

THE PEOPLE'S PRIEST: INTERACTION AND ROLE EXPECTATIONS IN NEGROS ORIENTAL

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ABSTRACT. What the residents of four communities of Negros Oriental expect of their parish priests, and the ways in which they deal with them, is the subject of this report on a survey done in March 1969. Respondent characteristics given special consideration as possibly related to reported differences in opinion and behavior are age, sex, civil status, social class, educational attainment, and kinds of school attended (religious or non-religious). The paper concludes with suggestions for new priorities for parish priests, American and Filipino, in northern Negros Oriental.

The Second Vatican Council (1962–65) began a major attempt at adjustment to the forces of modernization. In that historic gathering, the institution's leadership recognized what Bellah has called (1968:239) the "relativization" of man, underscored the significance of historical developments within the secular world, and presented its membership with guidelines for responding to the forces of change – guidelines embodying a new emphasis on this-worldly concerns.

But all this occurred at a very lofty level. What about ordinary Catholics? What about the men and women living in, say, rural Negros Oriental? Do they perceive the necessity of adjusting their religious behavior to the impact of modernization – whether or not they have ever heard of Vatican II? Literature concerning Filipino folk-Catholicism suggests that neither they nor any other rural Catholics are likely either to change their traditional norms and activities or to feel the need for such a change. But my own personal experience with the people of Negros Oriental led me to believe that certain Catholics in the Franciscan parishes there might not fit this traditional description. Some of them, I thought, had perceived the contemporary challenge to break away from

the old way of life and to find more meaningful religious beliefs and practices. To test the validity of this belief (or hope), I conducted in March 1969 the study which is reported here. After describing the plan of the survey I did, I shall present and discuss the findings that were made during it.

DOING THE SURVEY

Survey Plan

Theoretical orientations. In refining the status-role concept first explicated by Linton (1936), Gross, Masons, and McEarchen (1958) point out that there are degrees of consensus among role-defining populations, and that the degree of consensus to be found in any particular population is not a given – but an empirical variable. The primary goal of this study was to focus on the *role expectations* of Filipino parishioners for their American parish priests, specifically to determine degrees of consensus concerning these men busy about communicating the guidelines of their Church's Council.

While it was thought that a consensus would be found concerning the tasks of, and the

desirable qualities for, the priest (a traditional pattern of expectations), it was expected that some divergent expectations would be found among particular subpopulations within the sample (a non-traditional pattern). It was further expected that these divergent role-definers would be more ready than others to adapt their traditional religious beliefs and practices to a changing world.

Verification of these two pre-survey expectations would have practical significance for the priests involved. It would help them answer questions such as these: Who are those who understand, and who are those who do not understand, what their priests are trying to do? In their efforts to introduce certain changes, from which people can the local parish priests expect cooperation, indifference, opposition?

The secondary goal of the study was to focus on *patterns of interactions* between parishioners and their parish priest. Who are those most in contact with him? Who least? Where is it that interaction most frequently occurs? Which parishioners are involved? Pre-survey expectations were that not only did certain subpopulations have more contact than others, but, further, that these were the same people whose role expectations reflected the desire for more meaningful religious beliefs and practices.

Verification of these two expectations would yield answers to further practical questions: "Are the parish priests dealing with those people with whom they think they are dealing? In the light of what the priests are striving to accomplish, are they using their time and energy most effectively?"

Hypotheses. Two hypotheses related the expected interaction and role expectation patterns to those independent variables thought to account for them. The first hypothesis, dealing with the interaction focus of the study, can be stated as follows.

Respondents having high social status, high educational attainment, and a history of attendance at a religious high school or college, will have more frequent and differentiated interactions with priests than will others.

In particular, it was thought that respondents with these characteristics would be found

to have more group and personal contact with the priest than others did. On the other hand, respondent's sex, age, civil status, and residential proximity to the Church were not expected to show any association with his style of interaction with the priest.

The second hypothesis dealt with the primary focus of the study — the possibility of isolating a pattern of role expectations which differs from the common one. It asserts that:

Respondents having high social status, high educational attainment, youth, and residence in a poblacion staffed by American priests, will tend to allow greater scope for priestly activity, and will tend to be more flexible in defining the main rules for priestly conduct than will others.

