



Questions and Answers Regarding the Practice of Simbang Gabi Masses During Advent in the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth

November 15, 2024

What is Simbang Gabi?

Simbáng Gabi (lit. Night Mass) is a devotional nine-day series of Advent Masses practiced by Roman Catholics in the Philippines in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary in anticipation of Christmas. It ordinarily occurs during the nine days leading up to Christmas. Simbang Gabi is frequently celebrated in other parts of the world where there are Filipino communities.

May additional Masses be scheduled for the celebration of Simbang Gabi?

Yes, according to pastoral need additional Masses may be scheduled for Simbang Gabi, provided they respect the Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year.

What color is worn for Simbang Gabi Masses?

The Advent color of violet is maintained for Simbang Gabi Masses.

Which Mass prayers (orations) are used for Simbang Gabi Masses?

During Advent, in the preparation of Masses and devotions, priority should always be given to the Advent texts of the Roman Missal and Lectionary. Generally speaking, it is preferable that the Mass texts for the weekdays of Advent be used on all the weekdays of Advent. This principle is consistent with the nature of the season of Advent and the intent of the Simbang Gabi devotion.

Moreover, “The weekdays from December 17 up to and including December 24 are ordered in a more direct way to preparing for the Nativity of the Lord.” (Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year, 42)

They are, of their very nature, Marian in theme. Votive Masses and Masses for Various Needs and Occasions are not permitted on these days. (Even memorials of saints are reduced to commemorations during this period.) Consequently, the Mass texts (i.e. orations and Scripture readings) used during Simbang Gabi between December 17 and Christmas must always be those of the weekday (and Sunday) Masses of Advent.

Which scripture readings should be used at Simbang Gabi Masses?

The Advent readings of the day, which are especially Marian in theme, must be used at the Simbang Gabi Masses.

How may the church be decorated for Simbang Gabi?

According to the Ceremonial of Bishops, 236, “During Advent...the floral decoration of the altar should be marked by a moderation that reflects the character of this season...” Keeping in mind the noble simplicity which characterizes the season, the pastor may determine if any additional, moderate, decorations should be permitted for a Simbang Gabi Mass. However, additional decorations are to be removed immediately after the Simbang Gabi Mass is celebrated.

May Christmas Carols be sung at Simbang Gabi Masses?

According to the Ceremonial of Bishops, 236, "During Advent, the playing of the organ and other musical instruments...should be marked by a moderation that reflects the character of the season, but does not anticipate the full joy of Christmas itself." Therefore Christmas Carols are not sung at any Mass during Advent. There are many Advent and/or Marian songs appropriate for this time of year which may be used.

Can the Gloria be sung at Simbang Gabi Masses?

The Gloria is not sung on the Sundays or weekdays of Advent. (See General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 53). Therefore, the Gloria is not sung at Simbang Gabi Masses.

Does the indult given to the Philippines for the celebration of Simbang Gabi apply to the Canada?

No, the special indult given to the Philippines which allows for certain accommodations for Simbang Gabi Masses does not apply in the Canada.

In maintaining the character of the second part of Advent, how may Simbang Gabi be accommodated?

- An appropriate introduction after the Greeting
- Marian invocations in the Act of Penitence
- Homily
- General intercessions, especially the concluding prayer.
- Singing the 'Magnificat' or similar song after communion.
- Concluding remarks after the Prayer after Communion.