

# Balitang Nagbibigay Buhay

filipinoministry.ca



Archdiocese of Vancouver



## 500 YEARS AND GOING

*The Filipino Community looks forward to more years of faith-filled witnessing*

by: Marie Pacheco

As the 500 Years of Christianity's (YOC) celebration comes to a close, we look back at the different events that the Filipino Ministry of the Archdiocese of Vancouver celebrated to remind each of us that there is so much more to do, to share the faith we have all been gifted, under the theme of being "Gifted to Give."

Starting with the [Salamat 1](#) last April, when we learned about *The Giver*. Fr. Francis Galvan talked

about God our Father being the ultimate giver, as He gave us His only son, Jesus. For the Philippines, it was how God through the explorers 500 years ago, gave us Jesus through the gift of the Sto. Niño.

The [Salamat 2](#) event held in July was all about **Receiving the Gift**. We heard from Fr. Dennis Flores who spoke to us about the construction of the Sto. Niño shrine in Agassiz, BC — and its

much like our ancestors who built the shrine for the Sto. Niño in Cebu, Philippines.

[Salamat 3](#) in September talked about **Treasuring the Gift**. We learned about 7 Filipino Catholic lay organizations that started in the Philippines, and how they continue to treasure and share their faith through communities here in Canada.

The [Salamat 4](#) event held last December 10<sup>th</sup> was all about **Sharing the Gift**. An apt ending to the year-long celebration, Salamat 4 was not only the last event, it was also the only in-person event (*the others being held virtually*) held at the Nikkei Centre in Burnaby complete with a buffet dinner and Filipino Christian entertainment from the Praise Team.

Archbishop Michael Miller graced the event in a barong Tagalog and spoke about how Filipinos have enriched parishes across the Lower Mainland because of the joy they bring to the practice of their faith. He urged Filipinos to continue passing the gospel with joy, just like missionaries did 500 years ago.

*“Because we received it as a gift, this has to engage us in not hoarding the gift but sharing the gift. Let it flow to others,”* said Miller.

Without cost, we received. And without cost, we are also to give, he said.

As Bishop Miller called on Filipinos to recommit to the great task of evangelization, he also spoke about the many challenges we as a community face during this time. Simply put, it is not easy being Catholic today. This makes it harder for us to bring the Gospel to others like our own children, neighbors or the people we work with.

Miller talked about recent scandals on clerical abuse and the failure of the church to respond adequately that continue to sadden and discourage other people. He also spoke about the discovery of unmarked graves of children in residential schools across Canada, and how it has led to shame and doubt in our faith.

*“We know individually we weren’t responsible,*

*but we’re also aware we can’t simply say I didn’t do it. The Church is the body of Christ, we bear both the good heritage of our ancestors but also the bad,”* he explained.

Add to this how radically secular Canada’s society is, where 4 out of 10 people in the Greater Vancouver Area, according to the Archbishop, admit to having no faith whatsoever.

But he reminds us however that our task as evangelizers is to awaken in people what God has already planted in them, the desire to know HIM.

He called on the faithful to be aware of the challenges from within, which we have more control of. Things like pessimism and having a sense of unworthiness.

*“We know ourselves; we know we’re sinners and are a little afraid of being hypocrites when talking about Jesus and the Church to others. We hang back.”*

But the Archbishop reminds us of take heed from the wisdom of two popes: Pope Francis’ teaching that our falling short of perfection should be no excuse. And Pope John Paul II’s famous words, DO NOT BE AFRAID.

We share faith when we talk about our own stories of how Jesus is present in our lives. We share faith through our loving service to others, as husband/wife, mom/dad, brother/sister, son/daughter, co-worker or friend. Joyful service is a great way to kindle the faith in others.

*“Faith has to be given away if it is to grow in us. Seize the gifts you’ve been given. Go out and share the faith. That would be the true fruit of 500 years of Christianity.”*

**BE INVOLVED** - Participate in the upcoming Synod Discussions. Learn more [here](#).