

Fray Diego Cera OAR (1762-1832): Maker of the World-famous Las Piñas Bamboo Organ

by Emmanuel Luis A. Romanillos

The Augustinian Recollect religious who would put Las Piñas on the cultural map of the world saw the light of day on 26 July 1762 at Villa de Graus of Huesca province in the Spanish region of Aragón. Diego Cera's parish belonged to the Diocese of Barbastro. The friar behind the world-famous bamboo organ was born to Joaquín Cera and Francisca Badia.¹ At age 24, he donned the habit of the Augustinian Recollects at their convent in Barcelona on 29 January 1786 to commence his novitiate year. Recollect



Historian Manuel Carceller surmised that, before hearkening to the call to the religious priesthood, Diego had taken up studies for the priesthood as well as in the field of music and pipe organ. He further noted that Fray Diego had worked as organist in the Recollect convents in Spain.²

After the mandatory year of novitiate, he professed the three evangelical counsels on 30 January 1787 and chose the religious appellation of Fray Diego Cera de la Virgen del Carmen as token of his deep love and devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel as his personal patroness. With the novice master Fray Manuel de San Joaquín present at the rite of religious profession, the prior of the Recollect Convent of Barcelona, Fray Mariano de Santa Bárbara, received

¹ Francisco SÁDABA, *Catálogo de los Religiosos Agustinos Recoletos de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas desde el año 1606, en que llegó la primera misión a Manila, hasta nuestros días* (Madrid 1906) 360.

² Manuel CARCELLER, *Historia general de la Orden de Recoletos de San Agustín* (Madrid 1962) 657.

Fray Diego's profession of the monastic vows.³ He was ordained to the sacred order of priesthood at the Recollect convent of Benabarre in the Province of Huesca . In August 1790, he was a conventual of the convent in the Zaragoza where the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar is located. In this convent the community was visited by the Commissary Provincial Fray Manuel de Jesús María looking for volunteers for the Philippine missions. It was during this visit that Fray Diego expressed his desire to exercise the missionary apostolate in the Philippine. The 28-year-old frair bade goodbye to his confreres in the religious community on 15 October 1790.

Fray Manuel de Jesús María took the group of young missionaries to the port city of Cádiz in southern Spain. Fray Diego was in the 25th Recollect missionary expedition to the Philippines which was headed by Vice Commissary Provincial Mauro de San Agustín.⁴ He was described by an official government document as a 28-year-old priest who was endowed with an average-sized body, blue eyes, chestnut hair and he did not sport a beard.⁵ Their frigate *El Águila* lifted anchor at Cádiz on 3 December 1790 and sailed to the Atlantic Ocean en route to Mexico which they reached after a three-month voyage.⁶

After their arrival in Mexico City in February 1791, the friars waited for a year at the Recollect hospice which was their half-way house in the capital city. They left Mexico in February 1792 and reached the port of Manila five

³ CARCELLER, *Historia general* x, 657.

⁴ Padre Mauro de San Agustín was assigned as parish priest of Maribohoc, Bohol, from 1799 until his death which took place in the town of Baclayon also Bohol, on 16 May 1839.

⁵ Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio documental sobre el Padre Diego Cera (1762-1832)*, in *Recollectio* 8 (1985) 288.

⁶ Sádaba says in page 359 about two departure dates; the first date—28 November 1790—was provided by the Book of Missions. Sádaba also points to another departure date—7 December 1790—the date from the Registry of the Congregation. The Recollect historian Angel Martínez Cuesta, however, obtained the following information from the *Archivo General de Indias* in Sevilla, Spain, in *Legajo* 1053 of the *Filipinas* Section: the embarkation of thirteen Augustinian Recollects was certified on 3 December 1790. The same document earlier listed the names of the original group of seventeen Recollect missionaries presented by Fray Manuel de Jesús María on 2 August 1790. See MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio*, 288.

