

Simbang Gabi 2013 - Walking in Solidarity with the Philippines after Haiyan

Tuesday, Dec. 17: Day 3 of Simbang Gabi

*Masses: Corpus Christi, South River, 8pm;
St. Matthias, Somerset, 7:30pm*

Readings of the Day: Gn 49:2, 8-10; Ps 72:1-4, 7-8, 17;
Mt 1:1-17

Reflection: *Jacob gathers his sons in the first reading, and the Gospel genealogy links generations to the coming of Christ. Who do we gather with, either by choice or by bloodlines? How do they reflect the coming of Christ? How do we?*

Learn: A rebuilding effort, called “Adopt a Bahay (Home),” is underway for Bantayan Island. This island just off Cebu was in the direct path of Super Typhoon Yolanda and experienced high storm surges. The typhoon left 90 to 95% of the homes without a roof. People do not have money and no fuel to get their fishing boats out to sea. Their livelihood in this village consists of women working as fish vendors and men as tricycle drivers. The island still has no electricity.

Act: The “Adopt a Bahay” effort involves rebuilding homes for the people of Bantayan Island. The homes are mostly nipa huts and costs around \$250 USD. Starting with one barangay (village) at a time, they will work together with the community in the true spirit of “Bayanihan” to rebuild Bantayan Island to its original beauty. For more information, please go to www.adoptabahay.com.

Wednesday, Dec 18: Day 4 of Simbang Gabi Mass

*Masses: St. Matthew, Edison, 7:30pm
St. James, Basking Ridge, 7:30pm*

Readings of the Day: Jer 23:5-8; Ps 72 1-2, 12-13; 18-19; MT 1:18-25

Reflection: *So begins the story that ultimately leads to “the joy of the gospel (which) fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew,” as Pope Francis writes in Evangelii Gaudium. With a week before Christmas, how will the story of Jesus’ birth give birth anew to your Christian joy?*

Learn: Christmas Eve in the Philippines is traditionally celebrated with a “Noche Buena” (Good Night); a dinner for family to gather and eat together as they rejoice and feast on the Nativity of the birth of Christ. Unique to this tradition is the presence of a generous feast of various delicious delicacies and dishes such as queso de bola, puto bumbong, bibingka, rice cakes, Chinese ham and hot chocolate or salabat.



Act: Follow this simple Bibingka recipe and enjoy! 2 cups rice flour; 1 cup light brown sugar; 1 tsp. baking powder; 3 eggs, beaten; 3 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted; 1 can (400 mL) coconut milk; 1 banana leaf (optional); 1 tsp. unsalted butter, sliced; 2 tsp. fresh (or frozen) grated coconut
Grease 8 x 3 in. round baking pan. Line with banana leaves and set aside. In a bowl, place rice flour, brown sugar, baking powder, eggs, melted butter and coconut milk; mix thoroughly. Pour batter mixture into pan. Bake for 1 hour at 325°F (160°C). Serve cake in platter and top with butter and grated coconut.

Thursday, Dec 19: Day 5 of Simbang Gabi Masses:
St. Ambrose, Old Bridge, 7:30pm St. Francis Cabrini, Piscataway, 7:30pm

Readings of the Day: Jgs 13:2-7; Ps 71:3-6,16-17; Lk 1:5-25

Reflection: *Our readings are full of references to both barrenness and birth. Belief in the limitless power of God enables us to envision and act for a world where the seemingly barren can teem with new life. For example, out of the debris left by Typhoon Haiyan, we can actively hope and work for a rebirth of rice fields and coconut trees.*

Learn: Gawad Kalinga is at the forefront of providing immediate support to affected families of Typhoon Haiyan. Thousands of volunteers have signed up and joined Operation Walang Iwanan (“Leave no one behind”). More than 60,000 food packs have been distributed and the target is to bring 200,000 food packs in the next two weeks. Planning is already in place for the reconstruction phase.



Act: Support the Gawad Kalinga Movement. Donate, volunteer and support the Bayani Challenge! For more information, please visit <http://gk1world.com/>.

