

Filipinos gather to mark statue installation

Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Baltimore, usually is traditional, but the Sept. 23 afternoon Mass featured worshippers in aboriginal garb, the exuberant sound of drums and singing in the Tagalog language.

The Filipino community celebrated the installation of the Santo Niño de Cebu, a replica of the image of the Child Jesus found unscathed by Spanish soldiers in 1565 after a village was burned in the Philippines. The original statue lies in the Basilica del Santo Niño and has become a favorite destination for millions of pilgrims.

Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski celebrated the Mass, along with Father Clarito Jundis, a priest from the Philippines who serves as a chaplain of Good Samaritan Hospital, Baltimore, and Father James Sorra, associate pastor of St. Louis in Clarksville.

“We warned Bishop Rozanski, ‘You know this will be loud, right?’” said Hector Veloso, event chairman.

“I am happy to be joining them for this wonderful celebration of faith and heritage,” said Bishop Rozanski. “There is a large Filipino community in our archdiocese and it is a joy to be with them when they are able to come together for an event like the enthronement of the Santo Niño statue.”

At the conclusion of the Mass, the bishop blessed the statue and others brought by individuals.

“As Filipinos, we don’t do anything without food,” Mr. Veloso said. After Mass,

worshippers enjoyed traditional dishes such as bansit, a noodle dish, and biko, a type of rice pudding with coconut.