

The Influence of Misa de Gallo in Strengthening Family Ties in the Philippines

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Keywords

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- ② Rooster Mass/Simbang Gabi
- ③ Filipino
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Abstract

Family is the basic unit of society in the Philippines. The Filipino culture is a rich EastWest mix. In 1521 Spain brought in Catholicism making the Philippines the only Christianized country in Southeast Asia. A deeply rooted Spanish influence in

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the country is the observance of Misa de Gallo since then, notwithstanding social and economic status. This paper is the first attempt to ascertain the relationship of Misa de Gallo in strengthening Filipino families. Findings point that filipinos remained faithful in attending Misa de Gallo, which is a symbolism of their covenant to God, and reinforces solidification of family bonds. The intensity of practicing the customary Misa de Gallo evolved overtime due to socio-political and economic pressures.

Introduction

Family bond is threatened by the fast pace of life worldwide endangering the social structure. Filipino families are exposed to this vulnerability. As a dominantly Catholic nation, strong families are the backbone of the society. A mechanism to keep them cohesive is crucial. Thus, this study investigates the significance of Misa de Gallo in strengthening the bonds of Filipino families. It is significant in maintaining strongly bonded families, that are responsible in nation-building. Data gathering was conducted from December 2019 to January 2020 in the six parishes of two cities in Mindanao, Philippines. A survey questionnaire was used to interview 300 respondents in six parishes. The paper is divided in four sections such as the 1) Research methods and tools, 2.) Misa de Gallo: Past and Present, 3) Results and discussions, and 4) Conclusion.

I. Research Method and Tools

This study employs qualitative research using survey questionnaire to obtain information from 300 randomly selected Roman Catholic respondents in Davao City, Davao del Sur and Panabo City, Davao del Norte in Mindanao, Philippines. Survey interviews were simultaneously conducted by the researcher and four trained assistants pre and post Misa de Gallo for nine days. Separately, Focus-

Group Discussions and interviews were held in San Lorenzo Ruiz, Sto. Niño, St. Paul, and Pink Sisters in Davao City, Davao del Sur; and Sto. Niño in Panabo City, Davao del Norte, Mindanao, Philippines. Raw data gathered was coded, validated and analyzed.

II. Misa de Gallo in the Philippines: Past and Present

With a population of 109,035,343 (Philippine Statistics Authority 2020), the Philippines is dominated by the Roman Catholic religion (86%). Catholicism was brought to the Philippines through Spanish expedition on March 16, 1521 led by Ferdinand Magellan. Accordingly, Pila and Buraga write that “in 1542, the Spanish Explorer Ruy Lopez de Villalobos named the archipelago as Felipinas in honor of King Philip II of Spain (2013 p30).”

Spain had imbued to the Filipinos their values, social behaviors, customs and traditions. In the 1830’s, the Filipinos started a movement to liberate the country. David emphasizes that “when the colonization is summed up in the Filipino popular mind today, what defines Spanish rule is its legacy of Christianity. The selective recall of the colonial experience points out on cultural, not the political nor the economic impact (2017 p35).” Filipinos naturally say that they are glad that Spain introduced Christianity to them. They are proudly the only Christianized country in Southeast Asia.

Accordingly, a Spanish tradition vastly practiced in the Philippines until now is the Misa de Gallo (Rooster Mass), or “Simbang Gabi.” Ancheta and Aguirre (2017) analyze that “culture is called a blueprint for living of a collectivity whose members share a given territory and language, feel responsible for one another, and recognized their shared responsibility.” “They develop themselves as individuals and as

families, to emphasize the way in which it shapes their lives, how people experience the world and express the meaning to these experiences (Swidler 1986).” Thus the shared tradition of Misa de Gallo has been creating a positive impact on developing Filipino bond.

