



# La Tradición Popular

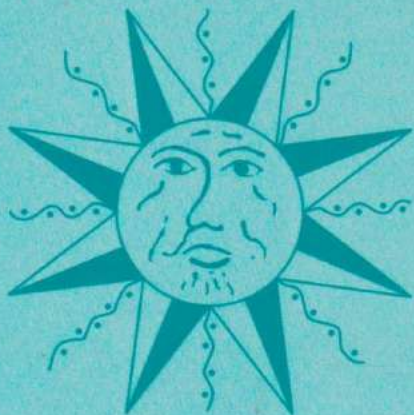
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## October, the Month of the Rosary and its Beginnings in Guatemala

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San Carlos de Guatemala University



# OCTOBER, THE MONTH OF THE ROSARY AND ITS BEGINNINGS IN GUATEMALA

Juan Alberto Sandoval Aldana.

The nineteenth century was a tumultuous era of change and stark contrasts whose consequences reach us to this day.

In the political aspect, it will suffice to recall that at the beginning of the third decade of the nineteenth century, the ties of political dependence with Spain were broken.

Although initially this might have seemed detrimental to the local conservative aristocracy, it turned out favorable with the promoted annexation of the territory to Mexico. The process concluded with the ratification of the absolute independence of the former provinces of the Kingdom of Guatemala on July 1st, 1823, marking the beginning of constitutional history.

The government of the Isthmus embraced the republican federalist system, which soon generates a deep crisis due to the differences between the members of the liberal and conservative parties, which quickly leads the federalist project to failure.

In the military sphere, internecine wars bled the region. Contrary to the interests of the *caudillos* of other countries that achieved their independence in the rest of the continent, who fought arduously to keep their borders intact, while in Central America the dispersion and atomization of power was favored. In the religious sphere, with the invasion of Guatemala by the liberal leader Francisco Morazán in 1829, the situation worsened, and the Church was not exempt because of the confiscation of the ecclesiastical goods, the St. Archbishop was disowned, and the expulsion

of the Orders and the main leaders of the conservative party was ordered.

The Guatemalan Church survived the first liberal onslaught of the century, which in addition to harshly attacking its doctrinal principles, generated a substantial material plundering that weakened it as an institution.

With the coming to power of the Conservative Party in 1839, the persecution ended temporarily, restoring the old hierarchies and privileges, a situation that allowed the return of religious institutions, resuming relations with the Holy See in 1852 by Pope Pius IX and the government of Guatemala.

When approaching the History of Central America from a scientific point of view, we find that the role played by the government of Guatemala during the so-called **Conservative Regime**, despite being labeled as obscurantist and retrograde by liberal thinkers, we can currently conclude that it has not really been studied in depth, and that definitive conclusions have yet to be written. During President Rafael Carrera's administration, people's beliefs and traditions were respected. Religious organizations, including old penitential, passionate, and sacramental confraternities formed by laypeople, were rescued; ideas of freedom and political equality were raised; moral and religious education was supported, and education, although clerical and conservative, was promoted; and the constituted authority was also defended. President Carrera led the country to absolute independence by creating the Republic of Guatemala in March 1847



under the system of the three powers, based on liberal concepts that were taken from the French ideology inspired by the ideas of *Montesquieu* and *Rosseau*.

The failed sixth state that emerged at the expense of the Guatemalan territory in 1849 was suppressed, denying during that time any other dissolution, which was confirmed in 1852 by defeating the invading army made up of Salvadoran and Honduran soldiers supported by mercenaries hired for the purpose, including soldiers who had fought against Napoleon during the invasion of the peninsula and lieutenants of General San Martin, in the battle fought in the fields of La Arada.

Returning to the religious aspect, the peaceful and monastic Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción from its settlement in the Valle de la Virgen, every day dawned with the ringing of bells, the smell of pine, and firecrackers for the celebration of the saints in some of its temples, including the *Day of the Rosary* commemorated on October 7 of each year, which had an unusual splendor.

Like all feast days, in the style of the great Roman celebrations, "*vespers*" were held during the nine days prior to the main day, and four novenas were prayed: The first was prayed by the artisans at four in the morning before starting their work, the second novena was prayed by the merchants before opening their stores at 8 in the morning, the third novena was prayed at ten in the morning by the elite ladies of the Novoguatemalan society, and the last preparatory novena was prayed by the servants of the manor houses at five in the afternoon, after they had already completed their household chores.

