

THE ENTRANCE OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS INTO THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

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The first permanent Catholic missionaries in the Philippines were the Augustinians who came with Legaspi in 1565 and these were followed by the Franciscans in 1578. The first Jesuit in the Philippines was not St. Francis Xavier, the statement in the Bull of his canonization and the old historians notwithstanding. (1)

The first request that Jesuits be sent to the Philippines came from Legaspi (2) and this petition was repeated by Lavezares. (3) These requests were referred to the Jesuit Provincial of Mexico by the Viceroy and in due course they reached Rome, and in September, 1580, a letter came to the Viceroy of Mexico from Father General Everard Mercurian in which he thanked the Viceroy for his interest in the Society and gave his consent for some Jesuits to be sent to the Philippines. (4) In the meantime Rev. Domingo Salazar, O.P. had been consecrated bishop for the Philippines and when he requested the king to send some Jesuits to the Islands he found the ground prepared and all the authorities ready to comply with his wish. (5)

The Jesuits who were assigned to pioneer in the Philippines were Father Antonio Sedeno, superior; Father Alonso Sanchez, a talented but unique character; Gaspar Suarez de Toledo, a scholastic and the brother of Father Francisco Suarez the theologian; and Brother Nicolas Gallardo. Father Sedeno had been a member of the ill-fated Florida Mission which gave Jesuit martyrs to the present state of Virginia and had been the first Jesuit to enter Mexico.

The galleon on which Bishop Salazar and the Jesuits sailed from Acapulco was the "San Martin". (6) An account of the voyage was written by Father Sedeno and