In particular, it was thought that the above variables would be positively associated with the tendencies (1) to perceive and approve of the priest as an initiator of new ways in the community, and (2) to perceive the priest as a legitimate actor in spheres not strictly religious (extension of the domain of priestly activity); and with the tendencies (1) to evaluate priestly qualities according to more differentiated criteria, (2) to be less restrictive in naming disapproved priestly behaviors, (3) to be more open in opinion concerning priestly celibacy, and (4) to approve priestly ecumenical activity (flexibility in definition of priestly conduct). No association was expected between these tendencies and respondent's sex, civil status, or kind of high school or college attended.

Sampling design. The population to be represented by the sample consisted of all persons over 15 years of age residing in the Negros Oriental poblaciones of Jimalalud, Guihulngan and Vallehermoso towns, and Canlaon City. The sample as drawn included 84 respondents, distributed in proportion to the populations of the four poblaciones.

Because certain demographic and social characteristics (particularly social status and educational attainment) were assumed to account for varying interaction and role-expectation patterns, the sample drawn included equal numbers of upper and lower status respondents. In terms of sex, age, civil status, religion, and proximity to the Church, however, the sample

was chosen so as to reflect the distribution of these characteristics in the population.

Field Procedure and Analysis

Household heads having high social status were located using the procedures and the economic and sociopolitical indicators employed by Lynch and Makil (1968). Listed names were assigned to a map of households zoned for proximity to the Church. Random choices were then made to fulfill the required number of high- and low-status respondents within each poblacion. While visiting the selected households, the interviewers fulfilled informal quotas: one half of each status set was to be male; two-thirds of each sex, married; one-fourth of all respondents, 15 to 19 years of age; one-half, 20 to 39 years of age; and one-fourth, 40 or more years of age.

Consultation with the interviewers was begun in the first week of March, and data collection was completed by March 31, the Monday of Holy Week, 1969.

Analysis focused on the associations among the selected variables, interactions with priests, and the suspected patterns of role expectations. Associations and their levels of significance were determined by using the chi-square test for several independent samples, with the acceptable significance level set at 0.05.

FINDINGS

Patterns of Interactions

Which parishioners are closer to the priest than others? Measures of group contact were the respondent-parishioner's reported attendance (1) at Mass, (2) at other services, and (3) at meetings of church organizations during the three months prior to the survey. Measures of personal contact were his assertions of conversations with the priest (1) on these occasions and (2) on other occasions during the same period, and reports of (3) his visiting and conversing with the priest at the convento, and of (4) being visited by him at home during the previous year.

Group contact with priest

Mass and other services. Two-thirds of the Catholic respondents claimed weekly attendance at Mass. Those especially likely to report this regular attendance were respondents with higher education (0.01), notably college-educated women, for whom the figure was 80 per cent. Only one-fourth of the parishioners claimed to have attended religious services other than Mass. The more highly educated and the married tended to participate more frequently than others.

Meetings. While more than one-third of the parishioners claimed to belong to a church organization, the claim was especially frequent among those of high social status (0.05). Actual attendance at meetings, however, was similar for both classes. More men than women claimed membership, and attended more frequently.

Personal contact with priest

Conversations. No subpopulation conversed with the priest before or after Mass, services, or meetings with significantly greater frequency than others. However, the percentages of men, of the married, and of those with high social status reporting conversations on these occasions were twice those of their counterparts. One half the parishioners claimed to have conversed with the priest at least once on occasions other than Mass, services, or meetings. Those who were especially likely to report speaking with him were those who had attended a religious college (0.01) and those of high social status (0.05).

Visiting the convento. More than three-fourths of the parishioners said they had visited the convento during the year preceding the survey. Frequent visiting was associated with having higher education (0.01) and high social status (0.02). Further, people of this description more frequently conversed with the priest on these occasions.

In addition, there was an association (0.05) between the parishioner's social status and his reason for visiting. Those with high social status most often visited for religious reasons -- to arrange for a Mass, a baptism, or a wedding.