Filipino family ties are closely drawn, and family affections more enduring. One example is the recent coronavirus related death of two sisters (whom the author has affinity) where all are grieving. Relationships by blood or by affinity, together they grief, pray, and support each other. The Filipino families are bound together by love and responsibility; personal interests are secondary to family interests. Article II, Section 12 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution recognizes the sanctity of family life. It stresses the importance of strengthening the family as a basic autonomous social institution. A family unit stretches beyond the parents and children — to the point of extending to the whole clan. Upon marriage, automatically the relatives of the couple are part of the family. Their assets and liabilities are legally treated as one. This union extends the scope of a family. Culturally, parents and children at will, share a strong sense of responsibility for the welfare of the family. They protect family reputation and defend each other. A Filipino family helps when a relative needs support. Even a poor member extends a helping hand as a posture of family unity. A family joined together in wrestling the threatening impact of illness, joblessness, and the worries of old age as everyone shares the responsibilities. This is a manifestation of a Filipino family’s application of the biblical mandate “Love one another.” Concretely, during the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, many workers lost their jobs. In order to survive, families innovate backyard gardening and bartering of goods and services among relatives. The harder the external threat is faced, the stronger the families become, and more prayerful time they share.

A family circle is further widened “through the custom of *compadre*, a relationship which is taken very seriously. Rituals are culturally patterned ways of expressing some central value or recurring concern of the collectivity (Ancheta 2017 p.40).” On baptisms and confirmations, a godfather (*ninong*, *compadre*) and a godmother (*ninang*, *comadre*) commit to stand as second parents. This custom with correlates to Hess contention that, “without common beliefs and ceremonies, group members will lack a sense of obligation to one another (1987 p.182).” Correspondingly, families are significantly bound by religious ties. Ancheta stresses that “Filipinos possess a genuine and deep love for family which includes not simply spouse and children, parents and siblings, but also grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins; godparents and other ceremonial relatives (2017 p43).” On fiestas, family members and friends come from all directions to celebrate with the townspeople, including those living abroad. Ancheta further stresses that “culture consists of those ways of thinking, believing, and behaving that order ones life (2017 p44).”

In the 17th century, Spanish priests believed that integrating native custom with Catholic ritual would spread the faith. Before the arrival of the friars, the native Filipinos had long been celebrating good harvests (as thanksgiving), like the present day Kadayawan Festival in Davao City. Kadayawan Festival is an annual celebration for the bountiful harvest and prayers for the incoming year. It is a week-long colorful and upbeat parade of fruits and flower floats, ethnic street dances, and recognition of the ancestors. At that time the Spanish priest gathered the farmers to give thanks to the Lord for the bountiful harvest, and to pray for the coming year, and later evolved as *Misa de Gallo*. “The average Filipino religious faith is legendary and beyond question. It is strong and it goes into the core of his or her being. It is effusive and often produces a dramatic effect on his or her disposition or conduct (David 2017 p36).” An elderly man interviewee said that he was a farmer.

During El Niño phenomenon, he and other farmers would offer rituals asking for rain. They believed that God listens to their prayers more during Misa de Gallo.

Misa de Gallo highlights and give color to the Filipino Christmas festivities. Ancheta emphasizes that “*fiesta grande*” was handed down by the Spaniards to the Filipinos (2017 p44).” “Filipinos are said to celebrate the longest Christmas season in the world. As early as September, Christmas carols are heard on the air; and people do not take down their Christmas decors until the New Year celebrations have passed (Filipinas Heritage Library).” Within the festivities, the most special is the Misa de Gallo which is from December 16 to 24. When the first church bells ring at dawn, everyone gets excited to attend the Misa de Gallo. Additionally, during the evening celebration of Advent season, many children and adults sing Christmas carols from house to house. They are rewarded with candy or money. The Midnight Nativity Mass (Christmas Eve) culminates with a religious service and is followed by feasting. During the height of the Christmas festivities, children opening of the Christmas gifts is more exciting — especially to the children. “They can expect to receive presents from the other members of the family when holiday visits are exchanged (A Pocket Guide to the Philippines).” The thought of Sta. Claus coming is very exciting. Parents say to their children: “Be good and Sta. Claus will give you presents.”

Misa de Gallo is a customary 9-day dawn mass from December 16 to 24. These dates were decided just in time for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ on December 25. In the minds of the Filipinos (including non-Christians), Jesus Christ came to the world to save humanity from their sins. In connection with the Holy Week, Jesus Christ sacrificed His life as symbolized by His suffering on the cross. Jesus Christ’s self-giving love demonstrates that He deserved to be praised and

celebrated. On Christmas Eve, Filipinos stay awake until Christmas Day — December 25 — the birth of Jesus Christ. In the Philippines, Christmas is the most awaited part of the Christmas season, fusing Catholic tradition with the ancient Filipino practice of thanksgiving. After the mass, people congregate in food stalls around church patios or go home for traditional breakfast of “suman at tsokolate” (rice cakes and cocoa) or “salabat” (ginger tea). While this research was being conducted, families were seen going to the churches in flocks around 2:00 a.m. in order to secure their seats. When the first roosters crowing sounds are heard at dawn on December 16th, the Roman Catholic churches ring the bells. In more affluent places, brass bands parade through towns, children fire “lantaka” (bamboo cannons) to awaken people for the Misa de Gallo. In Davao City, a band goes around to signal the start of Misa de Gallo.