On the *Day of the Rosary*, festivities began at 3:00 a.m. with large bonfires on pyres formed by bundles of dry bramble and numerous ocote (Montezuma pine) branches that burned illuminating the streets around the temple until

sunrise.

The festivity was characterized by the "*Toque de Alba*" (dawn call) and the recitation of the *15 Mysteries Rosary* at 4 o'clock in the morning.

Since the signing of the Concordat of 1852 with the Holy See, the entire troop was deployed to the atrium of the Dominican Church to attend the midday Holy Mass, which was celebrated at the door; the soldiers were placed in the square, honoring Christ in the Eucharist at the time of the elevation with more freedom because they were outdoors, firing salvos, according to the military rhetoric that ruled at that time.

The full municipal government of the city also attended the temple, by its own mandate and right of patronage held by the Virgin of the Rosary since 1651.

At night, to conclude the acts, after the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament and the chant of the Salve Regina with two choirs and in Spanish, the solemnity ended with the "*Burning of the devil*" in front of the temple, among colored lights and other pyrotechnics appropriate to the feast. The devil was symbolically defeated by the Rosary of Mary in the presence of the numerous concurrence that at all hours had arrived to the enclosure to gain the indulgences of the *Jubilee of the Rosary* to "*Toties quoties*," after which they stayed to drink beverage in clay pots to pass the cold of the season and to taste dishes and sweets of the time, that were exposed to the sale in the surroundings of the temple.

On June 30, 1871, with the triumphal entry of the liberal army led by Licenciado Miguel García Granados and his colleague Justo Rufino Barrios Auyón, after achieving by armed means the overthrow of the President of Guatemala, Marshal Vicente Cerna, the period of the "*Conservative Peace*" came to an end,



introducing important reforms in Guatemalan society.

The separation between Church and State was once again established, a situation that led to the expulsion of Archbishop Bernardo Piñol Aycinena, who left the country amid protests and severe pronouncements against the actions of the supreme liberal government that had been left in interim power by Barrios Auyón, in the absence of Provisional President García Granados.

By means of Decree No. 64 dated June 7, 1872, signed by Barrios, the Religious Orders were again extinguished in Guatemala, including among them the Order of Preachers, being suppressed, simultaneously and as a consequence of the referred decree, all the male and female Confraternities and Brotherhoods.

For the second time, the law of religious freedom came into force, which was put into practice in a contradictory manner, due to the contrary public actions and the malicious persecution of the Catholic Church and its institutions, which was evidenced by the confiscation of its movable goods and treasures, its convents, houses, and sanctuaries, which were defined as "*Assets of dead hands.*"

According to the research by the foundation *Asociación de Amigos del País*, published in the *Dictionary of History of Guatemala*, to the departure of the Dominican Fathers led by the last Prior Fray José de Casamitjana, after having received the decree of expulsion, in their return trip to the peninsula, they decided to take with them what they could take from the treasure of the temple of Santo Domingo, among the prized possessions that were being exiled to avoid the plunder was the image of the Virgin of the Rosary, made in 1592 by the master silversmiths and goldsmiths Nicolás de Almayna, Lorenzo de Medina and Francisco

Bozarraes, which was deposited upon their arrival at the Dominican headquarters in Barcelona, Spain.

Meanwhile in Guatemala, according to the provisions of the supreme civil authority, all Catholic religious ceremonies had to be held inside the temples, without priests to preside over them, but the neighbors kept the flame of their faith alive and strong, relying on committed lay people and some religious who, without being consecrated or wearing any habit or external distinctive, remained in charge of the temples, whose headquarters were not completely abandoned.

Among them, *Julián Raymundo Riveiro y Jacinto*, who had arrived in Guatemala from Cobán, Alta Verapaz to join the service of the Church in the Dominican Minor Convent.

At the age of 23 he received priestly ordination and was consecrated priest on March 31, 1877, without encountering any opposition from the government of President Barrios, who also welcomed his investiture and appointment, that same year, as pastor of the church of Santo Domingo. This fact evidences the privilege that his family enjoyed in the political circles that held power at that time, thus distorting the dubious attribution of Father Riveiro as a sweeper and errand boy of Justo Rufino Barrios.

