

RAMBLINGS - QUIANT RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Yesterday was the feast day of San Jose. Here in Tanjay, and perhaps in other places, various religious practices have taken form over the years. And many of them are special private devotions by family clans. I remember some years back having dinner at the house of one of our cousins. It started with prayers, led by some members of the church choir (who had a portable organ), with singing and chanting, while guests and invitees followed by reading from the distributed prayer pamphlets.



Then there appeared a man, woman and child dressed like the Holy Family. They were entreated to the dining table wherein the host family members offered food and drink. And in this case, among them were two priests, who were part of this large Quinit family clan.

Photo on left shows “Joseph” (in yellow robe) and “Mary” being served by Fr Thaddy, now a monsignor and assigned at the Bishop’s palace.

Photo on right shows “Mary” and the boy “Jesus” partaking of the food that was served, while the rest of the guests watch and wait. I got the impression that the Holy family gobbled down the food fast so all the others watching didn’t have to wait for long.

Below is the table after the Holy Family vacated it. More food is being brought in, though that only was part, as there were more goodies and letchon on another table. All this happened 6 years ago.



Day before yesterday, we got a call from a friend, member of the large Barot clan. They were inviting us to their San Jose celebration the next morning, for an 8 o’clock mass at their private chapel.

There are many private chapels here and there. Many are mainly financed and built by some family, or a local barangay. They are not necessarily used regularly for Sunday mass by some visiting priest. But on special occasions, the local parish priest or assistant comes over,

such as in the case of this Barot private chapel. But not all the time, as the local parish has some strict rules, albeit quirky, like no gambling or mahjong or Miss Gay contests during the fiesta’s celebration. Many a barrio has had no priest appear for the traditional mass at their barangay chapel. Two years ago, the Barot’s San Jose celebration had no priest who appeared at their chapel.

This high-handedness has alienated many of the older parishioners from the parish priest.

So when I noted that it was this parish priest, Fr Bohol, who was celebrating mass, I started conjuring up visions of the family members serving him food at the sumptuous breakfast table, while all wait and watch. I had second thoughts about having come. But this didn’t come to pass, fortunately.

Picture below shows the chapel, with two distinct groups of people. On the left are the guests, and on the right are candle vendors. Burning of candles is another tradition at any place where there is a mass, or prayers, such as at the cemetery. Vendors descend on you to sell their ware. Picture below shows the candle racks where the tallow is caught and reused. Candle prices are very reasonable for the



small ones at a peso each, regardless of whether they are white as in fresh wax, or dark as in recycled wax. It is said that candle sales at the main church is very lucrative.

Photo below shows the priest celebrating mass, while the other photo shows what is outside: many of the men folk whiling the time under a tree, etc. And true to form, it was a long mass at 1-1/2 hours. Fr Bohol's homily went on and on.



Most of us felt this was uncalled for, since unlike a Sunday mass, which is a main event, this was just an adjunct to the family gathering and celebration. His homily lasted almost 40 minutes. The new Pope had only spoken for 8 minutes in his first public mass. What is this priest trying to



impart to us anyway? In all consolation, he wasn't like his assistant priest who regularly has homilies lasting reportedly 45 minutes. And in some fairness, this time, Fr Bohol didn't punctuate his talk with "hello, do you understand" as he used to early on.

A Jesuit-trained priest and relative says a 10 minute homily is good enough to tell about the day's message; anything longer than that is reflective of the priest's subconscious desire to tell all about himself.

Anyway, many of the women folk were seated outside the church and some were obviously getting more agitated. Lisa moved her chair to behind the wall, and later told me she was certain he was deliberately riling us. Another lady, whom I know is even more outspoken than myself about parish matters, was muttering venomous things. I pointed out to her the object in the photo above. It is a makeshift bell made from pipe, hanging from the roof. I said to her "why don't we ring the bell" as in that popular radio song show with gong, rung when person on stage is out of tune.

After the mass, hallelujah, he went straight home, while the rest of us guests trooped to the host's house nearby for a relaxing and enjoyable party. Besides, our host stated after I later asked him, it wasn't their tradition of feeding "San Jose", priest or otherwise, as the one described above.

Danny Gil 20 March 2013