

# Philippine Easter Rituals of Crucifixion

## Bloody Filipino Observances for the Atonement of Sins

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Crucifixion in the Philippines at Easter 2006 - *Baptiste Marcel*

Each Easter in the Philippines, Christians make a grueling march on Good Friday to atone for their sins through self-flagellation and crucifixion.

In the Philippines at the Easter season, Roman Catholics practice the extreme ascetic rituals of flagellation, cutting, wearing crowns of thorns, bearing crosses, and crucifixion, emulating the passion of Christ. These Christian Filipinos are Roman Catholic, although the Church does not officially approve of these observances.

### Purpose Behind the Ascetic Rituals

The purpose of performing these rituals is to ask forgiveness for the sins committed over the year for oneself and one's family -- a type of penitence. In following the last painful events in the life of Christ, these people feel a closer connection with their religion and their God, and a feeling of ease or forgiveness for their sins.

Ascetic practices, or what might be called "mortification of the flesh" can be seen in some religious sects. This was shown in the Opus Dei (a controversial Roman Catholic organization) character in the fictional work *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown (Doubleday, 2003). This Opus Dei assassin practiced mortification of the flesh in order to bring his body under subjugation of his spirit.

Some Christian ascetics believe that the apostle Paul taught asceticism in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul said in Romans 8:13 "If you live after the flesh, you shall die, but if through the spirit you *mortify* the deeds of the flesh, you shall live." The Catholics believe that this means that mortification or self-inflicted acts of pain will end the disease of the soul.

While Christ's atonement was to pay for all men's sins, the [Catholic](#) belief is that men should also do something in the expiations of their own sins, which sacrificing acts are pleasing to God. Protestants do not practice such extreme asceticism, but do practice fasting for somewhat similar reasons.

### Easter Rituals in the Philippines

Each year in the Philippines, particularly in Pampanga Province, men and women take part in the passion plays of torture and crucifixion as symbolic of the suffering of Jesus Christ. At the end of the march on Good Friday, with self-flagellation, whipping and cutting of the flesh by officials, and carrying heavy crosses. Each year, over a dozen people are actually hung on crosses.

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- [The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ](#)
- [Lent Meaning and Purpose](#)
- [Good Friday Meaning and Purpose](#)

[Crucifixion](#) is an extremely painful form of torture and death. The Filipino crucifixion followers are either tied to the crosses or actually nailed there. They are not left on the crosses to die, as was the practice during ancient times by the Romans and other civilizations worldwide generally from the 6th century B.C.E. to the 4th century C.E.. In actual crucifixions, people usually died from asphyxiation or heart failure.

Most Filipinos attest to the feeling of worship, forgiveness and cleanliness that occurs through the process of their painful Easter rituals. They generally practice self-flagellation and crucifixion to atone for their sins.

## Others Who Self-Flagellate

The Filipinos are not the only modern group to practice self-flagellate in the name of religion. It is also seen by the Shi'ite Muslims as they commemorate the passion of Imam Husayn and other martyrs at the [Battle of Karbala](#) in the 7th century C.E. Catholic monks and nuns practiced self-flagellation since medieval times as a reminder of the suffering of Christ. In modern days Los Hermanos Penitente of Colorado and New Mexico practice self-flagellation, the bearing of crosses, and actual crucifixion like the Filipinos.

It was reported by a nun who looked after [Pope John Paul II](#), that he practiced self-flagellation, and the sounds of the whip on his flesh could often be heard from his living quarters.

Sources:

*New World Encyclopedia*. "Crucifixion," available at [newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Crucifixion](http://newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Crucifixion). Accessed 3 Mar 2010

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