

Misa de Gallo: is a revered Filipino tradition because it started in the Philippines by our old folks, and if other countries have adapted it, it was because of the presence of Filipinos who brought with them their tradition.

Background: In the olden days where farming is the main occupation of the Filipinos, (keeping in mind that there were no irrigation, fertilizers, insecticides at that time,) they rely mostly on the weather condition. The harvest season for the first crop which is rice takes place from the second half of November till the end of November. By the middle of December, the farmers would start tilling their land again to prepare for another planting of the secondary crops like corn, eggplant or tomatoes. Since there were no tractors yet at that time, they use the carabao to help them till the land. The nature of the carabao is that, it is efficient and hardworking when the weather is cold. Once the weather becomes hot, the carabao, loves to wallow in the mud. The farmer knows that, that's why he would take advantage by getting up early so that he could go to the field early enough, when it is still cold and make full use of the carabao.

But then, how can he wake up early in the morning since there were no alarm clocks at that time? The farmer with all his ingenuity, will take his rooster before going to bed, (rooster in spanish is gallo) will place the rooster under the house (keep in mind that our houses in the Philippines before were elevated, the ground floor is usually for animals or pets) and then the farmer goes to bed to sleep. Next morning, very early in the morning (again keeping mind that were no electricity at that time) the first glimmer of light coming from sunrise that the rooster sees, the rooster would start to crow. And because of the crow of the rooster, the farmer is awakened and off he goes to the field with his carabao.

But before going to the field, the farmers would meet in a small chapel called Ermita which has become their meeting place, to pray together. They would recite only the prayers that they have memorized since there was no electricity to use for their booklets.

One early morning, a priest passes by and joins them in prayer. He suggested if he could celebrate the mass for them instead. The farmers agreed, and so that was the first time that they had the Misa de Gallo in the Philippines. Eventually, they realize that Christmas was fast approaching, they incorporated the celebration of the mass in preparation for Christmas by having the Misas de Gallo, a nine day novena of masses in preparation for Christmas. That was the evolution of the Misa de gallo, from just mere prayers, to the offering of the Mass, to the Mass becoming their waiting, their preparation for the birth of the Savior.