



SIMBAHAY

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF ST. JOHN BOSCO PARISH CHURCH, MAKATI CITY, PHILIPPINES

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 11

CHRISTMAS 2011



A JOYFUL CHRISTMAS

& BLESSINGS FOR THE NEW YEAR!

BISPERAS SA VERITAS PRAYER/CONTEMPLATION

by Fr. Salvatore Putzu, SDB

As Christmas comes around,
the city is once again awash with glitters,
flashing neon lights, chimes, and noise in streets
and malls.

I walk quietly into a church, aiming for the crib
that beckons young and old to pause and pray.

Everything in the Crib is simple, quiet, subdued.
I only hear the murmur of a shy fountain,
playfully streaming down from a distant mountain,
past the fields where the sheep rest to the charming
tune of "Silent Night" and other Christmas carols.

Up, right above the rocky entrance to the stable,
winged angels dance in festal array,
and above them a bright comet shows the way
to the still far away Magi and people like me.
Below, inside the stable, lying in the manger,
the Baby Jesus, with outstretched arms.
He smiles in welcome to me and all.
His blessed Mother and Joseph watch over him
in peaceful postures that blend adoration and pure joy.

Around them, the shepherds alerted by the angels,
kneel or stand, watching in wonder that Baby Boy
announced as the long-awaited Messiah, lying on
the hay.

Hundreds of generations waited in vain to see him.
How blest I am to know that he has come
and gaze at him here, right in front of me -
the Creator of the universe and humankind,
the Savior of all, now become poor among the poor,
weak among the weak, exposed to rejection, threats
and pain!...

He comes to reveal to us the love of the Father.
He comes to take upon himself the pains and worries
of us all.

I pause in contemplation of the simple Belen,
centered on the Baby who, with his silent smile,
has a personal message for each heart.

Thank you, dear Jesus, for being what you are:
a baby brother to all of us, bringing joy and peace
to our troubled world, bringing hope to humankind.
Happy Birthday, Lord Jesus! And many happy
returns!



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SCHEDULE OF MASSES

Monday to Friday:

6:30am • 7:30am • 12:15pm • 6:00pm

Holy Hour every Thursday after the
6:00 pm Mass

Saturday:

6:30am • 7:30am
6:00pm (Anticipated Mass)

Sunday:

6:00am • 7:15am • 8:30am • 10:00am*
11:15am • 12:30pm • 4:00pm • 5:30pm
7:00pm • 8:30pm

*with sign language interpreters

Confessions are held during all the
Masses

Adoration Chapel - open daily from
7:00am to 8:00pm

PARISH OFFICE & RELIGIOUS STORE HOURS

Monday to Friday (except Thursday)
8:00am - 11:30am • 12:30pm - 6:00pm

Thursday:

8:00am - 11:30am • 12:30pm - 4:00pm

Saturday:

8:00am - 12:00pm • 1:00pm - 5:00pm

A DIFFERENT CHRISTMAS STORY

MESSAGE FROM OUR PARISH PRIEST



What's in a name? This proverbial question may just surprise us with the meanings of the most familiar names we hear during this Christmas season. Let me paint for us the Christmas story with the names we commonly associate it with.

To begin with, we may not be so familiar with the name **Jesse**, but we all accept that "God exists". From him comes "the beloved", his son **David**, a "friend to everyone". Long ago, it was promised to **Abraham** that he will be a "father of a multitude" as indeed, millions of Jews revere their "exalted father". Thus after so many centuries of waiting, "God has remembered" His promise through a couple, **Zechariah** and his wife **Elizabeth** who have both been "consecrated to God". In the anguish of their old age, they were given a son, **John**, for "God has been gracious".

This son of God's mercy became the announcer of the coming of the real son of God, **Jesus** – "God who saves". Called by other names, He is also **Emmanuel**, "God is with us" and **Joshua**, "God helps". Though commonly known as the **Christ**, He is really the **Messiah**, "God's anointed". His own birth was announced by the archangel **Gabriel**, "God's own hero" and He was born during the time of **Herod**, "the son of another hero".

