



LITURGY, MUSIC, ART AND ARCHITECTURE COMMISSIONS  
DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN

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**NORMS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF SIMBANG GABI BY THE  
FILIPINO CATHOLIC COMMUNITY  
IN THE DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN**

A. The *Simbang Gabi* or *Misa de Aguinaldo* is a form of solemn votive mass held at dawn for nine consecutive days before Christmas in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary<sup>1</sup>. This tradition was started in Mexico and introduced in the Philippines where it flourished into a massive popular devotion providing the Catholic Filipinos a fitting spiritual preparation to an encounter with the greatest gift the world has received, the birth of Jesus Christ through the Blessed Virgin Mary. An indult was issued by the Holy See to officially establish the practice of *Simbang Gabi* through the celebration of the Votive Masses of the BVM in Advent (*Rorate Coeli*).

B. The *Simbang Gabi* is celebrated after sunset and before sunrise from December 16 through December 24. Anticipation of masses are permitted using the following day's liturgy; hence, the practice may begin on December 15 to December 23.

C. The tradition of *Simbang Gabi* has been deeply imbedded in the Filipino culture and spirituality that Catholic Filipinos in diaspora brought with them this tradition to wherever foreign land they settled in as their new home. Recognizing the spiritual benefits and cultural bonds of this tradition, the following norms are set forth for the celebration of the *Simbang Gabi* in the Diocese of Brooklyn.

1. The celebration of the *Simbang Gabi* will be under the auspices of the Filipino Diocesan Apostolate.
2. Where communities are not large enough to adequately prepare and celebrate *Simbang Gabi* on their own, they are encouraged to join with neighboring communities, for their shared celebrations. This can include the use of differing church buildings for the united common celebration.
3. The celebration of the nine consecutive Masses is to be encouraged even if for pastoral advantage of the faithful they begin earlier than December 16.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Philippine Supplement to the Roman Missal, The ROMAN MISSAL Philippine edition 2012.

4. The votive masses provided in the PHILIPPINE SUPPLEMENT TO THE ROMAN MISSAL can be used. At these Masses, white vestments are used, and the Gloria is recited or sung in all *Simbang Gabi* masses including Sundays of Advent. The Church and sanctuary are festively decorated, and approved musical instruments are played. If any of these days fall on Sunday, the Mass formularies and readings are those of Sunday<sup>2</sup>.

5. If the *Simbang Gabi* Mass falls on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the BVM or the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the entire Proper Liturgy of the solemnity or feast is to be used.

6. Musical considerations should be mindful that *Simbang Gabi* takes place in the liturgical season of Advent. Hymns should be chosen to harmonize with the Mass Propers and Readings. Secular Christmas songs are never permitted and are not to be used at the Sacred Liturgy.

7. When decorating the church or chapel for the *Simbang Gabi* masses, consideration should be taken that these venues may also be used for other celebration which may require the somber spirit of Advent.

8. Where seen beneficial and opportune, there may be a convivium in a gathering space other than the church edifice. This celebration may include pageants, singing and decorations; but these should not overshadow the theme of expectation and preparation for the Solemnity of the Lord's Nativity proper to the Advent season.

D. These particular Norms are to be observed and to take effect beginning December 3, 2023, the First Sunday of Advent.

Rev. Alanzo Q. Cox

Interim Director of Liturgy

December 14, 2023

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.