Friday, Dec 20: Day 6 of Simbang Gabi

*Masses: St. Helena, Edison, 7:30pm
St. Mary, Alpha, 7:30pm*

Readings of the Day: Is 7:10-14; Ps 24:1-6; Lk 1:26-28

Reflection: *Today's familiar readings herald the historical birth of Jesus. Yet, God is always seeking to be born again and again in our lives and in our world. May Mary always inspire us to be open to God's word and will, especially to be found among the lowly.*

Learn: In the Philippines, the nine days before Christmas are known as “Simbang Gabi.” Each day represents one month of Mary’s pregnancy. The liturgies take on a celebratory tone, creating a fine line between Advent and Christmas. In the 17th century, under Spanish colonial rule, the church allowed the “Gloria” to be sung during this time, a practice that continues today.

Act: CRS works in partnership with SERRV to provide Catholics in the U.S. an opportunity to put their consumer dollars to work for a better world by buying extraordinary, one-of-a-kind handcrafts through the **Work of Human Hands** project. See Filipino ingenuity at its best! Learn more about the Work of Human Hands project and how to get involved! Go to http://www.crsfairtrade.org/print_materials/work-of-human-hands/ for more information.



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Saturday, Dec 21: Day 7 of Simbang Gabi

Masses: *St. Bartholomew, East Brunswick, 7:30pm*
Sacred Heart, South Plainfield, 7:30pm

Readings of the Day: Zep 3:14-18a; Ps 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21; Lk 1:39-45

Reflection: *The meeting between Mary and Elizabeth reminds us of the joyful possibilities that can come from the practice of hospitality. Solidarity and hospitality go together. How wide do we open our doors?*

Learn: One month after Typhoon Haiyan tore through six Philippine islands, the death toll stands at 5,959 and 1,779 people are still missing. More than 12 million people have been affected and have left entire communities without immediate access to food and medical care. Some 4.3 million people were said to have been displaced -- one million of whom were children. The total cost of the damage is pegged at more than \$288 million, according to the disaster agency. Around \$112 million of this was damage to crops, and \$100 million damage to livestock and fisheries.

Act: Pray for the Philippines

God, who quiets great winds and stills rough seas, we ask your protection for the people of the Philippines. Comfort them in their fear. Stay close to them in their danger. And we ask the intercession of Your Blessed Mother that together with her and with all your holy saints we may stand in solidarity with our Filipino brothers and sisters through their darkest hour through their longest night. Give us the courage to remain steadfast, to reach out to them in their need, to comfort them in their sorrow to hold them as closely as You hold them, to see them through to morning. Amen.



Sunday Dec 22: Day 8 of Simbang Gabi

Masses: *St. Bartholomew, East Brunswick, 7:30pm*
Sacred Heart, South Plainfield, 7:30pm

Readings of the Day: Zep 3:14-18a; Ps 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21; Lk 1:39-45

Reflection: *"This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about." We all have our own stories, and, in faith, stories in Christ. As we prepare to retell the story of the birth of Christ, how do you share your own story of life with Christ? The Word continues to be made flesh in the narrative of our lives.*

Learn: "In the midst of a disaster, it is natural and perfectly healthy to ask God why," Pope Francis told members of Rome's Philippine community.

Referring to the death and destruction Super Typhoon Haiyan caused in the central Philippines in early November, Pope Francis said, "Why do these things happen? It can't be explained. There are many things that we cannot understand."

But, then, the pope said, he thinks of children who are just starting to understand that there are things they don't understand. They start asking their parents, "Why? Why? Why?"

Often enough, he said, "the child does not wait for an answer from his father or mother," but just adds more questions.

In effect, the child is seeking attention from his mother or father more than answers, the pope said. "He needs his parents' eyes, their hearts, to be focused on him."

In times of trouble, the pope told the Philippine community, "never tire of asking 'why' like a child. That way, you will turn the gaze of our father to your people; you will attract the tenderness of our heavenly father."

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

Act: The effects of Haiyan will extend past the Christmas season and for years ahead. Fortunately, Catholic Relief Services is committed to accompanying the Filipino people through livelihood restoration. For decades, they have sponsored development projects in many countries.

CRS Rice Bowl is an annual Lenten program that includes supporting these programs. In 2014, the Philippines is featured in the 3rd week of Lent. Renew your daily focus then.

