

## ***What is the International Eucharistic Congress?***

Once every four years we Catholics celebrate the International Eucharistic Congress (IEC) to publicly proclaim that the Eucharist is our life. The congress is open to non-Catholics as well. In our broken world, the act of Breaking Bread beautifully witnesses to the power of God to bring healing and wholeness to individual lives, families, groups, and the world. It connects us to one another and to those who hunger for God.

The gathering rotates among six continents. This coming January 24-31, 2016 it will be held in Cebu, Philippines. This will be in Asia, the continent where Christianity began; and in Cebu, the cradle of Christianity in the biggest Roman Catholic nation in Asia. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for delegates and pilgrims to celebrate in Philippine soil and to be reminded of our missionary vocation as a Eucharistic people.

It also comes at a time when the Church seems to be returning to its beginnings with all the challenges it faces as a religious body.

Next year's IEC has the theme, "Christ in You, Our Hope of Glory" from Colossians 1:27. The theme has a special resonance with the host country whose faith remains joyful, resilient, and event defiant despite its share of natural disasters - an earthquake that shattered many places of worship and the strongest storm ever to make landfall.

A most moving image of this power of the Eucharist is Pope Francis's breaking of bread with survivors of Superstorm Haiyan last January 2015 in Tacloban, Philippines. There, amidst very wet, windy, and trying conditions brought about by another tropical storm that was on signal number 2, he came, oblivious of the dangers and inconveniences. Who can forget the Pope covered with yellow raincoat over his liturgical vestments? Who can remain dry eyed as he spoke words of mercy and compassion?

This is only the second time it will be held in the Philippines. The first and only time was in Manila in 1937 when a seven year old boy named Ricardo Vidal (who later became Cardinal-Archbishop of Cebu) received first communion.

To join the IEC is to receive special blessings and to be a blessing to others. Daily for eight days the Eucharist is celebrated in a multi-lingual manner ministered by the best choirs and music groups of a people whose jewels are its faith and its music. Five thousand first communicants include 500 street children. More than a million pilgrims are expected to join a street procession and a mass of the world, a beautiful opportunity to witness to the social dimension of our Christian faith.

Highly sought-after speakers from all the continents will give talks. From the USA, Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York and Bp. Robert E. Barron of Los Angeles are coming. Among other prominent speakers is Cardinal Luis Antonio G. Tagle of Manila.

Come and be a part of this very special gathering!"

Fr. Carmelo O. Diola  
Chairman  
Dilaab Foundation Inc.

*"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in..." (Abraham Lincoln)*