OUR LADY of Peñafrancia of Naga City is a copy of the Madonna in Peñafrancia in Spain. The feast day is celebrated on the third Saturday of September in Bicol. The feast is preceded by a novena (nine consecutive days of prayer). On the first day, the image of the Virgin is brought from its shrine to the Naga Cathedral where the novena is held. On the last day, the image is returned to her shrine by way of the Naga River route. The evening procession is attended by thousands of devotees in boats escorting the image. The image is brought back from the river to a land procession to the cathedral.

Considered one of the most popular Catholic religious events in the Philippines, the Peñafrancia fiesta is actually a one-week affair that starts on the second Friday of September when the image is transferred from her shrine to the centuries-old Naga Metropolitan Cathedral in the course of novena and prayers held in her honor. During the traslación (transfer), which passes through the main streets of Naga, the image is borne by barefoot voyadores who form a human wall to safeguard the image from the crowd. Upon its arrival, the Virgin is received in solemn religious rites.

The fluvial parade is actually the return of the image from the Naga Metropolitan Cathedral to her home shrine. This was formerly a small chapel that grew through the years, through typhoons, earthquakes, foreign invasions and two world wars, to eventually become the famous Peñafrancia Shrine. The Basilica is now the mecca of six million Bicolanos and has evolved into becoming the center of one of the Philippines’ biggest religious festivals.

Bicolano, Camarines Sur Province, Southern Luzon Island, Northern Philippines. In 1882, a cholera epidemic broke out in Manila and spread to Bicol. The intercession of the Divino Rostro and Nuestra Señora de Peñafrancia against the deadly epidemic was invoked by the local Roman Catholic clergy. In gratitude for having been spared, the Church leaders vowed to celebrate the feast of the Divino Rostro and Nuestra Señora de Peñafrancia jointly. The images of the Divino Rostro and Our Lady of Peñafrancia were ordered enshrined for prayers by the faithful at the Cathedral. Saved from the epidemic, the faithful and the clergy in Caceres made the solemn vow to have the images of Ina and the Divino Rostro always borne together in processions and solemn occasions.