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DR. JUAN ALEJO DE ARIZMENDI, FIRST PUERTO RICAN BISHOP

The honorable Dr. Juan Alejo de Arizmendi, both canonical and civil doctor, was the first Puerto Rican to be honored, in 1803, with the noble designation of bishop of Puerto Rico. For the first time in the three stages of our historical life to that point, the ability of the Puerto Rican clergy to rule their own diocese was recognized with the naming of a prelate, though they had governed as vicars during prolonged vacancies in the head office. Such was the case, for example, with don Diego Torres Vargas in the 17th century and with Dr. Martín Calderón de la Barca in the 18th century. With the exception of some Hispanic-American bishops, all of the bishops of Puerto Rico were Spaniards, and after 1898 - when the occupation by the United States occurred - they were from the United States. But it was not until 1960 - very intentionally - during the commemoration of the bicentennial of the birth of the Honorable Arizmendi that the right of the Puerto Rican clergy to govern their own diocese was again recognized. The designation of assistant bishop of Ponce gave Puerto Rican priests the right to govern their own diocese. The designation of assistant bishop of Ponce fell to His Excellency Cardinal Luis Aponte Martínez.

This raises a legitimate question: Who was this native son who won this unusual feat of being designated - for the first time - to rule the Puerto Rican diocese? What were his virtues and qualifications? Before answering these reasonable questions, it helps to remember some of the salient facts of the historical process of our 18th century and the first fifteen years of the 19th century. This summary will help us understand the circumstances of the environment in Puerto Rico in which the Honorable Arizmendi would have to exercise his ministry.

First is the notable growth of the population. We do not know the exact number at the beginning of the century. Two, three, four, five thousand? We cannot say. However, at the end of the 18th century, the population reached one hundred and fifty thousand or so. Also notable was the urban development. At the beginning of the century there were six urban centers but at the end of the century there were thirty-eight. These numbers are significant in allowing us to capture some of the spirit of communal responsibility and social advancement that this urban development demanded, on some level. It helps to point out that the process of founding a town was not easy: the endless paperwork, the trips to and from the capital without means of quick communication. Also, the social responsibilities that were imposed were relatively onerous, including, among the most costly, the construction of a church and its preparation for worship - furnishings, vestments and liturgical objects; plus providing for the salaries of the priest and the verger, which was three hundred pesos a year.

Bishops Francisco de la Cuerda (1790-1795), Juan Bautista de Zengotita (1796-1802) and our Juan Alejo de Arizmendi (1803-1814) protested these unjust burdens. It is important to note that the founding order was not formalized until the religious responsibilities had been complied with.

In the last three decades of the 18th century, there were unmistakable signs of economic growth. The driving forces were the reforms put into effect beginning in 1765 and

aimed at breaking the obstacles to economic mercantilism, among them, most particularly, the Free Commerce Regulations of 1778. This trade reform program continued in the first fifteen years of the 19th century with the advantage that it was now aimed directly at resolving the problems of Puerto Rico. These efforts culminated with the program of reforms put in effect by wise Spanish landowner Alejandro Ramírez, who was quartermaster general in Puerto Rico from February 1813 to June 1816.

Other factors that stimulated the economy were the initial measures of the agrarian reform: granting and legalization of titles, the policy against huge landholdings, the distribution of land, etc.,

And because of our unfortunate military fate, the international conflicts of the 18th century affected us, including, in a direct way, the taking of Havana by the British in 1762. This serious military reversal for the Spanish empire led to the monumental military construction projects of the last third of the 18th century: the imposing San Cristóbal, with its exterior works; the north wall; etc., all testimony in stone of the imperial desire to perpetuate itself. The creation of this formidable program of military engineering demanded an increase in the *Situado* - huge amounts were received from 1766 to 1779 - and was also, in some measure, a contributing factor in the relative economic growth noted at the end of the century.

