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Father John Duignam and the Filipino Community of Kalk Bay: Two ministerial partners

ABSTRACT

For fifty-two years the two partners, Fr. John Duignam and the Filipino community of Kalk Bay, ministered to each other. Their church, St. James Roman Catholic Church (RCC) had been founded in 1858 because of the presence of the Filipino community.

There are different theories as to how the first Filipinos came to South Africa. Fr. John Duignam joined them in 1874. He had just a few months earlier been ordained as a priest in Rome. He came to South Africa for six months and ended up staying for fifty plus years. To be exact: he spent 52 years at the St. James congregation. He returned only once to his native Ireland.

These two ministerial partners undertook a very ambitious construction programme. They dedicated a second sanctuary in 1901 after they had to vacate the first one because a railway station was to be built on the site. They also built two schools and a convent. These buildings are all still in use today. Apart from this building

programme the St. James congregation was also involved in the programmes of the local community and the Western Vicariate.

Fr. Duignam brought with him his Irish heritage. St. Patrick's Day like elsewhere in the Western Vicariate became a major annual event. Moreover, he became person in Kalk Bay, St. James and Muizenberg. He affectionately became known as "The Father". Like Fr. Duignam the Filipino community also brought with it a rich heritage. These two different heritages met at St. James Roman Catholic Church. Two outcomes were the annual St. Patrick's Day festivities and a Spanish worship service that was held weekly for a long time.

This study wants to introduce these two ministerial partners in this particular setting. Finally, this study is of an exploratory nature. Some issues will be analysed and detailed in future studies.

INTRODUCTION

Father Duignam arrived as a 27-year old newly ordained priest in 1874 at Kalk Bay and left in 1925 to retire.¹ When he arrived there he found the Filipino community worshipping in a church building, which was later demolished to make way for St. James Railway Station. Some of their descendants are still worshipping at St. James RCC today. Over the years these two partners i.a. built another church building, two primary schools, a convent, a presbytery (Roman Catholics call the place where

1 There are different spellings of this Irish surname. They are: Degnam, Deihgnam, Duignan (Fr. Duignam is listed as John Duignan at All Hallows College in Dublin), Dignan and Duibhgeannam.

their priest lives a presbytery while this term is a governing body for Presbyterians), etc. The aim of this study is, therefore, to analyse theologically Fr. Duignam and the Filipino community.

This study wants to look at St. James Roman Catholic Church, the site of the ministry and the personae of Fr. John Duignam and the Filipino community. Finally, it also wants to be critical history. It will be artistic: it selects, orders, describes; it would stimulate the reader's interest and sustain it; it will be ethical: it does not only narrate but also apportions praise and blame; it will be explanatory: it accounts for existing institutions by tracing their origins, etc. This study will also be apologetic: it corrects false or tendentious accounts of people's past, and refuting the calumnies of neighbouring peoples. It will also be prophetic: it hindsights the past and joins it to foresight on the future.²

At this time it is appropriate to say a word about the different terms that are used in this study. A *co-adjutor* is a person who helps a bishop with his administration. This person is usually another bishop. A *mass* is a service. In the Episcopal tradition (Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism) the Holy Communion is normally served at the mass. A *parish* is normally celebrated at the mass. A *parish* is another word for a congregation and its members are the *parishioners*. A *prefecture* is a smaller administrative unit than a vicariate. A *presbytery* is the residence of a Roman Catholic priest. For Presbyterians this term means an ecclesiastical governing body. A *sanctuary or edifice* is another term for a church building. A *secular priest* is a priest who does not belong to a monastic order. *Superannuate* in ecclesiastical parlance is another term for retirement. It is especially used in the Episcopal tradition and it is usually a bishop who superannuates a priest or minister. A *vicar apostolic* is a representative of the pope. A *vicariate* is an administrative unit with a bishop as its administrator.

As stated elsewhere: this study is of an exploratory nature. Many issues will be explored and analysed in future works. Let us first turn to St. James RCC, the site of the ministry.

ST. JAMES RCC AT KALK BAY

This section will focus on the founding of the parish its convent, etc. Its activities during the period 1874 to 1925 will be discussed elsewhere. The story of its two schools will be discussed in a following article.

The founding of the parish

In the mid-nineteenth century some Filipinos began to settle in Kalk Bay. They were Catholics and needed a church closer than the Simon's Town one. They were forced to sail on Sundays to the Saints Simon and Jude's Church in that town to attend mass. The Western Vicariate became aware of the situation. In the mid 1850s Bishop Patrick Griffith, Archbishop of the Western Vicariate, petitioned Sir George Grey, Governor of the Cape, for a piece of crown land in the Kalk Bay area for Catholic worship. Sir George Grey granted the Roman Catholic Church a small piece of land: 100 feet by 100 feet with the specific condition that it be used as a place of worship only.³ On 5 October 1858 the foundation stone of the first sanctuary of the parish was laid. Fr. Duignam would come and name it after St. James of Campostella, the patron saint of Spain, the country from which the Filipinos claimed a great deal of their heritage. The site chosen was between the present Main Road and the sea where the present St. James railway station is today. It was here where Fr. Duignam found the congregation when he arrived there in June 1874.

The parish used this building until 1901 when it moved to a new sanctuary. During the construction of this building Fr. Duignam acted as contracts manager, clerk of works, quantity

2 Loneragan 1979:185.

3 Walker 2001:3.

surveyor and contractor. Diligently he and his Filipino parishioners built the sanctuary.⁴ On Sunday 12 August 1900, the St. James congregation celebrated the laying of the foundation stone of the new sanctuary. Bishop Rooney officiated and was assisted by Fr. Duignam, the reverend Dr. Kolbe (former editor of the *SACM*) and Fr. E. O'Reilly. Dr. Kolbe preached the sermon and "... in the course of his impressive sermon showed how great a blessing the new church would be and exhorted his hearers to avail themselves of this new means of grace".⁵ The collection amounted to £222-19-5.

