



We will soon be celebrating the Feast of Santo Niño in our THNJ parish!!

PIT SEÑOR ! VIVA SEÑOR SANTO NIÑO! PIT SEÑOR!

These are the words we hear during the celebration of the Feast of Santo Niño.

Pit Señor are two words: "Pit" and "Señor". The word "Pit" is from Cebuano word "sangpit" meaning to "to call upon." The word "Señor" is a title of respect given to males and this refers to the Holy Child Señor Santo Niño of Cebu. So, the phrase Pit Señor means to call upon Señor Santo Niño.

Then we hear also the shouts of "Viva Señor Santo Niño" during the feast celebration. "Viva" has the usual connotation of "long live". To shout Viva is to say "may our Lord live long" and acknowledge the blessings that the Santo Niño has given us. It's a shout of thanksgiving to the Child Jesus.

Please join our Filipino Ministry at The Holy Name of Jesus parish in celebrating the **Feast of Santo Niño on January 24, 2021, 3:00 PM, at THNJ - Columbia.**

Fr. Noel Cruz, MS will be the Presider.

But let us not get ahead of ourselves here. I am sure you are wondering what is the Feast of Santo Niño all about.

What is the Feast of Santo Niño all about and why do we celebrate it?

The celebration is held in honor of the Santo Niño (Child Jesus). Devotion to the Holy Child Jesus is widespread and popular among the Filipino Catholics. It has become a part of every parish's life and in some places the biggest feast of the year. It is celebrated in the Philippines

on the third Sunday of January. Each year people come from all over to celebrate it with special Masses, dances and processions in which the participants carry a statue of the Holy Child Jesus, a reminder of the 16th Century arrival of Christianity in the Philippines.

The image of Santo Niño, garbed in different outfits, is found in the altars of almost every Filipino home. The Filipinos believe that Santo Niño is their protector and has the power to grant and answer their prayers. The Holy Child Jesus is a revered Protector and Guardian of children, and parents invoke the intercession of Santo Niño to keep watch over their children.

We wondered then what is the religious origin of this festival?

The Festival of Santo Niño originated in Cebu, a province in Southern Philippines. While it is celebrated across the Philippines, Cebu is the heart of festivities.

The Santo Niño de Cebu is the Roman Catholic title of the Child Jesus associated with the religious image of the Christ Jesus and venerated as miraculous by the Filipino Catholics. The statue of Santo Niño is the most recognizable religious image in the Philippines and the oldest Christian artifact in the Philippines.

According to written historical facts, on March 16, 1521, the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan arrived and planted the cross on the shores of Cebu, claiming the territory for Spain.

In April 1521, Magellan presented the image of the Child Jesus to Hana Amihan (Queen Juana), wife of Cebu's Rajah Humabon, as his baptismal gift for her. And along with the rulers of the island, about 800 natives were also converted to the Roman Catholic faith. Magellan was killed in the battle of Mactan later that month in the hands of Lapu-Lapu and Spanish reign came to a halt.

Forty-four years later, Miguel Lopez de Legazpi arrived in Cebu and defeated Rajah Tupas and caused destruction of the village. During the pillage, the Santo

Niño was left unscathed in a burnt down dwelling. The Augustinian friars that came with Legazpi proclaimed the statue miraculous and built a church on the site where it was found. And it became the San Agustin Church. This later on was raised to the status of Basilica Minore del Santo Niño (minor basilica).

The image kept in the Santo Niño chapel of the Basilica is considered the oldest relic in the Philippines. This was the same image Magellan gave to Queen Juana. Theologically, the Santo Niño symbolizes the whole mystery of the childhood of Jesus Christ.

The Catholic church of the Philippines sets the Holy Child as an example of humility, trust in God and simplicity of heart. It is in short, a celebration of the mystery of the Incarnation.

This year 2021, the Philippines and its entire Catholic community will celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the arrival of the image of Santo Nino in Cebu. The Augustinians, caretakers of the icon of the Holy Child, the Basilica and the Christian community are looking forward to this quinquennial commemoration of the presence of the Holy Child Jesus in our journey of faith as well as the introduction of Christianity in the Philippines through the expedition of Ferdinand Magellan in 1521.

So, what does celebration of Feast of Santo Nino look like?

Pilgrims from different parts of Cebu and the rest of the Philippines make their yearly journey to the church to take part in the procession and festival.

In 1980, the Cebu City government organized the Sinulog Mardi Gras, taught the Sinulog to the beat of the drums.

The Sinulog-Santo Niño festival became an annual religious and cultural festival. Pit Viva Señor is the cry of the Sinulog Festival.

How about the celebration of the Feast of Santo Nino at our THNJ parish?

The Santo Niño Fiesta celebration was started at THNJ parish in January 2007.

It was led by Fr. Jose Goopio, SVD, Parochial Vicar at THNJ parish in 2007 with the help from the Santo Niño Coordinators - Tony and Jessica Aliser at that time. Then Liza and Bing Lao were asked to help too until they assumed the role as Coordinators in the succeeding years of Feast celebration until this present time.

The Feast of Santo Nino is not a Diocesan event but celebrated locally in majority of parishes in our Diocese.

Our Filipino Ministry hosts the Santo Niño Fiesta celebration on the 4th Sunday of January each year. A Tagalog Mass is held for the celebration of the Feast of Santo Niño. A big statue of the Santo Niño (Child Jesus) is placed on a carro / platform adorned with fresh flowers then carried by several people as they go into procession towards the Altar. The carro is placed at the foot of the Altar until the end of the Mass. The parishioners bring their own Santo Niño statues for blessings by the priest celebrant during the Mass.

In the past Fiesta celebrations, parishioners from different parishes came to THNJ parish to celebrate with us. A fellowship follows after the Mass where sumptuous Filipino food is shared with everyone in attendance. And volunteer dancers perform the Sinulog dance to the beat of the drums.

Due to the current pandemic we are in, we are very limited in the activities we can do for the Santo Niño fiesta celebration.

But this celebration of the feast helps us remain rooted in our faith and devotion to the Holy Child Jesus. Celebrating this feast reminds us also of our Filipino heritage, our cultural identity. Señor Santo Niño will forever be in the hearts of the Filipinos and members of our Holy Name of Jesus Filipino Ministry.

- Compiled from various online sources: Susan Protacio 01-08-2021