Those of low social status most often came for reasons of mutual assistance — to give donations to or work for the Church, to receive material help from the priest.

Men visited more frequently than women; further, actually speaking with the priest during the visit was also associated with a respondent's being male (0.01).

Visited by the priest. One half the parishioners said they had received the priest into their homes at least once during the previous year. Being frequently visited by the priest was associated with having high social status (0.05). Compared to lower-class households, five times as many upper-class homes were visited seven or more times in the course of the year.

The purpose for which the priest visited was also associated (0.05) with the host's social status. Homes of lower-class parishioners were visited mainly for religious reasons — sick calls, blessings, advice; those of upper-class parishioners were visited most often for social reasons — for parties, at fiesta time.

While none of the parishioners residing farthest from the convento were visited, those living in the other three zones were visited with about the same frequencies.

Summary

The pre-survey expectation that there were some parishioners who were more in contact with the priest than others was partially supported by the data.

As hypothesized, respondents having either high social status or high educational attainment, or both, were found to have had more frequent and differentiated interaction with the priest than respondents of any other subpopulation.

Respondents having those two linked characteristics had the greatest contact by four of the seven interaction measures used. Nevertheless, although linked, the two characteristics were not equally associated in their interactions with the priest. And there were other forms of parishioner-priest interaction which appeared not to depend on social status or educational attainment.

Contrary to the hypothesis, respondents who had attended a religious high school or college were not found to have had more frequent and differentiated

interactions with the priest than those who had attended public or private non-religious schools.

Speaking with the priest on "other occasions" was the only measure associated with a religious (college) education. Although it may be true as alleged that "at the very least our Catholic schools serve to keep tomorrow's adults close to the Church," graduates of these schools were not found, according to the measures used, to be significantly closer to the priest than others.

Who then are those parishioners who are closer to the priest than others? They appear to be mainly men, usually married, and over 20 years of age. Very clearly they are of high social status, with higher education gained in various kinds of schools.

Domain for Priestly Activity

The hypothesis predicted that certain parishioners would allow a wider-than-traditional scope for priestly activity, that is, would more readily (1) perceive and approve of the priest as an initiator of new ways in the community, and (2) approve him as an actor in spheres not strictly religious.

Priest as innovator. Although religious, socioeconomic, and educational innovations (especially in the American-staffed towns of Guihulngan-Vallehermoso) have been numerous, only one in five respondents spontaneously mentioned the parish priest as "one of those who first does new things." Perceiving the priest as an innovator was associated with residence in Guihulngan-Vallehermoso (0.05).

Respondents recalled more of the parish priest's innovations when prompted with the request to name "some new things the priest has done." Most of these responses (43 per cent) concerned church-related innovations — changes in liturgical practice, renovation of church buildings. The next largest number (32 per cent) concerned socioeconomic innovations — credit unions, organizations for material assistance. Finally, 25 per cent concerned educational innovations — establishment and operation of schools, adult education, and the radio station.

Parishioners approved of almost all these innovations. Nine out of 10 were said to be "beneficial for the community," and most of the remaining to be "doubtfully beneficial," that is, beneficial for a limited number.

The kind of innovation most often mentioned was associated with a respondent's poblacion of residence (0.01). Those from Filipino-staffed Jimalalud emphasized religious innovations, while those from Guihulngan-Vallehermoso stressed the educational, and those from Canlaon City, socioeconomic innovations. These emphases would seem to reflect the actual kinds of priestly innovation current in each of the poblaciones.

Priest as non-religious actor. The finding that more than half the innovations mentioned were socioeconomic or educational in nature — and that almost all of them were seen as beneficial — indicates that to some degree the priest was perceived and approved as a legitimate actor in non-religious spheres. Further data confirmed this.

Most parishioners thought the priest could help his people "very much." But this opinion was associated with poblacion of residence (0.001). While eight of every 10 respondents from Guihulngan-Vallehermoso and Canlaon City thought their priests helped "very much," only one from Jimalalud thought so—the others said he helped only "somewhat."

