

# Serenity, Solemnity, Solidarity

by MALOU L. AGUILAR  
AJPress

**B**EING largely a Roman Catholic nation, the Philippines and its people observe almost every religious festival there is. Aside from the Christmas season, one of the most important religious events of the year is the *Semana Santa*, or the Holy Week.

Although many Filipinos still adhere to their traditions and faith, there is no denying that the observance of Holy Week here in the United States differs from what we are used to back home. Yes, Catholic Churches offer Masses and other related activities, but unlike in the Philippines where most businesses and establishments are usually closed as early as Maundy Thursday and especially on Good Friday, Holy Week in the US is maybe not as significant as compared to their Thanksgiving celebration.

**From the palaspas, pabasa and Bisita Iglesia**

A lot of activities are done during the week, starting with a Mass on Palm Sunday. Catholics bring *palaspas* or palm fronds to Church, to be blessed by the priest. After Mass, many Filipinos bring home the palaspas and place these above their front doors or window. These are believed to ward off evil spirits and protect the family and home.

The beginning of the *pabasa* (reading) of the *Pasyon* starts on Holy Monday. The *pabasa* is a marathon chanting of the story of the life, passion and death of Jesus, which continues uninterrupted day and night, for as long as two straight days.

The reenactment of the Washing of the Feet of the Apostles is usually included in the last Mass before Easter Sunday, and is followed by the procession of the Blessed Sacrament before it is taken to the Altar of Repose.

Another popular tradition which is done on Holy Thursday is the *Bisita Iglesia*, (church visit) which involves visiting a church or several churches at which the faithful would pray the Stations of the Cross. Back in the Philippines, it is fairly easy to visit a number of churches because of their proximity and accessibility to each other. But here in the US, depending probably on which state and city you are in, Catholic Churches are spread out that it is sometimes difficult to visit more than three or four.

"We usually try to visit at least four," says my mom, who has spent most Holy Weeks in the US for the past 10 years. "It's difficult, not only because of the distance, but also because they don't declare Thursday, or even Good Friday a non-working holiday," she said and added, "Almost all people still have to go to work." But this year is different—she intends to visit at least seven, as she is back home spending her vacation with my brothers.

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## Spiritual Parting with AM Gamby Funeral Home

**A**S A SIGN of showing respect, funerals are an important custom practiced by most families across the globe. This is why AM Gamby Funeral Home is around.

has staffs who can speak Vietnamese, Filipino, African-American and even Spanish.

AM Gamby Funeral Home has a long heritage of service to the South Bay area since 1936. Its location in Douglas & Zook in Monrovia has been founded in 1890 and Cortner Chapel has been a funeral tradition in Redlands since 1902. And all locations have proud history of service to their local community.

Over the years, AM Gamby Funeral home has received several awards for the services they have rendered to the South Bay community. Recently, AM Gamby Funeral Home was awarded by the Lomita Chamber of Commerce for its 70 years of service.

In addition, Terry Harmon, owner of the company was awarded 2008 California Funeral Director of the Year for the outstanding commitment he has to the families he had serviced.

He has the honor of assisting the California Funeral Directors Association.

AM Gamby Funeral Home sticks to their belief that a good funeral service is a caring one. Am Gamby also handles every family with compassionate understanding of their emotions and does not take advantage of the family's grief. This is a promise of AM Gamby Funeral Home, a caring funeral service, "Family owned...Thoughtful Service."

For more information call Joyce Orpilla, your Filipino Family Service Coordinator at 310-245-2577.

(Advertising Supplement)



Joyce Orpilla, Filipino family service coordinator and Steven Marcom, Manager/Funeral Director

AM Gamby is dedicated solely on helping families design a meaningful ceremony that pay tribute and celebrate the life that one lived in the manner that brings the most comfort to the bereaved. AM Gamby firmly stands on the belief that the purpose of a funeral service is to console the living. They also believe that if they provide a financial burden on the family; they have not helped them properly.

All of AM Gamby's listed locations are all full-service funeral homes that can provide every possible combination of requested products, services, and detailed information. AM Gamby has a vast experience in helping return deceased family members to Southern California from any place in the world and also in returning area residents to their home of origin nationwide, and even worldwide.

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AM Gamby's well-trained staff takes pride in offering AM Gamby's caring service to every family faced with loss. For those families who prefer a director of their faith or ethnicity, AM Gamby's staff is available for Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Buddhist, LDS, and many other faiths. In this regard, AM Gamby

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