



## Guam: its heartbeat of faith

**Relics tour the island of Guam, which retains its Catholic culture centuries after Spanish rule and through Japanese occupation. Its Chamorro culture celebrates life and death with fiestas and fandangos.**

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The book ["My Way of Life: The Summa Simplified for Everyone"](#) by Walter Farrell and Martin Healy states that "...the love is ours because we have given it". I realized a long time ago that love is something that can only be given; you really can't wait around for it to come to you. I taught my daughter that true love is in the act of giving not receiving.

During the "2007 Relics of the Passion Tour" in March and the beginning of April on the island of Guam, I experienced a profound presence of faith and love with which I was unfamiliar. I witnessed it in every parish, rest home, care facility, hospital, school, and even in juvenile hall and prison. I found that the religious discipline practiced by the faithful, and participating Church ministries, alike is overwhelming.

There were three re-occurring questions from people I met:

1. How long have you been collecting relics?
2. What happens to them when you die?
3. Are you hungry, do you want something to eat?

It only took three days to realize that the Chamorro culture of Guam celebrates death and the opportunity to eat and have a party with the same reverence and enthusiasm. Since the 17th century, Catholic churches have been the center of village activities. Even today, every village has its patron saint whose feast day is celebrated with an elaborate fiesta, which the entire island is invited to attend. Family groups still hold christening parties, fandangos (weddings, novenas, funerals, and death-anniversary rosaries).

I have fond memories of the people of Guam; I'll highlight a few of the very special moments of the tour. At one primary school a third grade boy raised his hand during the question and answer period. His question was, "Was Jesus naked when He was resurrected?" my answer was, "He probably asked a couple of angels to bring him some shorts". A girl in sixth grade asked, "What does the word passion mean." these are really great questions for people so young.

At the penitentiary an inmate asked me, "Have there been any miracles due to the relics?" I

responded " The fact that I am here in a prison surrounded by a swat team talking to you guys about the love between us and the Father is a miracle in it's self." The next day a gift was given to the Cathedral on behalf of one of the inmate's family. There were multiple cases on individuals asking Fr. Noli to hear their confession so they could come back to the Church and receive the Eucharist!

It was my last Mass on the Island, the evening Palm Sunday Mass at the "Dulce Nombre de María" (Sweet Name of Mary) Cathedral Basilica when a wonderful reality hit me. It didn't help that Abigail sang an incredible rendition of my favorite song, "Via Dolorosa". I got completely consumed by the song and the moment! Unfortunately for me I had to get up and talk to a full Cathedral before I could completely recover to my usual stoic self.

All I could come up with was, "It doesn't get any better than this. Eleven minutes ago we received the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Behind me is Christ truly present in the tabernacle. In front of me are the relics of His Passion. This is the closest we'll get to heaven on earth. It doesn't get any better than this!"

Guam is the largest of the Marianas Islands, 30 long and 9 miles wide, it ceded to the US by Spain in 1898. The Japanese captured the island in 1941; it was retaken by the US three years later. The military installation on the island is one of the most strategically important US bases in the Pacific Ocean.

The climate of Guam is tropical marine; it is generally warm and humid, and is moderated by northeast trade winds. It is of volcanic origin, surrounded by coral reefs, with a relatively flat coralline limestone plateau (source of most of its fresh water), with steep coastal cliffs and narrow coastal plains in north, low hills at the center, and mountains in the south.

The predominance of Roman Catholic faith (85% of the total population of Guam) is obvious and carried proudly by the faithful.

*Thomas J. Serafin is the founder of [International Crusade for Holy Relics](#) . Further information about his work can be found at [Apostolate for Holy Relics](#) - .*