During 37 years of his life, he would dedicate himself to the rescue and diffusion of the devotion of the Rosary. During one of his trips to Europe he observed that the festivities of the triumph of the Rosary were prolonged for a month, so the Pontiff Leo XIII instituted this devotion in the Church of Santo Domingo of Guatemala with the name of *Pious Exercise of the devotion of the Month of October* or *Month of the Rosary* with its own meditation for each day after the novena in the year 1888.

Notwithstanding the above, the Dominican



friar Miguel Fernandez Concha, in his unpublished manuscript "*Liber Aureus*" dated 1906, states that *"In the year 1877 the same father Riveiro to celebrate the month of October dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, increasing the pomp from year to year."*

The devotion must have extended in a parallel way to the cities where there is a canonically established Rosary Confraternity, being these the Church of El Espíritu Santo in Quetzaltenango, La Merced in La Antigua Guatemala and the Church of San Juan Bautista in Amatitlán.

He founded several associations in Santo Domingo, among them the *Asociaciones del Rosario Perpetuo* and *Rosario Viviente*, with the verses of the Hymn of the Perpetual Rosary written by Father Federico Virto and the stanzas of the Hymn of the Guards by *Licenciado* Juan Fermín y Aycinena. The music of both was written by Maestro Alfonso Méndez.

According to the aforementioned *Dictionary of History of Guatemala*, published by the *Fundación de Amigos del País*, in 1890 Father Riveiro y Jacinto was responsible for bringing back to Guatemala the image of Our Lady of the Rosary along with other movable goods of the convent, receiving it from Father José de Casamitjana in Barcelona and occupying once again a special place in the Church of Santo Domingo in Guatemala.

At the end of the XIX century, the primitive form in which the month of the Rosary was celebrated since 1877, described by Father Fernandez Concha in the manuscript of his authorship prepared for the commemoration of the first centenary of the temple of Santo Domingo, can be found detailed as follows: *"during the month of October dedicated to the Virgin of the Rosary, in accordance with the provisions of Father Riveiro himself, the first two Sundays corresponded to the*

*Confraternity of the Rosary, the third Sunday corresponded to the Guardians of the Living Rosary, the fourth Sunday to the Guards of the Perpetual Rosary. Every Sunday there was a solemn procession forming its structural 'corpus', led by the high Parish Cross and processional candle holders. Following in order were the Church banner, the banner of Saint Imelda, the banner of the Holy Burial, the banner of the Brotherhood of the Rosary, the banner of the Angelic Militia, the banner of Lepanto, the banner of the Holy Name of Jesus, the banners of the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries—each with banners for the 5 Mysteries, totaling 15—the Banner of the Living Rosary, the Silver Banner of the Rosary Confraternity, the Banner of the Perpetual Rosary, the Silver Banner of the Order of Preachers, the Banner of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the Banner of the Guardians of the Living Rosary. In two-by-two formation came the Leaders of the Perpetual Rosary, followed by an image of the Virgin Mary carried on a float, the priest, and a musical group. On November 1st, All Saints' Day, the conclusion of the month took place, after the procession and mass a "Triumph of the Holy Eucharist" was performed to the echoes of the royal funeral march "La Granadera" under the vaults of the temple, preceded by a multitude of banners and under canopy the August Sacrament was carried forming a fence, the Chiefs of the Perpetual Rosary, the Guardians of the Living Rosary and the Guards of the Perpetual Rosary, candle in hand, traveled the aisles of the temple to the beat of the peal. Once they reached the main altar, all the flags and banners were placed on the floor of the central nave to form a carpet over which the celebrant passed, raising in his hands the very rich monstrance with the Sacred Form, blessing those present who sang the Salve, prior to the "death knell" which was rung with the bell called "Del Rosario", cast in 1747.*



After more than 130 consecutive years, for the first time the Month of the Rosary will conclude in the Dominican main house in Guatemala until November 8, 2008, to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the inauguration and opening for worship of the Temple of Saint Dominic, currently the Minor Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary.

### Annexes

#### HIMNO DEL ROSARIO VIVIENTE HYMN OF THE LIVING ROSARY

Lyrics: Federico Virto. Priest.

