

June 30, 1969
80th ANNIVERSARY OF THE RETURN OF THE SANTO NIÑO DE LEYTE TO TACLOBAN

SANTO NIÑO DE LEYTE STAMPS
(The Miraculous Patron of Tacloban City)
June 30, 1969

The original feast day of the Santo Niño de Leyte was the third Sunday of January. But the people of Tacloban changed the date to the 30th of June every year after the image was lost in a shipwreck and miraculously found off the coast of Samirara Island in Mindoro and returned to Tacloban in the year 1889.

According to history, the image was sent to Manila for restoration in preparation for an elaborate celebration of the town fiesta in 1889. The day of the fiesta came, but the image did not arrive and the celebration did not materialize. The boat "Luzon" carrying the image had caught fire at sea between Mindoro and Romblon on the 15th of January of that year. To save the ship, the crew had to throw all its cargo overboard, including the crate containing the image.

Nothing was heard of the image for some time. Thinking that the image was forever lost, the Hermandad was considering the purchase of a new one.

But in May of that year the Governor wrote to the Military Governor of Leyte, Jose Gil de Avalle, informing that the barrio teniente of Semirara, an island off Mindoro, had salvaged a crate from the sea with markings for Tacloban as its destination. The crate, heavy as it was, had not sunk and was intact.

The Hermano Mayor and the members of the Hermandad chartered the boat "Consuelo" of Don Emilio Yu Biao to arrange for the return of the image from Semirara. At that time, a cholera epidemic gripped Tacloban and other towns of Leyte. The death toll was very high. In the afternoon of the 30th of June, 1889, the boat "Consuelo," carrying the beloved Santo Niño, docked at Panalaron, Tacloban, amidst great rejoicing of the people. Miraculously, the toll of the deadly cholera immediately subsided and eventually disappeared.

To commemorate the day of the return of the image to Leyte, the townspeople set aside the 30th of June as the very special day of rejoicing and thanksgiving to the Santo Niño.

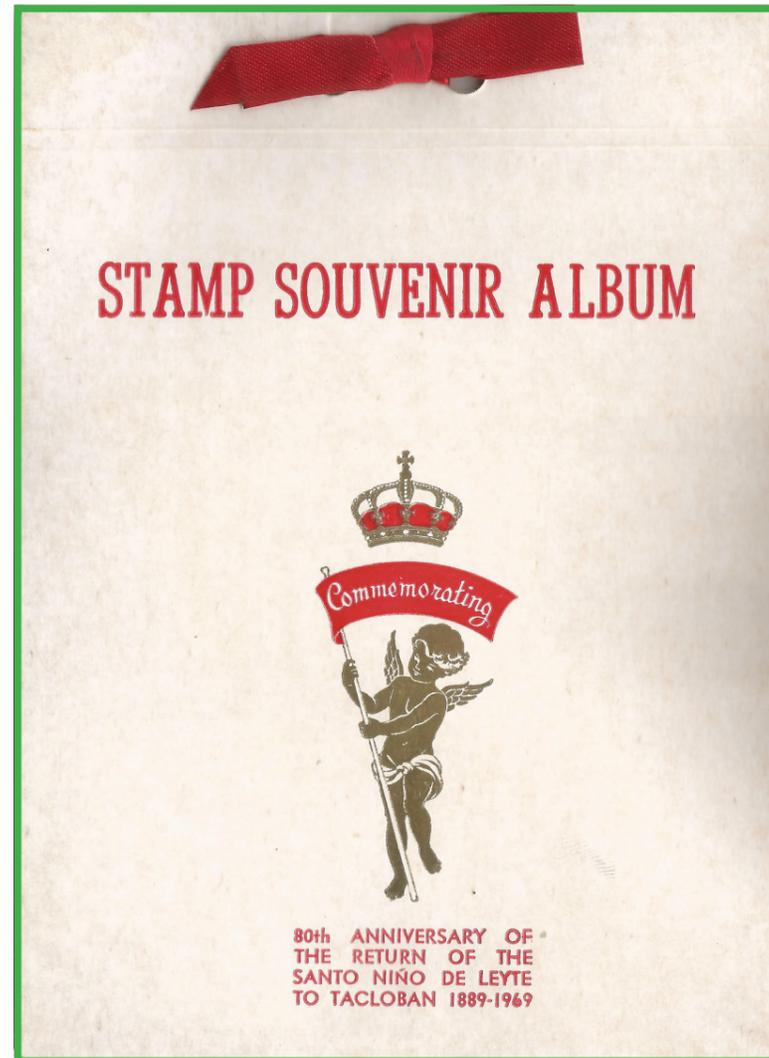
Thus, the change of the date of Tacloban's town fiesta from the third Sunday of January to the 30th of June every year.

On June 1, 1967, His Excellency, the Most Rev. Teotimo C. Pacis, D.D., Bishop of Palo, proclaimed the Santo Niño as the Heavenly Patron of Leyte.

This year's Hermano Mayor is Mr. Eduardo Z. Romualdez, Secretary of Finance. Joining the people of Tacloban in commemorating the fiesta of the Santo Niño is the Postmaster General who, today is pleased to issue a set of commemorative postage stamps.

The stamps measure 30x51 mm, perforation to perforation; printed in denominations of 5, 10 and 40 centavos; by heliogravure process in sheets of 50 by the Government Printing Bureau of Tokyo; and especially designed by supervising philatelic artist Nemesio Dimanlig, Jr.

Devotion to the Santo Niño of Leyte culminates in a province-wide religious celebration, particularly Tacloban, led by the Hermano Mayor of the year.



Festivities are climaxed by a procession - fluvial and land - which is a re-enactment of that historic, providential and dramatic return of the image of the Santo Niño to the people of Tacloban.

An interesting feature of the procession is a group of children whose entire bodies are blackened with charcoal and who are made up to represent Negritos, a group of aborigines of Mindoro.

These Negritos dance joyfully before the image to the rhythmic beating of drums. This dance is in effect a spiritual ritual depicting the Filipino's love for the hadihadi or moro-moro, where the battles between the Christian and the infidels are portrayed.

The land procession with the Santo Niño as the central figure, set on an ornate, brightly lighted carro (float) wend its way from the wharf through the main streets of the town to the church.

