

## November 30, 1963 ANDRES BONIFACIO BIRTH CENTENARY

### ANDRES BONIFACIO (Father of Philippine Democracy)

A hundred years ago on November 30, 1863, a boy who was destined to become the Father of Philippine Democracy, was born in a nipa shack in Tondo, Manila. His father, Santiago Bonifacio, a tailor and his mother, Catalina de Castro, a housekeeper, were both poor. This boy was Andres Bonifacio.

Andres was an honest hardworking boy who, at the age of 14, had to leave school to look after his three younger brothers and one sister, when their parents died. He sold canes and paper fans on the streets and worked as a messenger in a business concern. Because of his industriousness, he was promoted to the position of agent in that business concern. He earned a decent living in his humble way.

He struggled hard for his education. An intelligent wide reader. Andres spent his spare time improving himself by reading. He read Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, *Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo, *The Ruis of Palmira*, *The French Revolution* and the Bible. He was a voracious reader, but the book that awakened his spirit of rebellion was the French Revolution.

He married Gregoria de Jesus, known as Oriang (nickname for Gregoria) who was devoted not only to her husband, but also to the cause of Freedom. Together, they worged for the "cause."

In 1872, Filipinos began to form societies to promote union among the Filipinos in their fight for freedom from Spanish oppression. On July 7, 1892, Andres Bonifacio founded the Katipunan, the shortened name of the association, *Kataastaasan Kagalanggalang Katipunan nang Mga Anak ng Bayan* (The Most High and Respectable Association of the Sons of the Country).

The Katipunan aimed to overthrow Spanish rule, rescue Rizal from his exile in Dapitan and establish an independent Filipino state. It was a secret organization where members signed with their own blood their affiliation as a token of loyalty.

The society spread rapidly in Manila and in many parts of the Philippines. On August 26, 1896, the first stand of the Katipunan was made at Balintawak with the cry of "Long Live the Philippine Republic." This started the upsprings that led to the Spanish rule in the islands.

As the organizer of the Katipunan, Andres is known as the "Founder of the Katipunan" and as the leader in the famous "First Cry of Balintawak" he is known as the "Father of the Philippine Democracy" or thr "Father of the Philippine Revolution."

Bonifacio died in Marigondon on May 10, 1897 under circumstances which history has yet to clear up. He was a victim of a factional struggle for power among the forces of the Revolution and was charged of disrupting the unity. He denied the charge and returned to his own forces.



However, Bonifacio was already immortal when he was assassinated in an "execution" which in the memoirs of President Emilio Aguinaldo "he did not approve of at heart but which was virtually forced upon him by two or three of his generals." The Bureau of Posts commemorates the centenary of his birth with the issue of the Andres Bonifacio Centenary Stamps. The multicolored, 25.7 x 41.1 mm stamp was designed by Nemesio Dimanlig, Jr., philatelic artist.

The stamps were printed in sheets of 50 by heliogravure process by Courvoisier S.A., Switzerland in quantities of three million of the 5-centavo denomination, six million of the 6-centavo denomination and one million of the 25-centavo denomination.

The bust of Andres Bonifacio is vertically composed on the stamps with the word "Pilipinas" on top and the word "Koreo" and the denomination running across the bottom.

More familiarly known as "The Great Plebian," we honor Andres Bonifacio on the centenary of his birth and bring to light again the inspiring story of a poor Filipino boy who became famous and rose as a national hero in the same stature as Rizal.

