Ina ng Buhay making it the first church in Asia to honor Mary as the Mother of Life.

Upon receiving a donated one-hectare lot⁹ by a certain Serafia Gonzales¹⁰ in Damong Maliit, Novaliches, Cardinal Sin wasted no time in laying the cornerstone¹¹ of the *Simbahan ng Ina ng Buhay* on September 7, 1985.¹² He appointed the Rosary Movement led by Mrs. Rosario Melchor, and Rev. Fr. Manny Sebastian who was the spiritual director of the sub-parish of Our Lady of Miraculous Medal nurtured by the *Damong Maliit Catholic Association* to oversee the initial efforts in the establishment of a new parish. It is only right to give credit to the assistance of this existing sub-parish to the ongoing parish church construction and formation. Nurtured by Jesuit novices through spiritual and leadership seminars and catechisms, this small community in *Damong Maliit* grew to be a bustling sub-parish who aided its mother parish, Our Lady of Mercy, in its parochial affairs giving birth to the *Damong Maliit Catholic Association*. The association was responsible for the emergence of the chapel of Our Lady of Miraculous Medal that played a critical role in the years of the infancy of INBP. For a time it was using the chapel of Our Lady of

⁹ *Ina ng Buhay Parish: Fiesta '88*, Souvenir Program (Quezon City, n.p.: 1988): np. There were no specifications whatsoever on who donated the one-hectare area.

¹⁰ Minutes of the PPC Meeting, 17 June 2018

¹¹ The rite of laying the foundation stone or cornerstone is done when building new churches to invoke God's presence and blessing of success and as a reminder that the church structure is a visible sign of the living Church, God's building which consists of the people themselves. See International Committee on English in the Liturgy. *Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar*. N.p: n.p, 1978. Retrieved from <http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Rites/RDCA.pdf>. Accessed March 15, 2016

¹² *Ina ng Buhay Parish: Fiesta '88*, Souvenir Program (Quezon City, n.p.: 1988): np.

Miraculous Medal (see Figure 1) as its main church since the construction of the parish church was not yet complete.

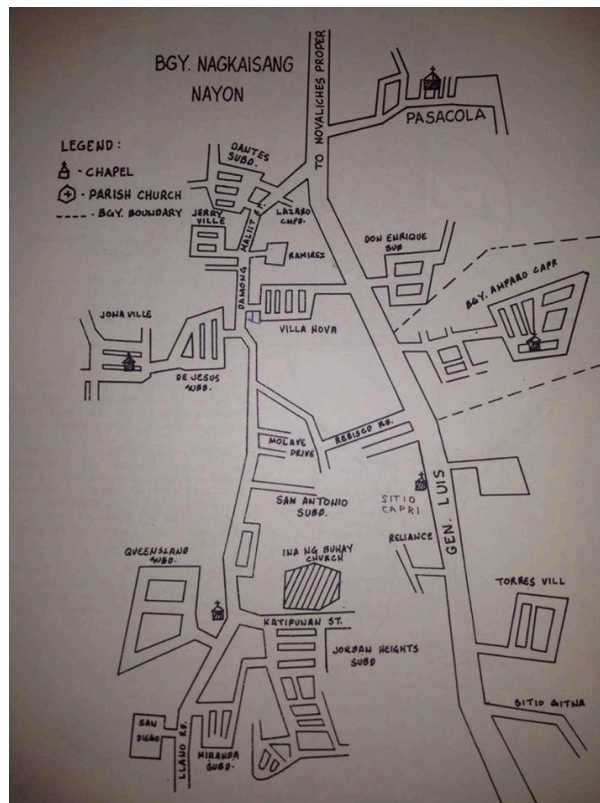


(Figure 1: Chapel of Our Lady of Miraculous Medal)

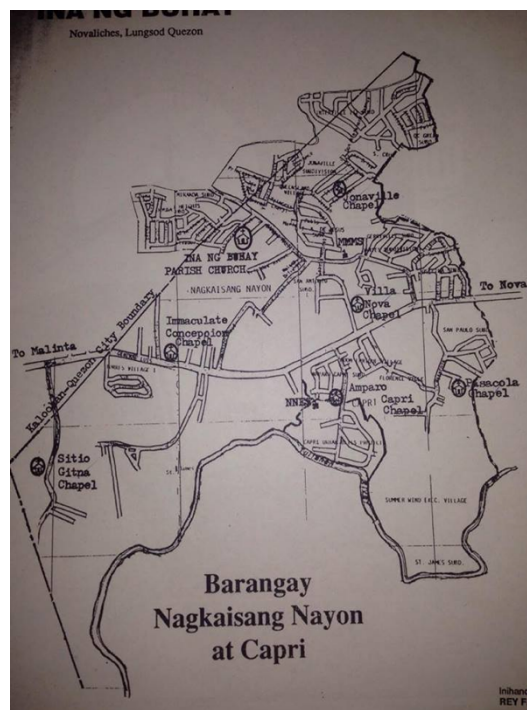
It is essential to understand that INBP did not start as a full-blown parish upon its establishment. Organizations were only beginning to be formed during its first year, except for ministries like the Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Communion and the Lectors and Commentators, which were already created, albeit loosely, even before the establishment of the parish to assist the priest in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Determined parish territory or boundary is an essential element of a parish since, more than identifying its geographic limitations, it defines the social setting to which the parish will be of service. By social context, we mean all facets of community life. From the awareness of this social setting, the parish then can decide apt projects and programs and plan appropriate activities relevant to the people.

INBP started with a somewhat larger territory compared to its current area scope. At its establishment, INBP housed six sub-parishes (see Figure 2). Gen. Luis St. served as a landmark dividing the whole parish area into two major sections. To the south of Gen. Luis St. are the sub-parishes of Amparo Capri, Sitio Gitna, and Pasacola; while to the north of Gen. Luis St. are the remaining sub-parishes of Villanova, Immaculate Conception, and Jonaville. Included in the parish's territory are the subdivisions of Jerryville, Dantes, F.B. De Jesus, Queensland, San Antonio, Jordan Heights, Miranda, and Don Enrique; and the compounds of San Diego, Ramirez, Lazaro, and Torres (see Figure 3).