The parents of Jesus were outstanding in virtue, **Joseph**, his foster father, did not live long enough but he proclaimed that "God will increase". **Mary**, or **Miriam**, though very young was gifted by God from the very beginning and was "strong willed" in following her son. She, too, came from illustrious parents, proving that (**Joachim**) "God will establish" (**Anne**) His "grace and favor" among us.

While hosts of **angels** sang at His birth, these heavenly "messengers" announced His coming far and wide. And behold, the magi from the East who came to worship the Infant King, had "kings" in their names: **Melchior** ("king city") with his gold, **Balthazar** ("protect the king") with frankincense for his priesthood and **Caspar** ("treasurer of the king") with myrrh fit for His sacrifice.

As the childhood story ends in the Gospels, the last two saints offer us godly lessons: **Simeon** and **Anna** will always be associated together, as "obedience" will always bring about "grace and favor".

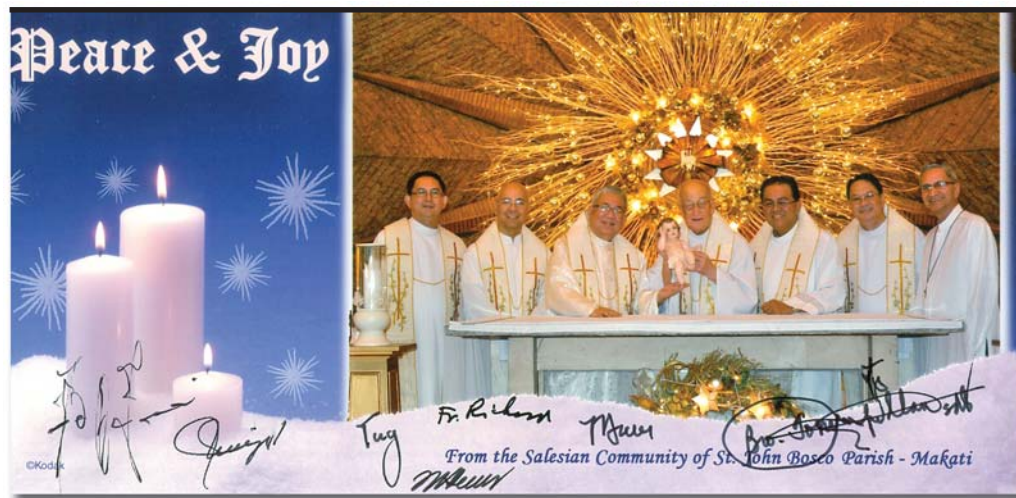
My heartfelt wish of joy and goodness, I lavish on all of you, my dear friends and parishioners, as we receive into our hearts the real reason of our celebration, Jesus Christ. To one and all, a most holy Christmas and abundant blessings for the New Year!

