



Basilian Fathers Missions

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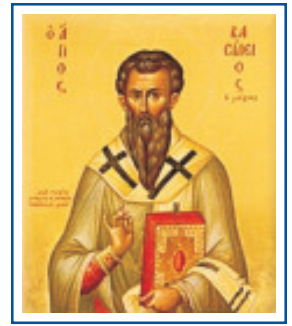


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Basilian Fathers Missions
Latin American Apostolate
NEWSLETTER



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March 2010

Oscar Fernando Gomez Soto, C.S.B. Ordained to the Priesthood

Oscar Fernando Gomez, C.S.B. was ordained to the Priesthood on January 2, 2010, the feast of St Basil the Great, patron of the Congregation of St Basil. The ordination took place at the Basilian parish of St Basil in Medellin, Colombia and the ordaining bishop was Monsignor Jorge Ivan Castano Rubio, Auxiliary Bishop of Medellin. Present at the celebrations were the Reverend Kenneth Decker, C.S.B., Superior General of the Basilian Fathers and Father Francisco Amico, C.S.B., Superior of the Basilian community in Colombia, together with Basilian visitors from the North and the entire Basilian community in Colombia. The celebration was complete with the traditions and colorful expressions of the Colombian culture. Perhaps one of most touching



Pictured at the ordination are (left to right) Father Frank Amico, C.S.B., Father Oscar Gomez Soto, C.S.B., and Father Kenneth Decker, C.S.B., Superior General of the Basilian Fathers.

moments was after the presentation of the candidate to the ordaining Bishop, Oscar received the family blessing from his eldest sister, Nicolasa, for his recently deceased father in the name of his family. The following day in the morning hours, Oscar celebrated his first Eucharist at the same parish and later in the afternoon, he traveled with several Basilians to his home town, about 30 miles from Medellin, to celebrate with other family members and his townspeople. It was a magnificent, warm and expressive celebration ... one that will not be forgotten by those who had the opportunity to be present. The Basilians give thanks for the presence of Oscar in the Congregation ... and we pray with you that he will be a holy and dedicated priest.



History of the Missions

"Rosenberg - Our First Mission Center"

Father John Collins relates his joy and frustrations in finally getting a mission center to call home as we continue his unpublished autobiography.

.....In 1938 the Most Rev. Christopher E. Byrne, Bishop of Galveston, wanted us to get established on the Missions in a residence. Father Dillon and I had been living at St. Anne's in Houston. Richmond seemed to be an ideal location. Sacred Heart Church and rectory had just been completed and Father Reybaud, a diocesan priest, was pastor. Because there were difficulties in the parish which the Bishop thought we could overcome, he suggested that it would be a suitable center for the Missions.

Father Dillon had organized a large congregation at Richmond, and on the First Sunday of each month, the church was more than filled with Mexicans. The English speaking parishioners resented the Mexicans using THEIR church. They tolerated them once a month, but when some of the Mexicans thought they would go to Mass on the other Sundays, the parishioners really got excited.

Father Raybaud was replaced by Father R. who, instead of trying to pacify the parishioners and help the Mexicans, added fuel to the fire. When a dying Mexican called for a priest, Father R. went, but took the Sheriff with him! The Mexicans were deeply afraid of the law because so often the officers of the law have treated them unjustly. At a later date, Father R. ordered some Mexicans to leave the church during Mass on Sunday. When they were slow to leave, he had the ushers eject them by force! That was the end of our congregation at Richmond.

In the meantime, the English-speaking parishioners at Richmond protested to the Bishop

about the Mexicans using THEIR church. The Bishop called in his consultors to decide the question regarding making Richmond a Mission Center and giving it to the Basilian Missionaries, and the consultors objected. In view of the attitude of the people, the Bishop said, "We had better abandon the thought of making Richmond a Center," and advised us to look for a house and property at Rosenberg, promising to help pay for it.



"After two months we were about to give up when we found a house and four lots on Walnut Street (later renamed Carlisle Street), owned by a Mr. Foote and a Mrs. Boarde"

Father Dillon and I began searching for a suitable place but could find nothing available. After two months we were about to give up when we found a house and four lots on Walnut Street (later renamed Carlisle Street), owned by a Mr. Foote and a Mrs. Boarde, who had spent twenty years in China as a Methodist Missionary. Neither had thought of selling, but promised to consider it, telling us to return at 2:00 P.M. the same day for a decision. It was then around 10:00 A.M. I could not wait as I had an appointment in Houston. Father Dillon remained alone in Rosenberg, telling me, "You say the Rosary." I did - all the way to Houston. They consented to sell for \$4,500.00. The deal was closed soon after when the Bishop allowed us to borrow the money which he was going to pay off. However, he never did do so - he paid some but we finally had to make up the balance ourselves.