months later, in July 1792.⁷ The young Recollects took up residence in their San Nicolás Convent, popularly known as Recoletos, Intramuros. This age-old Recollect priory—founded in 1608, damaged several times by earthquakes, destroyed by American bombardment during the Liberation of Manila in February 1945 and totally demolished after World War II—was the mother-house of the Philippine missionary province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino within the walled city of Manila. The Recoletos friary had likewise served as their provincial curia, novitiate, theology house, hospital, and home for the aged. Its conventual church with its magnificent interior housed the original image of *Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno*, the devotion endeared to and revered by millions of Filipino devotees as the Black Nazarene.

A gift fit for a queen

In 1793, a year following his arrival at the colonial capital of Manila, Fray Diego constructed his first pipe organ in the Philippines.⁸ On 29 October 1793, the Augustinian Recollect provincial council in a meeting, convoked solely for the purpose, decided to send it to the Spanish queen in Madrid as gift. The council fathers said the magnificent organ was a “jewel worthy of being presented to our lady, the Queen, because there was no other instrument could come close to it neither in Spain nor in England, as the actual governor general himself had insinuated.”⁹

The prior provincial José de Santa Orosia wrote the accompanying letter to the Spanish monarch: “In the name of this Province [of Discalced Augustinian of the Philippines], we are giving [you] this as token of our great and reverent fondness for your royal person.... I ask your Majesty to deign accept this small gift we hope would be pleasing to you.”¹⁰ In return, the queen without a doubt was so pleased with the Recollect token of gratitude

⁷ The arrival date was 5 July 1792 according to CARCELLER, *Historia general*, 657, and MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio*, 288, not 5 June 1792, as surmised by SÁDABA, 359.

⁸ Agustín DE SANTA TERESA [pseudonym of Fr. Rafael García], *Organista y organero*, in *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas* [BPSN] 43 (1953) 109.

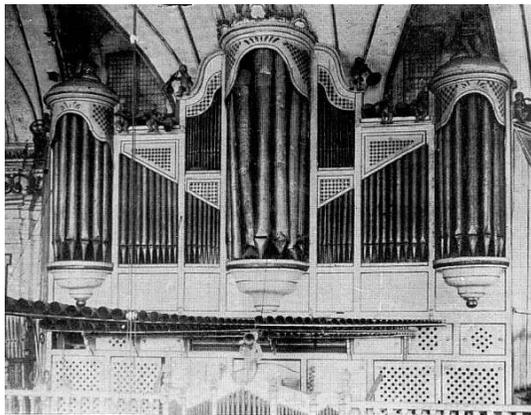
⁹ MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio*, 288-289; Agustín DE SANTA TERESA, *Organista y organero*, 109; Casimiro ROYO, *Relación histórica de los religiosos de nuestra provincia que se han distinguido notablemente en las ciencias*, in BPSN 12 (1921) 709.

¹⁰ MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio*, 283.

and respect that she in turn gifted Fray Diego with “a beautiful gold chalice, a set of cruets, also made of gold, and a bronze bell, which are preserved with painstaking care and are still in use [1919] in the parish of Las Piñas.”¹¹

A pipe organ for the Recoletos church at Intramuros

In 1793-1794, Fray Diego constructed another organ, this time for the Recoletos church of Intramuros.¹² The specific date of its construction cannot be determined. Three Recollect writers—Francisco Sádaba, Miguel Avellaneda, Fabián Otamendi¹³—unanimously affirmed that the musical instrument was finished by Fray Diego in or towards the year 1798.



The pipe organ made by Fray Diego Cera circa 1798 at the Recoletos Church of Intramuros, Manila, damaged beyond repair by American Occupation troops during the Filipino-American War.