— Fr. Ting Miciano, SDB

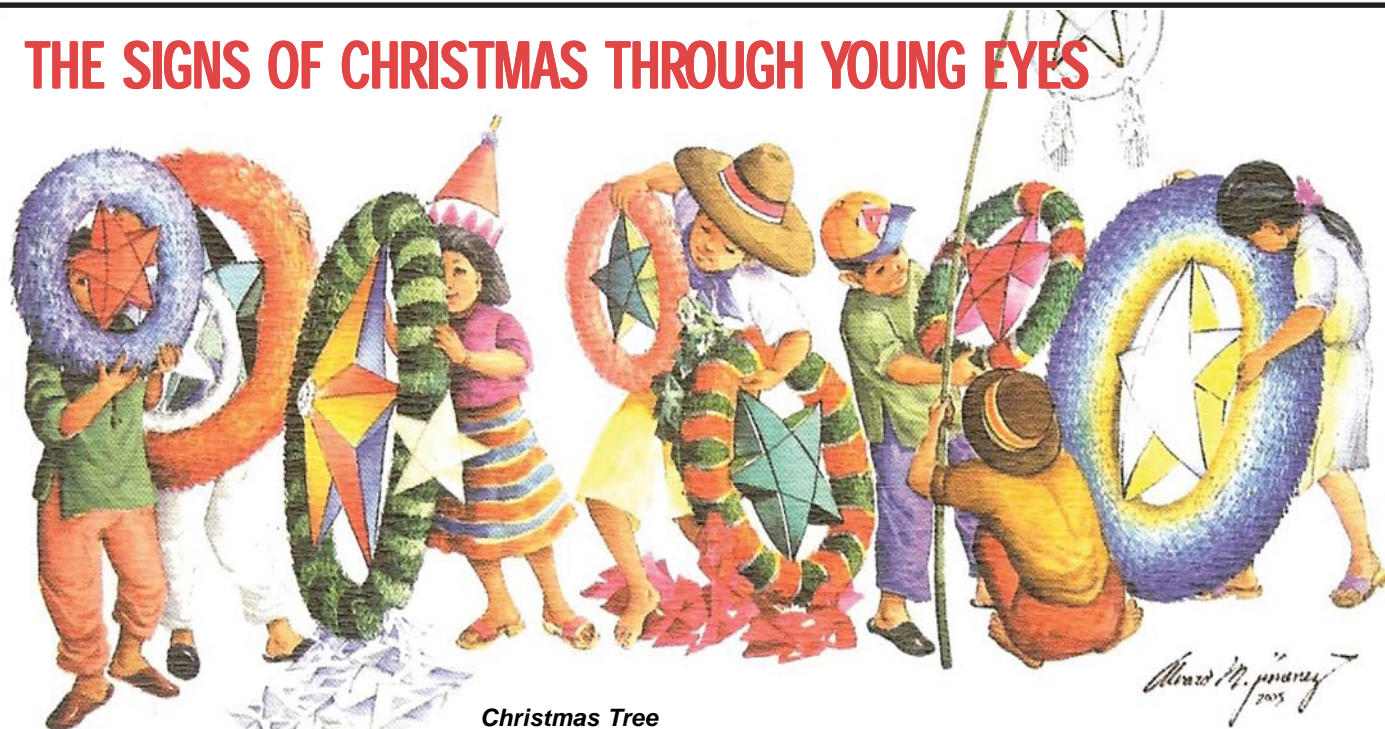
AN APPEAL FOR THE VICTIMS OF TYPHOON SENDONG

As we look forward to the Christmas Season with eager anticipation, our joy is tempered by the recent horrors wrought by typhoon Sendong on thousands of our kababayans in Iligan and Cagayan de Oro. Let us pray for those who have lost loved ones, homes, livelihood and peace and for those who did not live to celebrate Christmas. But more

importantly, in the true spirit of the Season, let us heed the Archbishop's appeal to relieve the sufferings of those left behind. Please bring your donations in cash or kind (e.g. usable clothes, blankets, mats) to the Parish office until December 26. God bless you for your generosity!



THE SIGNS OF CHRISTMAS THROUGH YOUNG EYES



by Welly Cuna

The Christmas Season is rich with symbols and traditions. But what do these symbols mean for young people nowadays? Let us view these signs of Christmas through their eyes.



Angel

first proclaimed the birth of Jesus to the shepherds.

- Gabay ni Jesus nang siya ay pinanganak (*Meljan, 17*)
- People who are there to protect and care for us (*Belle, 14*)

Belen

nativity scene, manger or **crèche**, depicts the birth Jesus as described in the gospels of Matthew and Luke and was first created by St. Francis of Assisi in 1223 using live actors.

- Simbolo ng kapanganakan ni Jesus (*JC, 12*)

Carols

(also called a **noël**) is a song or hymn whose lyrics are on the theme of Christmas

- Makes us remember what Jesus did to save us (*Bryan, 11*)
- Nagbibigay-saya sa mga tao (*Kyle, 12*)

Christmas Tree

in the Middle Ages, Germans and Scandinavians placed evergreen trees inside or just outside their homes to symbolize the end of winter. Legend credits Martin Luther King for decorating the first Christmas tree with lights representing stars and Christ as the "light of the world".

