

Magnificent Regalia

The Filipino people dress the statue at Manaoag in splendid vestments, sewing precious gems into cloth-of-gold embroidery, with diamonds and rubies flashing among the precious metals of her triple crown. Many dozens of these robes have been fashioned for the statue, changing with seasons and feasts. The woman herself, and her child, seem quite lost among all the finery, and what catches our eye is not the Madonna herself, or her Son, but her apparel. Some are put off by what seems over-the-top doll costumes, but the regalia is actually an expression of devotion in their culture. Filipinos, like most peoples in Asia, love to see their esteemed leaders and divinities in the finest vesture and head pieces. The “Santo Niño” of Cebú is another such image. A 12-inch wooden statue of the child Jesus given by Ferdinand Magellan to a Filipino king in 1521, it is the oldest and most-venerated Christian artifact in the Philippine Islands. The people show their veneration for Christ as a child emperor by vesting him in the most gorgeous imperial regalia.



Appreciation for titles and authority, and love for regalia and pageantry, are common to most cultures, but a particular mark of devotion in Filipino culture.

The Santo Niño de Cebú statue

Our Statue at Star of the Sea

The Manaoag statue commissioned for our shrine in San Francisco is a bit simpler than the original statue of Manaoag. Our Lady's face is not surrounded by a gold-laced collar but fully visible in her motherly tenderness. The crown atop her head and the halo rising high above contain no diamonds, rubies or silver pendants. She looks down kindly rather than staring straight ahead. Her robes are full but simple, without jewels and spectacular embroidery. I wanted to portray her more as mother than empress, as I think she would have appeared to the poor farmer in 1602. Some will object to the simplicity of a statue of Our Lady in Manaoag that they are accustomed to see in splendid regalia, but I think our statue strikes a balance between imperial splendor and motherly simplicity.

The Favors She Promised in 1602

In the early Spanish era, animist tribes often attacked and pillaged Christian villages. At one point they burned the village of Manaoag but could not set fire to the church itself, into which many villagers had taken refuge. Despite dozens of flaming arrows raining upon the thatch roof, the church did not catch fire while the village burned around it. In the Second World War, Japanese planes dropped four bombs on the church. Three landed on the plaza in front and detonated, but the bomb that landed on the church itself did not explode. The church was not significantly damaged. Many other miracles are attested to the faith of pilgrims that pray to Jesus through Our Lady of Manaoag. The greatest miracle, however, is faith in God. Despite aggressive cultural secularization, the Christian faith and the Christian family remains strong in the Philippines, thanks in part to Our Lady of Manaoag.

Our Lady of Manaoag Historical Facts and Essential Messages of Our Lady in 1602



Welcome to Our Lady's Shrine here in San Francisco. In this pamphlet, prepared by our pastor, Fr. Joseph Illo, you will learn the basic facts and message of this apparition. You are encouraged to spend some time in quiet prayer and perhaps go to confession. Please keep a reverent silence in the Church, especially when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed.

Star of the Sea Church

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What: One apparition of Our Lady

Where: Philippine Islands

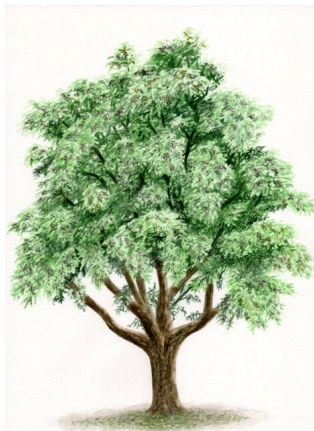
When: about the year 1602

To Whom: a poor farmer

Documentation from 1610 attests to an apparition of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary 125 miles north of Manila, in the province of Pangasinan. Three religious orders had tried but failed to evangelize the local animists (nature worshippers) of this region: the Augustinians in 1575, the Franciscans a few years later, and the Dominicans in 1587. According to a pious tradition, Our Lady appeared to St. Dominic in the 13th century, entrusting the rosary to him. Unsurprisingly, therefore, when the Dominicans built a chapel in the village of Manaoag in 1605, they dedicated it to Our Lady of the Rosary. But in Manaoag, the chapel was dedicated to the Holy Rosary because of what had happened there a few years earlier. Let me tell you the story.

Around 1602 a poor farmer was walking home after a hard day in the fields. The fading light added to his discouragement at trying to scratch out a living for his family from land that was often raided by enemy

tribes. He made an act of faith in God, however, and saw a bright light near Baloking Creek. The light emanated from a Molave tree, from a woman holding a child among its branches.



The Molave tree

Build a Shrine

The farmer was naturally frightened at this preternatural vision in the gloaming, and his animist elders had taught him to fear malevolent river spirits and woodland demons. Who



were these supernatural beings, a woman and child standing in a luminous cloud among the limbs of a mighty Molave tree? He was about to run when the Lady spoke his name, and he

looked up at her smiling face. Her maternal tenderness won the farmer's trust and fortified his courage. "Son," she said in a wonderfully sweet voice, "I want a church built here in my honor. My children shall receive many favors in this place." The vision faded, and the farmer went home.

He told his wife, children, and relatives, who received the news with joy, but the parish priest, an educated Dominican, was skeptical at first. News of the apparition spread, and soon many were making the pilgrimage to the spot. When asked where they were going or wither they had come, many would simply reply *Dimad Apo ya Mantataoa* or "from the Lady who Calls." The place came to be known as *Manaoag*, from the word "to call" in that dialect. Manaoag is "the Place of God's Call."

Guadalupe and Manaoag

The similarities between Our Lady's apparition at Guadalupe in 1531 and her apparition in Manaoag in 1602 cannot be overlooked. In both cases she appeared in bright colors to a poor farmer, calling him by name, and asking him to build a "temple" in her honor so that her Son could be better known and loved by that people. At Guadalupe she called Juan Diego her "most beloved child" and herself "the most merciful mother of all who live together in this land." At Manaoag she called the anonymous farmer her "son" and all the Filipino people "her children" to whom she longed to give many favors. Skeptics will say that both Guadalupe and Manaoag were invented by Spanish missionaries to convert the simple native peoples; that the Filipino Madonna simply repeats the successful Spanish trickery at Guadalupe. But is it not more likely that the similarities simply attest to the same person in both cases? The Filipino

statue, though, unlike the Mexican image, is not miraculous. The Manaoag statue was probably made by a Spanish artist to portray the actual event. The statue and its spectacular vestments manifest Philippine Island faith and culture as they portray a miraculous event.



The venerated statue in the shrine basilica of Manaoag