Music: Alfonso Méndez

#### CHORUS

¡VIVA!, ¡VIVA! Los Sacros pendones más arriba hasta el cielo elevad, ¡Adelante subid corazones!. Se María a las plantas llegad.	Long Live! Long Live! Raise the Sacred Banners, lift them higher up to the sky! Onward, lift your hearts upward! Come, draw near to Mary's feet.
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La falange de Arcángeles bella Desde el cielo nos dice ¡Venid! ¡A María! ¡A María! Que es ella Quien les manda llamarnos ¡Salid!	The bright phalanx of Archangels from heaven calls to us: "Come forth!" To Mary! To Mary! It is she who sends them to summon us—go out!
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En las salas del cielo espaciosas Para palmas del triunfo hay laurel ¡Adelante, luchar! Victoriosa nuestra sien ceñiremos con él.	In the spacious halls of heaven, for the palms of triumph, there is laurel. Onward, fight on! Victorious, we shall crown our brows with it.
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Cual bandada de blancas palomas Mil hermanos de lejos se ven en el valle corriendo en las lomas ¿Quiénes son que tan dulce y sonriente Ante el mundo presentan su faz?	Like a flock of white doves, a thousand brothers are seen from afar—Running through valleys and hills—who are they, with faces so sweet and smiling, turned to the world?
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Es legión del Rosario Viviente Avanzada de amor y de paz.	They are the Legion of the Living Rosary, the vanguard of love and peace.
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Zapadoras del tren de batalla Donde quier adelante estarán de las pampas al alto Himalaya en Zelanda, en Madrid en Teherán,	They are the sappers of the battle train, always advancing wherever they go, From the plains to the high Himalayas, in New Zealand, Madrid, and Tehran.
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Son sus armas el Ave María, un misterio un solo cañon, disparando diez veces al día adelante la pía legión.	Their weapons: the Hail Mary, their cannon: a mystery, firing ten times a day, Forward, the devout legion!
--	--

Es su mira el loor y la gloria  
De la madre de Dios inmortal  
Es por eso que alcanza victoria  
Su valiente virtud contra el mal.

Their aim is the praise  
and glory of the  
immortal Mother of  
God. That is why they  
gain the victory, their  
brave virtue triumphing  
over evil.

Desde el triste destierro del mundo  
Hasta el cielo se eleva su voz  
Y por eso su ejemplo es fecundo  
Y por eso bendícelas, Dios.

From the sorrowful exile  
of the world, their voice  
rises toward heaven.

That is why their  
example bears fruit, that  
is why, God, You bless  
them.

¡A las armas...! Mostrad el Rosario  
¡Compañeras! ¡Alzad la oración!  
Es el triunfo seguro, si es diario,  
El pelar de la santa legión

To arms! Show the  
Rosary! Companions,  
lift your prayer high!  
Victory is sure, if daily,  
the holy legion fights.

No haya tregua jamás en la tierra Si queremos ceñir nuestra sien..... ¡Guerra al mundo! A Luzbel guerra, guerra y a la carne ¡la guerra también!	No truce on earth shall ever be, if we wish to crown our brows... War on the world! War on Lucifer! War on the flesh as well—declare war!
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Adelante que el mundo es espacio Que se cansa de medir nuestro pie Conquistemos desde hoy el palacio Que a lo lejos arriba se ve.	Forward, for the world is a field that tires of measuring our steps. Let us conquer, starting today, the palace that gleams far above in the distance!
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Avancemos a marcha forzada Donde suena la voz del clarín ¡Compañeras! Se va la avanzada ¡No parar, no parar hasta el fin!	Let us march in forced advance, where the voice of the bugle sounds. Companions, the vanguard moves on—don't stop, don't stop until the end!
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#### CHORUS

¡VIVA!, ¡VIVA! Los Sacros pendones más arriba hasta el cielo elevad, ¡Adelante subid corazones!. Se María a las plantas llegad.	Long Live! Long Live! Raise the Sacred Banners, lift them higher up to the sky! Onward, lift your hearts upward! Come, draw near to Mary's feet.
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#### HIMNO DE LAS GUARDIAS DE HONOR DE MARIA

#### HYMN OF THE GUARDS OF HONOR OF MARY

Lyrics: Federico Virto. Priest.