- Ito yun lagi kong nakikita (*Tyrone, 16*)
- Pagbibigay liwanag kay Kristo (*Kyle, 12*)



Gifts

The first Christmas **gifts** were given by the Wise men to Baby Jesus.

- Kindness and generosity of other people (*Gio, 13*)
- Nagbibigay ng kasiyahan sa mga kabataan (*Meljan, 17*)
- Our concern and thoughtfulness for each other and one of the ways we show thanks (*Byeul, 14*)

Parol

the Filipino star lantern represents the Star of Bethlehem

- Malapit na ang Pasko (*Allan, 18*)

- Nagpapaalala ng pagsilang ni Kristo, nagpapaganda ng bahay (*Kyle, 12*)

Simbang Gabi

The early morning novena masses in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary prepare the faithful for the celebration of the Birth of Jesus

- Paghahanda sa kaarawan ni Jesus at pagbibigay salamat sa kanya
- Siyam na gabi ng pagsasakripisyo para sa ating Panginoon (*Lian, 13*)
- Nine days before Christmas (*Klinton, 11*)

Stars

The Star of Bethlehem guided the Three Wise men to Baby Jesus

- Hope and Light (*Belle, 14*)
- What the three Kings followed to get to Jesus' birth (*Danielle, 14*)



Three Kings / Wise Men

travelled far and brought their best treasures of gold, frankincense and myrrh as gifts to the child Jesus.

- They saw the Star to find Jesus and give gifts (*Ian, 12*)

THE SEASON OF CHRISTMAS

Christmas is here! We celebrate the birthday (on earth) of the Word, the greatest love story ever told of an all-powerful yet all-loving God coming down to earth from His home in heaven to live with us and die for us so that someday, He may bring us home.

In the Catholic Church, the celebrations begin on Christmas Eve (December 24 at around 6:00 PM when vespers are prayed – hence, *Bisperas ng Pasko*) and ends on

the Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord, the Sunday after the Epiphany of the Lord.

Christmas (from *Cristes Maesse*, Saxon for Mass of Christ) is truly a special day for which the Church celebrates three main masses, each with its own set of readings and psalms: the Midnight Mass or the “Mass of the Angels”, the Dawn Mass or “Shepherd’s Mass” and the Day Mass or “Mass of the Divine Word”.

These are the important feasts and solemnities during the Christmas Season:

December 25 – Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

December 28 – Feast of the Holy Innocents

January 1 – Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God

December 30, 2011 – Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

January 8, 2012 – Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

January 15, 2012 – Feast of the Baptism of the Lord



DECEMBER 30, 2011 FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH

A LOVING FAMILY IS A LISTENING FAMILY

By Dominicanis, from the Parish of the Holy Family of Las Piñas

Emma Thompson once said, “Any problem, big or small, within a family, always seems to start with bad communication. Someone isn’t listening”.

There are many different types of families, and there are many different problems which may crop up within a family. Yet all of these problems begin with just one issue – no one listened, deliberately or otherwise.

The Holy Family is God’s perfect example of a family that did listen. They listened to each other and listened to others outside their family circle, as well. And above all – everyone in that family listened to God.

Because Mary listened to God’s messenger, Gabriel, we have Christmas. In turn, Joseph, the good husband, accepted Mary

whom God gave to him as his wife after listening to yet another of God’s messengers in a dream. In times of doubt and without giving in to his sorrow, Joseph prayed to God and so God intervened and removed his doubts. When worries or suspicions arise in a family, the husband, as well as the wife, should pray and listen to the voice of God.

Then when the kids arrive, parents must pray and make sincere efforts to get them interested and attracted to what is holy. They must teach their children about our Faith, accompany them to church and teach them to listen to God’s Word. Surely Mary and Joseph must have taught the Christ Child about the Jewish religion. Why else would Jesus be hanging around the Temple when he was twelve?