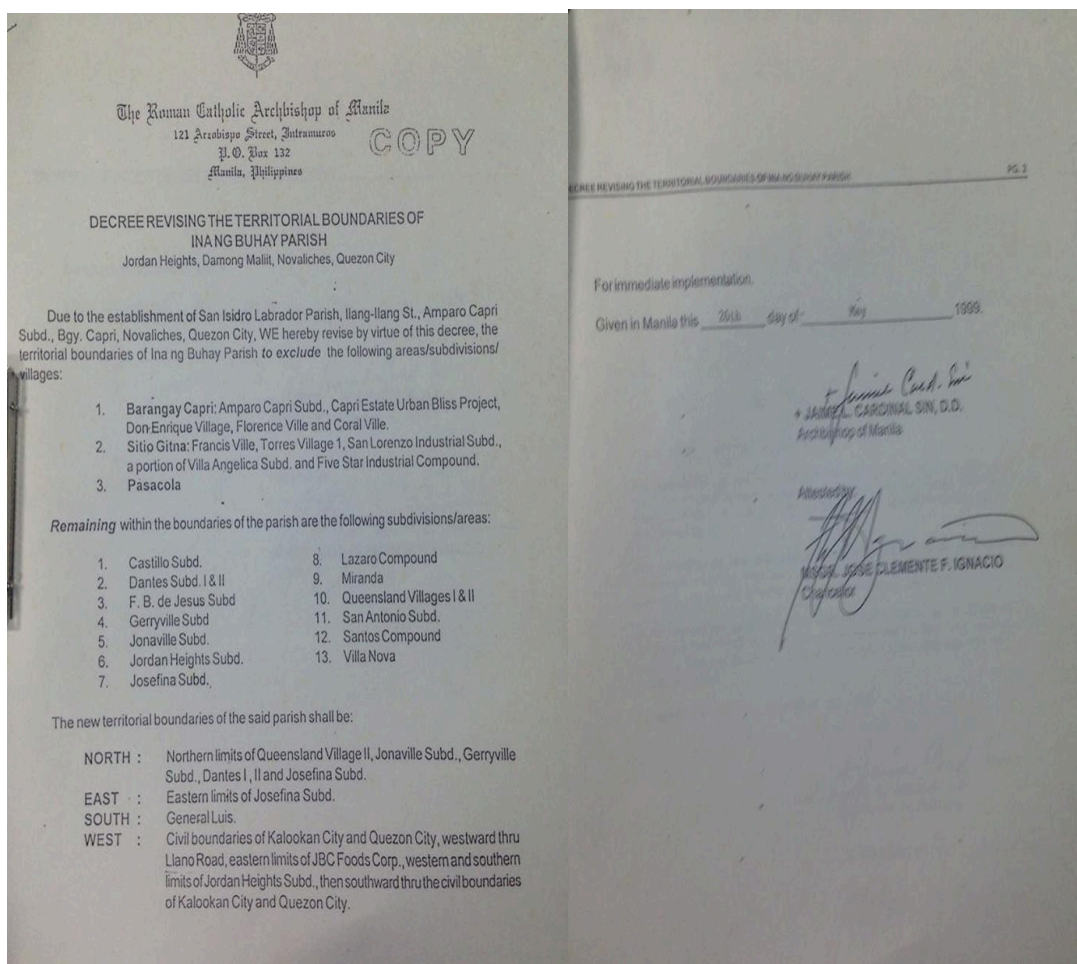


(Figure 2: INBP Territory taken from 1988 Fiesta Celebration Souvenir Program)



(Figure 3: INBP Territory taken from 1994 Fiesta Celebration Souvenir Program)

INBP maintained this scope of territory up until 1999 when the areas south of Gen. Luis St. had to be ceded to the newly established neighboring San Isidro Labrador Parish. This meant that the sub-parishes of Amparo Capri, Sitio Gitna, Pasacola and the communities of Don Enrique and Torres Ville were no longer part of Ina ng Buhay (see Figure 4).



(Figure 4: Decree Revising the Territorial Boundaries of Ina ng Buhay Parish)

Fr. Christopher V. Santos categorized the Ina ng Buhay as a middle parish.¹³ In other words, the majority of the parishioners belong to the middle class. This explains the high number of gated subdivisions that divide the whole community into sub-communities/compounds. The parish is also surrounded by factories, which bring about *transient residents*,¹⁴ most of whom are factory workers who live in rooms-for-rent or bed spaces, and whose permanency in the area are always clouded with the possibility of reassignment. Because they live

¹³ Rev. Fr. Christopher V. Santos, interview with the parish priest, Feb 26, 2016. According to him, one way of the diocese to categorize parishes are through evaluating the income turnout of the parishioners.

¹⁴ Interview with Rev. Fr. Christopher V. Santos.

in an urban community, the parishioners of INBP are used to a fast-paced life whose routines are mostly governed by work or studies. These specific configurations also pose challenges to the active ministry of the parish, which will be tackled as the discussions go on.

II. The Parish Priests and the Parish Pastoral Councils

INBP, not exempt from the implications of the space-time context, is subject to change per its milieu. For this reason, parish administrations had to fashion the parish to "dance with the times." This explains the different thrusts between parish administrations in the conduct of their ministries. However, parish administrations certainly conform in their thrusts considering that there exist pervasive contexts that continuously influence actions and decisions.

The reflexive and complementary relationship of the laity and the pastor is perfected and manifested through the Parish Pastoral Council. While parish priests are not to be separated from the pastoral council – himself being its highest officer – it is important to see them separately as pastors for the following reasons: (1) for more straightforward identification of an administration; and (2) parish priests give direction to pastoral councils in terms of thrust and focus. For this reason, the history of INBP will be laid down per parish administration.

Rev. Fr. Jose P. Miranda (1986-1993)

The establishment of INBP became imminent when Cardinal Sin appointed a similarly young priest, only serving two years in his vocation by the time of his appointment, Rev. Fr. Jose P. Miranda, a newly ordained priest pursuing higher studies in Maryland, USA, on September 12, 1986.¹⁵ He arrived at the parish on September 14, 1986. Since the parish church was under construction at the time of his arrival, Fr. Miranda had to hold his first mass in the chapel of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. Fondly known to the people as Fr. Joey, he was ordained on September 29, 1984 by Cardinal Sin. Fr. Miranda completed his Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Theological studies at San Carlos Seminary, Guadalupe, Makati; and, at the time of his appointment as the parish priest, was finishing his Master's Degree in Educational Management at Ateneo de Manila University.¹⁶

¹⁵ Interview with Rev. Fr. Christopher V. Santos.

¹⁶ Antonio Tullas and Susan Tullas, "The Vocation of Fr. Jose P. Miranda," *Ina ng Buhay Bulletin* Issue No. 1, (Sep 2, 1990), 57.

Upon his arrival, the first challenge was finding a good source of fund for the completion of the church's construction. His first initiative was to meet with the officers and other leaders of subdivision homeowners, sub-parishes, and already-established church organizations on the 27th of September 1986, which ended in the creation of the Ad Hoc Working Committee primarily geared towards conceptualizing fundraising projects to help finance the church construction.¹⁷ On October of the same year, Fr. Joey was able to organize the Youth Pastoral Council by gathering together the youth representatives of the different sub-parishes to elect their officers headed by Mr. Noel Parado. Again, realizing the primary challenge of the parish at hand, the Youth Pastoral Council's initial objectives were to help generate funds for the church construction; hence, the conduct of the Takbuhan '86 held on the 19th of October of the same year¹⁸.

Four days after, Fr. Miranda and the Ad Hoc Working Committee was quick to organize an Interim Pastoral Council and to appoint chairpersons for the different committees/commissions of the parish – Worship, Education, Service, Temporalities, and Youth (WESTY). The president of the first Parish Pastoral Council was Mr. Servillano Mendoza and among its member were Mrs. Sally Carino, Mrs. Adoracion Ramirez, Mrs. Norma Pacaigue, Mr. Leo Reyes, Mr. Nemen Carinno, Mr. Antonio Tullas, and Mr. Jovernal Gonzales.

By 1988, the parishioners elected new officers in the pastoral council while retaining some of its past officers. The newly-elected officers were:

| NAME | POSITION |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| Antonio Tullas, Jr | President |
| Manny Ignacio | Vice-President |
| Norma Pacaigue | Executive Secretary |
| Estela Gachpaz | Recording Secretary |
| Leo Reyes | Treasurer |
| Lina Perez | Assistant Treasurer |
| Dominador Vinuya | Auditor |
| Severino Samonte | Public Relations Officer |
| Thess San Diego | Chairperson for Worship |
| Danilo Araneto | Chairperson for Education |
| Kadette Roque | Chairperson for Service |
| Manny Ignacio | Chairperson for Temporalities |
| Noel Parado | Youth |

(Table 1: 1988 Parish Pastoral Council Officers)

¹⁷ *Ina ng Buhay Parish: Fiesta '88*. Members of the said Ad Hoc Working Committee were not specified, but some of its members went on to be the officers of the first Parish Pastoral Council which was an interim.