Most of those who said the priest helped "very much" cited non-religious activities as examples of how he helped. The distribution of these examples, especially by high or low status respondents, should be noted. Those who said the priest helped only "somewhat" replied that "he cannot do very much," explaining that he was either alone and/or had limited resources at his disposal — the situation obtaining in Filipino-staffed Jimalalud.

Although all the subpopulations agreed that the priest's primary contribution lay in his performing his "religious duties," certain emphases may be noted. While 75 per cent of Jimalalud's respondents cited "religious duties" as primary, in Canlaon City 50 per cent, and in Guihulngan-Vallehermoso only 36 per cent so

answered. Others who most often named "religious duties" were those having high social status and college education, and those who had attended religious high schools and colleges.

Responses concerning "areas of activity forbidden the priest" were rather uniform: most agreed that the priest should not engage in politics (36 per cent), in business (8 per cent), or in "worldly pursuits" such as drinking and gambling (36 per cent). Again, certain emphases may be noted. Respondents of high social status tended to stress politics as a forbidden area. And the higher the parishioner's educational attainment, the more frequently did he rule politics out.

Summary. The prediction that certain parishioners would permit the priest a wider scope of legitimate activity was only partially supported by the data. While almost all parishioners perceived and approved of the priest as a legitimate actor in spheres not strictly religious, perception of the priest as an innovator was very limited. Poblacion of residence was the only variable related to these tendencies.

1. As hypothesized, respondents living in the American-staffed poblaciones of Guihulngan-Vallehermoso and Canlaon City allowed broader scope for priestly activity than did respondents living in Filipino-staffed Jimalalud.
2. Contrary to the hypothesis, the youngest respondents did not permit broader scope than all others for priestly activity.
3. Contrary to the hypothesis, respondents having high social status tended to allow less scope for priestly activity than did those with low social status.
4. Contrary to the hypothesis, respondents with college education also tended to restrict the scope of priestly activity more than did those with elementary or secondary education.
5. Students now in school appeared to permit no greater scope for priestly activity than did other respondents.

Who then are those who allow a wider-than-traditional scope for priestly activity? They

appear to be 20-to-39-year-old parishioners, with low social status, and less than a college education. Very clearly they are living in the American-staffed poblaciones.

Rules for Priestly Conduct

The hypothesis predicted that certain parishioners would not only allow broader scope for priestly activity but would also be more liberal in defining what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate priestly qualities and behaviors.

Desirable and undesirable qualities

The best priest. The "best possible priest" is seen, first of all, as one who is identified with his people and who is understanding of them. He shows concern for their problems, a concern which is manifested by "being sociable," "approachable," "adjustable and flexible," by "having a good PR." This priest "goes around and talks to the people," "deals well with people," and is not "proud," "aloof," or "unfriendly." This priest is one with his people — "*inato* (ours)."

Second, the best priest is identified by his zeal and generosity. He is "dedicated to his work," "willing to sacrifice himself," "active and mobile," one who is "not selfish," "not greedy," or "lazy."

Other qualities mentioned were the priest's leadership skills, his sanctity, his ability to give material help to his people, and his "being modern."

Qualities attributed to the best priest differed in kind according to respondent's residence (0.02). Those living in Canlaon City differed from others in that the qualities they most frequently named were those involving leadership skills (28 per cent), followed closely by those involving "the ability of give help" (26 per cent). Qualities of that category which all respondents had ranked first ("being one with his people") were in third place in Canlaon City (20 per cent).

The worst priest. The "worst possible priest" is seen, first of all, as one who is *not* identified with his people, and who is *not* understanding

of them. He is "not sympathetic to the people," and "has no mercy for people." He is identified by his "aristocratic ways," his "hot temper," his "insulting way of dealing with people." He is the priest who is not one with his people.

Second, the worst priest is "worldly and not holy." This priest is "too fun-loving," "a drunkard," "a gambler," and, above all (30 per cent of these responses), is "promiscuous" — the priest "who is fooling around with different women," who is "too concerned with only women."

Other qualities of the worst possible priest are his laziness and greed, his practicing favoritism, and the asserted qualities of being a liar, a phoney, a homosexual, and a foreigner.