The military importance of these works, particularly San Cristóbal as an impregnable guardian of the city, was clearly demonstrated in 1797 during the third and final British siege. The powerful fleet withdrew without even trying to force its way into the city. This historical event showed the Puerto Rican patriotic heroism and, in particular, that of the militias. The examples of bravery and determination for victory fed the popular consciousness and inspired the fervent folk tribute to Pepe Díaz, the "bravest man the King of Spain had..."

And, certainly, Pepe Díaz wasn't the only one to survive in the collective awareness: also from that century was Antonio de los Reyes Correa, the hero of Arecibo, and, under different circumstances, the mulatto Miguel Henríquez was remembered for his bravery and his defiance, protected, of course, by two of our bishops.

The exemplary nature that these unique figures radiated and that tradition perpetuated are powerful ties that build cohesiveness in the collective consciousness that generate contemporary and subsequent attitudes of affirmation and emulating citizen responsibility. With this significant baggage of collective experience the historical life of the 19th century began.

In this summary of the historical process of the 18th century, no Puerto Rican initiatives have been seen beyond those that were part of the founding of towns and fulfillment of military obligations. Were there a Puerto Rican people with awareness of their existence as such and of their rights? We have to wait until 1808 when the liberal regime installed in Spain was extended to Puerto Rico and a clear expression of Puerto Ricanness was seen, a true "Puerto Rican emergence." And among those who publicly and jubilantly gave witness to this awareness of being Puerto Rican was our bishop, Dr. Juan Alejo de Arizmendi.

Let us now look at some essential biographical facts. He was born in San Juan on July 17, 1760, the son of a Basque father, don Miguel de Arizmendi, and a Puerto Rican mother (third generation), doña Juana Isabel de la Torre. Arizmendi studied for his bachelor's degree in philosophy in San Juan at the *Santo Tomás de Aquino de la Orden de Predicadores* Convent. He was praised by the master of studies, Friar Joseph de Peña, on October 20, 1778. At the end of that year, he went to Caracas and enrolled at the Real y Pontificia Universidad de Venezuela, where for five years - from December 23, 1778, to the same day and month of 1783 - he studied holy canons and jurisprudence. The year he arrived, he received his bachelor's in philosophy from the Real y Pontificia Universidad, having presented a public exam and been approved unanimously on October 9, 1779. On December 12, 1783, he received his four minor orders from former Bishop of Puerto Rico D. Mariano Martí in Caracas and eight days later his sub-deaconship and deaconship. His ordination as a priest took place in the cathedral of the oldest

city of the Americas, officiated by the bishop of Puerto Rico, Dr. D. Felipe José de Trespalacios, who had come to consecrate the site. They both arrived in Puerto Rico on July 16, 1785.

That same year, Bishop Trespalacios conferred on him the delicate ministry of confessor and chaplain for the Madres Carmelitas. Seven years later, when he 32 years old, Bishop Dr. D. Francisco de la Cuerda y García named him general vicar and ecclesiastical judge. Such an important responsibility demanded, first of all, recognized skill in the juridical-canonical disciplines, as well as exactitude, conscientiousness and an energetic nature.

The performance of his office of vicar and judge was not without setbacks and problems. The ecclesiastical council, always very jealous of its prerogatives, disagreed with the strictness of the young judge, who insisted on due compliance with the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical court, which was strictly defined. For example: he demanded that the ecclesiastical council intervene in the imposition of censures; he also required that the communications to the ecclesiastical council be done with full judicial formality and not plainly and simply, as they had been done. He also retained, over the ecclesiastical council's protest, his right to process with his priests in the processions held publicly in the streets because, he alleged, as vicar general he represented the prelate's authority in the processions.

It should be noted that in each of these cases, Arizmendi had the support of his bishop, Dr. D. Francisco La Cuerda y García.

These differences of opinion reached the point that the cathedral corporation began proceedings against the provisional leader before the Council in Santo Domingo, with the council ruling against the provisional leader. The Indies Council put off the case, setting it aside until the end of 1794 when Bishop La Cuerda resigned the miter. But the climate of tension persisted as the bishop, with his post vacant, named Arizmendi as ecclesiastical governor and general vicar. Peace was reestablished when the new bishop elect, Dr. D. Juan Bautista de Zengotita, delegated dean Dr. D. Nicolás Quiñones to take possession as bishop in his name, an act that took place on October 13, 1785.

