Semana Santa [Holy Week] in The Philippines

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In this predominantly Roman Catholic nation, Holy Week, known as both Semana Santa or Mahal na Araw, is considered as one of the most important religious festivals of the entire year. Many superstitions abound regarding this holiest of weeks, such as that wounds inflicted or received on Good Friday take long to heal and that amulets acquired on the said day are especially powerful.

Throughout the week, most establishments either shut down operations until Black Saturday or have later opening and earlier closing times, and (mostly local) television stations either stay off the air and those that sign-on air shows with more solemn or serious content, especially films and programmes with a religious theme. An example is the airing of the Seven Last Words on Good Friday live from churches on various local channels and films about the life and death of Jesus. During the Easter Triduum, usually a public holiday, some television stations even interrupt broadcast altogether until Black Saturday in observance of this solemn occasion. In the Ilocos Region, a common practice is the singing of a wailing song called the Leccio. It is done as a reflection of mourning the death of Christ.

Domingo de Ramos [Palm Sunday]

At Mass on Palm Sunday, Catholics carry palm fronds to be blessed by the priest. Many Filipinos bring them home after the Mass and place them above their front doors or windows, in the belief that doing so can ward off evil spirits and avert lightning. The usual Gospel reading on Palm Sunday features Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem, when he was welcomed by people waving palm fronds and laying their cloaks on the ground for his donkey to walk upon.

Holy Monday to Holy Wednesday [Lunes Santo a Miercoles Santo]

Holy Monday marks the beginning of the Pabasa (literally, "reading") or the Pasyon, the marathon chanting of the poetic prayer-story of Jesus’ life, Passion, and death, which continues day and night, for as long as two straight days.

Jueves Santo [Holy Thursday]

Come Holy Thursday or Jueves Santo, a popular tradition is "Church Visit", which involves visiting a church or several churches at which the faithful would pray the devotion known as the Stations of the Cross. Celebrated on this day is the last Mass before Easter, usually including a reenactment of the Washing of the Feet of the Apostles; this Mass is followed by the procession of the Blessed Sacrament before it is taken to the Altar of Repose. TV and Radio networks in the nation have formally either sign-off until Easter Sunday or started restricting broadcasts related to religion, especially to the Holy Week.

Viernes Santo [Good Friday]

Good Friday or Viernes santo, a public holiday in the Philippines, is commemorated with solemn street processions, the Way of the Cross, the commemoration of Jesus’ Seven last words and a Passion play called the Senaculo. In some communities (most famously in the province of Pampanga), the processions include devotees who self-flagellate and sometimes even have themselves nailed to crosses as expressions of penance or in fulfillment of a vow accomplished in thanksgiving or exchange for a granted request or prayer. After three o’clock in the afternoon of Good Friday (the time at which Jesus is traditionally believed to have died), noise is discouraged, bathing is proscribed and the faithful are urged to keep a
solemn and prayerful disposition. Towards late afternoon and evening there is the procession of the dead Christ. The figure of the corpse of Jesus is taken in solemn procession and borne on a decorated hearse, after which it is venerated by the faithful. Some even accord the image with the proper funeral rites such as laying the body in state or, in some instances, by smoking the seated corpse of Jesus over a fire in accordance with local, pre-hispanic funerary customs. Such a procession may involve a various number of other saints, and tradition dictates that the last image in the line is the Sorrowful Virgin.

Sábado de Gloria [Black Saturday]

Black Saturday, as it is called in the country, is traditionally observed with silence and solemnity. Preparations are made for the Easter Vigil to be celebrated that evening.

Domingo de Pascua [Easter Sunday]

Easter morning is marked with joyous celebration, the first being the dawn ceremony called the Salubong ("meeting"), wherein statues of the Resurrected Christ and the Virgin Mary, along with other saints such as St. Peter and Mary Magdalene, are brought in procession together to meet, imagining the first reunion of Jesus and his mother Mary after the Resurrection. The statue of the Virgin Mary is veiled in black, showing her state of bereavement. A girl dressed as an angel, positioned on a specially constructed high platform/scaffold or suspended in mid-air, sings the Regina Coeli and then dramatically pulls the veil off of the image, signifying the end of her grieving. This is followed by pealing bells and fireworks, and the joyous Easter Mass.

Senaculo

Senaculo or the Passion play is a dramatic presentation depicting the Passion of Christ: the trial, suffering and death of Jesus Christ. It is a traditional part of Lent in several Christian denominations, particularly in Catholic tradition.

The Philippines, being one of two predominantly Christian nations in the whole of Asia (East Timor being the other), has Passion plays called Senakulo, named after the Upper room, or Cenacle. Companies perform the Senakulo during Holy Week. Also, there are actual crucifixions done by people outside of Passion plays to fulfill a panata (for a request or prayer granted), in Barangay San Pedro Cutud, City of San Fernando, Pampanga being a popular place to see this.