Qualities attributed to the worst priest differed by respondent's social status (0.05). While those with low social status emphasized the first-mentioned quality, "not being one with his people," those with high social status most frequently named "lack of sanctity", as characteristic of the worst priest.

The actual priest. Eight of 10 respondents were willing to evaluate the parish priests they had known, generally giving them high ratings. The most frequently mentioned reasons for highly esteeming a priest (37 per cent) were those pertaining to the first-ranked category of the best priest. "He is concerned for the people." "He is easy to approach, very accommodating." "He is close to the people, uniting them." "He is kind to all, especially children." "He is kind to me."

However, the second most frequently named reasons (20 per cent) were not the second-, third-, or fourth-ranked categories of the ideal priest. They pertained rather to the fifth-ranked category of "giving help to the needy." "He takes care of the needy ones." "He doesn't charge for baptism." "He gives his own money to us." "He has mercy on poor people." In the real situation, as opposed to the ideal, it appears that a priest's ability and willingness to give materially is a quality highly valued by the people.

Disapproved behavior

Unseemly behavior. Opinions as to what constitutes unseemly behavior for the priest were remarkably homogeneous in all subpopulations. Most responses were confined to two categories: "worldly pursuits" – smoking, drinking, gambling, partying (58 per cent), and "associations with women" – ranging from "speaking with women in the street" to "dancing with them" (35 per cent). Other disapproved priestly behavior (6 per cent) concerned selfish deeds and political activity.

The greatest sin. Opinions as to what constitutes the priest's greatest sin were even less differentiated. Most responses (76 per cent) referred to sins against chastity – "getting married," "living with a woman," "promiscuity." The remaining responses concerned "cheating the people" (10 per cent), "cruelty and anger" (8 per cent), and "any serious crime" (6 per cent).

Priestly celibacy

Should the priest marry? An unexpected number of parishioners favored the priest's marrying, or else considered it a possibly desirable alternative to celibacy. While 48 per cent said he should not marry, 44 per cent thought he should be allowed to do so. A favorable attitude toward married priests was associated only with being a non-Catholic (0.01) – 10 of the 11 non-Catholic respondents favored a married clergy. Men, older parishioners, and those with high social status also tended to approve of priestly marriage, but the association was not significant.

Reasons for celibacy. Most parishioners who disapproved of priestly marriage did so because they thought it would lead to the neglect of pastoral responsibilities. A full 48 per cent of respondents gave reasons such as these: "He will always think of his family"; "His wife will demand all his attention." But 28 per cent disapproved because it would be to go back on the priest's "ideal of dedication." "The priest promises himself to God and to his people. If he marries he is no longer a true priest." And the others (25 per cent) simply said that

"marriage is against the law of the Church." Diverging from the consensus were married parishioners – they stressed all three categories equally.

Reasons for marriage. Reasons supporting priestly marriage showed even less variety. Most (78 per cent) said the priest should be allowed to marry "to avoid temptation and scandal." "Priests are also men and so subject to temptation; to avoid immorality they should be permitted to marry." The others (16 per cent) said he should marry because "marriage is good and would be helpful to him." "A married priest could understand our problems better." "A priest's wife could help him decorate the church." Parishioners who approved priest's marriage because of the intrinsic worth of marriage tended to be single males with low social status and secondary education

Ecumenism

A large majority of parishioners (84 per cent) favored priestly ecumenical activity. A dissenting opinion, however, was associated (0.02) with being a woman – women were hesitant to approve of inter-religious cooperation.

Most parishioners (52 per cent) approved for what may be termed "reasons of peace." "It is good because there is more peace in the town, not so much fighting." "Now there is not so much rivalry between religions as before." However, others (38 per cent) gave reasons referring rather to religious motives than to the practical social consequences of ecumenism. "It is good because we should all be equal and one." "There is only one God and one Bible." Those who more often emphasized this divergent reasoning were those of low social status, single respondents, men, residents of Canlaon City, non-Catholics, and those who had attended private non-religious schools.