However, Recollect Historian Ángel Martínez Cuesta has analyzed well the

primary sources and is convinced that Fray Diego completed the organ in May 1794 for three strong reasons. First, Martínez Cuesta said the very *Book of Receipts of the San Nicolás Convent* mentioned the expenses incurred in the “construction of the organ.” On 8 May 1794, the prior and the trustees/receivers signed in the folio entry for the expenditures of the 1791-1794 triennium that the amount of 774 pesos was spent for the work of the organ. In the succeeding manuscript folio, the historian continues, there is a mention of the “new organ” as an addition in the convent. But most of all, the first parish assignment of Fray Diego in the curacy of Mabalacat in Pampanga could be understood only, after he had finished the work of the grandiose

¹¹ Gregorio OCHOA, *Historia de la Orden de Agustinos Recoletos* 9, Zaragoza 1919, 237.

¹² MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio*, 283. Footnote 24 contains the historian’s compelling evidence and arguments.

¹³ Fabián OTAMENDI, *El órgano de nuestro convento de Intramuros (Manila)*, in BPSN 15 (1924) 341.

organ for the mother-house. Indeed, he was dispatched as missionary to Mabalacat on 9 June 1794 after his project for the Recoletos church in Intramuros was done. Less than a year later, on 22 May 1895, he was again assigned to the Recoletos friary.

Las Piñas Parish

On 17 November 1795, the vicar provincial presented a *terna* or list of three candidates for the position of parish priest of Las Piñas to the governor-general and the archbishop of Manila. One of the three was Diego Cera de la Virgen del Carmen because there was “no other more appropriate a parish priest to administer a newly-created town that lacked everything than him.”¹⁴

But, what was Las Piñas at the close of the 18th century? Let us hear what our historian Angel Martínez Cuesta has to say about it:

Las Piñas was a mean little village with hardly any resources of its own and a customary haven of malefactors. It was a mere appendage to the parish of Parañaque until 1755 when the Augustinians ceded it to the archdiocese. As it could not support a canonically-installed parish priest, the curacy was still in the hands of an interim minister. Hence it was not a parish that would whet extraordinary appetites. Nevertheless, it fell within the sphere of influence of Imus Hacienda and it was very near Manila where, given the deterioration of its convents, the province needed a place to assign some religious who would represent it in the pulpit and defend its interests in the corridors of power in government.

The Recollects commenced to display interest in Las Piñas in 1765 when they asked for it from the Augustinians. Once more they insisted in their request in 1790 and 1794. But apparently they made no official petitions until September 1795. The government and the archdiocese were pleased to welcome the Recollect formal request.¹⁵

The formal request for the administration of Las Piñas by the Recollect Congregation was initiated by Prior Provincial Joaquín Encabo de la Virgen de Sopetrán¹⁶ who would be bishop of Cebu in 1803-1818. He was prior provincial for two terms but at the time when the legal courses of action were

¹⁴ MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio*, 283.

¹⁵ Ángel MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *The Augustinian Recollects: Arrival in the Philippines and Spread of Missionary Activities*, Quezon City 2006, 40-41, and his voluminous *Historia de los Agustinos Recoletos I*, Madrid 1995, 620.

¹⁶ SÁDABA, 312-313.

made, Father Encabo was vicar provincial of Manila and nearby convents. The Augustinian confreres, the ex-provincial pointed out, had handed this impoverished town of three-hundred families over to the archdiocese, but the Recollects felt it necessary to have the curacy of Las Piñas in the vicinity of the colonial capital.¹⁷ The governor-general and the archbishop of Manila acceded at once to the request of the Augustinian Recollects and ceded the newly-established parish to the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino together with its nine scattered *visitas* or villages: Almanza, Pamplona, Pulanglupa, Talon, Zapote, Cut-cut, Fajardo, Manuyo and Ilaya.¹⁸ A month earlier, the new parish of Our Lady of Pillar in Imus, Cavite, where the extensive Augustinian Recollect hacienda was located, had likewise been ceded to their spiritual care.¹⁹

