

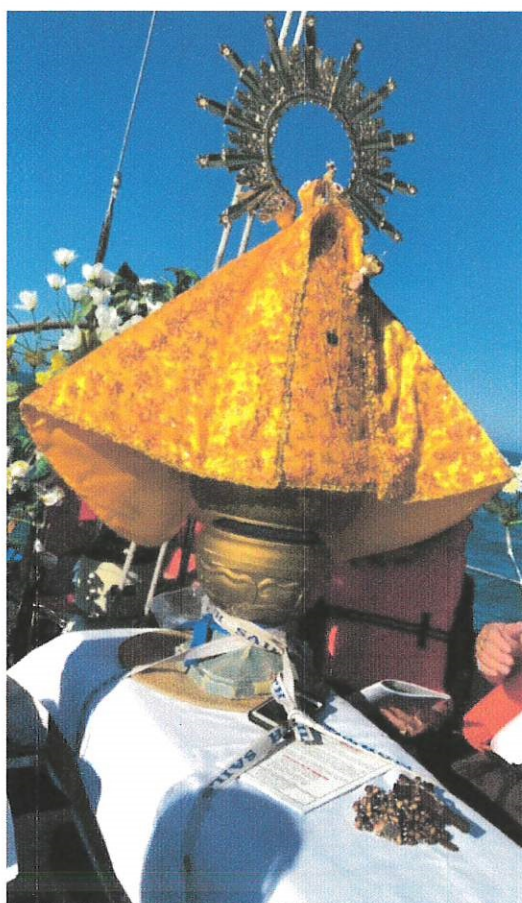


## CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES CHICAGO

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### OUR LADY OF PEÑAFRANCIA FEAST DAY IN CHICAGO

For the past 31 years, Filipino-Americans in Chicago have been celebrating the Feast Day of Our Lady of Peñafrancia with a "fluvial" procession on Lake Michigan.



Lovingly referred to as "Ina," meaning "mother," Our Lady of Peñafrancia is depicted by a wooden statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her Divine Infant Son with a crown of twelve stars over her head and is widely known as the patroness of the Bicol region in the Philippines.

The Philippine Consulate General, recognizing the depth of Marian devotion of Filipino Catholic members of the community, took part in the celebration that began with a novena or nine days of prayer and masses presided by Filipino priests at St. Matthias Parish Church.

Deputy Consul General Romulo Victor Israel Jr. joined a group of devotees, including Deacon Rolando Merced of the Archdiocese of Chicago, on a sailboat that carried the statue of *Ina*. They prayed and sang all the way from Belmont Harbor to Burnham Harbor while being escorted by a Chicago Police Department patrol boat under a clear, blue sky on Saturday, September 15.

Boat owners Dr. Jairo and Mrs. Lily Cruz said they have been doing such act of generosity and devotion since 1987, together with the Confraternity of Our Lady of Peñafrancia (COLP), currently headed by Mr. Roger Odiamar.

While there used to be about a dozen smaller boats that joined the procession in the past, Mr. Odiamar said that the COLP has proudly kept the religious tradition going even during the dark days following the September 11 attacks when use of the lake for transportation was restricted by the authorities. The procession remains one of the unique highlights of Filipino community events in Chicago.

After the procession, a *missa cantata* was celebrated in honor of *Ina* at St. Matthias which houses the venerated statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Fellowshiping over a sumptuous dinner followed at the parish hall organized by the COLP. **END**



Foreground (L-R): Mrs. Lily Cruz, Deacon Rolando Merced, DCG Romulo Victor Israel Jr. and Mr. Roger Odiamar of the Confraternity of Our Lady of Peñafrancia waiting to disembark after reaching Burnham Harbor at the end of the traditional procession in honor of *Ina*.