Six years later, however, Dr. Arizmendi's personal and ecclesiastical circumstances had changed radically. On September 4, 1802, the Honorable Zengotita appointed him to collect the 3% tax on all church income that was designated for the establishment of the Seminary School. Bishop Zengotita justified the appointment with a laudatory statement that showed just how well he had come to know some of Dr. Arizmendi's positive personality traits. He said: "Having full confidence and satisfaction with the work of Dr. D. Juan Alejo de Arizmendi, we have entrusted to his prudence, loyalty, exactitude and zeal the responsibility of collecting the proceeds of the 3% tax..."

The events described above presage some of the most marked elements of the first Puerto Rican bishop's ecclesiastical personality. First, Arizmendi canonical-juridical rigor and skill, always alert to strict and punctual compliance. This tendency of his is ever present in the reports of his review of parochial records. The Honorable Arizmendi - as we now suspect - was a man of character. He demonstrated resolve and firmness in his decisions and did not easily surrender to obstacles. Unbending before error, his zeal for his souls could lead him at times to extremes of intolerance. But at the same time he was compassionate and generous with those who repented and made amends. The doctrinal basis was one and the same as his own flesh, leaving him at ease and resolved in his decisions: he knew exactly what he wanted and where he was going. His refined faith, his trust in God, inspired him to surpass human means and he often expressed these sentiments with vehement conviction. His vehemence was also present in the expression of his patriotic Puerto Rican sentiments - as mentioned earlier - sentiments that he used to appeal to the people, especially in times of crisis. He tried to inspire confidence by reminding them in impassioned terms of their history. Thus did the Honorable Arizmendi fulfill his moral and patriotic responsibility that a patrician leader - as he himself defined himself - should perform. The union between the church and state in Spain favored him and could have been even more favorable under the liberal regime installed in

Spain from 1808 to 1814. Unfortunately, that was not the case. When Captain General and Governor Salvador Meléndez Bruna, a complete despot, took power (June 30, 1809 to March 24, 1819), he installed a repressive regime and made the Honorable Arizmendi a target of his vicious ruthlessness, accusing him before the metropolitan authorities of being an infidel. To date, we have confirmed no text that would justify the charge.

Arizmendi's time in office covered just eleven years. He took office as bishop elect on July 27, 1803, having been presented to King Carlos IV on the previous March 13 in the exercise of his role as royal patron. His bull was issued on February 26, 1804, and on March 25 he was consecrated in Caracas by Bishop Dr. D. Francisco Ibarra of that see. It was not until January 4, 1808, however, that he began practicing among the public. He returned to his cathedral to celebrate Holy Week, but unexpected events prevented him from leaving afterward. The serious events that shook Spain – the Napoleonic invasion, the war of independence, the installation of the constitutional regime, etc. – placed urgent and unavoidable civic responsibilities on the prelate. He would not be able to leave again until September 7, 1812. The phrase he used to say goodbye to the members of his San Juan diocese, "...to the valley of Jehosephat," is very significant. By that time his health must have been very poor, which perhaps contributed to the suffering and anguish that would be felt by a sensitive temperament in a life dedicated with complete integrity to the ideals of charity, love and justice in the face of the humiliations and intrigues against him by Captain General Meléndez Bruna.

In his second pastoral visit, he ministered in the coastal and interior towns, leaving San Juan and traveling east, following the eastern, south and part of the southwestern coasts. Suffering from health problems in Mayagüez (June 30, 1814), he returned to Hormigueros, where because of his devotion to the Virgin of Monserrate he wished to be buried. From there, he issued his final pastoral letter on September 26. He intended to bring it to the capital, but because of his health he was delayed in Arecibo, where he died on October 12, 1814. By his own wishes, he was buried in the Monserrate Chapel in that town. Later, by royal decree, his remains were moved to the cathedral on January 31, 1815, due to the efforts of his former provisional judge, Dr. José Gutiérrez del Arroyo, to prevent the fulfillment of Captain General Meléndez Bruna's vow, during Bishop Arizmendi's life, that when he died he would not be buried in the cathedral as his Spanish predecessors had been.

