



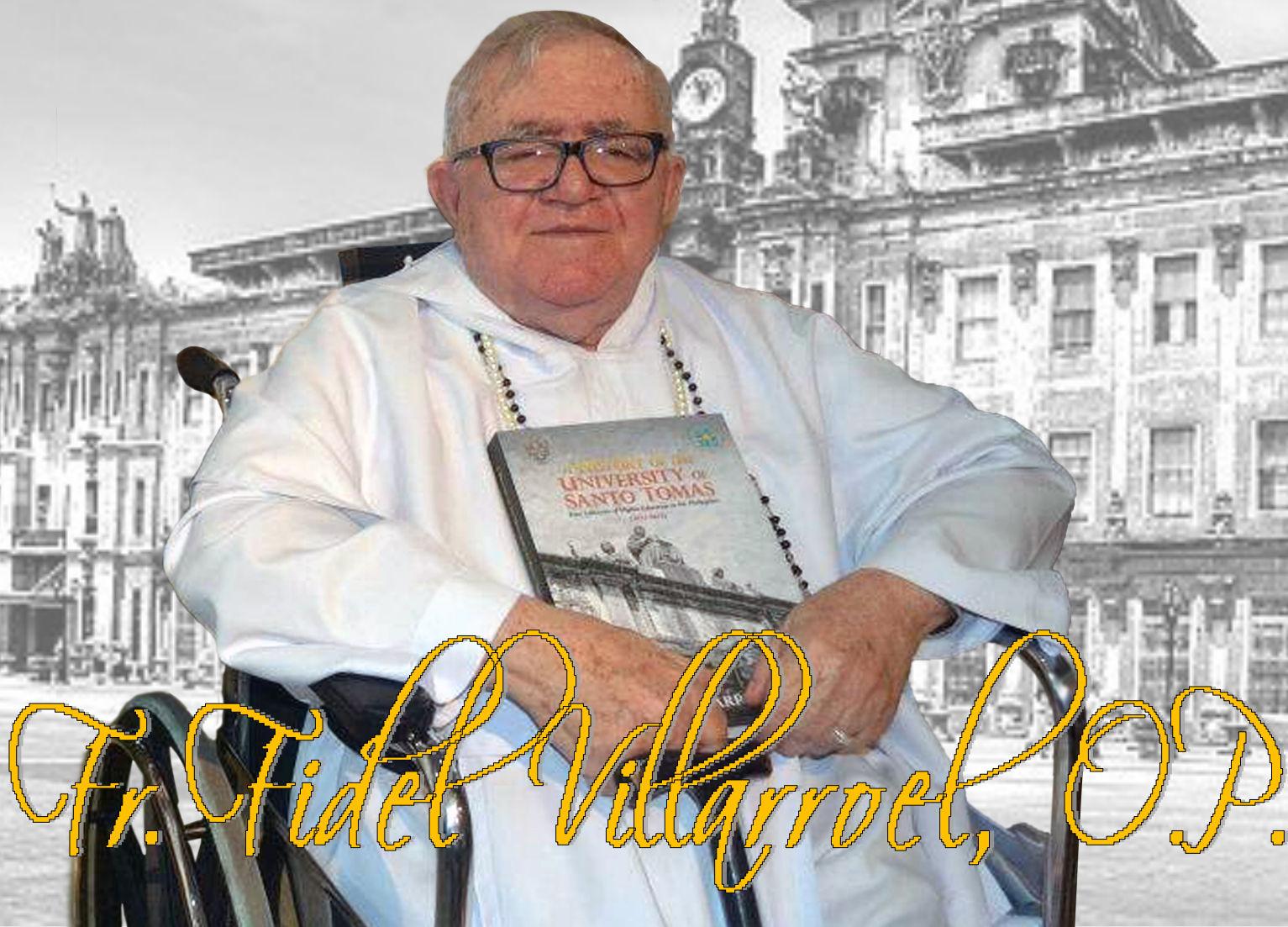
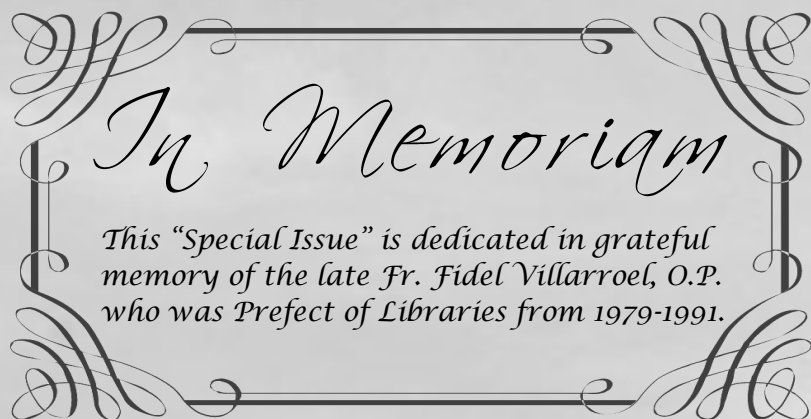
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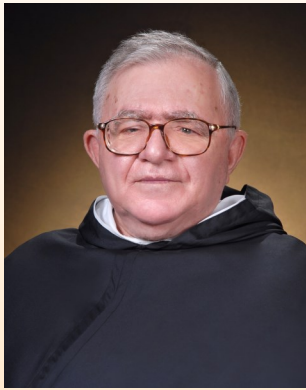
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MIGUEL DE BENAVIDES LIBRARY