Filipino families make a promise to complete the 9-day Misa de Gallo. A special midnight mass on the 24th of December culminates Misa de Gallo, and the Noche Buena awaits for each family to feast together. Noche Buena is celebrated by families with food such as chicken macaroni, bihon or pansit, spaghetti, *adobo*, *lechon*, *escabeche*, *afritada*, *leche flan*, suman, biko, tsokolate (hot chocolate drink), coca cola and so on. Poorer families focus on family togetherness than food. Some families have no food; just water to drink, and that’s fine. “All for one, one for all, they say.” The five families interviewed shared that they cannot buy luxurious food, so the cheap traditional delicacies sold in the stalls around the church are perfect.

During the 1500s, the Filipino farmers tilled their fertile farms from 4:00 am, and took a noon break when the strong sun hit its peak. Every day the poor farmers worked to their bones for fear of the Spanish lord or hacendero. Yet, when the

Christmas season begins, these farmers still attended the evening masses despite the day's fatigue. The priests saw their commitment to hear mass. As a result, they started holding Masses before daybreak. The custom spread and it evolved into a distinctly Philippine tradition to attend Mass at dawn. For them, attending masses is a great opportunity to talk to God. At that time, the poor farmers prayed to be free from poverty and Spanish maltreatment. The elders in the countryside said that a group of five members go around the neighborhood Christmas caroling—just like in Davao City and elsewhere at present. In some communities, the parish priest goes as far as banging on each and every door to awaken the parishioners. This is hard to do right now due to the ballooning population.

“Thus, throughout the centuries, Misa de Gallo has been preserved, enriched and sustained by the Filipinos in spite of the pastoral and liturgical challenges.

Filipinos have common belief that Christians are guided by the Holy Spirit as they seek to follow sincerely the good deeds of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is present in the lives of the believers as they actively participate in the life and mission of the Holy Church.” “Filipinos have a deep faith in God. Their innate religiosity enables them to comprehend and genuinely accept reality in the context of God's will and plan (Ancheta 2017 p47).” In fact, in 2013 when the super typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) destroyed the central Philippines, Filipinos strongly hold on to prayers. The Spanish friars successfully inculcated in the minds of the Filipinos to live everything to God, for God always provides.

III. Results and Discussions

1. What is Misa de Gallo?

Misa de Gallo is defined by 198 (66%) respondents as a combination of religious

tradition and family practice in celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ; 54 (18%) said that it is solely a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ; while 48 (16%) believed that it is a religious tradition practiced by families. According to Pila and Buraga, “the adoption of Hispanic names including the naming of churches in the Philippines is a Spanish legacy (2017 p40).” Spain built beautiful churches in Laoag, Paoay and Bacarra in northern Philippines. They adopted the Byzantine, Baroque, Gothic and Moorish styles. Similarly, the older churches followed the same. During the interview, nobody mentions its historical beginnings to the Spaniards. Probably the younger generation is quite far from that historical timeline. Should there be respondents in their 80s or 90s, oral narrative will likely include the Spanish influence.

2. Timing

The urban churches studied hold two morning batches (3:00~4:00 and 4:10~5:10) of Misa de Gallo to accommodate thousands of parishioners. This has been the practice as the population rose over time, yet the churches size and capacity remained constant. However, the rural churches and capillas (chapels) hold only one batch of Misa de Gallo from four to five o’clock. In the past Misa de Gallo was held during the harvest season, and the farmers had to be in the fields before sunrise. So as an accommodation, the Masses were moved up to four o’clock in the morning (Filipinas Heritage Library).”

Families customarily go to the church to complete the Misa de Gallo. All the respondents confirmed that this has been handed down over generations, as a demonstration of strong faith. On the other hand, 2.2 million Filipinos living overseas are mostly attending Misa de Gallo as a deep expression of spiritual practice.

