

Pope to Filipino community: pray with a child's simplicity



Pope Francis takes a moment to pray before the mosaic of St. Pedro Calungsod in St. Peter's Basilica Nov. 21, 2013. Credit: Kerri Lenartowick/CNA

VATICAN City, Nov. 21, 2013 ([CNA/EWTN News](#))—Pope Francis met with the Filipino community of Rome today, encouraging them in the wake of their native country's recent disaster to never tire of praying, even if the prayer is that of a child.

Referencing the typhoon that wreaked havoc in the Philippines, Pope Francis encouraged, "In these moments of sadness, let the power of this prayer be the most useful: 'the prayer of why.'...And I also accompany you, with this 'prayer of why.'"

"There are many things that we cannot understand. When children begin to grow, they don't understand things and begin to ask questions of their father or mother," the Pope explained to the group gathered in St. Peter's Basilica on Nov. 21.

A child asks "one after another 'why's'" but does not "wait for a response." Rather, "the child in his insecurity needs his father and mother watch over him. He needs the eyes of his parents, he needs the heart of his parents," the Pope continued.

As children of God, we must pray "the prayer of why," especially in moments of difficulty, emphasized Pope Francis.

"In these moments of great suffering, don't tire of saying, 'Why?' (Be) like children...and so attract the eyes of our Father for your people; draw the tenderness of the 'dad of heaven' upon yourselves. Be like the child when asking, 'Why? Why?'"

Pope Francis had joined Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila and the Filipino community of Rome for a celebration of St. Pedro Calungsod, a Filipino catechist and martyr for the faith. The Pope blessed a mosaic icon of the young man who was proclaimed a saint by Benedict XVI last October.

Cardinal Tagle spoke of the struggles of the people in the Philippines, as well as their courage in the face of frightening circumstances. Pope Francis embraced the cardinal at the end of his remarks, assuring him of his “closeness and prayers.”

The honoring of St. Pedro Calungsod in St. Peter’s Basilica comes at a crucial time for the people of the Philippines, who are struggling to recover from the recent typhoon.

Lina Santos, who lives in Rome but is originally from the Philippines, told CNA that today’s gathering was “very very meaningful for us” because the honoring of a Filipino saint came “despite the difficulties we are encountering now.”

“Even though we have experienced disasters, there is still hope that we can gain again our hope,” she said.

Fr. Jan Limchua, a diocesan priest of Cebu, Philippines, expressed his gratitude to be in attendance at today’s gathering, noting that Calungsod’s witness is particularly important “because we are in the year of faith.”

Today’s event is one of the various ways of “honoring many many great examples of (people) living their faith in the midst of difficulties and in the midst of such harsh situations, like St. Pedro Calungsod,” Fr. Limchua told CNA in an interview on Nov. 21.

The young man was martyred not because he was a companion of the Jesuit missionaries, said Fr. Limchua, but because “he was a catechist, so he defended his faith, he even offered his life: he died before the Jesuit priest was killed because he offered his life...for God and the Church.”

St. Pedro Calungsod “was not a great preacher,” explained Fr. Limchua, but “he just served the priests in his own little way.” The result was his sanctity and martyrdom.

The life and witness of this simple catechist serves as an example of how any Christian “can make a great impact in the world of today.”

“So we are called in this way,” reflected Fr. Limcha, to imitate “that example of simplicity and holiness.”

The blessing of the mosaic was followed by a mass celebrated by Cardinal Tagle.

(Kerri Lenartowick)