

A Filipino Priest's Acolyte Continues a Dream of Building a "Passion Village" and a "Marian Cathedral" in Monte Calvario of Bulan

By Lolo Bobby M. Reyes of Sorsogon City

Manuel L. Salvador was a scion of the prominent Salvador and Licup clans in the town of Sorsogon (now Sorsogon City) in Sorsogon Province. The province is part of the Bicol Region, the southern end of Luzon. He became a Catholic priest and served in the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul in Sorsogon City. Rev. Fr. Salvador (now deceased) became one of the mentors of this writer after he became an altar boy from fourth grade up to high school in the said cathedral.

Sometime in the 1970s, this writer visited Rev. Fr. Salvador (then already a monsignor) in the

A Priest's and his Altar Boy's Dream of an Oberammergau-like Festival in Bulan, Sorsogon - MabuhayRad

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town of Bulan, Sorsogon Province, where he was assigned as the parish priest. He told me that he was given the honor of naming a sitio in Jamorawon barrio of Bulan. He named it the "Monte Calvario," which was made into a separate barrio (barangay) of its own. Local residents called it, however, by its short name, "Montecal." Many of his former altar boys and the community at large addressed him with this sobriquet, "Mamo Salvador."

I said that the name of "Monte Calvario" would be perfect real estate for an Asian version of the Oberammergau festival. Msgr. Salvador said that he entertained the same dream for the new barrio.

To those not familiar with it, Oberammergau is located 60 miles southwest of [Münich](#) near the Austrian border, the picturesque village of Oberammergau is especially famous for its passion play that is performed every 10 years (the last time was in 2010). The oldest festival in Germany, the [Oberammergau Passion Play](#) has been performed faithfully since 1634, when the village was rescued from a plague. Oberammergau is also home to a number of other interesting sights, including beautifully [frescoed houses](#), a museum of nativity scenes from the 18th to 21st centuries, and cable-car excursions to two mountain peaks. Oberammergau also makes an excellent base for visiting the Benedictine monastery of Ettal and the Linderhof, Neuschwanstein and Hohenschwangau castles.

For details and photos, please click on this link,

<http://www.sacred-destinations.com/germany/oberammergau>

Conceptualizing a Development Plan for Montecal and the Province Itself

During that visit at the rectory of the Bulan Parish, Mamo Salvador and I continued up to late evening our brain-storming session. We talked about Montecal and how it could be turned into a Filipino version of Oberammergau.

We both said that for Montecal's Passion Play to become like a cottage industry, it would have to be staged every Holy Week, and possibly in other months if there were enough Christian tourists wanting to see it.

Msgr. Salvador told me also that he hosted in Bulan a Japanese volunteer (who was sent as a representative of Japan's equivalent of the United States Peace Corps). The Japanese was a ceramic expert and he built a kiln at a corner of the church grounds. He said that the Japanese volunteer told him that there were clay deposits in Montecal and Jamorawon barrios of Bulan. I told Mamo Salvador that I would make further research on the ceramic industry, as if we were to build a "Passion Village" in Barrio Montecal, we would need lots of ceramic materials for the roofs, floors, walls and toilets of the ideal infrastructures, including possibly a new church that we dubbed the "Marian Cathedral."

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Editor's Note: As proposed by Msgr. Salvador, the "Marian Cathedral" in Barrio Monte Calvario of Bulan town would pay homage to the different Marian icons in Philippine history, as per this article that this writer has also written: [The Lady of Guadalupe Was the Original Marian Patroness of the Philippines](#)

URL: <http://www.mabuhayradio.com/hispano-filipino-affairs/the-lady-of-guadalupe-was-the-original-marian-patroness-of-the-philippines>

The monsignor and I discussed the need for us to help finish the long-delayed airport in Barrio Polot (now renamed San Francisco) of Bulan town.

Also there was the other need of constructing a provincial road from Barrio Gabao (in Irosin town) that would be a short cut from the Sorsogon capitol town and other places in the province to Montecal, which would end at the Polot airport. The road from Polot to the adjacent town of Magallanes would have also to be finished.

It was mandatory that the airport in Bulan town be made operational, so as to attract foreign and Overseas-Filipino Marian devotees and tourists for the Oberammergau-like Festival in Montecal.

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Editor's Note: Please see this related article, which describes also the proposed airport in Bulan, Sorsogon, and other projects in the so-called Bulan-Magallanes Corridor:

[Why Select Magallanes Town as the Site of a World-class Movie Studio with a Revived Shipyard for Making Galleon Replicas and Sailboats?](#)

URL: <http://www.mabuhayradio.com/history/why-select-magallanes-town-as-the-site-of-a-world-class-movie-studio-with-a-revived-shipyard-for-making-galleon-replicas-and-sailboats>

The Ceramic Project

In 1983, I returned to see Msgr. Salvador, who was by then the parish priest of the Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Sorsogon, Sorsogon. I told him that Director Edsel Custodio, then the head of the Foreign Trade Section of the Department of Trade and Industry, had referred to me a group of Italian ceramic industrialists. A joint venture to build an integrated ceramic plant in Sorsogon Province would be possible. It was now necessary to have a local company that would deal with the Italians.

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And so, Mamo Salvador and I organized that year the "Sorsogon Ceramic Manufacturing Corporation (SOCERMAC)." We invited also then Capt. Salvador Garcia Peran (who hailed from Gubat town), Atty. Sumoroy M. Ortego, Atty. Manuel Gapas of Bulusan and Fernando Gabito, Sr. of Sorsogon, a retired executive of the Government Service Insurance System, to join us in the Board of Directors. (Atty. Ortego, whose mother hailed from Bulan, was then the Clerk of the Regional Trial Court in Sorsogon and who later became an RTC judge in Samar. Attys. Gapas and Ortego and Mr. Gabito have since joined Mamo Salvador in the Great Beyond.)

We did not ask Msgr. Salvador to pay for his 15% share in the corporation, as we said that he would hold it in trust for the People of Sorsogon and his share of the profits would be used to subsidize social services.

By next installment, we will continue on with the SOCERMAC story.

(To be continued ...)