Parishioners have to go to the Misa de Gallo at least one hour earlier before the mass starts to find their own seats, otherwise they have to stand for the whole duration of the mass. Even before the first batch of Misa de Gallo is over, the next batch of mass attendees are already queuing. Seats are taken very quickly because one family attending the mass has at least five members.

3. Continuity

The Misa de Gallo tradition has been tested by time and it is still the dominant Roman Catholic practiced since its introduction in 1521. It is supported by the overcrowded churches year by year attended by parishioners. In both San Lorenzo Ruiz and St. Paul, the officiating priests said that the parishioners always give overwhelming attendance. The soon to be ordained priest, still a brother at the time of interview in 2019 is happy to witness that families go together in groups to listen to the Misa de Gallo. They shared that there are many cases where individuals go alone; they are mostly transient students and workers.

According to local narratives, Catholicism has been deeply ingrained in the heart and minds of the Filipinos that it became a way of life. “Filipinos live very intimately with religion. It is tangible and touchable - a part of everyday life (Ancheta 2017 p47).” The strongest reason that it has stayed since then is the belief that God is the Messiah, the Savior, and the Provider. He listens to fervent prayers and intentions. In most cases, Filipinos pray for economic blessings, good health, and safety. During crisis and natural disasters, they rely much to God through prayers—“God always provides—.” “Prayers give strength and encouragement to keep them going amidst poverty and other forms of troubles. Filipinos have a cheerful and fun-loving approach to life and its ups and downs (Ancheta 2017

p48)”, “and are able to watch themselves collectively (David 2017 p38).” That is why Filipinos are well known for resiliency, reinforced by strong faith. “The Philippines is the most prayerful country in the world. It influenced the way Filipinos manage their lifestyle and tradition (Pila and Buraga 2013 p43).” In good times and in bad times, before and after eating or sleeping, before leaving the house or traveling, before starting a public or private event, Filipinos pray. In the dining table, no one should start the food without saying the grace before meals. Making the sign of the cross is a very important prayerful gesture until now.

4. Dynamics in the Misa de Gallo

Data reveals that the respondents think greatly of Misa de Gallo as a religious tradition that the Filipino families have been practicing since the beginning of Roman Catholicism in the Philippines. In each parish, families mostly have known each other for generations and associate in informal ways coined as “chika-chika” or small chats/talks. These families are united by common ancestry or geographic proximity, so they go to the same church in the neighborhood.

The most solemn church in this study is the Pink Sisters where parishioners do not engage in small chats after the Misa de Gallo. Every family and individuals just leave quietly. The parishioners at Pink Sisters are well-off and come to church by car. There are a few food stalls selling traditional delicacies outside the church where roughly 15% buys the food. St. Paul has a very similar situation with the Pink Sisters. In San Lorenzo Ruiz, the parishioners are heterogenous—were the well-off and the lower classes are combined. Some families walk while others go by car or by public transportation. More food stalls lined outside the church where at least 60% of the attendees buy the food. Families and individuals tend to know each other closely, thus, — “chika-chika”— is visible. Sto. Niño in Panabo City is

quite similar to San Lorenzo. Although the latter has many food stalls and more likely 80% of the parishioners buys. The other Sto. Niño church in Mintal, Davao City is attended by mostly less affluent families. A few may go by inexpensive cars but majority use public transportation. The church is small but the food stalls are crowding the vicinity wherein 90% of the parishioners buys after Misa de Gallo. A high number of the less affluent parishioners buy in the stalls because it is cheaper than buying all the ingredients to make their own.

Consistent to all four Churches is that families attend Misa de Gallo in flocks. There is uniformity in terms of food stalls but a clear difference in patronizing them. Affluent families tend to behave more refine and distant. Thus, they omit “chika-chika” and do not buy delicacies from stalls due to the notion of improper hygiene — which is not always true. Heterogeneous composition of parishioners tend to be more relaxed and open to small talks. They do not mind eating food from the food stalls. Parishioners in Sto. Niño, Mintal tend to patronize foods sold in stalls the most because they tend to associate them to their foods at home. They are cheap, too. The families eat directly (standing) or bring the food home. Either way they eat together as a family.