Let us continue with a consideration of various examples of our bishop's pastoral actions, first dealing with those which can also be seen as stimulated by his patrician role.

In his battles with Captain General Meléndez Bruna, Bishop Arizmendi wielded his status as a leader and demanded respect and consideration from the governor. For Arizmendi, the role carried serious moral and patriotic responsibility. Loving the homeland meant defending it and enriching it spiritually, morally and materially.

Arizmendi did not live, as we do, in a secular state. The union of church and state existed in Spain and its colonies, a relationship that originated in the rights of royal patronage and was later broadened and reaffirmed by agreements. The church ruled on religious and moral matters but the state ruled on political and administrative matters.

With the Napoleonic invasion in early May of 1808, the Spanish people, leaderless after the monarchy's surrender, rose up heroically to defend the national territory on that historically glorious Second of May, 1808. To carry out their will to fight, organizations were improvised – provincial boards – that assumed responsibility for responding to the threats of that moment in history. Seville took the initiative by organizing the first provincial board with royal sovereignty and the first to declare war on "universal tyranny," the epithet that Bishop Arizmendi applied to Napoleon Bonaparte.

Our island would learn about these events on July 24, 1808, when two representatives of the Provincial Board of Seville arrived. They came with the task of impressing the governors of the grave crisis in Spain and at the same time to call on Puerto Rico to remain loyal.

Just ten days after this significant visit, Bishop Arizmendi, in a letter to Governor and Captain General Toribio Montes on August 3, 1808, proposed nothing less than the creation in San Juan of a provincial board subordinate to that of Seville, listing the "just reasons" for creating it.

It should be noted that the historical phenomenon of the "provincial boards" tied to the Hispano-American insurgent movement were not always originally an instrument of insurrectionists. There were some that were loyal to the Spanish Crown, although there were others that feigned loyalty as a revolutionary strategy.

In the aforementioned letter to the governor, the bishop noted that he had publicly stated how pleased he was with the creation of the "Supreme Board;" that his support for it had been announced by him, by the ecclesiastical council, the clergy and the priests... because the finest loyalty to the Almighty and the most unbreakable union with the Supreme Board is written in all our hearts..." That he had agreed to send the corresponding orders to the parishes in his diocese so that "...so that through prayer they can see the nature of the need to preserve the union and the loyalty of the Island to those rulers and the High Supreme Board that represents them." That they should "...use their influence to turn back and resist any temptations and seditions that may be promoted by traitors and to remain firm in upholding the rule of the Religion, the King and the Homeland..."

The Bishop believed the establishment of the Board "...would achieve a better union, indissolubility and a devout purpose for that Superior (Board) and would further the interests of all the ecclesiastical, military and political bodies in sustaining a common cause without offending any individual authority..."

Our prelate's audacious proposal fell on deaf ears. Governor and Captain General Montes took no action though he admitted he would like to. Why? Because the Seville Provisional Council had not been advised in advance, because the situations and needs that led to the founding of the entity in Spain did not exist on our island, and finally, given the difficult situation of the Royal Treasury because of the huge outlays demanded by the state of war with France, it was not possible to assume new obligations.

I suspect that Arizmendi's proposal was motivated by the hope that creating the Provisional Board according to the instructions of May 20, 1808, from the Seville Supreme Board, would reduce the absolute authority of the captain general by obligating him to allow other "authorities" to be involved.

