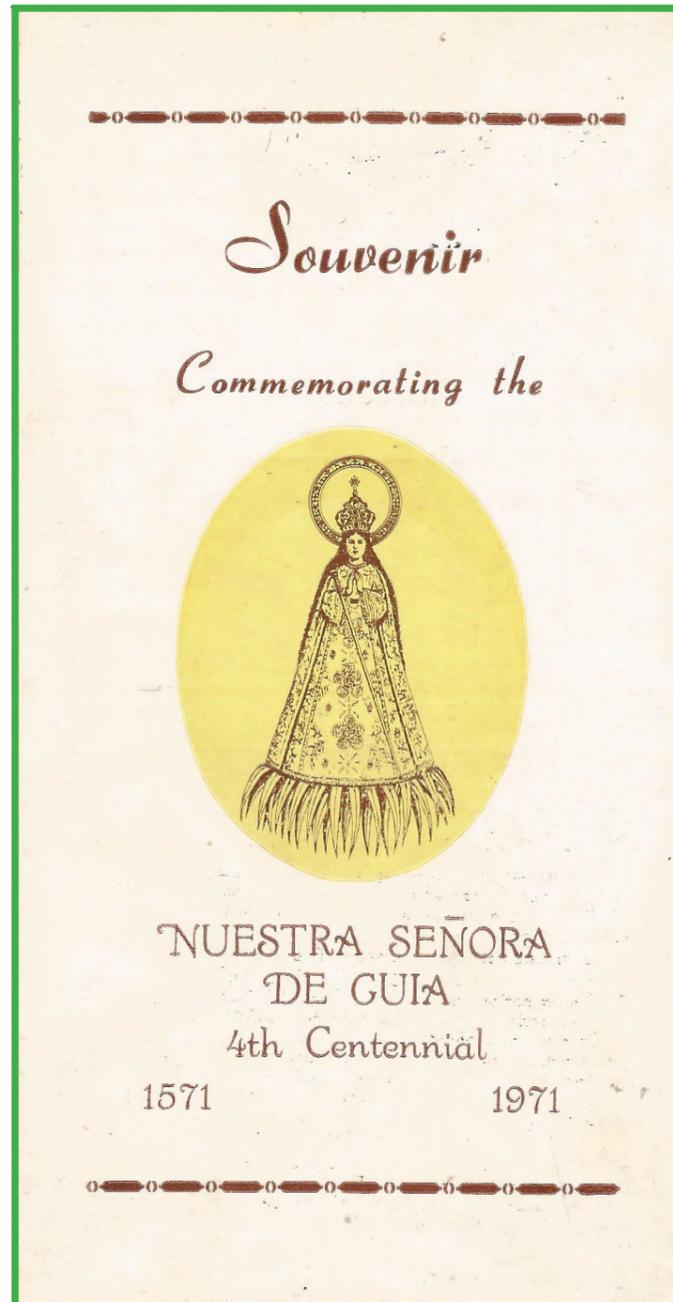


August 16, 1971
NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUIA - 4th CENTENNIAL



NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUIA 4TH CENTENNIAL

The Bureau of Posts issues today, August 16, 1971 a set of stamps commemorating the 4th centennial of the finding of the Image of the Nuestra Señora de Guia in Ermita, Manila.

Particulars of the commemorative stamps:

Size:	33x48 mm printed size
Denomination:	10-sentimo - 1.000.000
and Quantity:	75-sentimo - 1.000.000
Stamps in a Sheet:	50
Printing Process:	Heliogravure (5 colors)
Printer:	Government Printing Bureau (Tokyo, Japan)
Designer:	Nemesio Dimanlig, Jr., (Chief Philatelic Designer)

A Marian devotee going into the church of Ermita on M.H. del Pilar near Plaza Ferguson will see on the main altar a small, morena statue of our Lady, dressed in the resplendent robes of a queen.

This revered produce of a 13th-century Flemish wood sculptor was for many years the central figure of rich and colorful ceremonies among the residents of what was formerly known as the most aristocratic residential district of Manila. But since World War II, with hotels, dress shops and supermarkets sprouting over all of Ermita, her devotees dwindled to a very small staunch few.

The shrine where this little statue of a queen stands today, is historically speaking, the foremost among Marian shrines in the Philippines. This venerable image of Nuestra Señora de Guia in Ermita Church was here before any other image of the Blessed Mother ever set foot on Philippine shores and it was in Ermita even before Legaspi ever discovered the fishing village now called Manila.