The dynamics of families attending the Misa de Gallo in all churches studied share the same characteristics. They go together, pray together, and eat together. The collective process of choosing, buying, and eating together as a family stimulates small talks. This leads to taking care of each other.

5. Why attend Misa de Gallo?

According to Homans (1950 p16), “group membership is a circular process. The more people associate with one another, the more they come to share common

norms and values.” This process might eventually lead to change. “Change in a society not only consists of structural, economic, and cultural shifts but also involves psychological changes (Ancheta 2017 p65).” As Kornblum (1988 p71) puts it, “social change refers to variations over time in the ecological ordering of populations and communities, in patterns of roles and social institutions, in the structure and functioning of institutions, and in the cultures of societies.” This supports the changes in timing and holding of two consecutive masses in San Lorenzo Ruiz Parish.

The reasons of attending the Misa de Gallo according to 114 (38%) respondents is that it is an act of renewing their faith and commitment as a Roman Catholic: 93 (31%), it is a religious practice or tradition: 72 (24%), it is a family tradition or practice: 15 (5%), it is a chance to mend relationships: 3 (1%), it is an order by parents or adults and 3 (1%), responded they don’t know. This reasoning could be associated with the Newcomb (1943, 1984) concept of consensus, a natural process that strengthens group ties through shared activities, friendships, norms and values. Participation to voluntary neighborhood associations (or activities like the case of Misa de Gallo) is primarily motivated by the possibility of getting positive results, for instance, mending relationships.

The top three reasons for attending Misa de Gallo again affirm the connection of religious faith and family tradition. The families exhibit collective behavior which Shepard (1902, 1999) refers to as a “relatively spontaneous and unstructured social behavior of people who are responding to the same stimuli” — Misa de Gallo. During the interviews and small group discussions, the respondents repeatedly reiterate that as a family they have to go to the church in order to renew their faith. They think that if they fail to go, their commitment to God fades. Cooley (1902,

1909) “primary groups involve an identity of goals among the members, who share similar world view and strive for shared goals.” Because of the bonding character of their close ties, each person is concerned with the welfare of the other members.

Though it is only 5%, mending relationships among family members, is also an important factor for the respondents. This is strongly rooted from the Christian Golden Rule or the Ten Commandments (Rooker 2010 p10), that is, “Love your enemies.” This phrase sends a moral obligation to show compassion to those who have wronged you — to forgive and forget.

6. Pre and Post Misa de Gallo Activities

Of the respondents 9 (3%) said that they bond as a family, 28 (9.3%) have to wake up early to prepare, 102 (34%) said they go to church to hear the mass, and 161 (53.7%) responds all of the above. The study shows that only 3% of the respondents opposed to claim that Misa de Gallo is greatly linked to strengthening families. Neatly 34% of the respondents seemed to do it as a Christian duty. However, a closer analysis of this particular data revealed that more than half of the respondents correlated Misa de Gallo and family bonding. This is supported by the notes taken during the interviews, that families sacrifice together in waking up at 1:30 am to hear Misa de Gallo for straight nine days.

Preparing to go to the mass is very challenging because Filipinos need to take a shower before leaving the house as a general hygiene practice. Imagine if there is only one bathroom in a 4-member household who are queuing. Their actions must synchronize from start to finish.

7. Activities After Attending Misa de Gallo

After attending Misa de Gallo, most of the attendees directly go home: 158 (52.5%), buy traditional food: 79 (26.5%), chat with the churchgoers: 33 (11%), chat with the priest: 9 (3%), and do nothing: 21 (7%).

More than half of the respondents preferred to return home and be ready for work. Only a quarter buy traditional foods and flowers from the stalls. A few people engage in quick chat with the priest, and among themselves due to the brief interval between masses in San Lorenzo. There was no time and space to chat because the next batch of Misa de Gallo attendees were already queuing.

In Towoomba, Australia, the growing Filipino population living there provided a large number of the people attending the masses. “After each mass, the attendees remained to share a light breakfast brought by them to the church (Hardwick 2014 p1)” because there were no food stalls.

In the past 50 years, it was still common for the churchgoers to gather around the priest and talk randomly about Christmas and New Year. There were more food and flower stalls. People buy their favorite suman (glutenous rice in coconut milk wrapped with banana leaves), biko, sapin-sapin, leche flan (Spain’s catarana), banana barbecue, bibingka (rice cake), puto, cuchinta, palitaw, and lechon (roasted pig). Filipinos love to eat. The atmosphere was very festive. There is a slight deviation from the old practice of Misa de Gallo, particularly the post-mass interactions. The current and past activities after the Misa de Gallo seemed to have changed overtime. These changes can be attributed to the changing lifestyle of the locales, economic conditions, stained credibility of the Catholic church — being too political.

8. Motivating Factors to Attend Misa de Gallo

People attend Misa de Gallo, of which 128 (42.6%) said it is due to their strong faith in God, 83 (27.80%) to offer sacrifice, 46 (15.4%) to seriously pray for a strong petition for the welfare of the family, and a family tradition to bond together, and 43 (14.20%) to reflect and thank God, and the whole process is nostalgic.

Accordingly, the most dominant motivation for them to hear Misa de Gallo is faith, a strong religious devotion to God influenced by the teachings of Roman Catholicism. “The chief teachings of the Catholic church are: God’s objective existence; God’s interest in individual human beings, who can enter into relations with God (through prayer); the Trinity ; the divinity of Jesus; the immortality of the soul of each human being, each one being accountable at death for his or her actions in life, with the award of Heaven or hell; the resurrection of the dead; the historicity of the Gospels; and the divine commission of the church (Infoplease 2010).” All other reasons were on their commitment to remain faithful to God. Data showed that the family welfare is always attached to their commitment to faith and God. Their prayers are dedicated to their families and loved ones where the interviewees said. “Private prayer is also regarded as essential; contemplation is the ideal, and all believers are expected to devote some time to prayer that is more than requesting favors (Infoplease 2010).”

The survey result revealed that they are motivated to attend the Misa de Gallo because their families become stronger together. It strengthens the family solidarity to withstand problems: and collectively offer thanksgiving to God for all the blessings throughout the year. This manifests values, which “constitutes the fabric of the society, providing its institutions’ unity and coherence. They are not invented overnight. They are slowly woven over time, passed on to succeeding generations

who use as guides in their quest for solutions to the problems of living (David 2017 p88).”

The demotivating factors to attend Misa de Gallo are as follows: 168 (56%) difficulty to wake up as early as 1:30 in the morning, 30 (10%) not all family members are attending, 9 (3%) some church leaders have moral issues, 27 (9%) all of the above, while 66 (22%) for no reason.

The top reason that discourages them to attend Misa de Gallo is the hassle of waking up too early. Interestingly, during the Spanish rule, the peasant Filipinos were happy that the mass was held before daybreak so that they can participate before going to the farm. This contradiction is due to the changing lifestyle and occupation of the Filipinos. Akin to elsewhere in the world, Filipinos tend to prefer white collar jobs. It is now rare to hear someone dreaming to become a farmer. The timing of Misa de Gallo was favorable to the peasants back then, but does not perfectly suit the working class now as they have to rush to their workplaces. Traffic is now becoming a big problem that makes it difficult to reach the workplace before the official clock-in at 8:00 o'clock.

Moral and political issues by some of the religious leaders — sexual abuse, involvement in armed struggle, and recruitment of insurgents — is an open book. This is very crucial because “We took our cues from our parents, teachers, religious mentors, and national leaders (David 2017 p85).” However, the respondents did not put much weight on it to turn their back from attending Misa de Gallo. According to the respondents, God is the reason why they attend masses, not the priests. Even Adam and Eve committed the first sin. This mentality supports the deeply rooted faith of the Filipino Roman Catholics to God and to His Kingdom which is

represented by the church. Under Spanish colonialism, they thought themselves as children of the Church, or as subjects of Mother Spain (David 2017 p89).”

Half of the respondents find no consequences while almost half feel guilty if unable to attend the Misa de Gallo. To be part of a catholic society is to care for what happens to it. Both responses implied personal free will. “Free will has been considered a characteristic or capacity that human beings are generally endowed with and that has a special, if not unique, value (Van Inwagen, 1983 p99).” “It was usually thought that the intrinsic freedom of individuals, distinct from the social and political one, was a prerequisite for dignity and moral responsibility (McKenna and Pereboom, 2016 p25).”

9. The Significance of Misa de Gallo to Filipino Catholics

The significance of Misa de Gallo to the Filipino Catholics as revealed by the respondents: 33 (11%) viewed it as an inspiration to do good to oneself and family, 30 (10%) responds that the family members become closer to one another, 6 (2%) witnessed that they are being reconciled with God: 6 (2%) resolution of tainted relationships: 12 (4%) experienced the Christian value of sharing and giving: 186 (62 %) responded all of the above, and 27 (9 %) none.

More than half of the respondents confirmed that Misa de Gallo is significant to their lives as Catholics. The responses express reconciliation to one another— individual to individual, family and society — and most of all to God. This is a manifestation of the Christian teaching of forgiveness.

Further, the Austrian social democrat Otto Bauer had an interesting political statement in 1923 which mirrors the behavior of Filipino catholics. He posits:

“When I become aware that I belong to a nation (in this case, church), I realize that a close community of character ties me to it, that destiny forms me and its culture defines me, that it is an effective force in my character.”

10. Misa de Gallo made the families closer and stronger

Majority of the respondents 294 (98%) said that Misa de Gallo made their families much closer and well-bonded, while 6 (2%) said otherwise. The data is supported by Schumm (1986 p215) saying that “religious orientation might even be a sort of prime mover influencing intimacy, communication, commitment, and the ability to cope with crisis.” In addition, (Cobb 1976 p307) says that “Religious affiliation and participation may provide and/or enlarge the social support system available to the family by increasing the number of friendships with other families. This social support may lead the family to believe they are cared for and loved, esteemed and valued, and belonged to a network of mutual aid.” As a result, the Filipino families who hear the Misa de Gallo together develop a stronger relationship as asserted by 98% of the respondents.

11. Respondents Narratives

There are 294 (98%) respondents who said that Misa de Gallo strengthened their families. They said that: “The family that prays together stays together.” Family support system is a strong Filipino custom. Filipinos are by nature family centered.

11.1 The Connection of Misa de Gallo to Families

Hearing Misa de Gallo at 3:00 o’clock as a family solidifies relationships. They sacrifice waking up too early. Life has been so busy. Misa de Gallo makes everyone pause, pray and focus on family. It manifests love of family and faith in God. Each one pray for each other particularly on family safety, good health, blessings, and

even to pass a test. They believed that God grants fervent prayers especially when done collectively as a family. It is religion that binds Filipino families. On their way to the church, they are reminiscing those happy times they shared. The process of recollecting memories develops their filial love, and brings them even closer. Misa de Gallo strengthens families because of shared commitment and experiences. It is a religious tradition that families have been practicing — from generations to generations. The respondents repeatedly said that it is the time for the families to be together. It is a very helpful space to forgive and forget misunderstandings, reuniting families, sharing, giving and loving especially on Christmas Day. During Misa de Gallo, everybody is creating memories together by praising God. This gives time to be listening to each other. “Religious orientation might even be a sort of prime mover influencing intimacy, communication, commitment, and the ability to cope with crisis (Schunn 1986)”.

11.2 The Connection of Misa de Gallo to Self

Misa de Gallo has links to the individual person’s well-being. A few of the respondents specifically narrated their drive to really attend every year even if there are hindering factors. A married woman in her 40’s said that she is attending the Misa de Gallo alone because her husband is working overseas, kids are too young, and her mother is too old to go out at dawn. Despite of this, she is able to attend the Misa de Gallo because her mother can watch over the young children while she is in the church. She proudly said that they supported her devotion to complete the 9-day Misa de Gallo every year. “Filipinos are very religious, and Masses are attended by many people. Misa de Gallo is even celebrated in malls and in major airports.

11.3 The Connection of Misa de Gallo to Faith

Nevertheless, Misa de Gallo is a religious tradition that bonds families and communities by congregating and strengthening their common faith, and receiving the Holy communion. Almost all Filipinos won't just let it pass without completing 9 days. This was told by the Sullano couple, both professionals, who are known to be very religious. The husband is a retired NGO worker and a lay person in the church (who sadly passed away in 2021) while the wife is a teacher and a catechist. They said that hearing the words of God is a reminder to do good. It brings them much closer to each other by sharing what they have learned during the preaching of the priest, and helping each other to apply it in their daily lives.