Summary

What the data most strongly suggest is that there exists a consensus, a widely approved body of opinion concerning appropriate and inappropriate priestly qualities and behaviors.

Certain parishioners had more flexible expectations than others, but in only one instance were these the parishioners we thought would be more liberal.

1. In partial support of the hypothesis, respondents living in American-staffed Canlaon City appeared to be more flexible than others in their expectations for priestly conduct.
2. While respondents having high social status expressed certain more flexible expectations for the priest than did those having low social status, there are counter-indications which tend to vitiate the hypothesis.
3. Contrary to the hypothesis, respondents with high educational attainment were no more flexible than others in defining the main rules for priestly conduct.
4. Contrary to the hypothesis, no age grouping of respondents was clearly more flexible than others in expressing expectations for priests.
5. Men had more flexible expectations for priestly conduct than women did.
6. In two measures, respondent's religion was related to his expectations for priests.

Who then are those who have wider-than-traditional notions of priestly qualities and behaviors? Aside from the non-Catholic respondents, they appear to be men with low social status and less than a college education. More clearly, they live in American-staffed Canlaon City.

Filipino and American Priests

Do the parishioners surveyed have certain distinct role expectations for Filipino priests, and others for American priests? Do they prefer one more than the other? If so, why? These questions were a part of the study because we thought the answers would interest not only the Americans now administering the parishes included in the survey, but also those Filipino Franciscans who will replace them.

Most parishioners do think that Filipino and American priests differ from one another. Although more respondents were able, or will-

ing, to give opinions concerning the American priest (77 per cent) than the Filipino priest (59 per cent), the qualities attributed to each were similar in every subpopulation.

Filipino priests. Fully 90 per cent of the responding parishioners said the Filipino outdid the American priest in his identification with his people and in his understanding of them. Like "the best possible priest," he was said to be *inato* – "one with us."

American priests. Qualities attributed to the American priest were more differentiated. The American was said to excel in his ability and willingness "to give help to the needy" (38 per cent), in his "leadership skills" (31 per cent), and in his "generosity and zeal" (22 per cent). Only 9 per cent thought the American outdid the Filipino in being "one with the people."

Preferred parish priest. Four in 10 parishioners declined to indicate whether they would prefer a Filipino or an American as parish priest. But most did indicate their preference: 21 per cent opted for a Filipino and 37 per cent for an American. Preference for either a Filipino or an American priest was not associated with any of our variables.

Observations. The finding that more parishioners from every poblacion opted for an American rather than a Filipino priest poses a paradox. One third of all the qualities parishioners attributed to "the best possible priest" were those pertaining to being "identified with and understanding of his people." Later, nine-tenths of the respondents said the Filipino outdid the American priest in precisely this way – he is, above all, *inato*. Americans were said to excel in other ways. If the Filipino priest was perceived as possessing most surely those qualities of "the best priest," how is it that most parishioners expressed a preference for an American?

Senden (1969:8), in surveys conducted in Mindanao parishes staffed by American Maryknoll priests noted the following.

While more of the respondents (24.8 per cent) prefer a Filipino priest, the remarks accompanying such response do not show any substantial reason except for the fact that he is a Filipino. In comparison to this, while only 18.8 per cent prefer the foreign

priest, the accompanying remarks show that they have definite reasons for such a stand.

There may be a parallel between this finding and our own data. In Negros the Filipino priest was clearly perceived as being "one with his people," but, unlike the American, he was not widely perceived as a man with "generosity and zeal," a man with "leadership skills," or a man with the ability and willingness to give materially to those in need. But giving materially was highly valued by the parishioners. First, "giving to the needy" comprised one half the examples that were given as reasons for saying a priest would help his people "very much." Second, in ranking their actual parish priests, the second most frequently named reasons for high esteem were not the second-, third-, or fourth-ranked categories describing the ideal priest — they were qualities pertaining to the category of "giving to the needy."

It would seem that the parishioners in Negros do not prefer as parish priest the man who has *only* those personal qualities that make him understanding of them. Although these are highly valued, it would seem that they prefer the man who, lacking these, is zealous and generous in working for them, who has leadership skills he can apply to the solution of their problems, and, perhaps more than all else, who is able and willing to help materially those who are in need. But it is the American, not the Filipino, who at present can best fulfill these expectations.

