Reflection for 15th December 2016

I know that today our Sisters in Cebu will be attending the first of nine Masses in preparation for the great feast of the Nativity.

This Novena of Masses are known as Misa de Gallo (Spanish for; Mass of the rooster), as they begin to crow at around 4am! Each parish has its own dawn Mass and there are hundreds of Churches in Cebu so travelling to these Masses at around 3am is like being caught up in the rush hour!! There is a great atmosphere and a sense of anticipation and excitement as strangers greet each other as they walk along, many carrying their own chairs not expecting to get a seat inside the church. Jeepneys (buses) are all full and it is not easy to get a taxi either!

Last year we attended Mass at 4am in the Redemptorist Church. The Liturgies were very well prepared, each day the sermon was cleverly linked to the 'Year of Mercy' and the impact of the coming of the Messiah. There was a different choir each day and these were all so well prepared and very beautiful. It was certainly well worth the effort of getting up early as each Mass was so inspirational and certainly deepened my understanding of what the Nativity of the Lord is all about.

How will I prepare for the feast of the Nativity this year? I hope not to be too caught up what still has to be done, how many more cards and presents do I need to buy?

Attending the dawn Mass for the nine days before Christmas was very beautiful but it was also a sacrifice and a challenge to get out of bed

very early each morning! What will be my challenge this year? How will I prepare myself for the Nativity during these last nine days before Christmas? How will I inspire others to prepare well?

Perhaps we can all give a little more time to prayer and reflection, let us be an example to others that there is a great richness in preparing well so as to really welcome the Christ Child into our hearts and homes in a more meaningful way this Christmas.

Just one last thought!

Who will **I** invite into **my stable** this Christmas?