

Balitang Nagbibigay Buhay

Filipino Ministry



... in the footsteps of the Lord



SIMBANG GABI

How a Filipino tradition can be the invitation to bring Christ to others

For many Filipinos, December brings not just Christmas trees, setting up the belen and shopping for presents, it also brings back many memories of cold early mornings back home to complete the traditional Simbang Gabi.

Filipinos across the lower mainland have brought this tradition to Canada more than twenty years ago. Mike Guia from the Holy Trinity Parish is a member of one of the oldest running Filipino choirs in the country and they were part of Sambayanang Filipino's original Simbang Gabi tour. He has witnessed how the tradition has grown from a rolling tour of nine masses in different parishes, to other parishes eventually adopting their own full 9-days of Simbang Gabi.

filipinoministry.ca

***Keep the Filipino
Catholic Spirit alive!***

With the current restrictions on many of our activities brought about by the pandemic, we, Filipino Catholics in the Archdiocese of Vancouver Canada are making a stand on keeping the Filipino Catholic Christmas Spirit alive. Yes, we will celebrate the coming of Christ!

But what is Simbang Gabi?

Simbang Gabi, or Mass at dawn, is seen by many as a spiritual preparation to welcome the birth of Jesus. It is complement to the season of Advent through a nine-day novena which starts on December 16th to Christmas Eve. Filipinos inherited it from the Spaniards but have made it uniquely their own. Guia adds, unknown to many, the Simbang Gabi is a novena to the Blessed Mother.

He believes it is especially relevant with all the challenges this year.

"The Simbang Gabi is Marian, we know it is a Mass and it is a Novena, therefore a Marian Mass Novena. Mary is the Mother of Church and children yearn for their mother's care when sick or troubled...A Novena asks for intercession in troubled times. The Simbang Gabi is the most powerful form of prayer in these most challenging times," said Guia.

Guia adds the Simbang Gabi can also be a good segue to promote the 500 Years of Christianity (YOC) celebration to others. The Church has already recognized the significant contributions of Filipino immigrants around the world and passing on traditions like the Simbang Gabi means we are also passing on the Filipino's apostolic mission.

"The Simbang Gabi is a complete package, it has a compelling combination of liturgical, communal and cultural dimensions which makes it a powerful tool for evangelization." He adds, it's seasonal nature is also an ideal invitation for younger generations of Filipinos who are curious of their heritage. *"The thirst is there, we just need to bring them to the water. I believe the Simbang Gabi being a seasonal activity, the short commitment may be an attractive option to "initially" get them involved."*

Simbang Gabi continues even with Covid-19 restrictions

If restrictions on gatherings are lifted by December 7th, 17 Parishes are celebrating the full nine days of Simbang Gabi following safety protocols prescribed by the Archdiocese. If restrictions are extended beyond December 7th, some Parishes will livestream their celebrations following prescribed safety protocols. The Filipino Ministry has also prepared home-based programs to support the celebration of Simbang Gabi. These include:

- "Simbang Gabi @ Home Program", made up of 9 short daily readings meant for in-family prayers and meditation.
- "Parol @ Home Display Community Showcase, a video compilation of pictures of parols displayed at home. The goal is to have 500 parol pictures as part of 500 YOC.
- "Panunuluyan" video, will be recorded and uploaded on YouTube for Parishes to use.

For more information about Simbang Gabi this year, check out the Filipino Ministry Facebook page or the Filipino Ministry Website.

BRING OUT YOUR PAROL!

The Filipino Christmas lantern is a sign of hope.

We, in the Filipino Ministry Office of the Archdiocese of Vancouver are calling on all Filipinos to take extra effort this year to hang a "parol" the Christmas Lantern on their windows.

Let us show the world that nothing can dampen our hope, not any disaster, not any negative outcome in our lives, because we truly and fully believed that Christ has come and saved us from our human weakness. By the merits of his passion, death and resurrection, we have become a new creation and by Him taking on our human nature, we have become heirs, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father.

This is our faith, this is our assurance - that in the end nothing will and can prevail over the victory Christ, our Lord has won for us.

Covid-19 has wrought a lot of damage on many of us. Some experiencing death of loved ones, others being laid off from work, still others having to live on even less than the meager resources they have been used to. Yet, in all this, we stand victorious, not out of our own merits but by the merits gifted to us by the Son, God Himself, who has given all he has for the love of us -- the love of you and me.

This is just as good a Christmas than we've ever experienced. In fact, it is the best - Christ is with us!