On Whit-Monday (Day after Pentecost Sunday) 1901 the new sanctuary, in which the parish still worships today, was opened. The old sanctuary alongside the station was sold to the Railways. Fr. Duignam only agreed to the sale after he had been assured that the railway station would be named after his parish. The sanctuary was built according to the plans and under the supervision of Bishop Rooney. Fr. Duignam had supervised the quarrying of the stone in the churchyard and the Filipinos played a major role in the constructing of the sanctuary. The opening ceremony consisted of Pontifical High Mass at which most of the neighbouring priests and a large congregation assisted. The choir of St. Mary's from Cape Town rendered some music. The reverend Dr. Kolbe preached and pointed out the auspicious coincidence of the church being opened at Pentecost, which was the solemn beginning of the Universal Church. Each individual parish, Dr. Kolbe pointed out, typified and helped the work of universal Christendom, by being a shrine for the supernatural Presence: by being the home of prayer and the chief centre of beneficence. After mass the visiting clergy and several friends sat down to lunch in a schoolroom and a toast was proposed. Fr. Duignam in his reply "Kept his visitors in high humour as long as he was up". After a few more speeches a very successful day for the St. James congregation ended.⁶ One can be sure that Fr. Duignam alluded to the help of the Filipino community in the construction of the sanctuary.

In 1904 Fr. Duignam and the congregation took a new altar into commission. It cost £253 and was made of marble by Mr. Edmund Sharp in his studio at Great Brunswick Street, Dublin, Ireland. The *SACM* stated that the design was Gothic and "in keeping with the little church itself ... We congratulate Fr. Duignam and his people on their possessing such a beautiful altar in the church: ..."⁷

A convent is built

The St. James RCC did not only build two sanctuaries and two schools but also the St. James Convent. The aim of this convent was to serve as a convalescent home with medical facilities for sick nuns. Fr. Duignam again headed this construction effort. He served as architect and builder. In 1906 he along with Bishop Rooney, the co-adjutor Vicar Apostolic of the Western Cape drew up the plans for the building.⁸ The convent was to be built behind the St. James church. It would be taken into use by the Dominican Sisters at the beginning of 1908.⁹ The opening of the new convent occurred on Thursday 11 January 1908. Sixty Dominican Sisters from convents all over the Peninsula attended this event. One can of course sense the pride with which Fr. Duignam received these visitors. The *SACM* reported: "Mother Sub Prioress, ... entertained her Sisters royally, the tables being formed of planks laid on cement barrels, and one and all left in the evening delighted with their outing".¹⁰ The convent would soon become The Star of the Sea School.

4 Walker 2001:3

5 *South African Catholic Magazine (SACM) August 1900.*

6 *South African Catholic Magazine (SACM) August 1900.*

7 *August 1904:376*

8 Walker 2001:9.

9 *SACM December 1907:480*

10 *SACM, January 1908:26.*

A new pulpit is taken into use

In 1910 St. James celebrated again. This time a new pulpit was taken into use. The SACM described it like this: "It is of stained oak and, but for the four figures of the Evangelists ... is the work of the Salesian Institute, Cape Town".¹¹ This pulpit, continued the report, completed the furnishing of the sanctuary. The report ends with these words: "A word of praise is due to the pastor, Father Duignam, who has spent much labour and a large part of his income in erecting and adorning his church".¹²

What was the membership and ethos of St. James RCC like during the years 1874 to 1925?

The parish stretched from Diep River to Simon's Town, a huge area. It is, however, hard to say how many members were in the congregation because there are no records to that effect. Judging from the baptismal and marriage registers it is safe to say that most of the members were Filipinos. Apart from the Filipinos there were also Coloured and White members. Many of the Coloured members were spouses of the Filipinos while many White parishioners were businesspersons. Then there were the regular visitors. Furthermore, many Whites moved to Muizenberg, St. James and Kalk Bay during the summer months. While in town, those who were Catholic usually visited St. James RCC.

What was the ethos at St. James RCC like while the two ministerial partners were there? It can be correctly stated that many or most of the priests within the Western Vicariate were Irish. The bishops of the Western Vicariate, except for the first archbishop, were all Irish. So were the Dominican Sisters. These men and women brought with them the Irish culture. Furthermore, most of these priests had been educated in Ireland. One can assume that all the Irish nuns were also educated in their native country. How did Fr. Duignam's Irishness influence his ministry? It is hard to tell but his form of disciplining the Filipino community was definitely Irish in origin. It was quite normal in Ireland while he grew up there to have see the priest walking around with his whip. Furthermore, St. Patrick's Day celebrations became a major feature of the St. James parish.

How did St. James RCC relate to the Western Vicariate and the local community? One must remember that St. James RCC stands within the Episcopal tradition.¹³ Fr. Duignam and the parish stood under the supervision of the Archbishop of the Western Vicariate. There were regular directives from and consultations with the archbishop's office. There were also regular vicariate meetings that had to be attended and Fr. Duignam also had regular priests' meetings. One wonders on what committees Fr. Duignam served within the vicariate. Furthermore, did any Filipino members accompany Fr. Duignam to some vicariate meetings? Regarding its connection with the local community, the St. James RCC became one of several churches in its neighbourhood. There were at Kalk Bay the local Dutch Reformed Church congregation, the Anglican Church and a mosque.

Finally, the greater part of the 19th century fell within the Victorian era (Queen Victoria ruled the British Empire for 66 years), did the Roman Catholic Church at the Cape also adopt some of the trappings that the Anglican Church had in Britain?