SPECIAL ISSUE

| March 2017

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Prefect of Libraries, UST Library
(1979-1991)
UST Archivist (1959-1997;
1995-2008)

Fidel Villarroel, Escanciano, O.P.

BIOGRAPHY

(From Fr. Fidel's personal file)

FIDEL VILLARROEL was born in Tejerina (Leon, Spain) on March 18, 1929. He took up secondary studies at the Dominican schools of La Mejorada and Santa Maria de Nieva from 1940 to 1945. After entering the Dominican Order in 1945 in the Convent of Avila, he pursued Philosophy and Theology courses at the House of Studies of the same Convent, finishing his ecclesiastical career in 1953 with the degree of STL (Lector of Sacred Theology). He was ordained priest in 1952. Then he continued his postgraduate training at the University of London, from which he earned the degree of Master of Arts in 1957.

Fr. Villarroel was assigned to the Philippines and to the University of Santo Tomas where he obtained the degree of PhD (Major in History) in 1972. Since his arrival in 1957 he has served the University in various administrative and teaching posts: Head of the Spanish Department (1957-1982); Archivist (1958-1991, 1995-2006); Prefect of Libraries (1978-1991). At the same time, he has been Professor of Church History in the Faculty of Theology from 1963 to 2009.

For thirty two years he worked at the Apostolic Nunciature of Manila as Assistant Secretary (1959-1991). As a Dominican, he has acted, from 1977 to 2009, as Provincial Promoter of the Canonization Causes of his Dominican Province of the Holy Rosary.

He has devoted most of his academic life to historical research, especially in the field of Philippine history. Some of his works are: Apolinario Mabini (Manila 1964); Father Jose Burgos, University Student (Manila 1971); Jose Rizal and the University of Santo Tomas (Manila 1984); Lorenzo Ruiz, the Protomartyr of the Philippines and his Companions (Manila 1979); Un siglo de Apostolado: Religiosas Misioneras de Santo Domingo (Rome 1993); Cruzada espanola en Vietnam (Madrid 1972); El P. Antonio Gonzalez, Martir (Leon 1981); Shih-Lu, Apologia de la verdadera religion (Manila 1986); The Dominicans and the Philippine Revolution (1896-1903) (Manila, 1999).

As Provincial Promoter of Beatification and Canonization Causes, Fr. Villarroel wrote two *Positiones* (to use the Latin language of the Holy See). They are the *Positio super Martyrio* (Rome 1979), the historical study on 16 martyrs of Nagasaki (including the Filipino Lorenzo Ruiz) beatified by Pope John Paul II in Manila in 1981; and the two-volume *Positio super Martyrio* (Rome 1995), a similar study on the 38 Dominicans and 4 Marianists martyrs of the religious persecution in Spain during the Civil War of 1936-1939. He also collaborated in the beatification Cause of the Philippine-born Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo, Foundress of the Beaterio de Santa Catalina, Manila, for which he has presented in two volumes of historic document.

From 1974, Fr. Villarroel was Member of the "Academia Filipina, Correspondiente de la Real Academia Española"; in 1982 he was nominated "Outstanding Thomasian Awardee" for Historical Research.

This prolific saint-maker ended his life term last Sunday, Oct. 24 2016 at 6:05 p.m. at the UST Hospital following multiple organ failure. Fr. Fidel was 87.

Award

- “Dr. Eufonio Alip Award for Historical Research” (1980), by the UST Alumni Association
- “Outstanding Thomasian Awardee for Historical Research” (1982), by the UST Alumni Association
- “Catholic Authors Award” (1991), by the Asian Catholic Publishers, Inc.
- “St. Antoninus of Florence Award for Humanities-Church History” (1996), by the
- UST Graduate School Alumni Association, “Gintong Aklat Award 2000” (September 8, 2000), by the Book Development Association of the Philippines
- “National Book Award” (September 9, 2000), by The Manila Critics Circle and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA).
- “The Rector’s Award for Historical Research” (2008)

Decorations

- By the Holy See: Cross ‘Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice’ (1984)
- By the Spanish Government: “Cruz de Isabel la Católica” (1985)

Delegate of the University of Santo Tomas to International Convention and Symposia:

1. International Conference on the Historiography of the Church in China, Catholic University of Louvain, 1990 (Speaker)
2. International Symposium on the Chinese Rites, University of San Francisco, 1992 (Speaker)
3. International Conference on the Centennial of the 1896 Philippine Revolution, Manila, August 21-23, 1996 (Speaker)
4. International Symposium of Catholic Universities, Mexico City, 2003 (Speaker)
5. International Convention on Philip II, Manila (Speaker)
6. International Symposium on Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, Manila
7. International Seminar on Ferdinand Magellan, Manila, UST, 25-26 October 2004 (Speaker)

List of Writings:

BOOKS *(Related to Province of the Holy Rosary and its Missions)*

1. **Cruzada Española en Vietnam, Campaña de Cochinchina**, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid 1972, pp. I-XXIV, 1-559.

2. **Nagasakiensis, seu Macaonensis seu Manilensis Beatificationis Servorum Dei Dominici Ibáñez de Erquicia O.P. et XVI Sociorum, in odium fidei, uti fertur, annis 16633-1637 interfectorum, POSITIO super introductione Causae et Martirio ex officio concinnata.** (Sacra Congregatio pro Causis Sanctorum, Romae 1979, pp. I-XLV, 1-686 (for short, referred to as **Positio-Erquicia**).
3. **Lorenzo Ruiz, the Protomartyr of the Philippines, and his Companions, St. Paul Publications**, Pasay City 1979, pp. I-XIII, 1-160.
 - First and second editions, and Tagalog and Chinese editions, out of print
 - Third updated Edition, UST Press, Manila 1988, pp. I-XII, 1-304
4. **El Padre Antonio González, Mártir**, Institución Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Leon 1981, pp. 1-151.
5. **Pien Cheng-Chiao Chen-Ch’uan SHIH-LU, Apología de la Verdadera Religión / Testimony of the true Religion**, by Fr. Juan Cobo, OP, Manila 1593. Edited with translations by Fr. F. Villarroel, UST Press, Manila 1986, pp. I-IX, 1-408.
6. **Un siglo de apostolado. Religiosas Misioneras de Santo Domingo, 1887-1987**, Tipografía Vaticana, Roma 1993, pp. 1-513.
 - Edition in English, Manila, 1999
 - Edition in Korean, 2001
 - Edition in Japanese, 2006
7. **Matritensis Beatificationis seu Declarationis Martyrii Servorum Dei Bonaventurae Garcia Paredes, ex Ordine Praedicatorum, O. P., Michaelis Leiba e Societate Mariae, et Quadraginta Sociorum, in odium fidei, uti fertur, interfectorum. Romae, 1995. Vol. I, INFORMATIO**, pp. I-XVII, 1-477, 1-45; **Vol. II, SUMMARIUM**, pp. 1-900. (for short, referred to as **POSITIO-Paredes-Leiba**).
8. **Iglesia y Convento de la Santísima Trinidad en Via Condotti, Perspectiva histórica**, Roma 1955, pp. I-IV, 1-117, in *Trinitarium, Revista de historia y espiritualidad Trinitaria*, n. 7 (1998), pp. 275-296 (First Part, followed by the Second Part in another n. of the same publication).

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9. **The Beaterio de Santa Catalina. The Cradle Years of the Dominican Sisters in the Philippines. A Brief History of the Foundation, by Fr. Juan de Santo Domingo, its Founder.** First English Edition. Edited, with a Preface and Notes, by FIDEL VILLARROEL, O.P., Quezon City 1996, pp. 1-148.
10. **The Dominicans and the Philippine Revolution (1896-1903),** UST Publishing House Manila, 1999, pp. 1-55, 1-452.
11. **Miguel de Benavides, O.P. (1550-1605), Friar, Bishop, and University Founder,** Manila, 2005, pp. 1-86.

BOOKS *(Related to the University of Santo Tomas)*

12. **Apolinario Mabini. His birthday and student years,** National Historical Institute, Manila 1979, pp. 1-35.
13. **Father José Burgos, University student,** UST Press, Manila 1971, pp. I-XI, 1-121; (1)(127).
14. **Contribución de la Universidad de Santo Tomás al desarrollo de la Literatura Hispano-Filipina,** UST Press, Manila 1974, pp. 1-22.
15. **Jose Rizal and the University of Santo Tomas,** Arnoldus Press, Manila 1984, pp. I-XX, 1-314.
16. **Marcelo H. del Pilar at the University of Santo Tomas,** UST Publishing House, Manila, 1997, pp. 1-44.
17. **Marcelo H. del Pilar. His religious conversion,** UST Publishing House, Manila, 1997, pp. 1-65.
18. **ALMA MATER. The University of Santo Tomas seen by its own Poets,** UST Publishing House, 2009, pp...
19. **A History of the University of Santo Tomas : four centuries of higher education in the Philippines, 1611-2011,** UST Publishing House, Manila, 2012.
21. **Ejercicios prácticos de Español,** by Fr. Cándido Fernández, O.P., Manila 1928; Second Edition revised and prepared by F. Villarroel, Manila 1958, pp. 1-13.
22. **Fray Jerónimo Román, historiador del Siglo de Oro,** Ediciones Montecasino, Zamora 1974, pp. 1-203.
23. **Ensayo de un Vocabulario Tejerinense. El lenguaje típico de Tejerina, en la montaña leonesa,** Madrid 1975.

In addition, Fr. Villarroel had written ca. Seventy (70) articles mostly on *History, Religion* and *Philosophy* in various journals majority of which are published by the University.



Fr. Fidel received the Cross 'Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice' on July 7, 1984.

VARIOUS THEMES

20. **De baptismo parvulorum.** Thesis for the degree of Lector of Sacred Theology, Studium Generale, Convento de Santo Tomás, Ávila, 1953, pp. 1-137 (unpublished).

Rev. Fr. Fidel Villarroel, O.P. : peerless archivist, Dominican paradigm academic Father

Maria Eloisa G. Parco-De Castro



Someone asked me why I was invited to accept the posthumous lifetime achievement award (*Parangal Hagbong*) to be given to Fr. Fidel Villarroel, O.P. by The Varsitarian. Actually, that was the very same question I asked when the information was conveyed to me. Much as I am so thankful for it, I also believe it was more than the strong recommendation of a very good friend that had put me in that place. Is it not perhaps owing to being privileged to know him, his work, his values, his perspective, within the period of thirty-eight (38) years (starting from my student years) with almost two decades of those spent in the course of research and writing? Humbled as I was, I accepted that honor as well as this chance to share the joy of knowing Rev. Fr. Fidel Villarroel y Escanciano, O.P., Master of Theology, UST Archivist for nearly half a century, Saintmaker, the Historian's historian - so that joy may multiply many times over as readers acquire, even if only a gist, of Fr. Fidel's sterling qualities. I also take this occasion as my opportunity to pay tribute to him.

It was through the long process of archival work that we began to know each other as researchers. Our interests intersected in many ways but he never manifested any degree of turfing – that is being fiercely protective of a subject matter to the point that a perceived competitor for that topic is resented and rejected. If at all, what he showed was a healthy sense of skepticism which any self-respecting historian should have, to better weigh the spread of evidence in interpreting history. What facilitated my knowing him better was when he accepted to become my adviser for my Master's Thesis on the Dominican Imprisonment Accounts during the last phase of the Philippine Revolution. In turn, he was able to know me through the work I have done. Through the entire process of research, writing and advising, which he did without fail, he kept a respectful distance. It was only serendipity that I got to know that he was pleased when I finished my thesis when the chairman of the oral examination panel (who happened to be the late Rev. Fr. Lucio Gutierrez, O.P.) asked him if he had anything to say after the oral examination.

For almost ten years before he retired as UST Archivist, we worked in the Archives - with Fr. Fidel writing what I would eventually learn to be the monumental two-volume "*A History of the University of Santo Tomas: Four Centuries of Higher Education, 1611 – 2011*" while I finished the various papers and research projects which I have committed myself to. When I came across some data which I thought he might have used for, I showed them to him. And he in turn, helped me with every document I required, patiently answered the questions of then an initiate into religious history, showing me where to look for data and what they are about. Fr. Fidel was not someone you can simply claim you know very well because he had his inimitable way of putting things, thoughts and people in their rightful place in a kindly, fatherly way. I still remember him expressing puzzlement at the unexpected, unsolicited gift from a visitor who came unannounced one afternoon. He showed me the gift and chuckling softly said, "Why this? Beware of Greeks bearing gifts."

Many people familiar with his accomplishments have a sense of the impressive body of work he has produced, specially the *Positios* and in particular, the one directly resulting to the first Filipino Saint, Lorenzo Ruiz. Yet, throughout the years I have known him, he remained humble, never praising himself but always being matter-of-fact about his works. One day he called me into his office and showed me a sheet of paper. It was a letter expressing great delight at his book, Jose Rizal and the

cont'd on next page

University of Santo Tomas. The letter writer said that every paragraph, every page was filled with dense information slowly presented but that the sheer weight of the information they convey was so significant. Like every critical reader who is struck by the immense importance of his work, the letter writer's understanding of Rizal changed forever. I sensed the combined admiration, respect and awe of the letter writer, who was in his own right, one of the best historians in the Philippines through the course of his career and life. It was Scottie – William Henry Scott.

Fr. Fidel had no equal as archivist. He said that when his Superior gave him the chance to take the assignment, he immediately accepted being Archivist. It was what he wanted. He knew exactly where to find the information from the huge collection of manuscripts and documents in the Archives and to a certain extent, even at the library. At the time when he already had advanced Parkinson's disease, he was invited to present a paper in the international conference in Philosophy in UST in 2011. The convener, who is now Professor Emeritus Dr. Alfredo Co, suggested that Fr. Fidel and I collaborate on a paper. I was surprised when Fr. Fidel agreed and immediately set about to provide me with data. When I told him that one particular book could not be located at the Ecclesiastical library, he told me that it was there because it was he who brought the book from Spain. To facilitate matters, he went to the library, asking me to come along. He informed the librarians in very specific, clear terms where the book was to be found in the mezzanine, which shelf, what level and what direction. The librarian came down with this look in his eye which I cannot forget. He found the book exactly where Fr. Fidel said it was in.

Like a true son of St. Dominic, he promoted the Rosary by giving them as gifts for Christmas and when he returned from Spain. He bought the rosaries from the convent where they were made in Spain. It was the same

convent where his sister, a nun, was assigned.

The many calls of duty he had to answer as Archivist took away time from his own research and writing. There was an instance I heard him sigh saying that the history of UST always had to take the back seat when others come calling for assistance.

“I am a Dominican, so I must study,” he

said, echoing a Dominican bishop who believed that a minimum of four hours of study a day is necessary for every Dominican. Fr. Fidel always devoted more hours than what was asked for.

His unbounded love for UST is evident in his eagerness to see the end of the UST history book project in time for the quadricentennial commemoration and in the ten years of work he poured into it. When he finally held the first copy of the two volumes in his hands in 2012, he turned to us and declared, “Now I can die.” I kidded him that my wish was that he would live forever.

Fr. Fidel, like all good Spaniards, remained loyal to Spain and all that her kingdom represented. He was as eager as all the members of the Thomasian community in welcoming H.R.H. Queen Sofia, when she visited a few years ago. He gave the Queen a copy of his UST history book. Another connection to Spain he faithfully maintained was soccer. He was a keen follower of Real Madrid's soccer season year after year. At times, he even wore his Real Madrid shirt when watching the games on television and cheered loudly with every goal. But he knew where home was. After a bad fall in Rome he needed to recuperate and chose to go back to the Philippines.

For many Thomasians, students, faculty and support personnel, he was at various times, the head of the Spanish Department, the long-time Prefect of Libraries, professor of Church History and Archivist. During the long celebrations for UST's 400th year, he was the

Spanish Dominican friar who went about the campus participating actively in all types of events wearing his many UST shirts, at times with a Tiger head-dress and assisted by his reliable nurse with the unlikely name of Darna. To many seminarians, specially those with research assignments whether in UST or from their Bishops, he was the perennial go-to who would help them locate sources, translate them into English and send them away satisfied.

To me, he was my mentor, my adviser, my friend. He asked me about my father's demise so unexpectedly I had no words to answer him. He was so concerned I had no ending for my article in the commemorative book on La Naval that he asked me what I needed to finish it. And he himself got the volumes of *Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinas* from the shelf and hurriedly sent me away to finish it after I declared that I know how to end the work. One Father's Day, I greeted him with a text message, “Happy Father's Day!” He replied with the message, “Thank you very much. From your academic Father.”

Fr. Fidel Villarroel, O.P. helped in understanding our past and the rewriting of Philippine history through his body of work. He was happiest when working in his beloved University of Santo Tomas. He is a good Spanish friar, one of many who went before him, who were appreciated and loved by the people whom he worked with. He occupies a permanent niche in UST history.



"Reuerdo"

Handog ni Ms. Margie S. Cruz

I

Small but terrible, un Dominico pequeño
Sa tingin ng marami maliit na tao Historiador famoso.
Batang-bata preskong presko mula sa Santo Tomas Avila Seminaryo
Sa Pamantasang Pontifical unang nadistino.

II

Maraming posisyon kanyang ginampanan
Karunungan taglay naging sandigan
Sa mga gawaing sa kanya'y iniatang.

III

Archivo ng Pamantasan Pinaunlad, pinagyaman
Sa Papal Nuncio nanilbihan
Kinatawan ng Santo Papa dito sa kapuluan.
1979 hanggang 1991 nang siya'y maatasan
Aklatan pamunuan Puso ng Pamantasan.
Pagtuturo, pagsasaliksik, pag-aaral kanyang kinagiliwan
Malaking ambag sa Bansang kaunlaran.

IV

Walang sandaling nasasayang Pagsasaliksik bahagi ng buhay
Mga tala, talambuhay ng mga bayani kanyang isinabuhay
Historya ng Pamantasan, Dominiko at Rebolusyon kanya ring tinalakay.

V

Dedikasyon at bokasyong sinumpaang
Nagsilbing inspirasyon Unang Santong Pilipino kanyang binigyang buhay.
Sa Archivo ng Pamantasan mga dokumento ginalugad
Nagsaliksik, naglakbay sa Roma, Italya at Nagasaki, Japan
Kapalaran, martyrdom ni San Lorenzo Ruiz sinundan, pinatunayan.

VII

San Juan Bautista tinig sa Ilang Nagbunyi nagpatunay kay Hesus na pagsilang
Padre Fidel Villarroel, O.P. nagbigay liwanag kay San Lorenzo Ruiz
Ating Santong Banal sa buong santinakpan.

Down Memory Lane



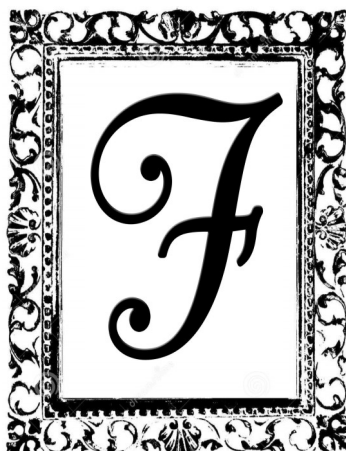
In photo with the late Fr. Maximo Marina, O.P. during the blessing of the new Library building in 1989



Exhibit of Hon. Dr. Mah Soo-Lay's "Collection of the Great Encyclopedia of Four Treasures"



Unveiling of the UST Central library Donors — the Chiang Ching Kuo Cultural Center on March 25, 1990



Fr. Fidel during the Spanish Declamation contest held January 11, 1984



The "Cruz de Isabel la Catolica" given to Fr. Fidel on October 12, 1985 by the Spanish Government



When he received the "Gintong Aklat Award 2000"



During the 4th Centennial celebration of Dominican arrival in the Philippines. In photo are: Fr. Damian Byrne, O.P., Fr. Antonio Cabezon, O.P., and Fr. Efrén Rivera, O.P.



(L-R) Fr. Aparicio, Maria Aguilar, Juana Abello, Fr. Fidel, Margarita Cruz, and the late Erlinda Flores



A delightful moment with his nieces (L-R: Adela, Paloma, and Vicenta)



Enjoying his motorized scooter



Photo opportunity with some of the Library staff during the "Blessing and Laying of the Cornerstone of the New Central Library" held on July 24, 1988



h the late Fr. Lucio Gutierrez, O.P.



With Prof. Regalado Trota Jose, present Archivist of the University



Taken in one of Fr. Fidel's birthday celebrations in the Archives with the Librarians and Archives staff

A nephew's experience of his Uncle Fidel

(Note: This is a letter found by Fr. Angel Aparicio, O.P. among the papers of Fr. Fidel Villarroel right after his death. Fr. Aparicio finds it interesting because it reveals an aspect of the late historian unknown to the readers.)

Dear Uncle:

For a long time the idea of writing to you kept bothering me but I was lazy to put myself to do it. Was this one more wishful desire or would it one day see the light?

Well, this is the moment!

Two reasons have finally moved me to break my previous hesitation. First, the visit of these Dominicans to Tejerina last spring (actually there was only one Dominican, the translator; the other two were friends who had visited Fr. Villarroel in Manila; the three had promised him to visit his family in Spain).

We had finished lunch and, as usual during vacation, all the cousins were gathering, not exactly to pray the Angelus, but attracted to the aroma of a good coffee and the delicious cookies prepared by one of our good cooks. In the course of the conversation with our guests, the idea of sending you a letter finally took shape.

Impressions from Manila, pictures about you and about the University of Santo Tomas, all this rang a bell in my mind. And then, the unexpected invitation to pay you a visit in Manila, because as they told us, you could no longer come to Spain.

I don't know when we will be able to visit you, but before anything else, I wish to express in writing all that is in my heart. I do not want my words to sound as a farewell, even if I think that we may not see each other again. (Among all the nephews and nieces, they decided to send three representatives of the whole family. The lucky ones were Paloma, Vicenta, and Adela).

Although I am speaking on my own, I am pretty sure that my siblings and cousins will agree with me and could still add more. I could not tell face to face what I am going to write even if the need to say it is so urgent.

The name of uncle Fidel has been imprinted in my memory since I was seven years old. Today, after more than fifty years, I may not be able to recollect all the details, but am still conscious of the debt we owe one of our predecessors. In writing to you, I use a respectful address even if some of the cousins would prefer a more colloquial tone.

After this long introduction allow me to express my gratitude:

- ♦ Thanks for the moments of anticipation when you open your luggage and distribute your 'pasalubongs' while we pulled one another hunting for the right size and color of a t-shirt or of another precious (and cheap) souvenir.
- ♦ Thanks for your tips that you gave the altar boys when we helped you at Mass. Just in case nobody has told you before, I tell you now. – "You were the most generous priest; better than Don Fernando, the Parish Priest, or Father Aniano."
- ♦ Thanks for those 25 pesetas (25 pesetas at that time was one dollar) that you gave me one time during the town fiesta. When I saw all that money in my hands, my eyes popped up.
- ♦ Thanks for making more pleasant those days when you accompanied us to bring the cows to their pastures. Not only did we enjoy your jokes; the 'merienda' was more abundant than usual and we could even share a sip of coffee, usually reserved for the grown-ups.
- ♦ Thanks for lending a hand when we were harvesting the hay in the "Llamona" and "La Solapeña," in the "Campones" and in the "Pandriella." Your presence served as an excuse for possible short-comings at the demands of our elders.

- ◆ Thanks for joining us when we collected potatoes, pods, cherries, and other forest fruits. Your presence was always a boost to our spirit.
- ◆ Thanks for something that we never saw you at, but that our parents told us about: that you had been a “motril.” Even though you were shorter than the lambs. (“Motril” is a young boy who shepherds the muttons when they are separated from the sheep).

Some people with slanderous tongues were commenting that it was due to your monetary contribution that our “lolo” was able to bring forth the flock.

But let me not dwell longer on the hard things. Let’s go to the pleasant memories of those days: when we would stop by the spring, not to drink water, but to take a gulp of wine with a spoonful of sugar. Do you remember all the nonsense that you concocted as you pretended to be a little tipsy? My mother used to say that you were more foolish than all of us!

Or when you taught us how to solve hieroglyphics. But remember that your disciple became better than the master for I always beat you at that; I always finished them, while you had to wait for the next day’s newspaper to verify your answer!

- ◆ Thanks, however, for teaching us to do crosswords. In this, truly, you were unbeatable. To watch you completing them seemed to me an outstanding feat!
- ◆ Thanks for all the pictures you took and then would send us. We still appreciate them and were moved to laughter, sadness, good moments.
- ◆ Thanks for all the excursions we undertook whenever you visited home.
- ◆ Thanks for the lexicon of our town and region that you collected that still serves us to retrieve our peculiar customs and traditions.

And though we cannot read all the books that you have published in English, we boast of a very productive and knowledgeable uncle.

- ◆ Thanks for your appetite. There was more food at the table when you were around and we enjoyed it.
- ◆ Thanks for always paying your lodging even though nobody had asked you for it.
- ◆ Thanks for guarding and blessing the houses of "El Ailon," and for those projects and works that came to light and that will remain for centuries. (Here he is referring to one monument to the shepherd, the sheep, and the dogs that Fr. Fidel contributed to produce with his brothers and that stands in front of their ancestral home).
- ◆ Thanks for the Christening and for giving the first communion to Maria.
- ◆ Thanks for the banter and mirth we shared together, your good humor, even if at times, you must have had to simulate it.

In a word, thanks for so many things that I have forgotten. I need to tell you that no other uncle has made us so happy. Come to think about this: can one imagine, if instead of being so small, you had been a giant? Better not to think about this.

We are all in debt to you.

Take care.

A big hug.

P.S. I hope that when this letter reaches you, you will remember to pay back the five dollars you promised me to buy some bricks for the construction of our house. You always showed them to us but you never let go of them. (Just a joke!).

Signed:

Jose Luis Escanciano Villarroel

How I remember Fr. Fidel...

"I was lucky enough to work at the UST Library with Fr. Fidel, a great Catholic author and historian. I was inspired by his love and dedication to his work. I love how he would always talk and communicate to us with his wit and humor. It was a joy and a privilege working with the great Fr. Fidel."



Angie P. Timbangcaya-Griffin
Former UST Asst. Chief Librarian
(now based in the US)

"I will never forget Fr. Fidel! As a superior, he was a very jolly boss. Working with him in the Library was easy, I never saw him get angry. He gave instructions clearly, thus one could easily understand him."

But what I could not forget was when I got married on January 28, 1982 (35 years ago) which was also the Feast of St. Thomas – that was my happiest moment with Fr. Fidel! Much as we wanted to have the wedding in UST, it was not possible because it was "fully booked." So we had it at St. Rita Parish in PhilAm Homes in Quezon City. It was a "cool morning" and Fr. Fidel was to officiate my wedding. Surprisingly, he was looking for the bride. I still could not remember if he was joking or he really did not recognize me because of my heavy make-up which perhaps made me extraordinarily beautiful! (joke only). Fr. Fidel was really an inspiration. I am really grateful for all the good things that he shared with the staff of the Library. He was so accommodating whenever one asked for advice. He was like a father to me having lost my biological father at a very young age. He had been my guardian angel and I consider him my second parent. For me, he is a "saint." I am so blessed and grateful for having worked with Fr. Fidel for twelve (12) years. I will always remember my happy memories with him for the rest of my life.



