



SOLT Sisters' SPOTLIGHT



Dear Friends,



One of my favorite Advent hymns is "O Come, Divine Messiah," a hymn of longing for Jesus to come and dispel the night and show His face and for sadness to flee away. It perfectly captures the spirit and sentiments of Advent, a season of preparation and anticipation for Christ's coming at Christmas. In this newsletter our Sisters will share some of their Advent experiences and spiritual practices. Let us take the opportunity this year to spiritually prepare for Christmas and unite ourselves with our Blessed Mother Mary and St. Joseph as they prepared for Jesus' birth on that most holy of nights.

Sister Megan Mary, SOLT



PHILIPPINES

NUEVA CACERES**
 LEGAZPI*
 SORSOGON*
 NOVALICHES*

PAPUA, NEW GUINEA

MT. HAGEN**

THAILAND

RATCHABURI*
 CHANTABURI*

*DIOCESE

**ARCHDIOCESE

TOTAL
 PROFESSED
 SISTERS: 109

PERPETUALLY
 PROFESSED: 98

TEMPORARY
 PROFESSED: 11

SISTERS IN
 FORMATION: 15

SIMBANG GABI

Simbang Gabi, which literally translates as “Night Mass,” is a Filipino Advent tradition. Simbang Gabi or Misa de Gallo (the Mass of the Rooster) is a nine-day novena celebrated from December 16 to 24 with early dawn Masses in preparation for Christmas. The church bells start ringing as early as 3am, waking people up so they can get ready for the 4am Mass. The Churches are decorated with colorful lights and beautiful lanterns to welcome those who are arriving in the dark. Each morning a group of children act out a skit to portray the Gospel and the choir prepares very well the music with the Christmas spirit. Right after Mass different kinds of rice delicacies are available and sold in the Church yard for breakfast.



This is also a time of family bonding and reunion of friends. Everyone in my family, my friends, and relatives attend Simbang Gabi thanking God and requesting blessings from the Lord as we look forward to Christmas Day. When we were children, my parents told us that if we complete the nine-day dawn masses, our wishes would come true and from my young age I believed it.

One of my favorite memories of Simbang Gabi occurred when I was a teenager. My friend, who was a Seventh Day Adventist, joined us and had a powerful experience of God. He was particularly drawn to the Nativity scene and came to understand and believe that Mary is the Mother of Jesus. The graces of this experience led him to conversion and baptism. He later married one of our Catholic friends and became a very good Catholic husband and father.

As St. Ignatius of Loyola said, “God will not be outdone in generosity.” Those of us who have the privilege to participate in Simbang Gabi and make the sacrifices entailed, know that God will bestow blessings upon us a hundredfold. And one of the greatest blessing is to be prepared to receive Jesus on Christmas. Come, Lord Jesus.

- Sr. Ma. Helen de la Pena

OUR LADY'S MONTESSORI SCHOOL

*"Come, Lord Jesus. Come, Lord Jesus.
Come and be born in our hearts."**



Advent has always been a special time of preparing, especially among children. As a child, it always seemed to take "forever" for Christmas to arrive. But there's something gentler, more hidden in the preparation that comes before Christmas. As Mary humbly and peacefully and even expectantly carried our Lord, so we too carry a desire to receive Him on Christmas Day.

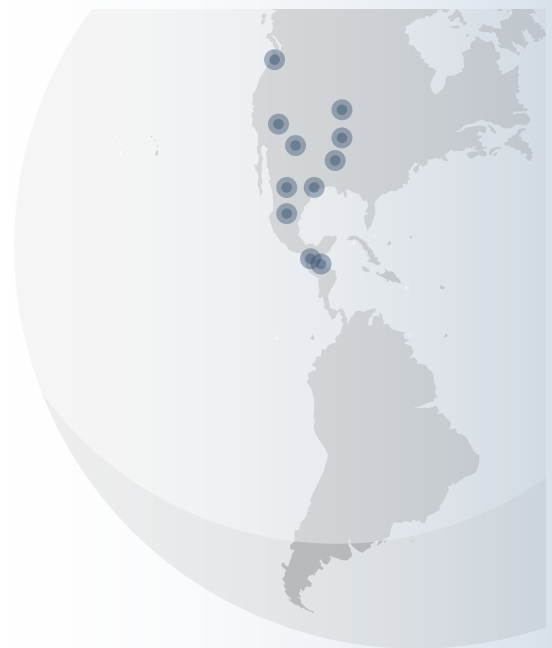
In Our Lady's Montessori School, the children hear the prophecies in the Old Testament during Advent and ponder how the people of Israel were waiting for the Messiah, how they had been waiting for thousands of years when the Prophet Isaiah first said, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." They ponder how it must have felt to receive this message of hope, to know they were not forgotten, that a Savior was coming.

"A great light." A few years ago, one of our teachers shared with me that she was sitting at the lunch table with one of our 3-year-olds and the child was very silent, unusually so. Wondering if something was wrong, the teacher asked the child, "Are you okay?" And in response, the child's face came alive and she proclaimed with enthusiasm powerful to behold, "Jesus is the light!"

To us, "Jesus is the light," could be a rather ordinary statement, but I think it's important to consider what it could mean that He is the light. Without light, life could not exist. No plants, no animals, no mankind. And yet we live in so much darkness. It is our Lord who brings light to our lives both physically and spiritually. It is His light that guides us along His everlasting way, that helps us to know Him. With great joy and enthusiasm, this little one proclaimed the great truth that had penetrated her life. May the Light penetrate our lives also.

- Sr. Maria Mater Dei

**"Come, Lord Jesus," music and lyrics by Carey Landry*



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APOSTOLIC VICARIATE OF
EL PETEN, GUATEMALA

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Advent

Great events entail great preparations. In the liturgies of Advent, the Church provides us with the time and space to prepare ourselves for the celebration of Christmas.

At Christmas, we receive Jesus into the world, but it is really He who receives us. He receives us by taking on our human nature with all its limitations. The infant in the manger receives our humanity entirely, fully, holding nothing about us at arms-length. He received us utterly and completely when He united Himself with our nature.

He chooses us, just as He chose Mary, to be His dwelling place. So, let us turn to Mary and ask her to help us prepare our hearts to receive her Son.

On the cover...

SOLT Sisters and SOLT Missionary Volunteers, in Benque-Viejo, Belize, join in prayer and adoration during the Advent season.



Sr. Mary Joy and Sr. Mary of Holy Hope in Grand Canyon National Park.



SOCIETY of OUR LADY
of the Most Holy Trinity

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SOLT Sisters in South Texas wish you a blessed Advent season.



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SPOTLIGHT