¹⁸ *Ina ng Buhay Parish: Fiesta '88*, np.

As a new parish, INBP started with only a handful of organizations, most of which are core organizations in the celebration of the Sacrament of Eucharist – Lectors and Commentators, Mother Butlers, Knights of the Altar, Special Ministers of the Holy Communion, and the Music Ministry with only four choirs (Brown Madonna, Ina ng Buhay Choir, Jordan Heights Choir, and Ina ng Buhay Children's Choir). Other organizations worked equally for the welfare of the parish. The Parish Marshalls were a group of men tasked to maintain peace and order inside and outside the vicinity of the church area. On the other hand, the Legion of Mary, the Ina ng Buhay Charismatic Community, and the BUKLOD Marriage Encounter were other mandated organizations that worked for the spiritual enrichment of its parishioners through prayer and worship outside Sunday masses and through seminar formations.

In 1990, the parish launched the Ina ng Buhay Bulletin. Using the newsletter as an effective medium for a lively exchange of ideas and information,¹⁹ Ina ng Buhay Bulletin features all facets of parish life for the awareness of its parishioners. The newsletter, with Mrs. Zenaida San Diego as its Editor-in-Chief and Mr. Reynaldo San Diego as its Managing Editor²⁰, contains parish announcements of future activities, mass schedules, parish news and other feature writings feeding spiritual insights. This significant literary undertaking was not only convenient in disseminating relevant information to parishioners but was also an avenue for effecting change and evangelization. The circulation of Ina ng Buhay Bulletin started from 1990 and went to a halt in 1993 with the re-appointment of parish priests.

Perhaps the most notable legacy that Fr. Joey left in INBP was the establishment of Ina ng Buhay Catholic School. Established in 1991, INBCS brought the parish to a more profound encounter with the parishioners being directed by the same parish priest. In this way, INBCS gave a new venue for its parishioners to be more involved in the parish through the school. Starting with only eleven Kindergarten students, INBCS upped its enrolment to 134 students, from Nursery to Grade Three, in the following SY: 1992-1993 passing the enrolment quota of the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS) of 120 pupils²¹ and then proceeded to increase in enrolment by 46.51% in the following SY: 1993-1994 now catering students up to Grade Four. The establishment of the parochial school was an answer to what Fr. Joey believed to be a need for evangelization through formal education that would operate

¹⁹ Reynaldo San Diego, "Why a Parish Newsletter?" In *Ina ng Buhay Bulletin* Issue No. 1, (Sep 2, 1990), 3

²⁰ Reynaldo San Diego, "Why a Parish Newsletter?" 3.

²¹ Susan Tullas, "Ina ng Buhay Catholic School: Mission Defined," *Ina ng Buhay Bulletin* Issue No. 1, (Sep 6, 1992), 1.

until the present time. Although its enrolment was not limited to the parishioners of INBP, still the majority of its students were from the same parish thereby strengthening the bonds of the community going beyond regular Sunday masses.

It was during Fr. Miranda's administration when the *Ina ng Buhay* Charismatic Community took a great leap in establishing a Memorandum of Agreement with the Technological University of the Philippines in 1992 strengthening the parish's Programang Pangkabuhayan. The program sought to aid parishioners with their livelihood by offering courses such as Food Preservation, Food Preparation, Cosmetology, Recycling of Discarded Materials, and Tailoring.²² While, on the 11th of April 1992, INBP formed its Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) as a response to a national call for clean, honest, peaceful, orderly, and credible elections.²³ Eighty-three of its active members underwent a series of seminars on voters' education while sending some of its poll watchers to about sixty precincts of Barangay Nagkaisang Nayon and thirty-one precincts of Barangay Capri on May 11 election day. He also raised awareness about the disintegrating condition of the Damong Malit Road, a major part of his parish's jurisdiction, and spearheaded the filling of potholes and resurfacing the road in 1989²⁴ but to no avail. A year after, he wrote a letter to Quezon City Mayor Brigido Simon, signed by twenty presidents of different groups and subdivisions²⁵ demanding for the road reconstruction, which saw fulfillment in 1991.

Albeit at the foundation-stage, INBP under Fr. Miranda exhibited enthusiasm in bringing Christ closer to His people by offering church service on a weekly basis:

| | |
|------------------|--|
| SUNDAY | Masses: 7:00am, 9:00am, 4:00pm, 6:00pm Baptism: 11:30am |
| MONDAY | Masses: 6:30 am |
| TUESDAY | Mass: 6:30 am |
| WEDNESDAY | Masses: 6:30am, 6:30pm Novena: 6:00pm Marriage Interviews: 4:00pm – 7:00pm Catechetical Instruction: 7:00pm |
| THURSDAY | Masses: 6:30 am |
| FRIDAY | Masses: 6:30 am, 6:30 pm (Every First Friday) |

²² Puring Vallejos, "Programang Pangkabuhayan," *Ina ng Buhay Bulletin* Issue No. 1, (Sep 6, 1992), 6.

²³ N.a, "PPCRV in May 1992 Election," *Ina ng Buhay Bulletin* Issue No. 1, (Sep 6, 1992), 2.

²⁴ Susan Tullas, "A Concrete Road At Last," *Ina ng Buhay Bulletin* Issue No. 2, (Jan 6, 1991), 10.

²⁵ Reynaldo San Diego, "Mga Lubak sa Damong Maliit, Idinaing ng Taong-Bayan," *Ina ng Buhay Bulletin* Issue No. 1, (Sep 2, 1990), 8.

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| SATURDAY | Masses: 6:30am, 6:30pm – Anticipated Marriage Counseling – 1:00pm Confession – 5:00pm |
|-----------------|---|

(Table 2 – Parish Weekly Schedule under the administration of Fr. Jose P. Miranda)

INBP's response to the economic and political issues of the time proves that its mission goes beyond the walls of the parish church. As a religious community responsible for the well-being of each other, the parish under Fr. Joey reached out not only to feed the spiritual hunger of its people but also to their concerns even as a civil community.

The administration of Fr. Miranda and his Parish Pastoral Council was marked by the challenge of establishing the parish such as building structures for functional roles, forming organizations to work for the welfare of the parish and assessing the social and physical environment to determine proper ways to answer the needs of the parishioners. With God's providence Fr. Miranda was successful in leading the parish in its first phase. He was able to spearhead the building of a Multi-Purpose Hall and a Parish Convent, the financial statement of which he reported in the 1992 issue of the *Ina ng Buhay Bulletin* amounting to almost 4 Million Pesos, not to mention he was able to establish a parochial school that caters students from Nursery to Grade Four in its initial years.

Fr. Miranda's administration is said to be versatile. In other words, he had a wide variety of projects that served their purpose for the different facets of the people's lives despite being in its infant years. He was able to achieve a structural improvement of the parish. His contribution to the education of the community was the INBCS and the INBCC's Memorandum of Agreement with TUP. It was through his administration's that a smooth Damong Maliit Road was achieved. Miranda, for seven years, was able to work for the stabilization of the parish that the succeeding priests had to maintain and improve. He was transferred to Mary Mother of Good Counsel Parish in Paranaque on May 24, 1993²⁶ and was succeeded by Rev. Fr. Virginio Pedregosa on May 25, 1993.²⁷

Rev. Fr. Virginio B. Pedregosa (1993-1995)

By the time Fr. Virginio Pedregosa was appointed as the new parish priest, INBP was already practically on the maintaining phase – core structures like the parish church, parish convent, and the multi-purpose hall were already built, and the INBCS was boosting its reputation in the parish vicinity. It was

²⁶, Reynaldo San Diego, "Fr. Vir Pedregosa, Bagong Kura Paroko," *Ina ng Buhay Bulletin*, Year 4, No. 1 (Sep 7, 1993), 1.