11 *February 1910:88.*

12 *SACM February 1910:88.*

13 Coertzen (1992) delineates several church governance models: they are the Episcopal, the Reformed, Congregational and Collegial. Examples of the Episcopal tradition are the Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism and Methodism. In these traditions the bishops are the major power. Within the Reformed tradition the local church council (*kerkraad*, consistory or session) is a real force. In Congregationalism the local congregation has a decisive say in events. An example of a South African Collegial system is the New Apostolic Church. In the Collegial tradition the church headquarters is the decisive voice in all affairs.

Theories regarding the coming of the Filipinos to South Africa

There are several theories regarding the coming of the original Filipino community to South Africa.¹⁴ One source has it that the first Filipinos were a group of fishermen who survived a shipwreck and settled at Kalk Bay in 1840. Being devout Catholics they needed a church closer than the one at Simon's Town to which they were forced to sail every Sunday for mass, weather permitting (*SACM 1901: 5*). This caused the St. James RCC to be founded. Price (1946) is the only author that mentions the Filipinos who came after the 1872 revolt in the Philippines. Burman (1947) asserts that a few Filipinos reached Kalk Bay in the 1850s after jumping ship at Simon's Town. Recognising the advantages of the area, they settled there and were gradually joined by their fellow countrymen. Thompson states that the first group of Filipinos deserted from a Spanish vessel at some time between 1843 and 1850 and made their way to Kalk Bay. Frank Bradlow (1958) also states that 14 deserters left the Alabama when it docked at Cape Town for the first time in 1864. He of course does not say whether they headed towards Kalk Bay or Simon's Town.¹⁵ Kirkaldy (1988) states that most of the early settlers were deserters.¹⁶ While some Filipino women appear to have joined the Kalk Bay Filipinos the majority of the men married local Coloured women. He is quick to point out that: "Marriage to local women and absorption into the local community did not imply an immediate or absolute loss of identity" (33).¹⁷ Kirkaldy also asserts that while some of the Kalk Bay fishermen of the late 19th and early 20th centuries could speak English, the majority appear to have been Dutch speaking. It was sheer necessity that forced them to learn the local languages. Furthermore, at first Fr. Duignam preached mostly in Spanish but as the original Filipinos decreased the less Spanish was used at services. Fr. Duignam continued to have a Spanish service once a week until the mid-1920s. This event was for the benefit of the Filipinos who could still speak it (Kirkaldy:34). Carse (1999:34) asserts that there were three waves of immigration from the Filipinos. First, there were those men that left the Alabama when it docked in Simon's Town in 1864. Other Filipinos followed this group after the Filipino revolt against Spain in 1872. Then there were those who came as the result of shipwrecks and castaways. All these persons made their way to Simon's Town and eventually Kalk Bay. These Filipinos according to Carse were also joined by persons from Indonesia, especially the island Java and other Asian countries. One must ask the question: how correct is Carse? Did he ever verify his statements because he does not quote any sources.

A plausible theory would seem that some Filipinos ended up at Kalk Bay during the 1840s. This declares the Filipino presence in the 1850s, which caused the Roman Catholic Church to build a church there. The sailors who deserted the Alabama in 1864 when it docked at Cape Town and Simon's Town, who had no doubt heard of this Filipino colony, joined them. Their numbers swelled after the 1872 Filipino revolt. One has to find out from where in the Philippines these various groups came.

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- 14 The various theories state that only one Filipino left the Alabama; others assert that more left the ship. The Alabama arrived at the Cape for the first time in 1863. The first sanctuary of St. James RCC was completed in 1858. Furthermore, it is only Maxwell Price who mentions the arrival of some Filipinos after the 1872 Revolt in the Philippines.
 - 15 Bradlow writes: "When the *Alabama* ... left the Cape early in September, she left behind fourteen deserters, ..." (p. 74).
 - 16 Kirkaldy gives a good analysis of the fishing industry. He claims that the Filipinos were the last group of settlers at Kalk Bay. Using anthropological evidence he asserts that there were other settlers at Kalk Bay before the Filipinos arrived there in the middle of the 19th century.
 - 17 Kirkaldy also lists a number of works on the Filipinos and Kalk Bay.

What were the Philippines like when the Filipinos left there in the middle of the 19th century?

The Filipinos that migrated to South Africa came from a country that was a colony of Spain with a specific religious, political and social order. The Philippines consists of about 7 000 islands that stretch from north of Malaysia and Indonesia in the south to Taiwan in the north, a distance of nearly 2 thousand kilometers. Only 2 773 of these islands have names and the major islands can be classified in three geographic divisions: firstly, Luzon, Mindoro and their adjoining islands; secondly, the Visayas including Cebu, Leyte, Panay, Negros, Samar, Masbate and Bohol; thirdly, Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago together with Palawan and its adjacent islands to the west. Though geographically the Philippines is seen as part of the Malayan world, it is unique in being the only predominantly Christian country in Asia and the third largest English-speaking country in the world.¹⁸ It is from this context that the first South African Filipinos came.

Climatologically, because of its location in the tropics, the Philippines has a monsoon climate, particularly in its western regions, while typhoons occur in the north and east. Throughout the year the weather is hot and humid with three seasons: hot dry from March to May, hot-rainy from June to the end of October, and cool-dry, beginning November and going on until March. This climate is a far cry from Kalk Bay along the False Bay coast and Indian Ocean in South Africa which has a Mediterranean climate with four clearly marked seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter. One wonders what the reaction of the first Filipinos was to this “strange” new climate.