A Catholic family is called to follow in the footsteps of the Family from Nazareth. True, there has never been another son like Jesus nor have there have been other parents as ideal as Mary and Joseph. But we can learn from their examples. We, too, can listen to their story.

JANUARY 8, 2012 SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Readings

***Is 60:1-6** – Jerusalem sheds the light of God’s presence on all nations.

***Eph 3:2-3a.5-6** – Through Jesus Christ, even the pagans share in the fulfillment of God’s promises.

***Lk 2:16-21** – The Magi recognize in the Baby Jesus, the savior of all mankind

Theme: JESUS, THE SAVIOR OF JEWS AND PAGANS ALIKE

The Jews thought of Jerusalem as the “unifying center” of mankind. Even the pagans would converge on it in their quest for light and peace. And the “secret” of Jerusalem’s attractiveness was the special presence of the Lord in her. This prophetic vision become a reality at the Epiphany of the Lord Jesus.

The feast of Epiphany, in fact, is not about fancifully dressed kings and cute camels but about Jesus Christ, the Savior of all human beings. “Epiphany” is the revelation of who the Child born at Bethlehem of a simple village girl from Nazareth really is, and what he has come to do for all mankind. He is no less than the incarnate Son of God, the promised Messiah who will bring together into one single family all the nations of the world!

Unfortunately, after almost two thousand years, this divine plan has still to become a reality. And the causes of such “delay” are human pride, aggressiveness, greed, and possessiveness. Today’s feast is an appeal addressed to the scattered “children of Eve” to rediscover the deep roots that make them all brothers and sisters and to find their unifying point in Christ, the first-born of the new mankind.

- Exploring God’s Word





JANUARY 1

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

Readings

*Nm 6:22-27 – Prayer to implore God's blessing

*Gal 4:4-7 – We are all adopted children of God in Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary.

*Lk 2:16-21 – Mary treasures in her heart all that she hears about Jesus.

Theme: JESUS, THE SIGN AND SOURCE OF ALL PEACE AND BLESSING

Today, the beginning of a new year, we happily combine the celebration of Mary's

divine motherhood with World Peace Day.

As Christians, we rejoice with Mary Most Holy over the unique privilege granted her by Almighty God to bring into this world His only begotten Son Jesus Christ. This lasting "Mother-Son" relationship is the root of all other graces and privileges granted by the Lord to the Woman He chose from all eternity. As her devoted children we imitate also her attitude of reflecting on the great mystery of love and grace that her Son Jesus is. He is her treasure, her everything. Such should Jesus be also for us, especially on this first day of the year. Jesus is the greatest blessing we can ask for and receive from God our Father. Only if we have Jesus in our hearts shall we enjoy and propagate genuine peace.

– *Exploring God's Word*

A REFLECTION

By Ma. Dulce Ley

"If our Lord Jesus Christ is God, how should the holy Virgin who bore Him not be the Mother of God?"

– *Cyril of Alexandria*

On the first day of the new year, as we celebrate the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, we give praise to her participation in our salvation as she brought forth into this world, Jesus Christ.

In my youth, I was a skeptic. I was half convinced that Catholics valued Mary more

than her Son, Jesus Christ. I have learned that it is not so. In truth, true contemplation of Mary will always lead us to her Son, and necessarily to God our Father.

If you were like me, what can I tell you to make you love her? Shall I tell you of her humility and graciousness as she accepted without hesitation and doubt the will of God for her, "Do to me, according to Thy word"? Or should I commend to you her purity as she, a virgin, conceived our Savior Jesus Christ; or her generosity and charity as she visited her cousin Elizabeth who was pregnant with child in her old age? Shall I praise her love and devotion to her Son Jesus Christ, her quiet and indefatigable strength and spirit as she watched her son crucified and die on the cross? And should I not thank God for her complete faith as she, our mother, intercedes for us all?