Improvements on the old church structures

On 26 December 1795, Fray Diego took possession of Las Piñas whose parish venerated Saint Joseph as its patron saint.²⁰ It did not take long for this “intelligent, vigorous and disinterested” Recollect friar to change the countenance of the town. Thus in the words of the Recollect historian:

At once he won over the trust of the people who in 1797 even placed themselves at his command in order to defend the town against a possible attack by the British. Father Cera re-established peace and order, attracted a good number of families to live in the *población* that grew from 350 families in 1795 to 480 in 1799, built roads, started the construction of a temple made of hewn stone and gave splendor to church worship by organizing an orchestra of violins and other string instruments. Progress such as that in Las Piñas did whet the appetite of the diocesan chapter but at the same time it won over the unwavering support from the governor who adamantly sided

¹⁷ Miguel AVELLANEDA, *Centenario de la muerte del P. Diego Cera, A.R.*, in BPSN 24 (1933) 234.

¹⁸ Emmanuel Luis ROMANILLOS, *Bishop Ezekiel Moreno. An Augustinian Recollect Saint in the Philippines* (Quezon City 1993) 100.

¹⁹ MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *The Augustinian Recollects: Arrival*, 40.

²⁰ SÁDABA says it was 1797. The credible testimony from the *Libro de Cosas Notables de Las Piñas* gives us the exact date. See *200 Years of Las Piñas*, (Manila 1962) 22; AVELLANEDA, *Centenario*, 234; MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio*, 297.

with the Recollect administration and in the famous report of 1804 vigorously defended it.²¹

First things first. So, in Las Piñas the new parish priest rebuilt his rectory which was made of light materials, according to the *Libro de Cosas notables de Las Piñas*.²² The lowly parish rectory was turned into a decent residence for a hard-working and indefatigable *cura párroco*. Next he worked on the existing small church that was likewise made of light materials, probably nipa and bamboo which were locally available in abundance. For a decent worship in the humble house of God, he purchased cloths, jewels, images of saints and other sacred vessels and utensils. The music lover and promoter as well as art enthusiast in Fray Diego urged him to organize a choir and a string orchestra of violins and bass, with everything needed “for the embellishment and splendor of church worship.”

A new stone church to withstand the elements

In 1797, the new Spanish parish priest started gathering building materials for the construction of a strong church with three naves. He ordered the construction of warehouses for the building materials and the sawing of lumber. The superiors of Saint Nicholas Province helped their industrious confrere in every way possible. In the coming years, they would defray the construction of the *retablo mayor*, or main altarpiece. In



**Saint Joseph Parish Church of Las Piñas City,
also known as the Bamboo Organ Church**

²¹ Rafael Ma. AGUILAR, “Exposición [...] sobre los curatos de Santa Rosa, Imus, Las Piñas y demás que se hace presente,” 25 noviembre 1804, in W. E. RETANA, *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino 1* (Madrid 1895) 3-22; the whole dossier is found in the *Archivo General de Indias, Ultramar* 682.

²² MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio*, 297. The Recollect historian summarized Father Diego’s parish works from the *Libro de Cosas notables de Las Piñas* [Book of Noteworthy Events of Las Piñas] which was later published as *200 Years of Las Piñas* by the Historical Conservation Society in 1962.

the same year 1797, Fray Diego gifted he parish church with a small pipe organ.

The succeeding year 1798 saw the laying of the foundations for the new *mampostería* [rubblework] parish church of Saint Joseph. Lime and stones were chosen as materials for the strong temple of God that would last for ages, barring natural calamities like earthquakes. In that same year 1798, a violent typhoon wrought havoc on the primitive church. The organ was ruined but Fray Diego himself repaired it. Due to the motivation by the parish priest, the parishioners and even Christians from adjoining communities donated funds and building materials for the ongoing church construction project. From 1810 to 1819 the people rendered the *polos y servicios* or community work earnestly motivated by their parish priest. Fray Diego himself provided food for the workers and accommodated them in comfortable lodgings.