²⁷ Reynaldo San Diego, "Fr. Vir Pedregosa, Bagong Kura Paroko," 1.

initially Fr. Pedregosa's task to maintain what the past administration had started. His appointment as the parish priest automatically rendered him as the spiritual director, just as Fr. Joey was, of Ina ng Buhay Catholic School. It had become an official undertaking that the parish priest also becomes the spiritual director of its parochial school.

Fr. Pedregosa finished Theology and Pastoral Theology at the University of Santo Tomas. Ordained on November 18, 1989, he served as the Parochial Vicar of San Roque Parish in Blumentritt, Manila and then proceeded to help at the Archdiocesan Shrine of St. Anne, Taguig, Manila. He was the parish priest of Sta. Lucia Parish in Novaliches right before being appointed as the parish priest of INBP.

Also with his installation as the new parish priest on September 7, 1993, was the induction of new pastoral council officers.

| NAME | POSITION |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Antonio Tullas, Jr | President |
| Domingo Pascual, Jr. | Vice-President |
| Norma Pacaigue | Executive Secretary |
| Norma Palermo | Recording Secretary |
| Leo Reyes | Treasurer |
| Monica Dimaculangan | Auditor |
| Norma Pacaigue | Chairperson for Worship |
| Rev. Fr. Edwin Tanalgo | Chairperson for Education |
| Dolores Dela Cruz | Chairperson for Service |
| Domingo Pascual, Jr | Chairperson for Temporalities |
| Jen-Jen Del Castillo | Youth |

(Table 3: 1993 Parish Pastoral Council Officers²⁸)

Although some of the officers retained their positions since 1988, such as Mr. Tullas, Mrs. Pacaigue, and Mr. Reyes, more new officers were elected giving opportunities for growth and leadership among other parishioners as well.

A year after, there happened a sudden change in the officers. Domingo Pascual, Jr. and Antonio Tullas, Jr. swapped positions, while Estela Bundalian was elected Recording Secretary replacing Noma Palermo. Ismael Bernal was elected Auditor replacing Monica Dimaculangan. Gloria Bautista, on the other hand, was elected as the new PRO.²⁹

²⁸ *Ina ng Buhay Bulletin*, Year 4, Issue No. 1, (Sep 7, 1993), 12.

²⁹ *Ika-8 Kapistahan: Parokya ng Ina ng Buhay*, Souvenir Program (Quezon City: n.p., 1994), n.pag. There are no records whatsoever indicating that Gloria Bautista immediately replaced Severino Samonte as PRO, nor was there proof that the PPC was left without a PRO before the installation of new officers in 1993.

| NAME | POSITION |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Domingo Pascual, Jr | President |
| Antonio Tullas, Jr | Vice-President |
| Estela Bundalian | Recording Secretary |
| Ismael Bernal | Auditor |
| Gloria Bautista | Public Relations Officer |

(Table 4: 1994 Change of Parish Pastoral Council Officers)

A notable project that Fr. Pedregosa led was the construction of a three-classroom edifice that houses students from grades five and six and three pre-school classes, along with the improvement of library facilities that enabled a more comprehensive and educational experience which is very fitting with the increase of levels (grades five and six) that the INBCS accepted. Previously, students sat together on long benches during classes, however by the start of SY: 1994-1995 individual chairs made of wood and iron were made available for a more conducive and comfortable classroom environment. All of these developments in the parochial school were made possible by the successful fund-raising event by the Parents-Teachers Association headed by Mr. Livi Marquez entitled “Search For Little Mr./Miss INBCS” yielding an amount of Php 155,630.³⁰ The success of this undertaking symbolizes the active and wholehearted participation of the people resulting in a fruitful end. A breakthrough program that Fr. Pedregosa’s pastoral council pioneered is the operations of free medical and dental clinics in the parish. This became possible through the help of the pastoral council president, Mr. Pascual, who was a medical doctor.

One of the significant programs fulfilled under Fr. Pedregosa’s administration was a response to a government initiative called Clean and Green Program establishing the Annual Search for the Cleanest and Greenest Local Government Units of the Philippines under Presidential Memorandum Order No. 187, December 10, 1993.³¹

Within two years of service in the parish, Fr. Pedregosa’s administration was marked with increasing membership in parish organizations, and the establishment of new parish organizations. The Music Ministry welcomed its latest member choir, the Walk With God’s Choir, while a new charismatic group

³⁰ N.a, “Achievements of the Ina ng Buhay Catholic School,” *Ika-8 Kapistahan: Parokya ng Ina ng Buhay*, Souvenir Program (Quezon City: n.p., 1994): n.p.

³¹Ibid. N.a, “Achievements of the Ina ng Buhay Catholic School,” n.p.

in the form of El Shaddai was established.³² This meant that the parish had gradually penetrated the lives of its parishioners that they are starting to involve themselves in the parochial life, making it more inclusive and active. One may credit this boon as the fruit of the combined executive stewardship of the past and Fr. Pedregosa's administrations. With his significant share of hard work Fr. Pedregosa was able to accomplish a handful of projects and was able to fulfill programs that benefitted the parish very well.

Rev. Fr. Joven P. Antique (1995-1997)

Ordained by Jaime Cardinal Sin on March 24, 1990, Rev. Fr. Joven P. Antique first served as the Parochial Vicar of Holy Sacrifice Parish, University of the Philippines, from 1990-1992. For a year, he was the parish priest of Holy Trinity Parish in Ideal Subdivision, Quezon City before going to Papua New Guinea in 1994 to 1995 as a Volunteer Missionary so that by the time he was appointed as the new parish priest of INBP on May 12 he had just returned from his missionary work. He graduated from college at the Seminario Mayor Recoletos in Baguio and finished Theology at the Augustinian Formation House of St. Vincent Seminary, Quezon City.

Falling under the same predicament as Fr. Pedregosa, Fr. Antique had a short stint in the parish; nevertheless, he was still able to fulfill the duties of a parish priest to lead his flock to Christ. With the help of a virtually new pastoral council headed by Mr. Domingo Pascual, Jr., Ms. Dolly Dela Cruz as Vice-President, Ms. Zenaida Alvarez as Executive Secretary, Mrs. Estella Bundalian as Recording Secretary, Ms. Lorie Guanzon as Treasurer, and Mr. Honesto Ramos, Jr. as PRO, Fr. Joven was able to make fruitful his short stint as parish priest. His administration saw the birth of new organizations such as the Couples for Christ, Ina ng Buhay Cursillo Team, King of mercy Marriage Encounter Community, and the Alliance of Two Hearts Organization.

May 1995 elections have heightened once again the awareness of the people's political responsibilities that led INBP to rekindle the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting that Fr. Miranda had pioneered. He was able to refurbish the Adoration Chapel and launched the bible study program, which was initially organized by the Education Committee during the administration of Fr. Pedregosa. This program went well for the spiritual and religious enrichment of the parishioners, especially lay leaders. This bible study also served well for the Parish Youth Council as it became their formation in preparing themselves

³² Zenaida San Diego, "History of Ina ng Buhay Parish," *Parokya ng Ina ng Buhay: 25th Foundation Anniversary Parish Fiesta Celebration*, (Quezon City: n.p., 2011): n.p.

for the most significant religious event in 1995 of which they took part in – World Youth Day '95.