Music: Alfonso Méndez

## CHORUS

De María las sacras banderas  
Tremolando gloriosas irán,  
Y que rujan las hórridas fieras  
Que lanzó sobre el mundo Satán.

The sacred banners of  
Mary, Gloriously  
waving, shall go forth,  
Let the horrid beasts roar  
wildly, Those that Satan  
loosed upon the earth.

Guardias, guardias de honor de María  
Del Rosario la enseña elevad;  
Ella sola será vuestra guía,  
A su sombra serenos marchad.

Guards, guards of honor  
for Mary, Raise on high  
the standard of the  
Rosary. She alone shall  
be your guiding light—  
March beneath her  
shadow peacefully.

No temáis al eterno tirano  
Enemigo de dios, Lucifer,  
Es escudo que ampara al cristiano  
De María el inmenso poder.

Fear not the tyrant  
eternal, Enemy of God,  
Lucifer;  
For the Christian finds  
sure protection  
In the vast power of  
Mary's reign.

Ella fue la mujer victoriosa,  
Que a la antigua serpiente aplasto  
Es la reina del mundo gloriosa  
Que a la prole de Adán levantó.

She was the victorious  
woman who crushed the  
ancient serpent low;  
She is queen of the  
world, most glorious,  
Who raised up Adam's  
race from woe.

Bienhadada le dicen las gentes,  
Porque es virgen y madre de Dios  
Y a sus plantas se postran fervientes  
Las naciones que van de ella en pos.

Blest indeed, the people  
call her, for she is Virgin  
and Mother of God;  
At her feet bow down in  
fervor all the nations that  
follow her path.

Quien invoca su nombre querido  
Sin que alcance remedio a su mal  
El que sufre, el que llora afligido,  
Halla en ella consuelo eternal.

Who invokes her  
beloved name  
And finds no relief from  
their pain? The one who  
suffers, who weeps in  
sorrow, finds eternal  
comfort in her again.

Nuestra patria le debe favores,  
Porque siempre sus ruegos oyó  
Y mil veces los crudos rigores  
Su benéfico amor la libró.

Our homeland owes her  
great favors, for she  
always listened to our  
prayers; A thousand  
times her gentle mercy  
Saved us from the  
harshest snares.

No es la espada animosa que mata  
La que hoy deben los guardias blandir.  
El rosario, la cruz de escarlata  
Son las armas que importa esgrimir.

Not the fierce and deadly  
sword must the guards  
now brandish in hand—  
The Rosary, the scarlet  
cross, Are the weapons  
that truly withstand.

Que por ellas la infame herejía,  
que abortó de sus antros Satán,  
cayó herida a los pies de María,  
A la voz del insigne Guzmán.

By these, the vile heresy  
perished, spawned by  
Satan's dark domain,  
Struck down at Mary's feet  
it fell at the cry of the noble  
Dominic's name.

El Rosario Guirnalda de rosas,  
las más bellas del sacro jardín  
que con manos tejíó primorosas  
de la gloria inmortal querubín

The Rosary, a garland of  
roses, Brightest blooms in  
the sacred garden,  
Woven by cherubim with  
grace, To crown those  
whom heaven does pardon.

De virtudes heroicas emblema  
Fe, esperanza y dulcísimo amor  
Simboliza la gloriosa diadema  
Que la frente ornará al vencedor

Emblem of heroic virtues:  
Faith, hope, and sweetest  
love— It symbolizes the  
glorious crown That the  
victor shall wear above.

¡Cuán feliz el devoto que lleva,  
el Rosario y lo reza con fe!  
En la hora terrible de prueba,  
Con ternura María le ve.

Oh, how blessed is the  
devout soul Who carries the  
Rosary and prays with  
faith! In the hour of trial  
and darkness, Mary looks  
on with tender grace.

Si vacila le tiende su mano,  
Si está ciega le alumbra su luz  
siempre auxilio y sostén del cristiano  
le da fuerzas para ir con la cruz.

If he falters, she stretches  
her hand, If he's blind, she  
offers her light— Always  
help and strength to the  
Christian, To bear the cross  
and win the fight.

Himno eterno de júbilo y gloria  
Noche y día resuene doquier.  
Celebrando la insigne victoria  
De la excelsa e invencible mujer.

An eternal hymn of joy and  
glory May it echo by night  
and day— Proclaiming the  
noble victory Of the exalted  
and unconquered Lady.