In 1813, the old church could no longer be used for worship and they had to double their effort on the stone church project. In 1816, the roofing of the new church was finished. The *retablo* was put in place. The painting of the interior commenced. In 1819, the façade and main altar were done. The two lateral niches had the images of Our Lady of Consolation and Saint Augustine.

The construction of the stone church of Saint Joseph with three naves finally had drawn to a close when the third pastoral visitation of Las Piñas was conducted by Manila Archbishop Juan Antonio de Zulaibar on 19 October 1819.²³ The succeeding archbishops, especially Archbishop José Seguí in 1831,²⁴ in their pastoral visitations never failed to express kind words and thanks to the diligent Recollect parish priest, praising him for the promotion of the splendor of divine worship, the cleanness of the divine temple, abundance of sacred vessels and decoration as well as his assiduous preaching of the Word of God and administration of the sacraments.²⁵ All these were carried out by the hardworking curate in spite of the poor income of the parish.

Earlier, in coordination with the *gobernadorcillo* of Las Piñas, Fray Diego supervised the building of important bridges in the town. The stone bridge in Pulanglupa was finished in 1810. To connect Las Piñas with the adjoining province of Cavite, the stone bridge of Zapote was constructed in

²³ *Ibid.* 300.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 301.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

1817. He was likewise very knowledgeable and adept in machines which he made use of for improvements in the neighboring vast Recollect hacienda of Imus in Cavite planted with palay, fruit trees and other crops.



The world-famous sui-generis Bamboo Organ, constructed by Fray Diego Cera in 1816-1821, still in use up to these days.

A Bamboo Organ for Las Piñas

In 1816, Fray Diego and his workers started cutting bamboos for the grandiose project of the Bamboo Organ. Then he buried 950 bamboo canes along sandy shores of Las Piñas for six months.²⁶ This ingenious process he ably used in order for the bamboos to withstand the ravages of time and avoid the damage caused by *anay* [termites]. In the end, the organ builder utilized 953 tubes, of which 832 were made of bamboo and 121 made of metal.²⁷ The inventive friar came up with stops that imitated drumming and the nightingale. The chirping of birds could also be imitated. The organist would pour an amount of water onto a special mechanism to produce the chirping sound. That is why the organist should have the water ready whenever the song of birds was called for.

²⁶ Agustín R. DE SANTA TERESA DE JESÚS, *Organista y Organero*, 109-110.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 109.

Minor and major repairs of the Bamboo Organ

After almost five years, Fray Diego finished his Bamboo Organ construction project in 1821, except the organ stops. He continued this work until the following year when the construction was at last finished. Both parish church and rectory were badly hit by the earthquake of 1829. In 1829-1830, Fray Diego had to repair the church and rectory which were both damaged by a strong typhoon that devastated the town in January 1829.²⁸ The colonial government donated 2,000 pesos for the important repairs. Another tremor struck in 1863. The storm that destroyed the church roof in 1882 damaged badly the bamboo organ as well. The most important repairs happened in 1973-1975 when the Klais Orgelbau GmbH & Co. KG carried out in Bonn, Germany the meticulous and complete restoration of this great legacy of the Recollect friar.

Honors galore and demise of Fray Diego Cera

The Recollect friar received pastoral assignments and honors inside and outside Saint Nicholas Province. He was designated by the governor general as chaplain of the *Real Colegio de Santa Potenciana*, a school founded in 1589 and later abolished in 1866, where orphans of Spanish soldiers studied. In the provincial chapters, the capitular fathers elected him as *prior vocal* of Taytay in the Calamianes (1805), Baclayon in Bohol (1815, 1821) and Tandag in Mindanao (1825), all of which were honorary positions which allowed him to attend as delegate to the triennial decision-making provincial chapters without necessarily residing in those designated convents or parishes.²⁹

In 1832, The old friar—almost seventy years old at that time and suffering from an unnamed serious illness—withdrew to the cloistered life of San Sebastian Convent outside the walls of Manila. He resigned from his beloved curacy of Las Piñas on 15 May 1832.³⁰ About two weeks earlier, he had been appointed *prior presidente* or superior of San Sebastian Convent in the district of Quiapo. On 24 June, Fray Diego Cera de la Virgen del Carmen passed away inside a friar cell in a cloister where a few meters away stood in a niche at the temple of God the age-old, very beautiful and much-revered ivory icon of the Our Lady of Mount Carmel her religious patroness that

²⁸ MARTÍNEZ CUESTA, *Florilegio*, 286.

²⁹ SÁDABA, 362.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 301.

arrived from Mexico City in 1618 and later enthroned at San Sebastian Church in 1621.

Conclusion

Let me now quote lengthily a portion of my translation of a 1953 Spanish article penned by Rafael García (1911-1977), editor for over two decades of the *Boletín de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Filipinas* [Bulletin of the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino of the Philippines] and concurrently administrator of the Historical Provincial Archive in Marcilla, Navarra. He dubbed the iconic Recollect Fray Diego Cera as *organista y organero*, organist and organ-maker:

Man is what he loves, says Saint Augustine. If man loves mud, he becomes mud; if he loves vice, he gets rotten; if he loves dishonor, he dishonors himself, and if he loves God, he becomes divine. Diego Cera loved God and he offered to Him the most expressive homage of his soul, what was sweetest to him, what was gentlest and most delicate. He knew of the sweetest impressions that religious music of temples causes in souls. He knew that at the sound of organ music Saint Cecilia melted in her love of God and offered her virginal heart to the Lord. He knew of the tears shed by Saint Augustine with the canticles of the Church and he knew as well that nothing like music could attract the Filipino people to the temple, and from the temple to God. That was the reason why Fray Diego devoted painstakingly to the construction of organs for churches, organs that made him immortal, organs that, in the words of the American writer George A. Miller, are *sui generis*, the only one of its kind on the face of the earth.”³¹

Endless accolades were heaped upon the Spanish Augustinian Recollect friar and his enduring *sui generis* Bamboo Organ legacy to the Filipino nation long after his demise. Indeed, the classic Greco-Latin adage holds true: *Ars longa vita brevis*, art is long, life is short, which highlights “the long-lasting impact of art over the brevity of life.” In May 1932, in commemoration of the centenary of Fray Diego’s death, an interesting article saw print in the *Philippine Machinery Journal*, as quoted by the Recollect biographer Miguel Avellaneda:

Five scores and ten years ago, Father Diego Cera, a member of the Agustinos Recoletos Friars, finished a task of infinite love and patience—an

³¹ Agustín DE SANTA TERESA, *Organista y organero*, 108.

accomplishment unique in the long chapter of organ-maker's history and one destined to endure far beyond the fondest expectations of the good man and his willing helpers. In the little church of Las Piñas, Rizal Province, barely a twenty-minute drive from the heart of Manila, he built the first and only Bamboo Organ the world has known: an organ that swelled forth its sacred music for the reverential ears of great-great great grandfathers of today, and for every generation since and which still fills the old church with its sweet and plaintive melody.³²

Las Piñas remains today a Christian community grateful to Fray Diego and his enduring patrimony of culture and material progress. The greatest legacy, however, bequeathed to Las Piñas City by Fray Diego Cera de la Virgen del Carmen and succeeding Augustinian Recollect confreres, especially Saint Ezekiel Moreno, their holy parish priest in 1876-1879, is their Christian faith. That unwavering faith is being handed down from generation to generation in the progressive Las Pinas City, aptly dubbed “a city with heritage” deservedly proud of its 19th-century Hispanic heritage structures: Bamboo Organ, Saint Joseph Parish Church and Pulanglupa Bridge. The abundant fruits of their Christian faith through untiring Augustinian Recollect evangelization have continued to be harvested by their equally able successors, workers and parishioners in the Lord's vineyard.

Timeline of Fray Diego Cera OAR

- 26 July 1762 – Birth at Villa de Graus (Huesca). His parents are Joaquín Cera and Francisca Badia.
- 29 January 1786 – Novitiate at the Augustinian Recollect convent in Barcelona.
- 30 January 1787 – Simple profession of the monastic vows.
- 1790 – Priestly ordination at the convent of Benabarre (Huesca)
- 5 July 1792 – He arrives in Manila with the 25th Recollect mission.
- 1793 – Fray Diego builds his first pipe organ which the prior provincial Fray José de Santa Orosia and his provincial council sent to the Queen of Spain on 31 October 1793.
- In return, the Spanish monarch gives Fray Diego her gifts: a gold chalice, a set of gold cruets and a bronze bell.
- 1793-1794 – Fray Diego builds a pipe organ and installs it at San Nicolas Church, also known as Recoletos, in Intramuros, Manila. The

³² AVELLANEDA, *Centenario*, 233-238.

pipe organ was used for two centuries until it was irreparably ruined by American Occupation troops in 1898.

- 9 June 1794 – Missionary of Mabalacat in Pampanga.
- September 1795 – Saint Nicholas Province sends to the governor-general and the archbishop of Manila an official petition to administer Las Piñas, a *visita* of Parañaque, after informal requests sent to the Augustinians of Parañaque in 1765, 1790 and 1794.
- 17 November 1795 – Fray Diego is included in the list of three candidates as parish priest of Las Piñas, presented by the prior provincial to the governor-general and Manila archbishop.
- 26 December 1795 – Fray Diego takes possession of Las Piñas which has nine barrios under its jurisdiction: Almanza, Pamplona, Zapote, Pulanglupa, Talon, Cut-cut, Fajardo, Manuyo, Ilaya.
- 1797 – Fray Diego organizes a choir and a string orchestra of violins and basses, with everything needed “for the embellishment and splendor of church worship.”
 - The townspeople request the governor-general to name Fray Diego as commander in case of war against the British.
- 20 December 1805 – Appointed *prior vocal* of Taytay in the Calamianes.
- 1806 – The governor general names Fray Diego as chaplain of the Real Colegio de Santa Potenciana where orphans of Spanish soldiers study.
- 1810 – 1819 – Construction of Saint Joseph Parish Church, funded by the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino.
- 1810 – Construction of the stone bridge of Pulanglupa finished.
- 1815, 1821 – Appointed *prior vocal* of Baclayon in Bohol.
- 1810 – Construction of the stone bridge of Zapote finished.
- 1816 – Roofing of the new parish church finished.
- 1816 – Fray Diego starts cutting bamboos for the Bamboo Organ project. He buries 950 bamboo canes along at the shores of Las Piñas for six months for the bamboos to withstand the ravages of time and damage caused by *anay* and *bokbok*.
- 1816-1821 – Construction of the now world-famous Bamboo Organ.
- 1818 – Elected provincial councilor.
- 1821 – He made notable improvements in the adjoining Recollect Hacienda de Imus, Cavite.
- 1825 – Appointed *prior vocal* of Tandag (Surigao).
- January 1829 – Strong typhoon damaged both church and kumbento.

- 1831 – Manila Archbishop José Seguí in his pastoral visit expresses thanks to Fray Diego, “praising him for the promotion of the splendor of divine worship, the cleanness of the divine temple, abundance of sacred vessels and decoration as well as his assiduous preaching of the Word of God and administration of the sacraments.”
- 2 May 1832 – Elected *prior presidente* of San Sebastian Convent.
- 15 May 1832 – He resigns as parish priest of Las Piñas.
- 24 June 1832 – A month short of his 70th birthday, Fr. Diego returns to the Father in Heaven at San Sebastian Convent.

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