In seeing the same trend of stewardship in Fr. Pedregosa and Fr. Antique, one may say that the parish was at the maintaining phase of its life. Both priests did not have a watershed event that changed the face of the parish during their time, but this does not mean that theirs were administrations of bore and stagnation. A factor would be that two years of stewardship were not enough for them to realize all their master plans for the parish. Still, credit is due to both priests for making do with the short years that they've had and doing their responsibilities well.

Rev. Fr. Bong Lopez (1997-1998)

Through another reassignment of parish priests, INBP found its pastoral care under its new parish priest, Rev. Fr. Bong Lopez, on April 1997. What made Fr. Lopez stand out among all the parish priests, both preceding and succeeding him, was that he was able to put to good use his God-given talent of singing.

With his singing Fr. Lopez was able to record songs and hold concerts for fund-raising. Mrs. Zenaida San Diego, former editor-in-chief of the *Ina ng Buhay Bulletin*, vividly recalls how he would serenade his parishioners whenever he celebrates the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist on Sundays, and while singing, offertory enveloped would be passed around, and indeed people would not hesitate to give. This became a regular affair so much so that the people branded him as the “singing priest.”³³

What made his stint successful in its respect was that he only needed to strike the musical interest of his people so that he would not be forgotten despite serving just a year. His was an administration that, shortest as it may be, solidifies that a part of a pastor's success is tapping the people's soft spot to be able to garner support from his flock, which Fr. Lopez was able to do. For a while time is of critical essence, the wise and wholehearted use thereof is still warranted; such that so many things can be achieved in such a short period, provided that it is motivated by the wise and wholehearted use of talents and skills.

³³ San Diego. “History of Ina ng Buhay Parish,” *History of Ina ng Buhay Parish*, n.p.

The transition of parish priests from 1993-1998 was rather swift. Three parish priests have served in INBP in 5 years. This explains the relative period of quiet in the life of the parish. For indeed, significant changes require a great deal of investment in time and effort. It would not be very realizable to say that significant changes can be visible in the span of only a few years, but this is not to say, and again we emphasize, that the priests from 1993-1998 were not successful in their respects for indeed they were.

Rev. Fr. Danilo P. Pajarillaga (1998-2007)

INBP achieved an undeniably new high under Rev. Fr. Danilo Pajarillaga. Under his leadership, the parish attained its *metanoia* (a transformative change of heart or a spiritual conversion) so much that the parish looks at itself so differently as it traversed its life under Fr. Pajarillaga, establishing the maxim “*Ina ng Buhay: Buhay na Buhay!*”

Appointed as parish priest on May 15, 1998,³⁴ Fr. Pajarillaga was quick to lay his plans to improve the parish that he had described to be seemingly devastated.³⁵ Just like Fr. Miranda’s administration, versatility was one of the many characters of that of Fr. Pajarillaga’s administration. Tremendous attention was given to the physical and spiritual improvements of the church. In the year 2000 alone, the pastoral council successfully spearheaded the building of what will be the among the most significant legacies of Fr. Pajarillaga’s administration, and which marked a growing interest in INBP by people from outside the parish – the Life-Size Station of the Cross. The project amounted to Php 450,000 where each image on the Station of the Cross stood to Php 10,000.³⁶ With enough land area, the stations were situated in the parish garden area where a simultaneous development was happening – the Garden Reception and landscaping of the garden area. With these developments, the garden became a conducive area for reflection, meditation, and prayer deepened by actual images of the passion of Christ, while at the center was a multi-functional space where pastoral meetings and other activities, particularly seminars and formations, were held. This made the parish's garden an ideal

³⁴ San Diego. “History of Ina ng Buhay Parish,” *History of Ina ng Buhay Parish*, n.p.

³⁵ N.a, “Buhay na Pananampalataya, Maunlad na Parokya Tungo sa Bagong Milenyo” in *The New Ina ng Buhay: Fiesta 2000*, Souvenir Program, (Quezon City: n.p., 2000), n.pag. To say that INBP was “devastated” would create a problematic interpretation of the parish life before Fr. Danny’s administration. Such branding discredits the efforts of previous parish priests in the establishment period of the parish. It would be more prudent to say that the potentials of INBP were not yet actualized due to the fast transition of parish priests in the last five years limiting their administrations to a year or two, leaving the parish at a state of minimal improvements.

³⁶ Zenaida San Diego, “Milestones for Kapistahan 2000,” *The New Ina ng Buhay Fiesta 2000*, (Quezon City: n.p., 2000): n.p.

reception area for weddings, baptisms, birthdays, etc., thus opening a good source of parish funds. Consequently, it became the center of extra-liturgical parish activities like the conduct of PREX Seminars, the Station of the Cross held weekly during the Season of Lent, and PPC Meetings.

Part of the 'beautification' projects launched by Fr. Pajarillaga are the building of the Rosary Wall, the parish rectory which he called the Jubilee Convent as it was built on the Jubilee Year, which stands until today with the same function, the refurbishing of the parish adoration chapel and the altar. As the parochial school's spiritual director, Fr. Pajarillaga was able to provide for the school more classrooms and school facilities so that by the first decade of 2000 the school expanded up to secondary level.

So much has been invested in the people as with the infrastructures. Music Ministry had grown from only a handful of choirs with the addition of newly established groups such as the Villanova Choir, Couples for Christ Choir branching from the parish's Couples for Christ organization, and the Miranda Choir.

In 1998 Fr. Pajarillaga organized the Usherettes and Collectors Group (UCG) who shares the same nature as that of the Mother Butlers excluding the care of the altar.

The Parish Youth Ministry experienced a renaissance itself during this period. With the establishment of *Teatro Ina ng Buhay* on November 24, 2001, the parish youth had been given a chance to participate and shine in the most important seasons of the Catholic church. Established by youth leaders themselves in the persons of Jonathan Bulacan, Ricky Garcia, Jun Balino, and Jannette Ciervo, the Teatro was able to gather the youth into undertaking a series of plays during Holy Week and the Christmas season. Their portrayal of the *Panunuluyan* in Christmas season, and the passion of Christ, now referred to as the *Istasyon ng Bayan*, made the youth ministry a mainstay and a highlight in the important events of the parish. Whenever April comes, fervor rises as to who will play Mary and Jesus Christ. The youth exert so much of their heart in preparation for these plays so much so that parishioners are left in tears whenever the *Istasyon ng Bayan* concludes. The *Teatro* gave new life and a new purpose for the PYM and gave the parishioners something to look forward to while succeeding in its objective to unite and rekindle the spirit of service among the youth of the church.

So important was the spiritual thrust of Fr. Pajarillaga to the people as he patterned programs that enabled the people to delve in themselves in reflection to foster transformation. The pastoral council conducted annual retreats and recollections that better-formed parish leaders and servers alike creating a more intact and bonded community. The most notable legacy that Fr. Pajarillaga left with *Ina ng Buhay* in terms of spiritual formation is the initiation of the Parish Renewal Experience Seminar (PREX).

Initially initiated by Rev. Fr. Charles Gallagher, SJ in the Diocese of Trenton, New Jersey, PREX, whose tenets are inspired by Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, came to the Philippines in the 1980s through Rev. Fr. Hugh Zurat, OFM who had undergone PREX himself back in the USA. Upon return to Philippines, Fr. Zurat immediately conducted PREX a seminar in his parish, Santuario de San Antonio Parish, Makati. Fr. Gallagher himself held a workshop to train priests to facilitate PREX in Baguio City in 1983 on the invitation of Cardinal Sin who was inspired by the visible results of PREX in Santuario de San Antonio Parish.³⁷ On January 15-17, 1999, Fr. Danny sent nine members from different organizations to attend a PREX Seminar in Good Shepherd Parish, Fairview which he called the Seed Group. The Seed Group was responsible for conducting the first PREX Seminar in INBP on Feb 19-21, 1999.³⁸ PREX is a significant spiritual undertaking because it evangelizes through constant conversion and renewal of people beginning in the parish orientation. PREX was, in INBP, a massive opportunity for many parishioners to renew their faith and be part of the parish life and as such, it became an engine that powered the mobilization of parish organizations.³⁹ Additionally, PREX ties the whole INBP community into one experience of encounter with Christ.

Fr. Pajarillaga was an academician himself. Knowing that he will be the director of the parochial school, he took up graduate studies in School Management.⁴⁰ In managing the students, he applied Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligence, which holds that people should be seen as possessing multiple intelligences, skills, and talents rather than measuring their intelligences through one specific ground. He listed different intelligences to be linguistic, intelligence, logical-mathematical, musical, bodily-kinesthetic,

³⁷ N.a., "What is PREX?" Retrieved from http://www.prexnapps.org/what_is_prex.asp accessed March 25, 2016.

³⁸ N.a., "Mga Kuya, Mga Ate, Mag-PREX Muna Tayo!," *The New Ina ng Buhay Parish: Fiesta 2001*, Souvenir Program (Quezon, City, n.p., 2001): n.p.

³⁹ The researcher is a PREX graduate himself and is a witness to how PREX becomes an avenue for more parishioners to be involved in the parish. Before a candidate graduates, he or she is encouraged to join a specific parish organization who will then recruit the candidate.

⁴⁰ Danilo Pajarillaga, interview with the former parish priest, March 16, 2016. He did not specify the specific degree and institution where he studied.

spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, moral, and existential.⁴¹ Fr. Pajarillaga patterned programs from this theory and ended up launching the school journal: “The Marian Courier,” which became a top entry of the National Capital Region to the National Schools Press Conference held at Surigao City. In 2005, the journal’s writers bagged awards at the Division Young Writers Contest, Sherrie Ann Buan garnered 7th place for Headline Writing, Trudeece Ramos earned 7th place for Feature Writing, Regina San Diego won 3rd place for Pagsulat ng Balita, Joselita Ruiz took home 6th place for Sports Writing, and topping everything off Hannah Mae Arid outstood by winning 1st place in Editorial Writing⁴². With this enormous success in journalism, the school's participation in Mathematics Teachers' Association of the Philippines (MTAP) competitions, and the formation of different sports guilds, it is a clear-cut fact that Fr. Pajarillaga’s integration of Howard's theory was indeed a great success.

When asked what kind of leader Fr. Pajarillaga was, his former pastoral council chairperson, Mrs. Remedios Guerrero, was quick to describe him as an all-out hands-on parish priest. He was able to monitor all parish organizations as he always attended their monthly meetings. The PPC meetings for the first quarter of every year was a dedication for planning sessions so that the rest of the year was allotted for the execution of whatever is planned. This gives the pastoral council enough time to prepare the parish to launch their projects adequately.

Fr. Pajarillaga’s stint faced some historical affairs. First, San Isidro Labrador Parish, a new neighboring parish was established in 1999 this meant that all the territories of INBP below Gen. Luis St. had to be given to San Isidro leaving it with a smaller land area. Second, the care of the parish, being under the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Manila – Diocese of Manila, had to be transferred to the newly canonically erected Diocese of Novaliches under the Roman Catholic Bishop of Novaliches. Finally, Fr. Pajarillaga left the parish in 2007 in a rather remarkable note as it was the first time that the Diocese of Novaliches implemented the regular re-shuffling of priests giving them a term of 6 years in the parishes they were respectively assigned.

Fr. Pajarillaga’s administration was marked by a centralization scheme which focused all attention to the parish center. This meant that all Eucharistic celebrations were held only at the parish center rendering the sub-parishes

⁴¹ Mark Smith, “Howard Gardner: Multiple Intelligences and Education” in *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*, 2002, Retrieved from <http://infed.org/mobi/howard-gardner-multiple-intelligences-and-education/> accessed March 25, 2016.

⁴² Seymour Ridon, “Ina ng Buhay Catholic School: The Maker of Champions,” *Ina ng Buhay Parish: Fiesta 2005*, Souvenir Program, (Quezon City: n.p., 2005), n.pag

somewhat marginalized. However, as seen in the numerous developments in his time, the centralization scheme served beneficial to the parish as it solidified parishioner-participation at the center.

At the start of Fr. Pajarillaga's administration, Mrs. Guerrero recalled that the pastoral council had a visioning to establish realistic objectives of the administration and to set the council's attitude towards these objectives. Indeed, it was very fortunate that Fr. Pajarillaga has seen the fruits of his efforts. Having the longest administration for nine years, he had invested a lot in the parish so much so that his legacies are, until today, visible and standing. If Fr. Joey Miranda's administration was one that is of *establishing*, his was an administration of *re-establishing*. One cannot discredit the executive stewardship of Fr. Pajarillaga for having initiated a time of renaissance in the parish.

Rev. Fr. Rogelio S. Positar (2007-2013)

The regular re-shuffling of priests implied something more than just defining a definite administrative period. It planted in the mindset of the people, and the priest himself, that staying for too short a period was no longer an excuse not to be able to do something significant for the parish nor was staying for an extended period an acceptable notion – the parish priest is not supposed to make of the parish a kingdom for himself, anyway. Realistic objectives proved to be more critical than ever. Projects were designed in such a way that they are feasible within the timeframe while keeping in mind that these projects, possible in 6 years as they may be, would still contribute for the attainment of the parish's ultimate end.

Rev. Fr. Rogelio Positar's administration, and thereafter, were in this predicament. Fr. Roger was appointed in INBP on June 7, 2007.⁴³ Upon his appointment, the election of new Parish Pastoral Council officers immediately followed which put new officers in position in the persons of: Mrs. Norma C. Pacaigue (Chairperson), Mr. Teofilo Cruz, Jr (Vice-Chairperson), Mrs. Josefina Cruz (Secretary), Mrs. Estela Bundalian (Asst. Secretary), and Mrs. Vangie Tapayan (Treasurer), who were to serve for the entire duration of Fr. Positar's ministry; some of them until the next parish administration.

Some of the physical improvements to the church under Fr. Positar are the repainting of the church edifice and the altar, an improved sound system along with the construction of a choir area. The most significant of these structural

⁴³ San Diego. "History of Ina ng Buhay Parish," *History of Ina ng Buhay Parish*, n.p.

endeavors was the construction of the Conference Room where most organizations, including the PPC, hold their regular monthly meetings, and which enabled more mobilization for parochial activities.

While Fr. Pajarillaga saw the potential of PREX to evangelize the parishioners through conversion and renewal of spiritual life, Fr. Positar saw this potential for the benefit of the core organizations of the parish, for it only fits that an individual who serves in the parish be continuously renewed in spirit and faith so that he/she may become an epitome of Christ's message to the church. For this reason Fr. Positar mandated all parish servers to undergo the PREX seminar. The social services of his administration included medical missions and an annual Christmas outreach program entitled: *Pamaskong Handog sa Mahihirap* where focus is given attention to the most depressed areas of the parish, especially Roxas Compound.⁴⁴

A modern project that was spearheaded by Fr. Positar was taking a portion of the parish church to serve as a mortuary. Not only was this project beneficial to the people, especially to the marginalized who cannot afford commercialized burials for their beloved dead, it also served for the good of the parish. It was as a good source of parish funds while not taking advantage of the economic status of the parishioners and had led people to knock on the doors of the parish, thus enabling more parochial familiarity of the people and, consequently, inviting more participation.