On other occasions, Arizmendi was not creating a significant initiative as a leader, but was making us participants in the patriotic emotion he felt in the face of the recognition of civil rights for his people that had until then been denied. Declaring the Overseas Provinces (1-22-1809) to be an integral part of the Spanish monarchy granted them the right to representation in the Supreme Governing Council of the Kingdom. The five then existing councils met to elect a representative from each one. The five elected candidates later met at La Fortaleza (7-15-1809) to hold a drawing, and the good fortune fell to the Puerto Rican, a naval lieutenant, Ramón Power y Giralt.

All of these civic experiences and the new civic climate awakened hope and stimulated fervent affirmations of Puerto Rican feelings. Undeniable evidence of this was the instructions of four of the five existing councils. Those of Arecibo are unknown. The documents are also surprising for the civic maturity they present, for the awareness of their own rights, for their spirit of protest against excessive taxation, for example, the tithes, the payment of first fruit, the construction of churches, etc., and for the social problems of the sharecroppers and subsistence farmers. There was no lack of proposed political, economic and educational solutions. These instructions are a mature accounting of their problems. Also note the call for equal treatment for outstanding locals in terms of awarding posts, whether they had served in the royal service or not. These petitions are indicative of the treatment of those born on the

island. They also show the yearning for progress. Significant are the expressions of patriotic love, such as "Puerto Rico, beloved homeland of mine."

It is worth noting that within this new civic and patriotic climate the Honorable Arizmendi figured as a candidate for representative and was triumphant in Aguada. This shows that he identified with this climate of aspirations and patriotic sentiments. It also confirms his emotional statements during the courtesy visit by representative Power to the bishop and his council. It's also shown in the solemnity he hoped to bring to the office. The Ecclesiastic Council's Act of August 16, 1809, says that the cathedral was "ostentatiously decorated ... with the corresponding circumspection and gravity..." It was on this occasion that the Honorable Arizmendi impressed upon Power "...the need to faithfully follow the island's sentiments and hopes and take upon himself the cause of everyone..." Taking off his ring, he offered it to Power, "...so you can better remember this moment... and will always be tied to the resolve to protect and support the just rights of your compatriots... and to look with favor on all that is honorable, for your meekness, your loyalty, and other political and moral virtues (you possess)."

The Honorable Arizmendi did not shy away from taking stands. He defended, condemned, and argued as his religious and patriotic criteria demanded and proposed solutions in accordance with those criteria. For example, he condemned the granting of the so-called "absolute authority" decreed by the Regency Council on September 4, 1810. In a communication dated June 1, 1811, thanking the ruler for the repealing decree (February of 1811), he pointed out how "the Royal Order of the past September 4 was astonishing to the island because of the breadth of powers it gave to this Governor and Captain General, to the point of removing, at his discretion, an entire class of employees; however, also uniformly applauded was the repeal Your Majesty was so kind to offer through your Royal Decree of this past February 15" (1811). He felt obligated to "...to offer Your Majesty from myself and in the name of this entire faithful and very loyal city the most eloquent gratitude..."

This letter - an official document - shows us the emotional, even impassioned, character that ruled in much of Bishop Arizmendi's pastoral writing. Let us now consider other facets of his church duties: those of a zealous and vigilant pastor attending to facts and circumstances, uses and customs that he believed threatened the spiritual health of his flock.

Let us look at the following example taken from his general edict of his visit of March 21, 1805, when he was intensely disturbed by what he considered a lack of devotion and modesty by men and women in the temple.

To the shame of our times, or perhaps in punishment for our sins, we see that this serious place, where the only thing permissible is to appear like a Publican, crying tears of contrition and showing the deepest regret, is now the site of mundane gathering, where each one competes to show his pride, his licentiousness and his insolence. We see, I am pained to report, dissolute men and self-possessed women, displaying their vanity, vying for the attentions of Jesus Christ, and insulting the work of the truly faithful. In these sites of circumspection and seriousness, we see effeminate men, immodest and barely religious, who make a show of not bowing even before the Majesty and kneel like Aman before the secular altar to win the esteem of the idol whom they adore, and we see scandalous women who boast of being in the Holy House despite their mortal sins, which they continue to commit, and not only their unhappy accomplices, but also the indifferent cast their eyes on those such dangerous objects.