DISCUSSION

No doubt the challenges of modernization are very real and are gradually affecting the people of Negros Oriental. There is a need to adjust certain religious beliefs and practices, and it is the priest's task to help his people make that adjustment. Identifying myself now with the priests in the parishes, let me ask a series of questions of the data.

With Whom are We Dealing?

The priests in the towns surveyed are most clearly in contact with parishioners having high social status and higher educational attainment.

These people most often visit the convento to arrange for Masses and baptisms and marriages, to tend to the work of parish committees, or to look after their interests in the credit unions. They converse more frequently with the priest on the occasions of these visits as well as at other times. More than others they are members and officers of parish organizations. Upper-class parishioners are most often visited by the priest in their homes, usually for social reasons. Those with college education most frequently attend Mass and other religious services.

It is also clear that the priests are dealing more frequently with the men in their parishes than with the women. But the other findings are less decisive. It would seem that the priest is more in contact with the married parishioners, and least in contact with those under 20 years of age. It is not clear that the kind of school a parishioner attended has anything to do with his style of interaction with the priest. And those who are now in the schools administered by the parishes do not appear to have any more contact with the priest, outside the school, than do other parishioners.

With Whom Should We Be Dealing?

One of the pre-survey predictions was that those parishioners found to have more contact with the priest would also tend to have wider-than-traditional expectations about the priest, expectations you would find especially in parishioners ready for the changes that are under way in the Church and society today. But this prediction was not verified. Those most in contact with the priest were *not* those with the most flexible expectations for him, it was the parishioners with low social status and with elementary or secondary education who were found to have wider-than-traditional expectations for the priest. If they are interested in those most open to change, perhaps the priests are not spending enough time with those most likely to show this flexibility.

In What Area Can We Operate?

It would appear that the priest can operate

in almost any area he chooses, as long as it is evident to his people that he is somehow working for them. The data also suggest that the priest may do even more in the way of non-religious activity than he has until now. It appears that extending the domain of priestly activity depends in great measure on the initiative of the priest himself – most parishioners will probably ratify whatever extension he introduces.

However, some parishioners do appear to be more ready to grant the priest this wider role. Those with low social status and lower educational attainment, whose socioeconomic needs are more acute, appear more ready than others to approve activity in this area. They emphasize the priest's socioeconomic contribution to the community, but think he can do more than he is doing; further, they are willing to trust the priest, even in the political arena.

From whom can the priests expect cooperation in their efforts outside the traditional religious sphere? Perhaps fullest cooperation should not be expected from those now in closest contact with them, from the minority now occupying the more secure positions in the social structure.

What About the Behavior of Priests?

The generally high ranking given to their parish priests by parishioners indicates (barring the possibility of widespread courtesy bias) that expectations in this area are being reasonably well fulfilled. Unlike Doherty's respondents (1964), parishioners in Negros did not stereotype their priests as "unmanly," "unsociable," or "materialistic," but they did perceive the unsociable and materialistic priest as undesirable. Far from considering the average priest "unmanly," the most common concern was that he would, in a sense, be too manly, that is, violate his vow of chastity.

The notion that this vow is not easily practiced may stem in part from a less-than-full understanding of it. A similar observation may be made in reference to the reasons given for approving ecumenism. There seems to be room for education in both areas. Moreover, some

seem to need this instruction more than others – the highly educated and upper-class parishioners, those with whom the priest most often deals.

What About American and Filipino Priests?

The American priests in Negros were highly approved by their people, if not for their identification with them, for their leadership skills, for their generosity and zeal, and especially for their ability and willingness to help their parishioners in a material way. But Filipino Franciscans will likely take over from their American brethren in the not-too-distant future. And "the Filipino priest" was not perceived as endowed with these differentiated qualities – he was seen simply as "one identified with us." This too-simple expectation, whatever the reason for it, is perhaps an obstacle to be overcome. For the Americans are forming certain expectations among the people, expectations which their successors will be required to meet in some way, or to change.