Some respondents believe that it is also helpful for the economy as they pray for continuous graces, peaceful life together with the family, the neighbors, and God. God is the star of all. What happens to the economy has God's intercession. Strong faith leads to closer and stronger families. Going to the church to hear Misa de Gallo together is a great bonding moment, and a chance to become closer to God. In a family, it is important to make God as the center of relationships, the foundation of one's life. Another couple said that only him and his wife attend the Misa de Gallo. They always look forward to going and hearing mass, and pray. One respondent said that her family is not a usual churchgoer. But attending mass always makes her feel lucky enough to have a complete family and appreciate everything they do. Another respondent said that he is often away due to call of duty, but if he is home he goes with his family to attend the mass. He believes that one step closer to God means two steps stronger his family would become.

Regardless of objectives, they sacrifice their sleeping time and listen to the abundant goodness of the Lord, thanking God for all the blessings He showers thru the

Eucharistic celebration. It is like an automatic factor that the family members are doing together since then. No matter what happens the families are united, all become one. Listening to the Gospel of God is very helpful.

One respondent asserted that through the years she is attending the Misa de Gallo and all her prayers and special intentions have been answered beyond expectation. The Misa de Gallo has been her inspiration in finding her purpose and direction in life. In case of attending the regular Sunday mass the homily enables her to reflect. She could better understand and deal with every day situations in relation to strengthening faith, and put everything as service to the Lord — praise and thanksgiving to reciprocate His blessings.

In the small group discussions, the respondents said that it is not easy to wake up early. So, the family has to agree on whoever wakes up first will wake up others. They also have more time talking, bonding while walking to the church, and praying the rosary. After the mass, there is also much time for conversation while sipping hot chocolate with “puto maya”. This sort of family togetherness is really a special holiday within the year. This opportunity does not conveniently happen during regular months since everybody is in a hurry preparing for school and work.

Other respondents share that celebrating Misa de Gallo too early is tough. So it measures a family’s devotion to God. It is a renewal of faith and spiritual commitment, a complete submission to God by offering sacrifices and giving clarity. The process of going to church together while chatting merrily about the past happy moments reinforces family ties. It is one of the manifestations of spending quality time with family. It is also a time to be thankful to loved ones, as

well as asking and giving forgiveness for soured relationships. Parents are taking the lead in attending Misa de Gallo. However, the case of one respondent is slightly different. She goes to the Misa de Gallo with her siblings because her father is too sick and her mother must take care of him. In her neighborhood where relatives live nearby, they go in flocks. But in her case, they cannot because their relatives live way too far from them. Even then she realized that she and her siblings become much closer as they only have each other, “because family is so basic to our sense of well-being and of relatedness (Ancheta and Aguirre 2019 p50).” An affluent family narrated their own version. They said it’s fun to hear the Misa de Gallo — from preparing, driving to the church, hearing mass and doing something right after, and driving back. They said: “We get to hear a lot of stories that we have never heard when we are at home because our parents are present. If we gossip at home, our parents become suspicious. They think we are talking behind their backs.” Thus the foregoing narratives demonstrate that Misa de Gallo influenced the way Filipino families strengthen their bonds.

IV. Conclusion

Misa de Gallo indeed influenced in strengthening of Filipino families. This tradition of hearing this special mass has been sustained since its introduction by the Spanish colonizers to the Philippines in 1521. Completing the 9-day mass primarily intends to offer prayers and petitions for their own families like good health, safety, success, and happiness. Filipinos across demography and social standing tend to practice the tradition since then. Contrary to the past there are less conspicuous food stalls lined around the church for people to buy local delicacies after the mass that stimulates “chika-chika”. The busy lifestyle affected socialization but the drive manifests. In the past, peasants did not have to worry on rush hours. Celebrating two masses with only 10 minutes interval gives a slim window for interaction among the parishioners

and the priests —a supposedly nurturing gesture of faith.

The findings posit opportunities to re-examine how this religious tradition can play a more dynamic role in re-building and re-bonding families, who are faced with fast paced lifestyle. Religion has been a strong factor for Filipino resilience amidst disasters, holding on to each other, and sustaining the filial love. Filipino families put God at the center of everything. The Misa de Gallo tradition can fuel people's mind and heart to do good, and be forgiving, Thus, re-creating a more livable place to thrive. The religious sector as well as the Filipinos in general can somehow exploit the prowess of Misa de Gallo in strengthening families that would redound to a stronger community of faith and eventually a more peaceful country.

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