His impassioned defense of rigorousness continued to increase in the following paragraphs. At the end of the document, however, his austerity gave way, showing his more tender side and his love for his flock, sentiments that are seen commonly in his writing. We observe:

My dear ones... let us not work against our own nature, which leads us toward

peace, love and tenderness: what is asked of us from the core of Jesus Christ and what is expected of us is our due obedience, known piety and long-standing religion..."

If he was inflexible toward error, he was at the same time generous with those who repented or made amends. We know of two cases, though in truth the accounts are incomplete. In a letter from the guardian father of the San Francisco Convent, Friar Marcelino Reygada, on November 3, 1807, he comments on the sentiments of the prelate "...for not having fulfilled the request for brother Espina, for whom he feels badly because he has shown that he has mended his ways." The other case is that of the foreign vicar in Coamo, who appeared to have been suspended, and who wrote in his official letter of October 22, 1814, to the Ecclesiastic Council affirmed that "...only through the innate kindness of our Prelate Dr. D. Juan Alejo de Arizmendi (may God bless him) can I continue exercising the forensic discipline."

His moral severity and his impassioned apostolic zeal led him to adopt an attitude of violent opposition not only against theatrical productions that, with the approval of the captain general and the council, were offered by two traveling comics in an improvised theater in the city, but also a negative attitude toward the theater in general. With respect to the former, there were local circumstances that explain and diminish somewhat his excessive strictness. The events occurred in the second half of October in 1811. The bishop felt that considering the tragic circumstances affecting the nation due to "the persecution of universal tyranny," it was a time for penitence and prayer, not public festivities. And even more so when the Spanish Cortes itself requested public rogations to call on God to enlighten them in the arduous task of improving the political constitution of the nation and, even more serious, for the captivity suffered by His Holiness Pius VII and King Ferdinand. Another aggravating circumstance in the prelate's view was the state of poverty to which the population had been reduced by the continuous levies to help pay for the costs of the war and the lack of support from Spain. He felt it was not the most advisable time to begin putting on shows that could lead some to spend the little money they had for their sustenance. Further, the comedies were, according to the prelate's criteria, "far from morally wholesome." Such was the situation and despite the open opposition of the prelate to the shows, Captain General Meléndez decided to give a function to benefit the Hospital de la Caridad that was one of the most expensive efforts and was the cause of constant concern for the prelate. The benefit produced 500 pesetas, when the committee created to deliver the profits of the event to the prelate, with the approval of the high alderman D. Manuel Hernáiz and the artillery captain D. Andrés de Vizcarrondo, arrived at the bishop's palace, the prelate did not receive them and sent them away with thanks but refusing the donation, because he considered it to be poorly gotten and "very tainted." In reaction to the prelate's rejection, the captain general decided to give each of the patients in the hospital a half ounce (40 pesetas), and this effort was also repelled by the prelate, who forced the patients to return the gift. We need not dwell on the multiple incidents of this affair; I present it to you because I consider it illustrative of Bishop Arizmendi's moral temper.

Other elements of our prelate's character are shown in the orders with which he closed the visit to the parish books of various towns. Strict, minute, exact. These documents testify to what we already know about the Bishop Zengotita. It is amazing to see in these documents from the visit how scrupulously he had review the hundreds of entries of baptisms, marriages and deaths since the previous pastoral visit. Errors in each entry were pointed out, specifying the page on which they were found and the name of the person who received the sacrament or was buried. There is no question the work was done scrupulously. He pointed out the canonical violations, such as, for example, the "deformity," as he called it, of many of the baptism entries in which the parish priest served as "godfather." He criticized the priest's

negligence for a baptism entry in which the parents are unknown. "How is it possible that you have not investigated those responsible for such affronts as abandoning their children and exposing them to the loss of their souls and not having scolded them, advising them of their responsibility to the children?"