De María la mística Rosa  
Que en la margen broto del Jordán  
De la madre del verbo dichosa  
Cuyos triunfos eternos serán.

Mary, the mystic Rose,  
That bloomed by the  
Jordan's side, The Mother  
of the Word made  
flesh—Her triumphs shall  
forever abide.

Ves postrarse, María, a tus pies,  
No te olvides ¡Oh, madre querida,  
de que prenda de amor tuya es!  
Eres tú su esperanza y consuelo,  
la que aparta sus pasos del mal  
la que premia su afán y su anhelo  
con miradas de amor celestial.

Behold us kneeling at your  
feet, O Mary! Forget not,  
beloved Mother divine,  
That we are the pledge of  
your love—You are our  
hope, our guiding sign.  
You lead our steps away  
from sin, You crown our  
effort and desire With  
glances filled with heaven's  
love, And lift our hearts  
ever higher.

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Guatemala año milésimo noventa y seis.

Este libro fue escrito en el año de 1906.

Liber aureus.

Title and date of the manuscript "Liber Aureus."

Miguel Fernández Concha.

Signature of Father Miguel Fernandez Concha





Church exterior, 1901.

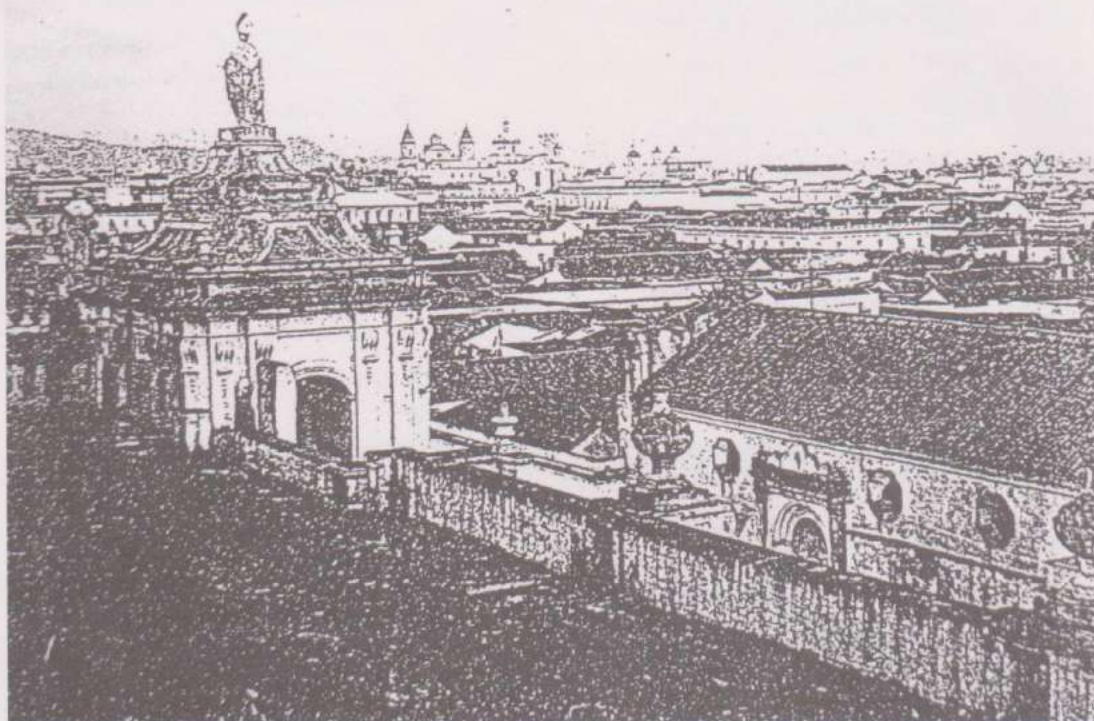




Church, 1901.

A una iglesia en Guayaquil  
Ocupar el 10 de mayo





Right belfry, 1901.



Left belfry, 1901.





Licenciado Francisco Marroquín. First member of Brotherhood of the Rosary.  
Official Portrait. XVIII Century.