Religiously, the country was predominantly Roman Catholic. The Augustinians accompanied Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, the first Spanish governor, to the Philippines in 1565. Later on the Jesuits, Dominicans and Franciscans followed. They built their first monasteries in Manila and gradually spread out over the Philippines. They had much success in converting the local Filipinos that within a decade after 1571 some 200 000 converts had been made. By 1898 there was an estimated total of six million Catholics out of a population of some seven million (Nelson 1968: 37). The Filipinos who settled in Kalk Bay, South Africa therefore could therefore relate easily to Father Duignam. They were both from countries where the majority of the population was Roman Catholic.

Politically, the Philippines was a Spanish colony from 1565 to 1898. From 1898 to 1946 it was an American colony until it became an independent republic in 1946. We are concerned with the Spanish occupation only because it was during that period that the Filipinos who settled in South Africa, left the Philippines. The governor-general ruled the colony and also presided over the *audiencia* or Supreme Court, the highest tribunal for civil or criminal cases. The governor-general received his orders, etc. from New Spain (Mexico) because the Philippines were ruled as part of the American empire of Spain. Outlying districts were governed by *corregidos*, usually army officers and *alcades* or mayors. *Caciquis* or rule by one man or a family, was part of this system and widespread in Spanish America. *Caliquism* was close to the native system of rule by *Datus* or traditional chiefs.¹⁹ The *Datus* were allowed to continue their local rule because the Spaniards knew that they could not govern the Philippines adequately without their help. The *Datus* were often appointed as *gobernadorcillos* or petty governors. The *gobernadorcillo* served also as mayor or municipal judge if needed.

Socially, one can say that the Philippines consisted of a number of peoples. The Filipinos were basically Mongoloid with a Malay culture modified by centuries of contact with Chinese, Japanese, Hindus, Arabs, and Spaniards.²⁰ In summary: the Philippines in the nineteenth century

18 Nelson 1968:9.

19 Nelson 1968:34.

20 Nelson 1968:9.

consisted of the Spaniards on the one hand and the local Filipinos who consisted of a number of races on the other hand. There was also a very strong Chinese population. This would stand the Filipinos who came to South Africa in good stead because their new home country also consisted of a large array of different peoples. Next, something briefly will be said about their sociology.

How did the Filipino community relate to Fr. Duignam?

A few things can be mentioned about the Filipino community's relationship with Fr. Duignam. Firstly, the Filipinos easily connected with him because he could speak Spanish, which was one of the languages that the Filipinos spoke. Of course, he could not speak Tagalog and the other Filipino languages that these people used. When the Spanish service ended, is hard to tell because there is no record of this event. Secondly, Fr. Duignam became a father figure to the Filipino community. He also meted out corporal punishment to recalcitrant Filipinos. As already stated, he reportedly walked around in Kalk Bay with a whip. A beating to a wayward parishioner was nothing new to Fr. Duignam because in Ireland this event occurred regularly.²¹ A case in 1825 is mentioned when a jury failed to agree whether a priest had beaten a man for refusing to pay the 'Catholic rent'. In County Galway in 1838 an inquiry was held into a case of a youth who died some months after his parish priest had caught him taking part in a boxing match and gave him several blows with a whip. Finally, as good Catholics the Filipinos accepted Fr. Duignam for what he was: their priest.

Other immigrant communities in South Africa during the ninetieth and early twentieth centuries

The Filipinos who settled at Kalk Bay were not the only nineteenth century immigrants to South Africa. In 1820 the British Settlers arrived here and were settled in the Eastern Cape. In 1857 a group of German settlers arrived after the Crimean War (1855-57) in which Germany participated. Some of them were settled in the Eastern Cape while others came to live around Philippi on the Cape Flats. In the 1860s a group of Indians arrived in South Africa as indentured servants to work on the sugar plantations of Natal (the present Kwazulu Natal). A member of this group invited Mohandas Ghandi to come and defend him in a court case. Ghandi arrived in South Africa in 1896 and remained here for 25 years when he returned to India. He would go lead India's independence struggle against the British occupation. In 1904 a group of Chinese immigrants arrived in South Africa to work on the gold fields around Johannesburg. These were all state sponsored immigration schemes. A contingency of Russian Jews arrived in South Africa of whom many settled in Simon's Town.²² Fr. Duignam, the St. James RCC and the Filipino community of Kalk Bay must have had some dealings with them because several of these Jews opened businesses. Like the Kalk Bay Filipinos the Russian Jews also came on their own steam.

FATHER JOHN DUIGNAM

Emily Lawless is correct when she says: "Irish heroes, for one reason or another, have come off, it must be owned, but poorly before the bar of history. Either their deeds having been told by those in whose eyes they found a meager kindness, or else by others who, with the best intentions possible, have inflated the hero's bulk, so pared away his merely human frailties, that little reality

21 Connolly 1982:58.

22 Gay 1974:4

remains, and his bare name is as much as even a well-informed reader pretends to be acquainted with". One such unsung Irish hero is Fr. John Duignam who left his native Ireland and laboured for fifty plus years in the St. James RC parish in South Africa. He visited Ireland only once after he came to South Africa and that was in 1913-1914. Let us turn to the Irish background against which Fr. Duignam's ministry was formed.

