**65-year-old church bell returns to home in Dumaguete**

By Mary Judaline Partlow March 4, 2019, 8:06 pm

**HOME AGAIN.** Msgr. Julius Perpetuo S. Heruela (left) leads the consecration of the returned 65-year-old bell at the Our Mother of Perpetual Help Church in Dumaguete City while Fr. Sean Purcell looks on, March 3, 2019. *(Photo by Judy F. Partlow)*

**DUMAGUETE CITY** – A decades-old brass church bell has found its way back to its original Catholic Church parish here after being “away” for 65 years.

In a simple turnover and consecration rite at the Our Mother of Perpetual Help Church on Sunday, officials of the Motong Parish, who had the bell in their chapel here for many years, formally returned it to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (C.Ss.R), commonly known as Redemptorists.

Fr. Sean Purcell, a Redemptorist priest assigned in this city for many years, highlighted the importance of the return of the bell to its original parish.
“It seems we are in the season for the return of bells, starting with the return of the bells of Balangiga,” said Purcell, referring to the bells in Balangiga, Eastern Samar which the U.S. Army took from the San Lorenzo de Martir Church during the Philippine-American war.

“Of course, our bell is not as famous as that of Balangiga, but for us, the bell is an important part of the history of the Redemptorists in Dumaguete,” he said.

He noted that the bell, with the inscription markings “Our Lady of Perpetual Help Chapel”, “Dumaguete City”, “October 13, 1954”, was rang to “call the Redemptorists and the people to prayer and worship, liturgy and masses.”

It was first put up in a steel tower next to the then Our Lady of Perpetual Help Chapel at the Manuel L. Teves Memorial Hospital compound in 1958 when the Redemptorist missionaries started their foundation in Dumaguete, Purcell said.

In 1970, the new Redemptorist parish church was inaugurated and the Redemptorists acquired a new bell from Holland, he added. Thereafter, the old bell was transferred to the Motong Parish chapel.

Fr. Purcell thanked the people of Motong for returning the bell to the Redemptorist community.

Meanwhile, Msgr. Julius Perpetuo S. Heruela, who heads the Commission on Church Cultural Heritage of the Diocese of Dumaguete, emphasized the significance and importance of bells for the different churches. Heruela was invited to lead the turnover and consecration rites of the bell.

It is essential that the bells remain or be returned to their original parishes, he said in the Cebuano dialect.

In this case, the bell will tell the people of the story and history of the Redemptorists when they first came here to Negros Oriental, he added.
The ringing of a bell or bells serves as an “announcement” for various occasions, like masses, funerals, weddings, and other important church ceremonial activities, Heruela said.

Back in the old days, in the absence of modern communication, the bells would also serve as a warning when “marauders” or “pirates” were approaching, he said.

Some parishes have, unfortunately, lost their old bells for a number of reasons, such as being borrowed by another parish, or worst, stolen.

Heruela hoped that people will become aware of the importance of church bells in their parishes and would help in restoration efforts as these form part of their heritage.

“We will have to do thorough research on this,” he said, noting that church bells are usually marked with the names of the church or parish to whom it belongs, its donor, the date it was made, and even the name of the manufacturer.

Among those present during the turnover of the old bell to the Redemptorists was Negros Oriental Vice Governor Edward Mark Macias, whose family owns the Manuel L. Teves Memorial Hospital where the old chapel was located. (PNA)

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