Our next step was to get some furniture. Most of it was given to us by the parishioners of St. Anne's and we proceeded to move on March 9, 1939. Father Allnoch helped us move.

I slept in the house alone the first night. During the night I heard a noise but was too scared to investigate since I did not have a gun for protection.

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("Rosenberg - Our First Mission Center" from page 2)

In the morning, I found that the eighteen beautiful hens we had bought with the house had been stolen, as well as two automobile tires and some odds and ends.

The following day, Father Dillon and I built an altar and a prie-dieu downstairs where we could say Mass when we were at home, and reserve the Blessed Sacrament. Toward the end of the week, Father Dillon went to Bay City and brought a Mexican lady, named Silveria Acosta, to live at the house and act as housekeeper. She was excellent at laundry and house cleaning, but had never done any cooking. So it was my job to teach her how to cook, and I was none too competent at that detail myself! However, some ladies from Houston – Mrs. Weber, Mrs. Poye, Mrs. Dunn and Mrs. Abell – came to the rescue. They made periodic visits to Rosenberg, each time bringing some article for cooking or something for the house.

The very next Sunday Father Dillon fell sick and was ordered to Toronto where he entered St. Joseph's hospital. I was left to take care of the Missions alone. Each weekend I got help from the priests at St. Thomas High School in Houston. Once I became resigned to going it alone for some time, I began to work on getting things a little better organized.

Father James Wilson was quite interested in the Missions since he was well-versed in Spanish; so he decided to come to Rosenberg and stay with me. After staying two days, I sent him to Freeport. He spent Saturday night there, and a cat got under the church and serenaded him. He did not appreciate the cat's music and on Monday he got sick, went back to Houston, and that was the end of his stay on the Missions – I was alone once again.

My first problem was money. We had opened an account in Houston but there was only about \$29.00 in the bank, and the Sunday collections only averaged about \$2.00 to \$3.00 a week and Mass intentions were scarce. I wrote to Father Carr, the Superior General, for help but got none. Father O'Rourke at St. Anne's came to the rescue as did some of the fine laymen in the parish.

First Encounter with Banks

When we bought the house in Rosenberg, we borrowed the money from a bank in Houston.

When Father Dillon left he failed to tell me it was a 90-day note. I received notice from the bank that the note was to be renewed or paid, so I proceeded to the bank to renew the note.

At the bank, they told me the Bishop's signature was needed and that I would have to pay the interest in advance. I didn't have that kind of money, so I went to Galveston to see the Bishop. He was grand! He signed the note and gave me the money to pay the interest for another 90 days. The Bishop waxed eloquent on his youthful days in St. Louis, when, as a young priest, he had to take charge of a large parish. He encouraged me and said that he had spoken to Father Carr, our Superior General, and that I would get some help in July when the appointments came out. That was definitely an encouraging thought.

I went back to the bank and one of the officers handled the note for me. At the time I thought he was doing me a big favor, but I later discovered he really gave me the works – he charged me 10% interest on the note!

Vocations in Bogota

Last year, Father Bob Seguin was assigned the responsibility of Director of Novices at Casa Annonay in Bogota, Colombia. Father Bob is assisted by Father Wally Platt. Father Bob writes:

Our house in Bogotá has been and is a good experience. We have two postulants, Camilo Dimaté and Nestor Hernandez, living in the house and two others who are part of the vocational group and are studying with the postulants at the Redemptorist University in Bogota, "Fundación Universitaria San Alfonso". There are a good number of religious communities studying there. The young men are all enthusiastic about the experience. The postulants also spend Friday afternoons taking part with young men and women of other religious communities in a program sponsored by the Colombian Religious Conference. On Saturdays the postulants are part of the catechetical program of the local parish. On the week ends we are more than six in the house. The young men in the vocational group stay overnight and on Sundays they come with us to the Mass at a small chapel in "El Chorro de Quevedo", one of the oldest areas of Bogotá where we celebrate the Eucharist with a small community of people who live in the area. Such is my life at the moment. Continue to pray for us.