But even if I rave to you about her, Mary will remain a distant and cold figure if you do not recognize what she is to us all: *Mary is the treasury of all good things, in order that everyone may know that through her are obtained every hope, every grace, and all salvation. For this is God's will, that we obtain everything through Mary.* (Pope Pius IX in the Encyclical *Ubi primum*)

May our contemplation of the Virgin Mary, lead us to a deeper awareness of her motherly presence so that comforted by her love and protection, we may live lives worthy of God's praise.



SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Epiphany – an appearance or manifestation especially of a divine being.

In the Catholic Church, the Solemnity of the Epiphany celebrates the "shining forth" or revelation of God who took human form i.e. was incarnated as Jesus, our Lord. The Solemnity of the Epiphany is celebrated on the first Sunday following January 1. This year, the Solemnity is celebrated on January 8.

While most associate Epiphany with the visit of the Three Wise Men (Magi) to Bethlehem, the eastern Christian Churches which originated this feast also included in the Epiphany, the birth of Jesus Christ, and all of Jesus' childhood events, up to His baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist. It used to be celebrated on a fixed date, January 6, exactly 12 days from Christmas Day.

The famous song, *Twelve Days of Christmas*, refers to these twelve days between Christmas and the Epiphany, when the latter used to be celebrated on January 6.

The following excerpt on the Twelve Days of Christmas is reprinted from an article by Fr. Ting Miciano in the 2009 *Simbahay* Christmas issue:

Catholics in England during the period between 1558 and 1829 when the Catholic faith was outlawed, wrote this song as a "catechism song" to help young Catholics learn the tenets of their faith, without being accused by the Protestants of practicing it!

The hidden meanings in the song are as follows: "True love" refers to God himself, the "me" represents the baptized person, The "partridge in a pear tree" represents Jesus Christ, reigning from the cross. The rest of the meanings are as follows:

- 2 turtle doves: Old and New Testament
- 3 french hens: faith, hope and charity, the theological virtues
- 4 calling birds: the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John)
- 5 gold rings: the first five books of the Old Testament
- 6 geese a-laying: the six days of creation
- 7 swans a-swimming: the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit
- 8 maids a-milking: the eight beatitudes
- 9 ladies dancing: the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit
- 10 lords a-leaping: the Ten Commandments
- 11 pipers piping: the eleven faithful apostles
- 12 drummers drumming: the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostles' Creed

NEWS BRIEFS



ADVENT RECOLLECTION

Last December 14, noted theologian, Rev. Fr. Francis Gustilo, SDB gave this year's advent recollection to the SJB Parish with the theme, "Starting the Advent of the 500th Anniversary of Filipino Christianity." The next ten years will be spent preparing for the Quincentennial Anniversary in 2021 of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines.

Fr. Francis' talk centered on the question, "What are we waiting for?" He explains that divine life is already available to us here and now because Jesus was "grafted" into us during baptism. As such, we need not wait for the afterlife to experience divine life. Whenever we do the will of the Father in this life, we incarnate Jesus; when we love our fellowmen, God's love comes alive for them.

HANDOG PANG-NOCHE BUENA

This Christmas season, through the initiative of Fr. Ting Miciano, the SJB Parish Community, the members of the different SJB Organizations, the Youth Ministry and the Parish Pastoral Council have pooled resources to provide Christmas gifts for the less-privileged parishioners. About 200 families will receive gift "baskets" containing rice, ingredients for spaghetti and fruit salad and canned goods for their *Noche Buena* or Christmas Day parties.

PROPER CHURCH ATTIRE STANDEES

Talented young artist, designer and illustrator, Alexandra Paredes, a graduate of the UP College of Fine Arts, BFA Visual Communication, *magna cum laude*, created four Christmas-themed standees for the SJB Parish, a fun way for the young and young at heart to learn about proper church attire. The four colorful standees are located by the garden near the parish church.