Ireland produced several missionaries before John Duignam

Ireland was a major sending and receiving missionary country. Those Irish who engaged in missions did it as "*peregrinatio pro Christi nomine*".²³ We mention a few. Ireland received i.a. St. Patrick. The latter is revered as the patron saint of Ireland. Who was he? Born as the son of a British landowner and the grandson of a priest he was scheduled for a bright future. That, however, did not occur. At age sixteen years he was carried off into slavery to Ireland. He would remain there for the next 6 years. Patrick managed to escape and made his way back to England. His parents were, as could be expected, elated at his return. He was hardly home when he received a vision in a dream in which he was being begged to return to Ireland. Soon afterwards he set off again for Ireland, this time as a missionary. He baptised scores of Irish, founded many congregations and legend has it that he performed several miracles. One of these miracles has it that he chased all the snakes from the emerald island. Today he is Ireland's patron saint.²⁴

Ireland also produced numerous missionaries. St Columba of Iona, Apostle of Scotland, St. Aidan of Lindisfarne, Apostle of Northern England, St Columbanus of Luxeuil and Bobbio in France, Gallus (St Gall), after whom Sankt Gallen in Switzerland is named, e.a.²⁵ There were also several women who were doing missions at this time (Bakker 1990: 1701-174). One of the first Christians in Ireland was Palladius a Frenchman. Pope Celestinus sent him to Ireland in the year 431.²⁶ In fact, there were already Christians there. He was sent not as a missionary but as a bishop to Ireland. The most famous early Christian in Ireland was no doubt Patrick who would later be honoured as patron saint of this island.

Columba was another great Irish churchman. He left his home country to go do missions elsewhere. Unlike Patrick, Columba received theological training and became an ordained priest. In 563 AD he and twelve companions left Ireland and founded a monastery at Iona next to the Atlantic coast of Scotland. Prior to his departure for Scotland he founded several monasteries and congregations in Ireland. After his departure they were administered from Iona. He was from regal heritage: he had an uncle and three cousins who were kings in the province Ulster. He left all of this to become 'an exile for the Lord'. Columba's followers soon founded congregations in Ireland, Scotland and Northeast England. These congregations were all grouped under the name 'the Columban Church' and existed for many years. In many of these monasteries were bishops who stood under the jurisdiction of the abbot, as the custom was in Scotland and Ireland at that time. The Church at this time in these countries was not under the jurisdiction of Rome. Roman Catholicism would come later to these two countries. Iona, where Columba's body rests, also became a renowned educational centre. He lived on this island until his death on 9 June 597. Like Patrick he was also sainted.

Columbanus was another Irishman who left his home country at this time for missions in Europe. Like Patrick and Columba before him the Church did not send him either. He became a

23 O' Faiach 1989:89.

24 Bakker 1990:36-56.

25 O' Fiaich 1989:89.

26 Bakker 1990:34.

missionary on his own. He first set off for Bangor in Scotland. Here he laboured for many years and then he moved to France, later to Switzerland and finally to Italy.²⁷ Unlike Patrick and Columba Columbanus did recognise the authority of the pope. He, however, had a very strict condition: he would recognise the pope's authority as long as the pope subjected himself to the Word of God. If that did not occur then Columbanus would not hesitate to show the pope the errors of his ways.

There were also other noted Irish missionaries such as Gallus who went to France and Switzerland.²⁸ Willibrord (657-739 A.D), an Englishman by birth, was educated in Ireland and did some missionary work there. After twelve years in that country he went to Europe for missions. He ended up in France. Before he started his work he first went to Rome. Here he received a papal blessing for his work. So, with the blessings of Pippin, a secular ruler in France, and the pope he began his work in France. He would found several monasteries. Willibrord next was sent to Rome by Peppin to be enthroned as bishop, another first for an Irish or Irish-inspired churchman. Pippin then sent him to Utrecht where he lived until his death.²⁹

Young John Duignam's early life and education

John Duignam was born in March 1846 to Thomas and Margaret Duignam in Mullingar, Ireland. One cannot precisely say what the stimuli were that helped him to decide to become a priest, moreover a missionary. Was it some priest?³⁰ Was it some missionary who visited his parish that triggered the idea of the mission field in young John Duignam? Was the ministry part of the Duignam family tradition.³¹

What was the ecclesiastical situation like at Mullingar while young John Duignam grew up there? Mullingar was the seat of the Diocese of Meath. County Westmeath was founded later. Bishop John Cantwell presided over this diocese from 1830 to 1866.³² Did the *persona* of Bishop Cantwell inspire the young John Duignam to make the priesthood his vocation?

Did the Seminary (St. Finian's College) help John Duignam to consider the priesthood as a vocation? John attended this all-boys diocesan school in Navan, County Meath. It first opened its doors in May 1802. The age of admission was from 7 to 14 years. It is not clear when young John enrolled at the college. Further research will hopefully clear up that issue. In any case, a fee was required. From age 12 the annual fees were forty pounds-forty shillings (40 guineas) a year. This money covered boarding, tuition, clothes, books, stationery and everything else. What was the Seminary like? There was a very strict code: "There is [sic] no vacation at any seasons of the year and the strictest attention is paid to health, morals and general advantages of the pupils" (*Irish Identity*). The subjects taught included i.a. Metaphysics, Ethics, Latin, Greek, French, Oratory, Geography, etc. In a sense it prepared young Duignam for his studies at All Hallow College (AHC). He would have no problem with the languages that were needed at the *Propaganda Fide*

27 Walker 1970: Bakker 1990:96-112.

28 Bakker 1990:113-114.

29 Bakker 1990:133-140.

30 Young John must have known Fr. Michael Naughton who served at Mullingar from 1854 to 1870. He later served as bishop of Dominica in the Caribbean (1870 to 1900).

31 John Duignam must have known about Richard Duignam and John Duignam who attended AHC. Richard, son of Samuel and Anne Duignam of Kinnegad, County Meath entered AHC in 1854 and was ordained in 1862. He went to Australia. John Duignam, son of Simon and Mary Duignam of Trim, County Meath completed his studies at AHC in 1866.

32 Fr. Paul Connell's work *The Diocese of Meath under Bishop John Cantwell, 1830-1866*. 2004. Dublin: Four Courts Press is helpful in understanding the ecclesiastical situation at Mullingar at that time.