In his review of the parochial books, he also took care to see that they complied with the rule against defamatory notes in the entries. In one such case, he warned: "Also in the case of María Josefa which proceeds to the next page... the status of the mother and the circumstances in which she is found, to be made illegible as such stories are not the main purpose for the making of these entries." Of course his order was followed to the letter.

In other cases, he was forgiving. In other words, he checked his strictness when he saw virtues that compensated for failures of compliance. For example, although there was a fine of 50 reales for each entry (there are many, with date, page and number) in which the parish priest, as explained above, served as godfather, "...in consideration of the respectable reliquary that was donated for the sick and other services that were beneficial for the Parish itself..."

He showed considerable insistence that the parish books be separated according to the qualities of the persons: One set for whites, another for slaves and another for "mixed race and free blacks." This was the generalized church practice in the Spanish era, based on the social and judicial realities and reaffirmed by royal decree issued July 8, 1790. Of course before Arizmendi the books were kept separate in some parishes, but those were the minority. Most did not comply with the rule. What is clear is that the Honorable Arizmendi was insistent on the issue to the point that in most of the parishes the books were separated into classes beginning with his pastoral visit. In the parishes he never reached, it was his successors who made sure it was done.

Our prelate's insistence may be related to an incident that occurred in 1803 when he was bishop-elect. Let's look. Francisco Vergara approached the Priest to request the transfer of marriage entries of his paternal grandfather and a brother-in-law from the "Book of mixed-race and slaves" to the "whites." The texts of the case suggest that the grandfather was "...markedly white in the nature of his origin" but had married "with notable inequality" to a "free mixed-race" woman. The official opposed the transfer based on the aforementioned royal order of July 8, 1790, and the priest concurred with the decision, according to his report of December 20, 1803. Vergara did not accept the ruling, believing that the priest who made the entry was motivated by feelings of animosity toward his grandfather, and he appealed to the Indies Council. Given the charges, the council decided to begin an evaluation of the criteria used in making entries into the parochial books of the churches in the American colonies. A royal notice was issued on November 26, 1841, for this purpose, to both the civil and ecclesiastic authorities in the Indies. The separation of the parochial books continued just the same, however, until the sixth decade of the nineteenth century when Bishop Dr. D. Gil Esteve (February 10, 1849, to August 2, 1853) issued the order in the course of his pastoral visits to the parishes of the island in 1850 and 1851.

Bishop Arizmendi, we have seen, insisted on compliance with the royal orders related to the separation into classes of the parochial books. However, he never issued judgment on the pertinence of that practice. On the contrary, he admonished the children of white parents who were incapable of controlling their passions and violated family law. Later they would approach the priest, hoping that their error would be put right by the transfer from one parish book to another, alleging an error or revenge.

Liturgical purity was another of the prelate's serious concerns. He forced a refund to be given to the Coamo Parish for the cost of the black chasuble cloth "...because it was made of cotton fabric not appropriate for use in adornments..." and he found it strange that the Parish Priest had allowed "...a chasuble made of prohibited fabric..." He scolded Cayey for the "dirtiness or indecency" of the holy vestments, especially the robes, the chasuble and the

black and purple capes. Because he felt he had been careless with the parish priest, he ordered that the prelate finance the vestments with good fabrics and trimmings, to relieve his conscience. He also expressed concern for the images that many times appeared "ridiculous and without any conformance to the prototypes they represented." In other cases, the chapel was the object of his concerns and he gave precise instructions on its decoration. In yet other cases, it was the altar.

The "cleanliness and decency" of the churches is nearly a *leitmotif* in the general records of his visits. He was constantly worried that the temples and vestments be at least respectable if they could not shine with the splendor worthy of the worship of "His Divine Majesty." In these concerns, it seems we can see a personal detail. His Honor Arizmendi must have been a very neat and elegant man in his personal appearance. He did not ignore a single detail in the vestment or decency of the temples that might not measure up. In light of this it is interesting that in the year of Bishop Arizmendi's death the cathedral superintendent wrote to the Council and told them that the two wigs that complemented the attire he wore for religious functions were nearly useless; that in life the Honorable Bishop had sent a peso to a craftsman who kept them combed and powdered but since the bishop's death nobody had been interested in that.