When Fr. Pajarillaga set foot in INBP, he centralized all masses to the parish church rendering the sub-parishes somewhat marginalized. Fr. Positar reciprocated this practice and decentralized masses and brought them back to the sub-parishes as a part of his objective to reach out to the different communities of his parish. This decentralization enabled him to hold masses in the sub-parishes of INBP, which in turn allowed him to familiarize himself with the people.

Fr. Positar characterized the success of his administration as only contributing to the future developments of the parish saying that his stint was successful in a sense that this success had to be continued⁴⁵ by the next parish priests. In other words, he believed that his administration and that of others are only stages, stepping-stones if you must, into achieving INBP's full potential as a parish.

⁴⁴ Rogelio S. Positar, interview with the former parish priest, March 9, 2016.

⁴⁵ Interview with Rogelio S. Positar.

Rev. Fr. Christopher V. Santos (2013-present)

Re-shuffling took place in June of 2013, Fr. Positar was transferred to San Bartolome Parish paving the way for INBP's incumbent parish priest, Rev. Fr. Christopher V. Santos.

In his transition period as a parish priest, Fr. Santos was very particular in his philosophy of observing first before implementing change.⁴⁶ This explains the minimal modifications in the PPC for the first three years of his administration. But this philosophy did not hinder him from carrying out projects that he saw fit for the development of the parish.

Halfway through his administration, Fr. Santos was able to revamp the entirety of the parish church's roof as a response to persistent leaks during rainy days that disturb masses. He ventured into a massive undertaking by spearheading the construction of the Parish Multi-Purpose Hall and Adoration Chapel that enabled more venues for carrying-out parochial affairs.

Fr. Santos has a great love for the youth of INBP, as a matter of fact among the main thrusts of his administration is the development of the youth so much so that a number of his programs are geared towards their formation. Among these is the establishment of the Bible Apostolate. Bible studies in the parish have been sporadic and at many times only available to parish servers, but with the establishment of the Biblical Apostolate, bible studies in the parish have been open to all walks of life, although mostly attended by the young of the parish, and offers a more systematic study of the Word of God as the core group is directly coordinated with the Diocesan Biblical Apostolate. After being formed through and in the Word of God, the youth are urged to share their knowledge with children from different communities as Volunteer Catechists as part of the parish's initiatives every May. Sometime between the tail-end of 2017 and early 2018, the Social Communications and Media Ministry (SOCCOMM) was established. INBP's SOCCOMM was patterned after the Diocesan initiative of the same name. It is the information dissemination *cum* public relations of the parish, which aids in the promotion and documentation of parish activities in various forms of mass media.

At this point in his incumbency, Fr. Chris has shown leadership that is participatory – always evoking suggestions from the consultative body on what projects to launch, what programs to design, and how to plan for activities. In

⁴⁶ Christopher V. Santos, interview with the parish priest, Feb 26, 2016.

other words, it is essential for Fr. Chris that the pastor and the laity meet halfway so as not to compromise the benefit of the latter and so as not to disregard the authority of the former whose wisdom in running the parish is taken with high regard.

Anthony Giddens asserted that social systems are reproduced social practices that exist as long as agents continuously produce and reproduce them. In other words, the existence of social systems depends on the agent whether or not he will, by his resources, perform social action. Parish activities are looked at the same lens as what Giddens asserted. The parish priest and Parish Pastoral Council may choose to continue programs and activities spearheaded by past administrations, or they may decide to create new ones. This pattern is visible when connecting all administrations of Ina ng Buhay. Fr. Pajarillaga initiated PREX, which Fr. Positar and Fr. Santos came to support and propagate.

On the other hand, while Fr. Pajarillaga centralized all masses into the parish church, Fr. Positar decentralized them and brought the parish down to the communities. Fr. Miranda's circulation of Ina ng Buhay Bulletin served for the boon of the parish only to be set-aside by succeeding administrations. This affair of producing and reproducing practices gives the parish a dynamic characteristic, one that is not stagnant.

III. Surmounting Barriers

Challenges are integral to institutions as they measure its capability to stand firm against untoward tides making it worthy of a lengthy stint. Arnold Toynbee averred that a civilization's survival depends on its ability to respond to posing challenges that threaten its life. Toynbee's theory is conceptually appropriated in this study – as challenge and response is practically observed in social phenomena other than civilizations. INBP has also experienced – and will experience long as it exists – problems that tested how steadfast it is which pushes it to make important decisions and take weighty measures, thereby making it a more robust and enduring institution.

An encompassing and pervasive factor in discussing the issues that INBP has been facing is what Fr. Santos refers to a “gated subdivisions.” It is encompassing because it is the source from which other parochial problems spring forth, and pervasive as it has always been the factor determining the social context that the parish was put into.

Among the issues that spring forth from this fountain is the problem of unity among the parishioners in a general sense. Fr. Miranda, in his message to the parishioners in the fiesta of 1988, bared that the parish was not in unison when it comes to working for the parish and that there was the division between the rich and the poor, the educated and the benighted, and between subdivisions.⁴⁷ Subdivisions and Compounds characterize the geography of the parish and as such these also signify the relationship of parishioners. With "gated subdivisions," – we should include compounds to avoid misrepresentation – people are, in certain degrees, alienated from each other considering that each subdivision and compounds share a common subculture different from one another, this is magnified by transient residents living in bedspaces and rooms-for-rent who work for factories belonging to the parish's jurisdiction. Fr. Santos has stressed that with the existence of transient residents comes the impermanence of a part of the parish's population as there is a higher possibility of them moving in and out of the parish jurisdiction.

Indifference is in itself a challenge and also a moving force in this problem of unity. Because the parish's categorization is that of the middle class and is situated in an urban environment where the working population is high, indifference from each other and the parish is imminent. Fr. Santos added that people are living fast-paced lives due to the urban setting and are at work most of the time rendering them less participative on weekday parish activities, and because Sunday is their only time to rest, rather than involving themselves with parish affairs excluding the mass, they instead rest at home or choose to spend this time with their families and friends for leisure. With tremendous advancement in modern technology, especially in the entertainment and gaming phenomenon, children's attention to the parish are dwindling rendering parish programs for the youth not very well attended.

For the very reasons stated above it is challenging for the parish to implement its Basic Ecclesial Communities in full swing even though they are already established. For a time BECs had become idle due to Fr. Pajarillaga's centralization scheme. His first years as parish priest were marked with deteriorating participation of the people, which he attributed to the erroneous application of the BEC in *Ina ng Buhay*⁴⁸ where the only program facilitated for the BECs is the celebration of the mass in the different communities. What he did was to centralize all masses and parish activities in the parish church to urge the people's participation rendering the sub-parishes and the BECs inactive. It

⁴⁷ Jose P. Miranda, a message to the parishioners published in *Ina ng Buhay: Fiesta '88*, n.p.

⁴⁸ Danilo P. Pajarillaga, "The Economy Governing a Parish," *The New Ina ng Buhay Parish: Fiesta 2002*, Souvenir Program, (Quezon City: n.p., 2002): n.p.

was only when Fr. Positar brought back the celebration of masses in the communities when BECs started to regain formation, but without full success. The final factor in the challenging formation of BECs, Fr. Santos added, is that neighborhoods hail from different dominations of Christianity, which causes difficulties in grouping communities and hesitations in facilitating BEC programs.