College in Rome. The Seminary moved to Mullingar in February 1901, long after John Duignam had departed from that place. The Seminary no doubt helped to shape young John's character. It definitely inculcated morality, a sense of purpose and a need for hard work in young John Duignam. Moreover, it also taught him what it means to be away from his parental home. This would come him in good stead because ahead of him were still All Hallows College (AHC) in Dublin, the Propaganda College in Rome and fifty plus years in South Africa. Was it at the Seminary that the likelihood of the priesthood was first mentioned to him? Next he attended All Hallows College.³³

All Hallows College (AHC) in Dublin was founded by the visionary priest John Hand in 1842 (Condon 1986).³⁴ He died in 1846. When John Duignam arrived there he experienced the reign of the fifth president, Dr. Fortune, who was elected to this position in 1866. John Duignam arrived there in 1867. During John Duignam's time at AHC the course of study lasted five years: the first year was spent studying Philosophy and the other four years were devoted to Theology.

What did John Duignam's stay at AHC mean to him? Firstly, it instilled in him the need to be a secular priest (not a member of an order) because an order requires too much time, etc. of the individual. AHC required that undertaking from all its students. John Duignam no doubt also promised to uphold this oath. He remained a secular priest his entire life. Secondly, he was also exposed to a Spartan lifestyle because living conditions at AHC were harsh. This experience would stand him in good stead for his future South African experience because when he arrived at Kalk Bay in June 1874 he found no presbytery and the other means of a comfortable living. He had to invent those things for himself. Thirdly, AHC also taught him academic discipline and prepared him for his next stage of his training: the *Propaganda Fide College* in Rome. How long did John Duignam study at AHC?³⁵ Was it for the entire five years or did his bishop take him out before his term had expired at AHC? One thing is sure that if he spent five years at All Hallows College then he could not have spent more than a year or two at the *Propaganda Fide College* in Rome.³⁶ Further research will have to clear up this issue.

In any case, after All Hallows College, John Duignam went to the *Propaganda Fide College* or *Collegium Urbanum* in Rome. This institution was named after Pope Urbanum VII.³⁷ and stood under the jurisdiction of *Propaganda Fide* or as it is officially known: *Sacra Congregatio Christiano Nomini Propagando*. This agency at the Vatican is the department of the pontifical administration charged with the spread of Catholicism and with the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs in non-Catholic countries. The intrinsic importance of its duties and the extraordinary extent of its authority and of the territory under its jurisdiction have caused the cardinal prefect of the Propaganda Fide to be known as the 'red pope' (Benigni, undated, Internet).

What was the *Propaganda Fide College* or Collegium Urbanum all about? It was a seminary where young ecclesiastics could be educated for missions. The powers that be at the *Propaganda*

33 There were several seminaries in 19th century Ireland that prepared candidates for the priesthood and foreign missions. They were: St. Kieran's (Kilkenny), St. Patrick's College (Carlow), St. Patrick's College (Maynooth), St. John's College (Waterford), St. Peter's College (Wexford). This college sent men out to the Eastern Vicariate of South Africa., St. Patrick's College (Thurles) and St. Mary's College (Youghal) (Condon 1986: 223-224).

34 Condon's work is the most definitive work on the All Hallows College.

35 According to Greg Harkin, the archivist at the AHC, the records do not indicate how long John Duignam stayed there. There is, however, proof that he entered in 1867.

36 This author is questioning the AHC register (Condon 1986: 332) when it gives John Duignam, as having entered in 1867. This author believes that it indicates rather the year when he completed his studies there.

37 It is still an open question as to who suggested that John Duignam should go to the Propaganda College in Rome. This issue warrants further research.

Fide College must have noticed John Duignam's fluency in Spanish and aware of the search for a priest for the St. James RCC in South Africa, they suggested that he make himself available for that position. After all South Africa and the Philippines were areas that were under the supervision of the *Propaganda Fide*. What was a normal course of study like at the *Propaganda College* like when John Duignam studied there?³⁸ The duration was six years and consisted of courses in doctrinal theology, moral (ethical) theology, ascetical (holiness) theology, Scripture, church law and church history. All lectures, textbooks and examinations were in Latin. Moreover, the road to the priesthood was laborious in the 19th century consisting of four minor orders and two major orders.³⁹ The course of the road to the priesthood was somewhat changed in the late 20th century.⁴⁰

Fr. Duignam moves to South Africa

John Duignam was ordained as priest in April 1873 at the Basilica of St. John The Lateran Basilica in Rome. He would return there in 1913 and kiss the ground or floor, rather, where he was ordained. This historic church in Rome is known as the "mother of all Roman Catholic churches" and is the parish of the pope.⁴¹ It is one of four principal basilicas in Rome. The other three other are St. Peter's, St. Mary's Major and St. Paul at the Vatican. The Basilica of St. John The Lateran is the oldest and ranks first among the four great 'patriarchal' basilicas of Rome. It stands on a very historic site, the ancient palace of the family of Laterani. Some members of this family gained great heights in ancient Rome. Emperor Constantine, the first emperor, acquired this palace and gave it to the Church round about the year 311 AD. This building was renovated into a church. It was later dedicated as the "Basilica Salvatoris" and the appendage "St. John" followed because of the Benedictine monastery

38 Fr. Roy Bauer, Pastor of St. Peter Church, Quincy, Illinois, USA in his biography of Fr. Augustine Tolston entitled "*They Called Him Father Gus*", gives a good overview of what life was like at the *Propaganda Fide College* in the 19th century. Fr. Tolston was the first Afro-American priest in the USA and studied at the *Propaganda College* in the 1880s.