TALENTADO @ BUSKO

The Youth Ministry (YM) hosted a talent competition cum Christmas party last December 17, a grand, well-attended event to cap the year-long celebrations of the National Year of the Youth. The festivities started with a thanksgiving Mass with Fr. Richard Varela as presider and Fr. Dennis Paez as homilist. In his homily, Fr. Dennis who guided the YM in the planning, organizing and successful execution of Talentado@Busko spoke of forgiveness as a fitting advent preparation for Christmas.

The highlight of the party was the talent competition featuring 17 contestants. The top 3 winners who won cash prizes are:



photos by Frances Solinap

1st prize winner – Don Bosco Youth Center for their black-lights interpretative "hand dance" of the song, "I Believe I Can Fly"

2nd prize winner – Paco Catholic School Youth Demigods for their spirited break dance / hip-hop number

3rd prize winner – Kimberley Paglingayen for belting out a powerful rendition of "Isang Pangarap"

About 200 young people, mostly from the different SJB youth organizations, partied until 11:00PM, enjoying the food, games, performances, raffle prizes, dancing and each other's company.



ST. JOHN BOSCO CHORALE CHRISTMAS PARTY

The St. John Bosco Chorale celebrated Christmas with a themed party entitled, "A Modern Masquerade Affair". This simple yet elegant gathering was also in thanksgiving for the many blessings that the Chorale received in the past year, including well-acclaimed performances during the visit of Don Bosco's pilgrim relic and the T1NIG concert with Fr. Ting Miciano. From the SJB Chorale to its Parish community, A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



SIMBANG GABI

(reprinted from www.rcam.org, of the Archdiocese of Manila)

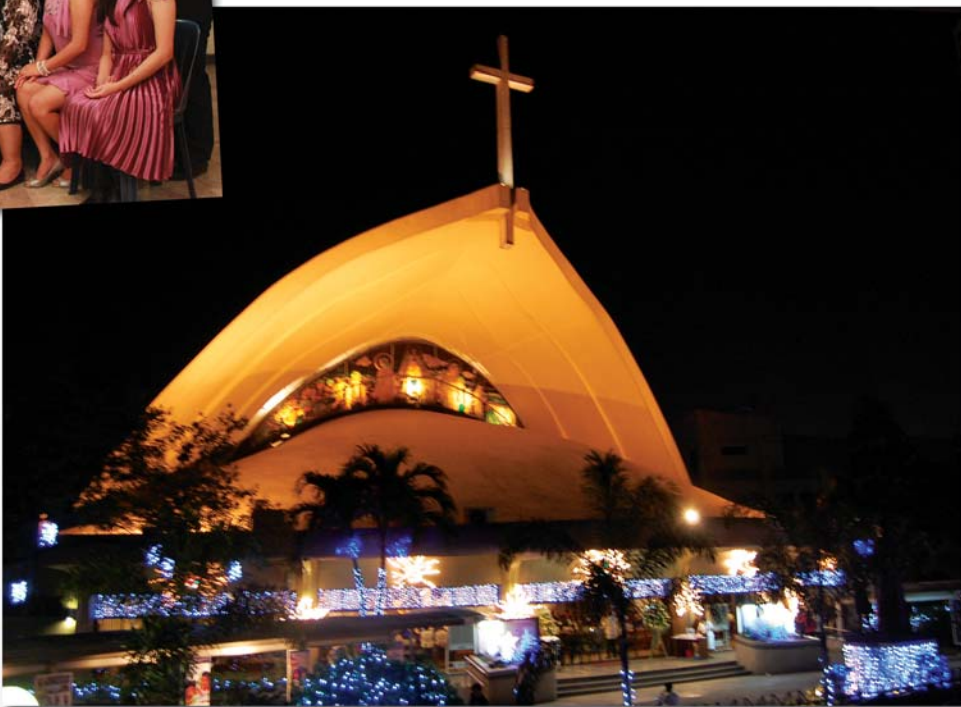
SIMBANG GABI is one of the longest and most popular among the Filipino traditions in the country. It is when Catholic churches across the nation start to open their doors shortly before the break of dawn to welcome the faithful to the Simbang Gabi mass.