This challenge in the unity of parishioners should not be hyperbolically taken as to imagine that people do not care for each other or parish activities are utter failures due to complete apathy. The parish is doing its part to respond to this difficulty through the projects, programs, and events that enjoin cooperation between parishioners. The active functions of the BECs as of the present are (1) the dissemination of information relevant to the parish such as announcement of activities, particular schedules, initiation of projects and programs; (2) different communities are assigned to sponsor masses in the parish church by a fixed schedule; (3) communities are encouraged to celebrate the feast of their patron saints; and (4) their participation in the large gatherings and celebrations of the parish. Though unity is a challenge, it is nevertheless manifested in parish celebrations especially during the Seasons of Lent and Advent and the celebration of the parish's fiesta. For without the cooperation of the parishioners these celebrations would be failures. What this study only presents is that the challenge of unity does not mean its absence, just the lack thereof hindering the actualization of the parish's full potential.

Financial stability is always a facet of the parish that requires attention, especially when working for its external developments. It is natural that financial needs be a primary concern for newly established parishes and as such Fr. Miranda faced this burden as the first parish priest of INBP. This is the reason why the common urgent objective of the organizations that he had formed was to conceptualize effective fundraising projects to help finance the on-going parish church construction and mobilize plans and activities, which he was able to fulfill considering the full range of projects he was able to spearhead in five years.

Fr. Pajarillaga's administration was left to settle the financial burdens of past administrations – catechetical debt bill of the parish, “unpaid loans from the Archdiocese of Manila...unpaid SSS premiums of teachers and other employees, unpaid salaries of teachers and debt from book suppliers.”⁴⁹ It turns out that his centralization scheme was effective in bringing the people to the parish church

⁴⁹ Danilo P. Pajarillaga, interview with the former parish priest, March 16, 2016.

to foster more active involvement in the parish that consequently involved the people in settling the parish's financial burdens through their participation in successful fundraising projects and activities.

Fr. Positar had to experience the same plight maintaining that when he arrived at the parish priest, the money left to his administration was only enough to settle electric and water bills leaving him no excess funds to mobilize projects and programs readily.⁵⁰ Following the same pattern of conducting fundraising activities, he was able to lump money for parochial affairs.

Having biases is a natural tendency of man. This puts him in a situation where he chooses something over the other for reasons known only to him. As applied to INBP, it is inevitable that parishioners, having been led by seven parish priests, prefer one priest over the other leading to inappropriate loyalty. Fr. Positar cites this as one of the visible challenges during his time. Having just come from an evident successful stint from the past administration, it is a definite possibility that people feel a kind of separation anxiety that leads them to be indifferent towards the new administration. Though it does not bother the parish in a great deal, Fr. Positar added, it nevertheless jeopardizes support for the new administration.

Parishioners, particularly parish servers themselves are susceptible to be the sources of challenges and difficulties in the parish. Being the latest administration, Fr. Santos identified the untoward character of some servers that lead people to shy away from the church to be a pressing challenge while also maintaining that it is better that these servers are in the church to keep guiding them to good conduct, which also is a responsibility of the parish. He attributed this to the "limitation of the church" being open to all and being accepting of the people that come at its door making it susceptible to these issues. He also saw deterrence as a negative characteristic of some of his lay leaders who have been serving for an extended period already not giving room for new generations of leaders and an influx of new ideas. It is for the benefit of these parishioners that the spiritual formation programs like PREX, Lenten and Advent Recollections, and the Bible Study are offered in the parish for them to realize their misgivings and be able to act upon them. On the other hand, priests are susceptible challenges to the parish themselves—human as they are.

Religiosity is not a question among the parishioners, Fr. Santos averred. Parochial activities are well attended, and people fill the pews on regular Sunday

⁵⁰ Rogelio S. Positar, interview with former parish priests, March 9, 2016.

masses. Although be that as it may, their participation dwindles in spiritual formation programs like those enumerated above leading to a question of their spirituality. But of course, the problem of spirituality is immensely personal a discussion that is not to be judged by external actions alone.

Due to the establishment of San Isidro Labrador parish in 1999, certain areas from INBP have been transferred to the former and in 2012, Villanova Subdivision, also a territory of Ina ng Buhay, was assigned to the same parish. This brought the people an atmosphere of confusion – for servers, where to serve; and for ordinary parishioners, where to attend mass. But the parish priests from both parishes only maintained that people should serve and attend mass where they could bear more fruit as Catholics.

Challenges that come in the way of INBP only prove that it is a perfectible institution. Each problem calls for a response that, if overcome, serves as a stepping-stone to becoming better and better. Not only do challenges make the institution better, they unify its people to a collective action aiming for a common goal, fostering in them the value of cooperation and co-operation and therefore making the people better individuals themselves. Challenges teach the lesson that one should work hard and toil for stability life, not just for mere existence and survival.

IV. Continuing Faith and Formation

The beauty of looking at the history of a religious institution such as Ina ng Buhay Parish is that it is never bereft of the mystics and wonders of the human spirit moved by Divine inspiration. In other words, a religious institution is a hodgepodge of socio-religious affairs where the temporal meets with the spiritual. In this sense, all things earthly are made spiritual and divine through faith and all that it entails. All things spiritual and divine, on the other hand, are concretized in the temporal. Perhaps this is what is meant by "heaven on earth"—trying to bring out the heavenly in all that is earthly. Upon this principle revolves the parochial affairs of INBP in a wholesome sense.

Through implementing various projects and programs, the parish manifests its adherence to the vision of the Diocese of Novaliches to be a “Christ-centered community, responding to the needs of the people, journeying with the Blessed Virgin Mary towards the newness of life”⁵¹ and has been faithful in fulfilling its

⁵¹ Diocese of Novaliches, *Celebrating Ten Years of the Diocese of Novaliches* (Quezon City: M.Borjal Printing Press, 2013), 34.

mission of evangelization, laity empowerment, and communion with the poor.⁵² The mission of evangelization is realized through the different spiritual programs that the parish has – PREX Seminars⁵³, retreats, recollections, bible studies, and making the sacraments available to the parishioners. Laity empowerment is seen in the continuous participation of the lay faithful in the parochial activities and in the opportunities given them to step out of their comfort zones to realize their full potentials as individuals by joining different parish organizations. The pastoral council is the epitome of this lay empowerment. The communion with the poor, on the other hand, is seen in how the parish gives priority to the marginalized, especially in social programs like outreach activities and medical/dental missions. It is through the constant cooperation and teamwork of the parish priests and the pastoral council that parochial affairs become successful.

Growth will never cease, not unless one has already forgotten where he has left off. In other words, it is always important to look back to see how far you've come, and how far you are still set to go. Though still young at 32, Ina ng Buhay Parish has had its shares of uphill and downhill experiences, all of which proves the parish's strength or, in many cases, making the parish even stronger. Ina ng Buhay Parish's history – an all history is – is equal to certain undeniable degrees of change. But in its process of changing, one thing is always constant, and that is the mission of the Church, the purpose of Ina ng Buhay Parish, to bring Christ and His salvific message to this temporal world. Ina ng Buhay parish a community is called to a life patterned after Christ and Maria, Ina ng Buhay—one that steps out of the comfort zones to reach out to the poor, oppressed, and marginalized; one that keeps steadfast faith despite hurdles and barriers along the way made surmountable by the grace of God; one that empowers their fellowmen to affect true human development and authentic social transformation; and one that is geared not only towards *proclaiming* the Good News, but most importantly *being* the Good News.

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