39 Bauer gives a good description of the road to ordination. Shortly after his arrival at the seminary the candidate received his seminarian garb. At the *Propaganda Fide College* it consisted of a black cassock and black biretta. A red sash was worn around the waist and a red tassel in the biretta. Most *Propaganda Fide College* graduates normally wore this outfit for the rest of their lives. Sometime after he received this outfit, the *Propaganda Oath* followed. Each student had to take it. He promised three things: firstly, to go work in whatever country or diocese to which he was assigned; secondly, not to join a religious order without the permission of the Holy See and finally to inform the Sacred Congregation of the *Propaganda* every 3 years of his general condition and work. Next followed the tonsure. This religious ceremony consisted of a bishop cutting the hair of the seminarian in the form of a cross, or in monasteries the head was shaved except for a small band of hair in the manner of an ancient Roman slave. Tonsure symbolised the candidate's willingness to become a slave of the people of God. Next followed the four minor orders. They were: porter, lector, exorcist and acolyte. With each order went a ceremony. "In the ceremony of the porter the candidate was handed the keys of the church and was instructed to ring the bells, open and close the church and sacristy, and open the books for the preacher and endeavour by word and example to close to the devil and open to God the hearts of the faithful". As lector the candidate was told 'to read the word of God intelligibly, so that the faithful may be edified'. As exorcist he could drive out the power of Satan. As acolyte he could minister at the altar. The two major orders were those of subdeacon and deacon. As subdeacon the candidate took the oath of celibacy. As deacon he could preach. During the ceremony for the diaconate the celebrant i.a. said: "Consider well to what exalted rank you raise in the church. The office of deacon is to assist at the altar, to baptize and preach". After these two orders followed ordination to the priesthood.

40 John Molony's work *Luther's Pine* gives a good insight into life at the *Propaganda Fide College* during the 20th century. He was a student there from 1947 to the 1950s.

41 *Catholic Encyclopaedia: Saint John Lateran*.

of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist which adjoined the basilica.

On his way to South Africa, Fr. Duignam spent six weeks on the island of St. Helena in the South Atlantic Ocean. This is the place where Napoleon Bonaparte had spent his second exile. One can be sure that he pondered about his future ministry in South Africa. He would no doubt also have visited the site where Napoleon Bonaparte was buried before his body was exhumed and reburied in France.

Fr. Duignam as parish priest

Fr. Duignam became parish priest of St. James RCC in June 1874. He came for 6 months but did not know that he would spend the next 52 years in this parish. What was his view of ministry? How did he view worship? How did he view the sacraments? How did he view the Filipino community? What was his ministry with the Filipino community like? How was he involved in synod, diocesan and parish affairs? It is hard to say what his views were on these issues. One can however accept the fact that it was typical mainstream. One must bear in mind the influence that the “Devotional Revolution” (the religious period 1850 to 1875 in Ireland presided over by Cardinal Cullen) and his studies at the Seminary, All Hallows College and the *Propaganda Fide College* had on him. One should also bear in mind that he most likely lived in Rome while the Vatican Council met in 1869 to 1870.

As parish priest Fr. Duignam had many roles. He served as pastor to the Filipino community and the rest of St. James RCC. He was also for many years schoolteacher (1874 to 1906). He was also a community person and certainly kept up with developments around him. When construction on the St. James sanctuary began in 1901 he was i.a. the contractor and purchase agent. He played the same roles for the construction of the Convent. Furthermore, he was also member of the Western Vicariate and responsible to his bishop.

What was his image of St. James RCC and of himself? What did others think of him?

He always referred to his congregation as “my little church”.⁴² made this reference at several other occasions. Did he have in mind the larger parishes such as St. Mary’s in Cape Town, Wynberg, Simon’s town, e.a. when he made this reference? Did he think that his parish was inferior to them? Regarding his self-image, one cannot help to mention that Fr. Duignam had a very positive self-image. He described, for example, Mullingar (his home town) as the capital of Ireland and the rest of the world besides. Furthermore, when he went to Rome in 1913 he went to St. John The Lateran Basilica where he had been ordained and kissed the ground on which he had been made a priest, thanking God again and again for the wonderful privilege of his ordination.⁴³ He also had a good humour. On various occasions there are allusions to it.

What did others think about him? We quote two persons. G. O’Reilly describes Duignam as “the noble figure of the old Parish Priest stands out in bold perspective, overshadowing all the others who were contemporaneous with him, and bringing to their hearts a feeling of gratitude for the privilege of being his friend”.⁴⁴ The organisation of his golden anniversary as priest also manifested the high regard in which he was held. Several persons from outside the St. James RCC rallied around the congregation to help with this event. Furthermore, Mr. J.D. Robertson, a plumber who helped Fr. Duignam with some work on the Convent at the 50th anniversary (1958)

42 *False By News*, 23 May 1985.

43 O’Reilly. *Star of the Sea* 1958:12.

44 *Star of the Sea* 1958: 12.

of the Star of the Sea School said: “Finally, I would like also to pay a sincere tribute to one of the finest men I have ever known, Father John Duignam, to whose foresight the Convent of Star of the Sea owes so much”.⁴⁵

Fr. Duignam and the Dominicans

Although Fr. Duignam was a secular priest (this is a priest that does not belong to a monastic order) he built up a good relationship with the Dominicans. The Dominican nuns of Springfield Convent in Wynberg came and staffed the St James Mission School and the Star of the Sea School. When he was superannuated (retired) in 1925 Bishop O’Reiley sent him to the Dominican convent in Bonnievale to be the chaplain. What is this order all about? The founder of this order was Dominicus Guzman (1170-1221), a Spaniard.⁴⁶ In 1215 he requested permission from the pope to organise an order but the Fourth Lateran Council, following the suggestion of Pope Innocent III, had decided that no new monastic rules were to be approved. The latter took the issue to his followers who subsequently decided to adopt the so-called Rule of Saint Augustine and were therefore for a time known as ‘regular canons of Saint Augustine’. From its very inception it insisted on the importance of study for the accomplishment of its task.