Gigi D. Panizal
Office Clerk, UST Library

"I have known Fr. Villarroel as a jolly, kind hearted, and approachable person. I remember everytime we give him an apple, he would always say 'an apple a day keeps the doctor away'."



Lani T. Olamit
Head Librarian,
Cataloguing Section

"Father Villarroel, O.P. was praised as a great historian. He was compassionate and a down to earth person; he possessed good virtues very much worthy of emulation. As the former Prefect of Libraries, working with Father Villarroel was a nice experience. There were no dull moment with him since he was always energetic, jolly, and full of wisdom. A humble person, Fr. Fidel will always be remembered because of his contributions to the history of our University."



Marivic G. Usita
Head Librarian,
Science and Technology Section

"It was a privilege to have known Fr. Villarroel, being my former superior in the UST Library even for a brief period of time. I would never forget his positive aura, genuine smile, unparalleled intelligence and virtuous character. I honestly believe that he has been one of the instrumental figures in the existence of our great Library – the Miguel de Benavides Library which is now on its 412th year."

He will surely be missed and our fond memories with him will forever be cherished.



Thelma P. Trinidad
Former UST Librarian
(now based in the US)

"Remembering Fr. Villarroel from 1979-1991 (12 years) in the UST Library, and five (5) years in the UST Archives inspired me to love my work and to dedicate my younger years to improve, enrich, and preserve the Filipiniana collections until I reached my year of retirement. I will never forget the happy years working with the jolly, workaholic, the "walking encyclopedia," who is none other than our dear Fr. Fidel."



Margie S. Cruz
Retired UST Librarian

"I've known Fr. Fidel since my college days. He was the Prefect of Libraries way back in 1980 when I was still a student assistant at the Medical Library. I've known him as a historian and a saint-maker, hence sometimes, we call him "a living saint." A very generous person, he used to give me money as Christmas gift when I was still at the Ecclesiastical Faculties Library. He loves to eat apples, that's why he was very happy every time we would give him his favorite fruit. His memory will live forever in the Library."



Nora M. Matawaran
Head Librarian,
Serials Section

I remember Fr. Fidel as the UST Prefect of Libraries, a historian and a faithful servant of God. When I was a working student of the Library, I would always see from my window Fr. Fidel in his office, writing. One of the books he wrote was about the life of Jose Rizal, the Philippine national hero. I read this book when I took my Rizal course in college. I also read the book he had written about the life of San Lorenzo Ruiz. Even though this old Father had a hard time walking to the altar of the Santisimo Rosario Chapel every Saturday, he tried to be always present for the Mass. That was very inspiring and I will never forget that!



Donna V. Alonzo-Vogt
Former UST Librarian
(now based in the US)

"More than a book lover, Fr. Fidel Villarroel was a voracious reader. During his tenure as our Prefect in the early 80s, the affable Father with a contagious smile for everyone, was an indefatigable researcher too, being a writer himself and Faculty professor. He carried his passion even after his retirement. Then seated on a wheelchair with an aide to assist him, Fr. Villarroel would still borrow books, mostly old editions, from the Ecclesiastical branch where I was assigned. It seemed that for him, reading books was a necessity, a mental exercise that was very close to his heart.



Ma. Luz C. David
Former UST Librarian

I have known Fr. Fidel Villarroel, O.P. since my first interview for a summer job at UST Archives Department way back in 2003. He was a very supportive and generous superior. He made sure that his staff were not just his employees but his family as well. He was always present at every occasion in my life — from birthdays to marriage, to giving birth, and even to my daughter's baptism and birthday. He may not have been a perfect superior but he was surely the best that anyone could ever wish for!

To Fr. Fidel, "Thank you is not enough to say how much I appreciate all your love not only for me, but for my entire family. Thank you for sharing your life with us. Your love and appreciation for others only proved that you have a pure heart. I miss our chocobimbim; I miss more your voice singing sarungbanggi; and I miss most our coffee break everytime you visited the Archives and telling us always that 'it is the best coffee you've ever tasted'! I miss your endless stories on history, your family in Spain, and even comments about an ordinary show on television. You will always be in my heart and I will forever be grateful for having known such a good soul like you. No goodbyes Father for I know someday we will meet again. See you in heaven my Fr. Fidel. ¡Hasta luego!"



Jane Frances F. Tumambing
Office Clerk, Archives

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