

Dambana: The Grotto's Filipino Faith Shrine

As many of you know, here in Portland we are blessed with a beautiful 62-acre Catholic shrine and botanical garden called The National Sanctuary of Our Sorrowful Mother. We more commonly refer to it as *The Grotto*. The shrine is administered by the Order of Friar Servants of Mary. Father Jack Topper, OSM, heads the very competent and welcoming staff.

There are many opportunities for prayerful reflection in this beautiful outdoor sanctuary. A number of shrines are scattered across the grounds. The central attraction, Our Lady's Grotto, has as its centerpiece, a white marble replica of Michelangelo's famous masterpiece, the Pietá. In addition to the main chapel, there is also a meditation chapel, a peace garden, a rose garden and St. Anne's chapel. Polish Catholics supported the building of a shrine in honor of Our Lady of Czestachowa. There is also a Lithuanian Wayside shrine. Friends from the Vietnamese and Mexican communities are considering building shrines in honor of Our Lady of LaVang and Our Lady of Guadalupe.

A new shrine will be blessed on Sunday, Sept. 28. It is *Dambana*, the Filipino faith shrine. It will be a place of pride and pleasure for our Filipino Catholic community, which is helping to build this lasting legacy. Sept. 28 happens to be



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the feast of St. Lorenzo Ruiz, the first Filipino to be canonized a saint. The feast day this year falls on a Sunday. Our local Filipino community regularly gathers on the Sunday closest to the feast to celebrate their Catholic heritage. They will gather at The Grotto this year for this special event and for the blessing of *Dambana*.

St. Lorenzo Ruiz was martyred back in 1637. He was finally canonized by Pope John Paul II at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome on Oct. 18, 1987. St. Lorenzo Ruiz was born in Binondo, Manila, of Chinese and Filipino heritage. He was a family man with a wife, two sons and a daughter. When Ruiz was falsely accused of a crime, some Spanish friars sent him on a missionary expedition to Japan where Christian persecution was widespread. He was arrested and his torturers tried to convince him to renounce his faith. He answered, "I will never

do it. I am a Catholic and happy to die for God. If I have a thousand lives to offer, I will offer them to God."

As a layman, St. Lorenzo models beautifully our fundamental conviction that life without faith is without value. An ordinary man in the eyes of the world, he showed us, as Pope John Paul said on the occasion of his canonization, that "sanctity and heroism are there for anybody and the final victory is made to size for each one of us." Our Filipino people are greatly inspired by the story of his heroism and deep faith. So am I.

Consequently, the blessing of *Dambana* on Sept. 28 is much more than coincidental. It will be a moment of blessing and faith renewal for all our Catholic people of Filipino heritage as well as their many guests that day.

But what about *Dambana*? *Dambana* is the Tagalog word for shrine or altar. Those who are planning the shrine envision it as a sanctuary which blends Filipino faith and culture, a reminder of the Filipino community's unity and sense of mission which hopefully will inspire future generations of Filipino Catholics and others. The completed shrine will feature three sculptures of St. Lorenzo Ruiz, the Infant Jesus and Mary. The structure depicts images and materials from the Philippines.

The roof of the shrine looks like a large *salakot*, a wide-brimmed hat, which is a traditional symbol of Filipinos. The shrine also contains seashells from the Philippines and writings used before the arrival of the Spanish on the islands. The shrine planners very much wanted the shrine to bring home the love of Mary for children as well the sufferings of St. Lorenzo Ruiz.

This Filipino *Dambana* is being dedicated at 4 p.m. during the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday, Sept. 28. Our Filipino Catholic people proudly invite all of us to join in this significant event as they continue to partner with us in our church's evangelizing mission here in western Oregon. Our Filipino Catholics have been instrumental in the activities and ministries of the archdiocese now for many years.

We already have one Filipino priest, Father Henry Rufo, who serves as our pastor in Sweet Home and Brownsville. Two Filipino seminary deacons will be ordained priests next June 13. We are also blessed with other Filipino seminarians in the pipeline. They are surely doing their part.

My Filipino friends know that I have struggled just a bit in sharing the celebration of Sept. 28 with them. Why? Because the national patron of our Czech people, St. Wenceslaus, is also honored on that

Archbishop Vlazny's schedule

Saturday, Sept. 20 — Meeting of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, Archdiocesan Pastoral Center, Portland

Sunday, Sept. 21 — Celebration of the Eucharist on the occasion of the anniversary of St. Joseph the Worker Church, Portland, 9 a.m.

Monday, Sept. 22 — Celebration of the Eucharist and Breakfast Reception with Archdiocesan Major Donors, Sacred Heart Church, Medford, 8 a.m.

Tuesday, Sept. 23 — Celebration of the Eucharist and Breakfast Reception with Archdiocesan Major Donors, St. Mary Church, Eugene, 8 a.m.

Wednesday, Sept. 24 — Archdiocesan Ember Day

Thursday, Sept. 25 — Meeting of the Priests' Personnel Board, Archdiocesan Pastoral Center, Portland

very same day. But our call to solidarity as members of the Catholic community reminds me that sharing the celebration is a lot better than no celebration at all! In fact, it is just another sign of how truly catholic we really are. I invite all of you to join me with our Filipino sisters and brothers at The Grotto on Sept. 28.