

# FR. BRAD HAGELIN

## PASTOR

My dear Kirkland Catholics,

December is a month with two special celebrations that are *especially near and dear* to the two largest Catholic ethnic groups in Western Washington. That is the celebration of *Our Lady of Guadalupe* celebrated on December 12<sup>th</sup>, and *Simbang Gabi* which takes place over a nine day novena; and is celebrated at both of our parishes on December 21<sup>st</sup>.

The European Franciscan Missionaries had been spectacularly unproductive and unsuccessful at evangelizing native Mexicans, making very few converts. So, the same year (1531) that the Protestant Reformation broke out in Germany which would lead which would mean millions of people leaving the Catholic Church in Europe, Our Lady appeared to Juan Diego leaving a miraculous garment (the Tilma) which would lead to the almost total conversion of Mexico to Catholicism in larger numbers than were lost in Europe during the Reformation, and in less time than the Franciscans had labored to convert less than 1% of the population. The United States has been consecrated to Our Lady of Guadalupe. I encourage you to read more about this event and the Tilma itself.

The celebration of Simbang Gabi began after the Philippines was colonized and Catholicism rapidly spread there. In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century most Filipinos were laborers of one type or another working from dawn until dusk. To enable the average peasant to take part in a special novena to Mary, a Mass had to take place before dawn so that workers could attend daily Mass for the nine days leading up to Christmas. This tradition became extremely popular and instrumental in establishing greater devotion among the people in anticipation of Christmas, and immigrants from the Philippines have brought this beautiful tradition to wherever they settled. The symbol most associated with Simbang Gabi are the colorful “parols” which are star-shaped lanterns representing the Star of David.

We are so lucky and blessed to have such wonderful traditions and celebrations to enrich our parish and the Church of Western Washington.

With love in Christ,

Fr. Brad