His sense of justice was also a distinctive note of his episcopate. Observe, in the example I give below, how he demarcates the responsibilities and privileges of the ecclesiastical order from those that were civil or secular in nature. It was one of the first decisions of his episcopate (May 14, 1804) or possibly the first, after having returned from his consecration in Caracas. The War Auditor, who had been charged with determining the reasons for the scarcity of meat in the capital and to force the ranchers to comply with their obligatory contributions, discovered that some church officials who owned considerable ranches and raised livestock, such as the parish priests of Arecibo, Caguas, Tuna and Mayagüez, and other presbyters, had resisted complying with their obligation. The auditor lodged the complaint with the prelate, who reprimanded his priests for acting like debtors and refusing to meet their obligations when they, as distinguished vassals, should be serving as good examples. And when the priests argued that the tax was a violation of their rights and privileges, the prelate pointed out their mistake by clarifying that clergy who voluntarily became owners of secular property were subject to ordinary and extraordinary fees. They should not take refuge in their privileges to avoid such responsibilities nor consider it a violation of their rights to pay legitimate taxes on their secular property.

Counterpart to the strictness with which he exercised his ministry is his love, the intimate tenderness of the shepherd for his flock. This image was a symbol of his ministry, not only for the frequency with which he used it, but also for the way in which he understood it and made it reality. It is present in the loving protection, the zealous vigilance, in the strictness with which he reprimanded as well as the human understanding and forgiveness. "The flock," he reminded us, "are all the souls redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Almighty, from whom we receive this charge, with the help of your grace we recognize that they are truly your flock..."

His crook, "the curved crook that the Lord in his infinite mercy has served to put in our hands..." with this shape "...that our Holy Church has made handy to guide us, without hurting us, to direct us focus on the preservation of the Catholic Religion, for the universal benefit of the Church, and to keep ourselves in your heart with love for our Holy Faith, our Lord, and our beloved homeland."

This image and symbol, of a shepherd with his flock, I repeat, is always impregnated with such strong sentiments and such a tone of his temperament that it does not give the impression of being merely a cliché that is repeated, a simple stereotyped phrase. But let's move from the words to the facts. Let's see how the prelate acted on this loving and vigilant relationship of shepherd and flock.

The example I want to give is from a document circulated by the prelate soliciting donations to support the costs of the war with France. The calls for help were extremely frequent, not just beginning with the Napoleonic invasion, but also in prior years. It appears that the prelate was a little concerned that his flock was being pressed too much. He understood the urgency of the need and he made the call for help he had been charged with. But it seems that in his conscience he debated between two strong feelings: patriotic duty to the national soil, made vulnerable by the French intrusion, and love for his flock, whose poverty worried him and whose docility and simplicity he thought could be abused. Certainly, he called for donations, but he made certain comments so that his flock would not be left in want; he advised them that the gift should be discreet. Let's listen:

...Our donations, my beloved children, are the price of peace, and the necessity is palpable to each of us. The intent is not to sacrifice our families and reduce ourselves to destitution, nor would that be the best nor appropriate policy for a Pastor who loves Jesus Christ... may God forbid that we even think that the water we ask for in the name of the King would be drunk by those poor defenders of our homeland..."

And, to put an end to this statement, and in light of the examples presented – there are many more – there is the sudden and imperative presence of another example: of how our Arizmendi personally attended to the poor at the door to his palace, sheltering there the indigent and sick. And how it perturbed his spirit not to be able to do the same with sick women! Let us incorporate his most outstanding example, the charity and resplendent virtue of our first and only Puerto Rican bishop in a prolonged period of four and a half centuries of our history (1508-1960) and consider it paying tribute. It was in 1960, during the pontificate of Pope John XXII, that the second man born on our island was named bishop, today His Excellency Luis Cardenal Aponte Martínez.