<http://www.crsricebowl.org/about/ricebowl-faq/#question2>



Monday Dec 23: Day 9 of Simbang Gabi

Masses: *Our Lady of Fatima, Piscataway 7:00pm*

Readings of the Day: Mal 3:1-4, 23-24; Ps 25:4bc-5ab, 8-10, 14; Lk 1:57-66

Reflection: *"The pre-dawn series of Simbang Gabi Masses, by their very nature, call us to an extra level of watching and wakefulness. As do our readings today. God may arrive anytime. Are we watching? Are we ready?"*

Learn: A singular event like a typhoon, especially for those in impoverished parts of our world, can derail a family's stability, deplete a lifetime of savings and push them over poverty's edge. For larger communities, the devastation to infrastructure, economy and reserves can set back a generation.

Catholic Relief Services has deployed its teams across across the Philippines' most heavily affected areas to determine the most pressing needs and how best to help. Your continued support allows us to reach more people, more communities, with vital help now—and to stay with them for as long as it takes to achieve a full recovery. A little goes a long way and we need your help.

Act: To get involved in the diocesan Filipino Apostolate, please contact: Rev. Roberto Coruna, Coordinator (908) 479-4905 or Fr. Gerry Paderon, social concerns committee (908) 283-1393.

For more on the Catholic Charities Solidarity Team and CRS in the Diocese of Metuchen, please contact Msgr. Joe Kerrigan (jkerrigan@ccsolidarity.org)



Celebrating Simbang Gabi in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in the Philippines

Sunday, Dec 15: Day 1 of Simbang Gabi
Mass at St. Francis Cathedral Metuchen, 5pm

Readings of the Day: Is 35:1-6a, 10; Ps 146:6-10; Jas 5:7-10; Mt 11:2-11

Reflection: Today, the Third Sunday of Advent, is known as Gaudete or Rejoice Sunday, to set the hopeful tone of Christ's coming. A little more than one month ago, Super Typhoon Haiyan wrought deadly havoc upon the Philippines. Where is the rejoicing now? St. Francis of Assisi once said, "Above all grace and gifts of the Holy Spirit which Christ gives to all his friends, is that of overcoming oneself and for the love of Christ gladly bearing pain, insults, disgrace and hardships. For we cannot glory in any of the other gifts of God, for they are not ours but God's."



Learn: Simbang Gabi is a novena to the Virgin Mother that culminates with the Christmas Eve Mass called "Misa de Gallo." The tradition of pre-dawn Masses traces its roots to the Spanish colonial period when Pope Sixtus V granted the petition for outdoor Eucharistic celebration in order to accommodate the big number of faithful flocking the churches. The pealing of the church bells announced the start of the pre-dawn Masses, with rural farmers and fishermen waking up early to listen to the Gospel before embarking on their way to work.

Act: For many in the Philippines, the joyous celebration of Simbang Gabi is set against the harsh backdrop of the deadly typhoon Haiyan. More than ever, our brothers and sisters who have suffered and are suffering need the comfort of the light that has conquered the darkness.

As we begin our nine-day journey, we encourage everyone to prayerfully participate. Try to make as many of the Simbang Gabi Masses as possible, consider the "Act" suggestions in these pages, and join your preparation for Christmas in solidarity with those in the Philippines who have their worlds upturned.



Monday, Dec 16: Day 2 of Simbang Gabi
Masses: Our Lady of Victories, Sayreville, 8pm;
Annunciation, Bloomsbury, 7pm;

Readings of the Day: Nm 24:2-7; Ps 25:4-9; Mt 21:23-27

Reflection: God works through the prophet Balaam, and even through the chief priests and elders who question Jesus' authority. How is God working through us in unlikely ways? Advent calls us to look for the unlikely ways of God.

Learn: Elements of Simbang Gabi that have survived to the modern times in the Philippines are the colorful lights and lanterns or "parol" hung in every window of houses, the singing or playing of yuletide songs in both Tagalog and English, hearing of the Mass by the entire, or at least most members of the family, modest after-dawn Mass feast on native delicacies like puto bumbong; the climax comes after the Christmas Eve Mass when the whole family gathers to celebrate Noche Buena.



Act: The number of displaced people in the hard hit areas of Visayas has decreased as many have returned to their land to rebuild a temporary shelter next to their damaged home. As they prepare to rebuild their lives, the people of the Philippines urgently need the most basic life essentials: food, water, shelter, medical care, sanitation. Support our brothers and sisters in the Philippines. Please go to www.crs.org and make a difference

- \$8 Family water kit
- \$15 Emergency Shelter Kit
- \$22 Vital Household supplies
- \$28 Family Hygiene Kit
- \$30 Income Recovery