Simbang Gabi or *Misa de Gallo* (coined after the cocks which crow to meet the dawn) is a nine-day novena to the Blessed Mother. The novena begins December 16 as early as 4 in the morning and culminates with the Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve to welcome the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. In some churches, the *panunuluyan* is reenacted showing the efforts of Joseph and Mary to find a suitable birthplace for baby Jesus.

Origins

Simbang Gabi traces its roots back to Mexico when, in 1587, the Pope granted the petition of Fray Diego de Soria, prior of the convent of San Agustin Acolman, to hold Christmas Mass outdoors because the churches could not accommodate the huge number of people attending the evening Mass.

In the past, the pre-dawn Masses were announced by the ringing of the church bells. In some rural areas, an hour before the start of Simbang Gabi, a brass band plays



Christmas music all over the town. It is also believed that parish priests went as far as knocking on doors to wake and gather the faithful to attend the *Misa de Gallo*. Farmers, as well as fishermen woke up early to hear the Gospel before going to their work and to ask for the grace of good harvests.

Simbang Gabi Now and Then

The changing times did not break the Simbang Gabi tradition, although it is celebrated in new ways. Colorful lights and lanterns fill every street; beautiful *parols* are hung in every window. Songs of the season are played everywhere to warm the hearts. Individuals, families and friends find their way to the nearest church to attend the nine-day novena. Shortly after the Midnight Mass,

families gather in their homes to celebrate *Noche Buena* and feast on various delicacies like *queso de bola*, *bibingka*, *puto bumbong*, or drink *salabat* or hot chocolate.

Significance

The Simbang Gabi is a significant tradition not only because it strengthens relationships among family members but also because it is the time where our faith is intensified. This is the time when we feel the presence of the Lord most because it is the spiritual preparation for Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ. It does not matter if one has the stamina to complete the novena or not. The blessing does not depend on the number of Masses attended, but on the disposition of the person who receives the Lord's blessing.

2011 CHRISTMAS BELENS OF THE VICARIATE OF STS. PETER & PAUL



STO. NIÑO DE PAZ CHAPEL, GREENBELT



HOLY CROSS



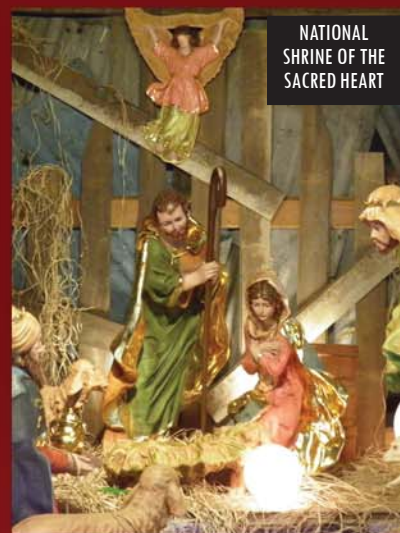
NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GRACIA



OUR LADY OF LA PAZ



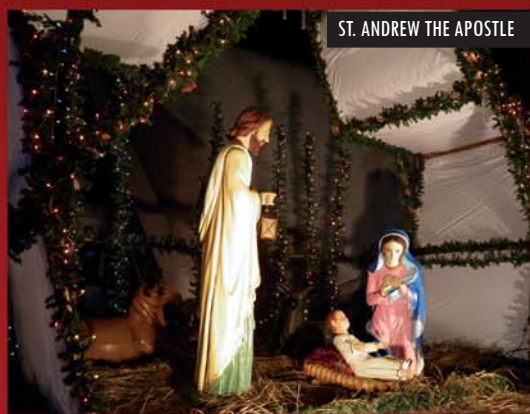
STS. PETER & PAUL



NATIONAL
SHRINE OF THE
SACRED HEART



SAN LORENZO VILLAGE PARK



ST. ANDREW THE APOSTLE



ST. JOHN BOSCO PARISH

photos by Welly Cuna and Richard Eusebio