

# Pope Francis to mark 500 years of Catholic faith in the Philippines with Mass

Pope Francis will offer Mass in St. Peter's Basilica on March 14 to mark 500 years of Catholic faith in the Philippines.

The Mass will be attended by Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the former archbishop of Manila, as well as Filipino Catholics living in Rome.

The celebration will livestream from the Vatican to reach the many Filipinos around the world. The Mass will air on EWTN in Canada on at 3 a.m. Alberta time ( 5 a.m. EST) and 10 a.m. (12 p.m. EST encore). It can be viewed on cable or on the EWTN website, <https://www.ewtn.com/tv/watch-live> or through the EWTN app on mobile devices.

In Toronto, the Inaugural Mass for the Celebration of 500 Years of Christianity in the Philippines will be held March 16 ay 11 a.m. Mass will be broadcast on YouTube and Facebook.

The celebration will include messages from Cardinal Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Toronto, and Archbishop Romulo Valles, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, a limited number of people will be able to attend, but the Mass will be live-streamed for people to watch around the world.

"Join us in Rome to pray, praise and thank God for his gift of the Christian faith," Fr. Ricky Gente, C.S., a priest of the Filipino Chaplaincy in Rome, said in comments to the news agency of the Philippines bishops' conference.

The papal Mass is being held in honor of the year's 500th anniversary of the presence of the Catholic faith in the Philippines, where the first Mass and the first Baptism took place in 1521.

For 300 years afterward, the Philippines remained a missionary territory with no native clergy. But in 1905, the first Filipino-born bishop, Jorge Imperial Barlin, was appointed. Barlin is buried in Rome, where he died during an ad limina visit in 1909.

Today, an estimated 86 per cent of the 108 million population of the

Philippines is Catholic.

In most dioceses in the country, the anniversary year will be inaugurated on Easter Sunday, April 4, after nine years of preparation. The dioceses have designated certain churches as special pilgrim churches for the year.

In Manila, apostolic administrator Bishop Broderick Pabillo opened the anniversary year with a Mass at the cathedral last month.

The Archdiocese of Manila, which serves around three million Catholics, has been without a bishop since December 2019, when Tagle left to serve as prefect of the Vatican's evangelization office.

In an interview with CNN Philippines, Archbishop Charles Brown said that the next archbishop of Manila may be announced "before too long."

"I don't think the waiting will go on that much longer," Brown added.