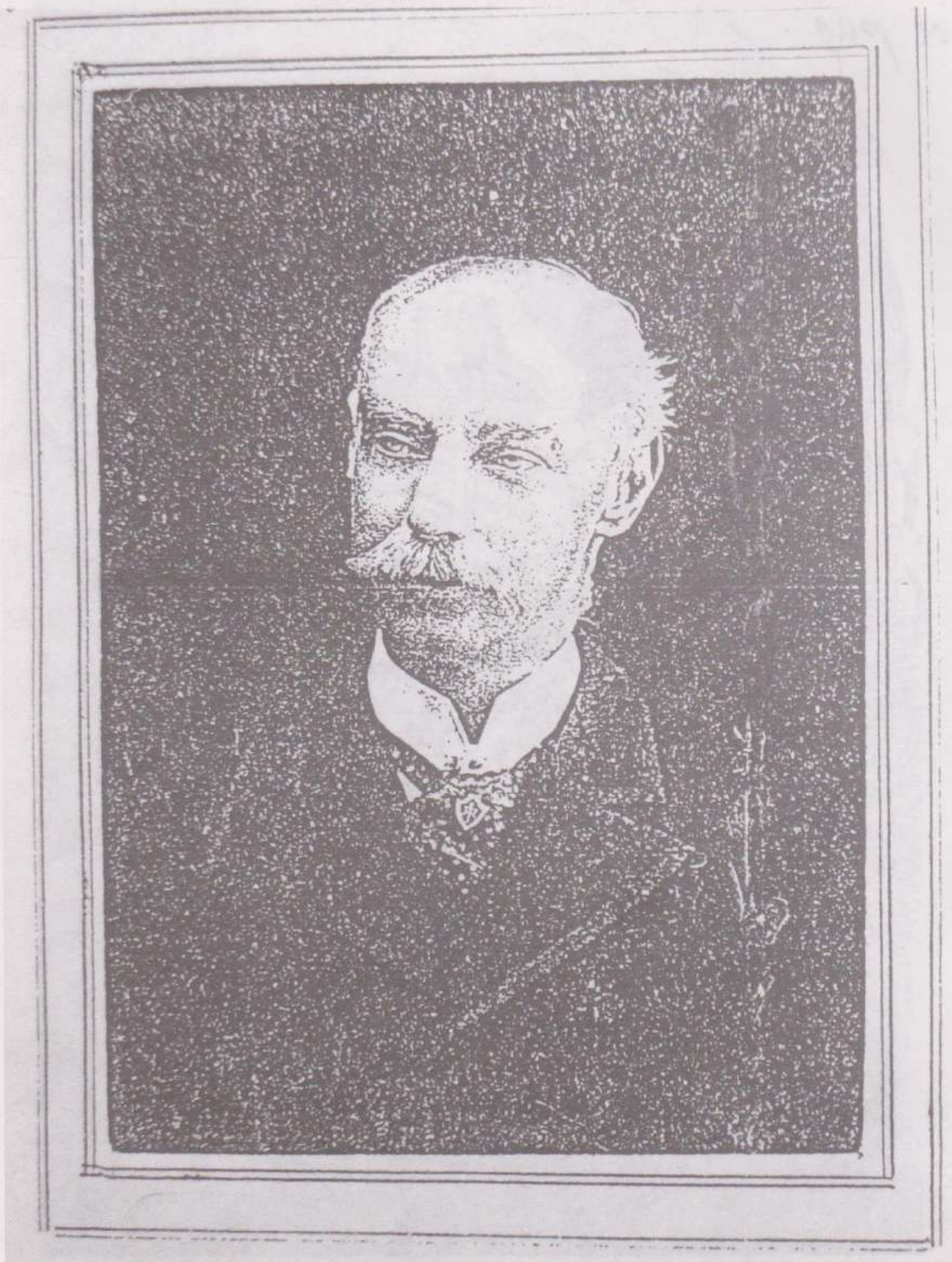
Photograph of the Most Holy Virgin of the Rosary. 1901.



*ce pag*

Fr. Federico Virto.

*A la memoria de Fr. Federico Virto  
Compañero de la vida y de la obra*



Mr. Juan Fermin Aycinena.

