

## **Guatemala: Our Lady of the Rosary**

The image of Our Lady of the Rosary, the work of unknown artists, was finished in 1592. Commissioned by Friar Lopez de Montoya, a Dominican priest, the statue was made completely of pure silver, but her robes and pedestal are not visible, having been covered by elaborate garments and ornaments.

Her devotees claim that the coloring of her beautiful face changes from bright pink to a much more faded shade whenever there is a conflict, or some national misfortune is imminent. The image has a large rosary in her right hand and with her left one she holds the Child who seems to be trying to free himself from her embrace. There is a popular tradition that the Virgin Mary went out to travel through America and that the Child fell asleep when they reached Guatemala, which is why she stayed there. In 1821 the leaders of the independence movement proclaimed her Patroness of the new nation, and they took an oath before her image that they would not rest until they freed Guatemala.

The Virgin of the Rosary was solemnly declared "Queen of Guatemala" in 1833 and was crowned canonically on January 28, 1934, in a huge ceremony in the principal plaza of Guatemala in front of the cathedral. The ceremony had to be held in the open because there was no church large enough to hold the multitude that had gathered.

The crown which Archbishop Luis Durou placed on the head of the blessed image is a valuable silver jewel with which the people of Guatemala wanted to show their devotion and enthusiasm for their patroness. The artists who made it used 121 emeralds, 44 diamonds, 80 pearls, 5 amethysts, a gold rose, etc. The church and convent of St. Dominic, current temple of the Virgin of the Rosary, was begun in 1788 and completed in 1808.

October, the month dedicated to the rosary, is the most popular and important religious happening for the Guatemalan people and nation. The entire month is occasion for celebration, feasting, and constant pilgrimages to the Sanctuary of the Virgin of the Rosary.

(Advocaciones Marianas en la Religiosidad Popular Latinoamericana, Documentaciones Sureste, Oficina Regional del Sureste para el Ministerio Hispano)