In due course the Dominicans, as these men would become known, had a presence at Oxford University and in Paris. It is out of this order that the two great 13th century theologians Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas would come. Furthermore, the Dominicans would become known as the *Domini Canes* (the dogs of the Lord) and the preachers (*Ordo Praedicatorum*, abbreviated as O.P) of the Roman Catholic Church. Legend has it that Dominicus’ mother had a dream before the birth of her son in which a dog with a torch in its mouth to lighten up the world appeared.⁴⁷ The Dominicans would become known as the aristocrats among the monastic orders. What else did this order stand for? Apart from the usual ideals that monastic orders require, the Dominicans place a high premium on intellectualism and emphasises work for others. Books are essential for them. Moreover, their ideal is not contemplation apart from the world, but access to men in their needs.⁴⁸ What was Fr. Duignam’s association with the Dominicans? Dominican Sisters staffed the two St. James and Star of the Sea schools, as already said. He also attended the installation of several Dominican Sisters in October 1894 in Wynberg. What did he learn from the Dominicans? One wonders if his love for teaching was not a tenet that he learnt from the Dominicans? Or was it a case of a need in the St. James parish that forced him to take over the role of schoolteacher? In any case, it was not for no reason that Bishop O’Reiley transferred Fr. Duignam to Bonnievale (a place in the Western Cape) to be the chaplain of the Dominican Sisters there. He was aware of Fr. Duignam’s earlier contact with the Dominican Sisters.

Fr. Duignam’s last days

In 1925 after almost 52 years at St. James RCC the Western Vicariate superannuated Fr. Duignam. Mr. Donovan, the editor of the *Cape*, gave a good picture of what had happened at St. James during those years. Here are a few lines to confirm this statement: “Half-a-century! When he came first there was no railway beyond Wynberg. There was no St. James at all: and between Muizenberg and Kalk Bay there weren’t half a dozen houses; ... But down at Kalk Bay there was a settlement of Phillipino [sic] fishermen who had been shipwrecked from a ship and who had settled down in little thatched huts as fishermen. It was to these that Father Duignam came fifty years ago, as

45 “Looking Back”, *Star of the Sea. 50 Years, Golden Jubilee (1958)*.

46 Cf. i.a. Gonzales 1971:227-229; Praamsa 1989 Deel 1:300-301.

47 Praamsa Deel 1:301.

48 Walker 1970:234.

minister".⁴⁹ Fr. Duignam's physical environment changed totally over the fifty-two years that he lived at St. James.

A week before Fr. Duignam left to take up his chaplaincy at the Dominican convent in Bonnievale, his beloved horse, Larry, was sent there. Was Fr. Duignam sent there because he understood the Dominicans well? Here in this rustic setting he spent his last few years. He finally succumbed to the illnesses of old age and therefore was taken to Cape Town. On 7 January 1931 Fr. Duignam died at age 85 years. On 8 January 1931 after a requiem mass at St. Mary's he was interred at the Maitland Cemetery.

CONCLUSIONS

Several conclusions can be drawn from this study. Firstly, the Filipino community of Kalk Bay is the least known of all immigrants to South Africa. The average Capetonian does not know that such a community ever existed. Secondly, of the two ministerial partners Fr. Duignam was the more senior. This was inevitable because he was the parish priest. One must also bear in mind that no matter what the system is (Episcopal, Reformed, Congregational or Collegial) the priest or pastor is always the senior in a ministerial situation. In the Episcopal tradition bishops normally do not consult with the parish councils but with the priest or pastor in a given ministerial situation. Furthermore, Fr. Duignam remained faithful to his promises which he made as a seminarian, namely, that he would go where he was sent to; that he would remain a secular priest and send regular reports to the Propaganda College about his life and work. Thirdly, both Fr. Duignam and the Filipino community became part of the South African landscape. In all his years Fr. Duignam only returned once to his native Ireland and Europe. The original Filipinos never went back to the Philippines. It was only later in the 20th century that some of their descendants started moving back and forth between South Africa and the Philippines. Fourthly, it seems as if the Irish culture prevailed over the Filipino culture at St. James RCC. This is of course obvious because Fr. Duignam was the leader and most of the priests in the Western Vicariate including the three bishops with whom Fr. Duignam worked were Irish. Fifthly, the two ministerial partners witnessed the growth of three towns: Muizenberg, St. James and Kalk Bay. There was not much infrastructure in place when they first arrived there. In fact, the Filipino community is heralded as having begun the fishing industry of Kalk Bay. This writer believes that they have not been credited properly for this event. He advocates that some monument or any other form of insignia be erected to bring homage to their presence in Kalk Bay. Presently there is only a small mural on a store in St. James depicting their arrival. That is not enough recognition for what these men and women contributed to Kalk Bay and the False Bay coast.

Sixthly, the two ministerial partners also witnessed the expansion of South African Catholicism. When they started their ministry there were only one vicariate and a few schools. Over the years the *Propaganda Fide College* authorised the founding of several vicariates and prefectures. Many schools were also founded including the two connected to St. James RCC. Seventhly, more study needs to be done on the rest of St. James RCC. This present study only focused on Fr. Duignam and the Filipino community. This void should be researched. It is, for example, a known fact that some white business people belonged to St. James RCC. Who were they?

Finally, there are several issues that need to be further researched: for example, which Filipinos came after the 1872 revolt?; where did Fr. Duignam go and visit when he went to Ireland

49 Cape Town, 19 March 1926.

and Europe in 1913-14? Did he deliver any sermons and speeches at any of these venues?

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