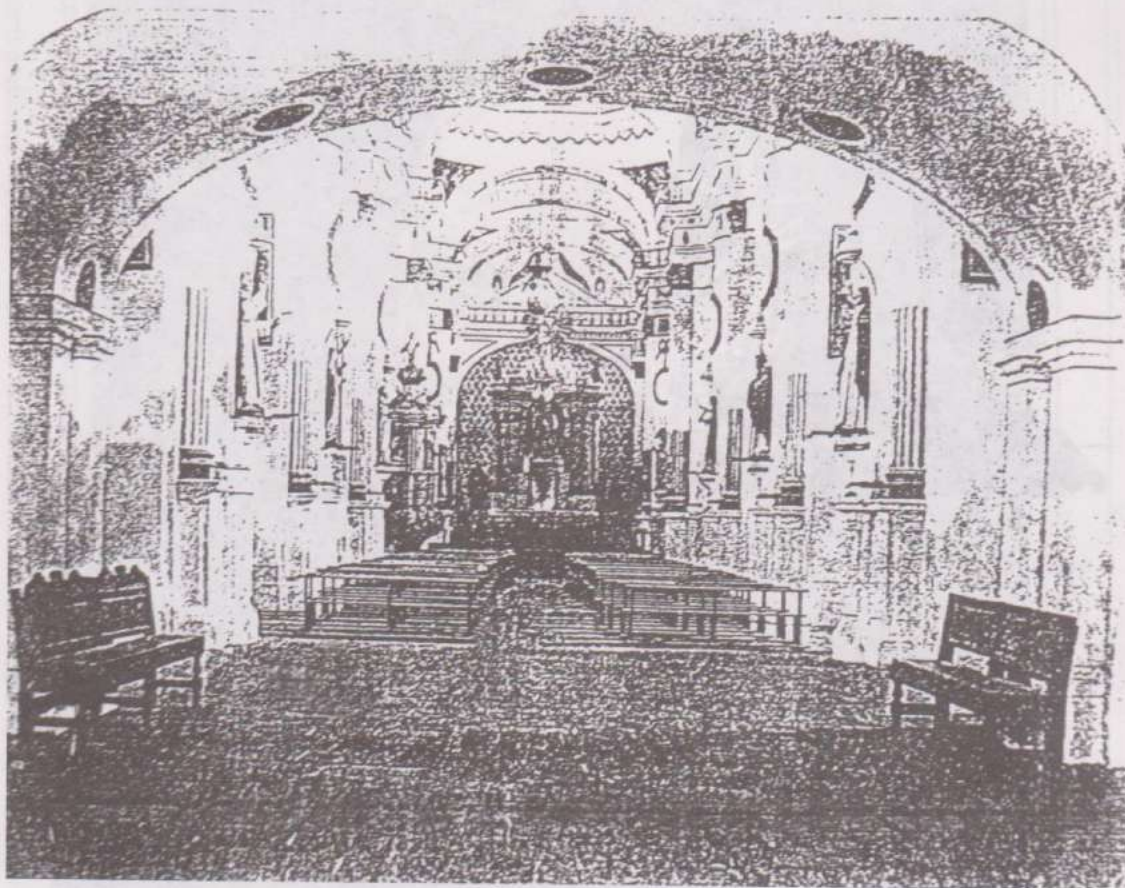




Saint Dominic of Guzman. Patron of the temple, sculpture of the XVIII century.

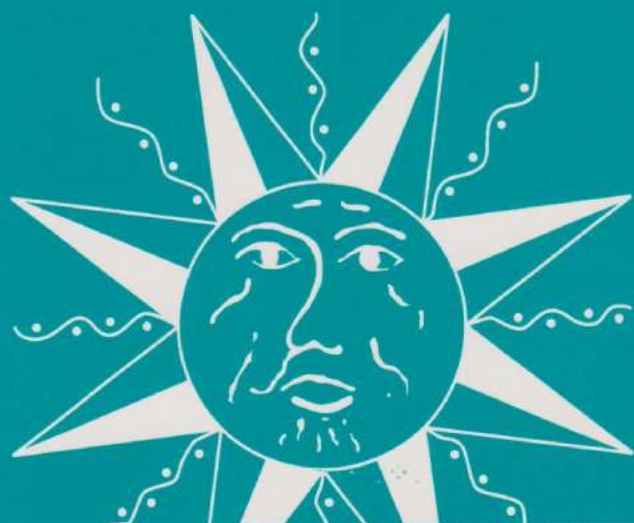


Monstrance.



Main altar, 1905.





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