

The Sinulog Festival, celebrated annually on the third Sunday of January in Cebu, Philippines, is one of the most iconic cultural and religious events in the country. Its origins trace back over 500 years, marking the introduction of Christianity to the Philippines.

Today, the devotion to the Sto. Niño (Child Jesus) transcends borders, as the Filipino Catholic diaspora continues to celebrate Sinulog worldwide. Wherever Filipinos gather, the festival becomes a heartfelt expression of their faith, with the chants of “Viva Pit Señor!”—a call to the Child Jesus—resounding in unison. The festival’s vibrant dances, songs, and rituals remain central to the celebration.

However, the true essence of Sinulog goes beyond its colorful performances, elaborate costumes, and grand festivities. As Fr. Francis Cruz emphasised during his homily at the 18th Sinulog celebration of the FILCHAMP community in Kilburn, the festival should also remind Filipinos of the deeper meaning of their faith in Christianity, which can sometimes be overshadowed by the focus on spectacle.

Fr. Francis encouraged Filipinos to reflect on their personal and communal growth, inspired by the journey of the Sto. Niño from a child to a man. He challenged the faithful to outgrow tendencies such as bitterness, often seen during elections, and the culture of fault-finding (“Matampuhin”). Additionally, he urged them to overcome tardiness, including the ingrained notion of “Filipino time.”

“Just as the Sto. Niño matured, so must our faith,” Fr. Francis reminded the congregation. Growth requires sacrifice, and it is through this sacrifice that the Body of Christ is strengthened. A mature faith calls for unity, transformation, and healing within communities.

Fr. Francis highlighted that many challenges in Filipino communities, both in the Philippines and abroad, can be addressed by adopting this mindset. He reminded the congregation that good leaders are shaped by their own experiences of hardship and suffering. Without these, leaders risk becoming the source of difficulty for their people.

He concluded by encouraging individuals to view struggles as opportunities for growth and renewal, both personally and as a community. Instead of creating unnecessary suffering, Filipinos are called to use their faith and resilience to inspire meaningful change, embodying the true spirit of the Sinulog Festival.

“VIVA PIT SEÑOR!”

End.

Article by Amy Deadman