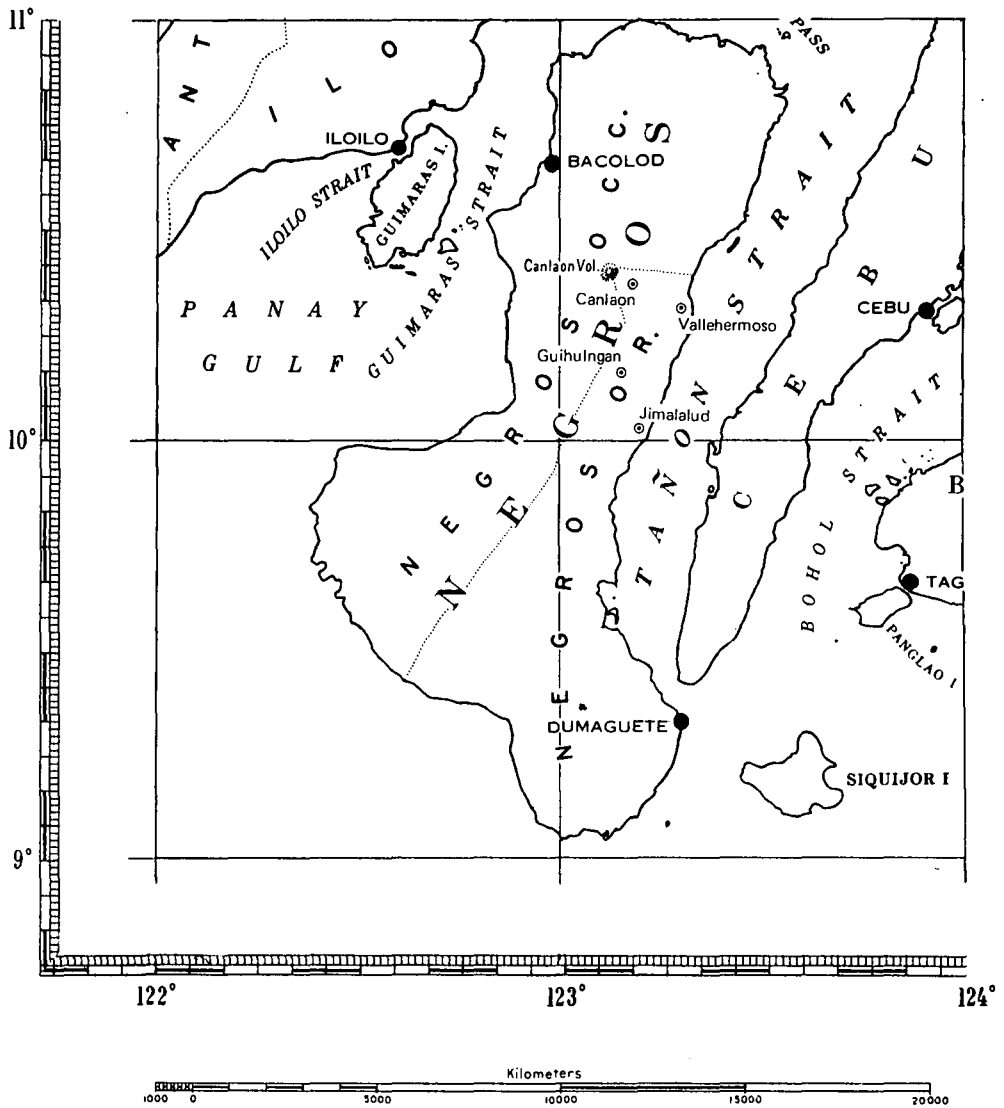
What will they do? They may, if they so choose, continue the programs now underway, continue in their own way to fulfill present expectations. On the other hand, either from financial inability or from ideological unwillingness, they may strike off on their own in directions prompted by personal perceptions of their own people's needs. Whatever their choice, the Americans in Negros, as well as those charged with the formation of future Filipino priests, should explore now the difficulties and challenges that will accompany either course of action.

Note

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Map of Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental