



UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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TO : THE THOMASIAN COMMUNITY

FROM : OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

RE : OUR LADY OF THE HOLY ROSARY AND THE UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS

DATE : 7 OCTOBER 2021

Thomasians hold dear the devotion to *Our Lady of the Holy Rosary*, not only because of the intimate link of the devotion to UST's history, but also because the Philippines has always been described as *un Pueblo amante de María*—a country in love with Mary.

Today, October 7, we celebrate in the Universal Church the feast of *Our Lady of the Holy Rosary*. It was instituted under another name, 450 years ago, when Pope Pius V instituted the feast of *Our Lady of Victory* in thanksgiving for Mary's patronage in the victory of the Battle of Lepanto (1571). Two years later, Pope Gregory XIII changed the title of this feast to the feast of *Our Lady of the Holy Rosary*.

A year after the Dominicans arrived in the Philippines in 1587, the community headed by its first Prior, Fr. Diego de Soria, OP, transferred to their motherhouse, the first and wooden Santo Domingo Convent in Manila, where an image of our Lady of the Holy Rosary was enshrined while "*the candles in the chapel of our Lady burned without wasting.*"¹

The Foundation Act of 1611 invokes the Almighty God and places the *Colegio* under the advocacy of Our Lady of the Rosary.² Initially, the title *Colegio de Nuestra Señora del Rosario* was used until after 1623 when *Colegio de Santo Tomás de Aquino* became its definitive title.³ Now, we know the *Colegio* as the University of Santo Tomas.

Furthermore, the devotion to Our Lady of the Rosary is also associated with the Battles of La Naval in 1646, when the Spanish and Filipino soldiers fought, with faith and for their faith, against the mightier and more heavily armed Dutch invaders. They incessantly prayed the rosary while the battles were raging. The miraculous victory was declared as an event of Divine intervention, and was also attributed to the intercession of the Blessed Mother. The victorious soldiers returned to Manila to fulfill their vow of walking barefooted ("*in nudis pedibus*") toward the old Santo Domingo Church in Intramuros.

In 1941, the shrine of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary – *La Naval de Manila* – and UST in Intramuros were bombed as the archipelago felt the effects of the Second World War. The miraculous image was safely hidden in the old church's vault, and was later transferred to the chapel of the University of Santo Tomas in Sampaloc.



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On 21 March 1942, Archbishop Michael O’Doherty of Manila issued a decree establishing the *Santísimo Rosario Parish* inside the University with the UST chapel serving as the parish church.⁴ Less than a month later, the Archbishop appointed its first Dominican Parish Priest in the person of Fr. Emiliano Serrano, OP, a UST professor, who had Fr. Ángel Fernández, OP and Fr. Benito Vargas, OP, the first Filipino Dominican, as his assistants. The first fiesta⁵ celebration of the *Santísimo Rosario Parish*, set on October 7, was graced by the presence of the historic image of *La Naval*, and it was so yearly until 1954, when the image was enshrined in present-day Santo Domingo Church, Quezon City.

As we meditate upon the mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, may we imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise. May the Thomasian community remain steadfast in faith as we face another battle, the COVID-19 pandemic, and any battle in life for that matter “in celebration of a battle fought and won; a vow made and fulfilled; a time remembered and held dear; a miracle experienced and kept alive; love received and returned: Our Lady’s patronage sought and thanked for: God praised, God adored.”⁶

His Holiness Pope Francis exhorts us: “I invite you to pray the rosary, and to carry it in your hands or in your pockets. The recitation of the rosary is the most beautiful prayer we can offer to the Virgin Mary; it is a contemplation on the stages of the life of Jesus the Savior with His Mother Mary and is a weapon that protects us from evils and temptations.”⁷


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Secretary-General

¹ cf. “History of the Dominican Province of the Holy Rosary” in *The Philippine Islands: 1493-1803*, pp.139 and 142.

² Fort, Baltasar OP, Minayo, Francisco OP, y de Santa Catalina, Bernardo OP, *Escritura de la Fundación del Colegio de Santo Tomás*, 28 Abril 1611: “En el nombre de Dios Todopoderoso, Padre, Hijo, y Espíritu Santo, y a honor de la siempre Virgen María, a la cual, debajo de la advocación de su **Santísimo Rosario**, se ofrece, y toma por Patrona de la obra, que abajo será declarada, por serlo también de la Religión de Predicadores del Patriarca Santo Domingo”; AUST, libros 48, doc. 1.

³ cf. Villaroel, Fidel OP, *A History of the University of Santo Tomas*, Vol. I, p.41.

⁴ Dominican Province of the Holy Rosary, *Acta Capituli*, Manila 1947, Appendix ix, pp.131-132.

⁵ It was later established that the first Sunday of October is to be the fiesta of the *Santísimo Rosario Parish*-UST while the second Sunday is reserved for *La Naval*.

⁶ cf. *Novena to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary - La Naval de Manila*.

⁷ Pope Francis, *General Audience*, 7 October 2020.

