

AFTER THE BOHOL EXODUS

The other night, Lisa had a bad case of insomnia. By 3:30 in the morning, she decided to attend the early morning “Misa de Gallo”, the traditional 4:00 AM mass that heralds the Christmas season. We haven’t gone to any of these rituals for years. But the church bells were already ringing, and the word had got around that for the first time in six years, the new priests were now reverting back to the traditions of the parish and the faithful, after the earlier unpopular parish priest named Fr Bohol had been transferred out to a new assignment. He had devastated the town’s Catholic community during his period, with his unilateral rulings, inane projects, banning of almost all the traditional practices, and the like. So much so that the new bishop, made aware of what had happened, reportedly said Tanjay indeed needs a healing process. I had made many a write-up about this priest’s shenanigans. One write-up I entitled “Bohol Exodus” and it really was about a Holy Week pilgrimage to a far-away barrio church wherein one of the young Tanjayanon priests had been assigned. Five van-loads of us trekked there, mainly because many of us wanted to avoid Fr Bohol’s rites in town.

Anyway, the past is past, we looked forward to the new order. And joyous indeed it was. The church was chock full of people, overflowing into the street and plaza nearby. See both pictures. Fortunately,



we had foreseen this, and like many others, brought over our chairs. And we managed to worm our way inside, and place our chairs right behind the choir section so we were near the altar. During the entrance procession, with the traditional song sung by all, there was a palpable sense of joy. Perhaps it was the spirit of Christmas, or the thought that it was not anymore the dour, sour priest officiating. People were smiling, and I am sure that if this were a Pentecostal or similar service, the crowd would be dancing and jamming like anything.

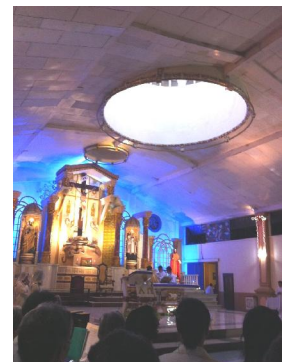


The new priest Monsignor Glen Corsiga, shared the homily with two others. The first was a lector, eight years with the parish. He briefly shared the life history of his struggles. Now a pedicab driver, with his own tricycle, and a college educated son, he thanked the Lord, and expounded on the “connectivity” of those who give good will, however small it is, to others less fortunate. The other was a girl who sang a beautiful refrain. Not surprisingly, both got spontaneous applauses. And when Fr Corsiga ended his short homily, a riveting, structured treatise on sincerity and appearances, I looked at my watch, and the total time for all three was less than 25 minutes. Hallelujah, if it had been Fr Bohol, it would be 40 minutes of screeching, boring, scolding repetitive talk.

I usually time everything: homilies, choir singing, basic and central mass rites, communion, after-mass announcements, etc. And at the worst of times, it has come up to 1-1/2 hours, which makes me grumble. Not surprisingly, the central mass rites are fairly constant at 20 minutes. In other words, if everything else was cut back or cut out, we would have fulfilled our Sunday obligation in 20 minutes. I remember that as a kid in Cebu, the priests would breeze through mumbling the Latin rites in that time frame.

But anyway, this Misa de Gallo lasted an hour 10 minutes, partly due to the long but joyous songs of the choir, but this time, I didn’t complain. Kind of liked it, actually. Even sang some Latin songs.

And by the way, church collections have gone way up. And there is a special project to remove the dome (right picture) that Fr Bohol built, after he had demolished the roof pillars. Recent engineering survey indicates it is unsafe.



And for those curious, he now is in Dauin parish, reportedly being petitioned out.