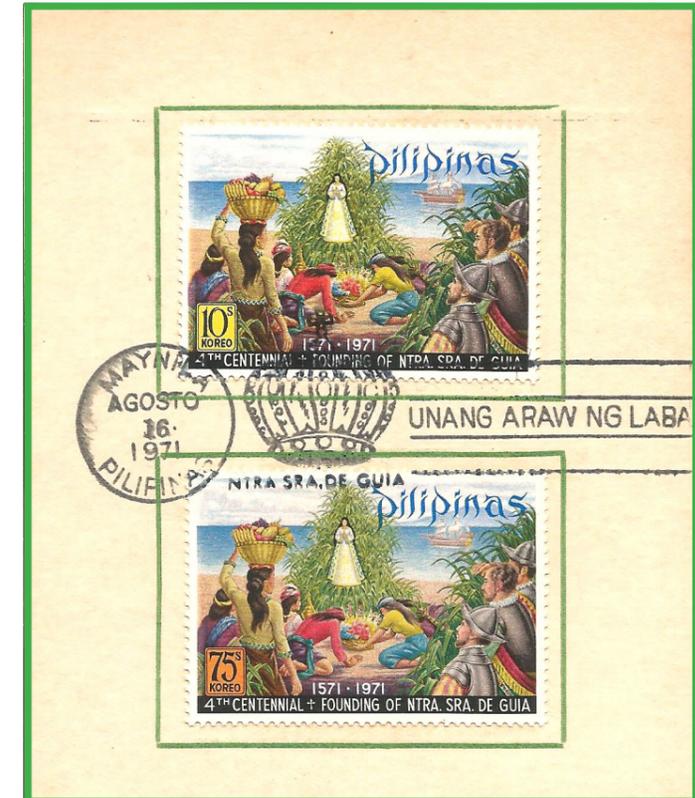
With the designation of the year 1954 as Marian year, Nuestra Señora de Guia takes on added importance. The reason is obvious: the Marian year is the centenary of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and Nuestra Señora de Guia is - though not many seem to realize this - the first statue of the Immaculate Conception ever set eyes upon by Filipinos.

The image was found on the shores of Manila on May 19, 1571 by a Spanish navy private newly arrived with the Legaspi expedition. For what reason, in what manner and by whom it came to be where it was - no one seems to know. But its close resemblance to the Sto. Niño of Cebu have made everyone believe that it must have been brought to the Philippines in 1521 by Magellan's own ships and later sent by the Cebu native chiefs as a gift to one of the many rajahs of Manila.

The lucky but now nameless soldier found the image on top of a pandan bush surrounded by natives who were adoring it in pagan fashion.

As soon as his commander's attention was called to the discovery, there was great celebration and rejoicing. From that days, says the Anales de la Catedral de Manila, the Virgin de Guia "began to shed the rays of her charity in ever so many miracles which she wrought in behalf of the people at large and specially in behalf of the Navigators. For this reason she was given the title of Guia (Guide) and was declared the Patroness of the Galleons of Castille."

In a Royal Decree dated August 9, 1758 the King of Spain declared Nuestra Señora de Guia as the "Sworn Patroness" of the city by reason of the continual favors that she lavished on it.



The first church where the well-loved patroness was enshrined was of "bamboo and nipa, with posts of molave and palambrava." Later when the chinese pirates stopped molesting the shores of Manila and gave the Spanish colonists time to construct something more permanent, a Church of stone was built. This was demolished by earthquake in 1645; rebuilt in 1666; ruined in 1706 and rebuilt 1712; captured by the British in 1762; ruined by the earthquake of 1771 and rebuilt in 1810; bombed out in 1945.

In this latest catastrophe, the famous statue was saved by the Ermita parish priest, Fr. Blas de Garnice and Mr. and Mrs. Justo N. Lopez, who secretly "buried" the statue in one of the niches of the crypt at the back of the mail altar, a few weeks before liberation.

On the days of Liberation of the District of Ermita, in February 1945, while the Japanese snipers were still shooting from every side, V. Rev. Fr. Rogelio Bedoña with a chaplain and four soldiers of the American Army, went to the ruins of what had been the Church of Ermita, dug up the sacred image of our Lady from the debris of the crypt and brought it to a safer place. Since then, until the construction of the now existing chapel, the sacred Image stayed in a private house in Taft Avenue in San Miguel de Mayumo and finally in Quiapo Church.

The First Mass celebrated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI in the Philippines on November 27, 1970 at the Manila Cathedral was presided by this image. After the Mass, His Holiness blessed and kissed the hands of the Image.