

## **Celebration | El Santo Niño**

Thus, the Santo Niño has become a symbol of Cebu, a symbol for Cebuanos as a people, for their faith, hopes and desires, and a symbol to all devotees of the love and care that the Niño has given in their lives.

The devotion to the Santo Niño was brought to Hampton Roads by three ladies from the Visayan islands in the Philippines and is the largest of its kind in Southeastern Virginia. Novenas are held every night for 9 consecutive nights and is then capped by a Fiesta, Sinulog and reception on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of January. The Sinulog is a dance that was performed by the natives of Cebu in honor of their wooden idols. The dance moves two steps forward and one step back to the sound of drums and was designed to mimic the flow of the current of a major Cebu river.

The modern Sinulog is now performed to honor the miraculous Santo Niño. As they move, dancers chant “Pit Senyor”, a call to the Santo Niño. It is a prayer dance, a dance of petition, of contrition, of thanksgiving, and of adoration. It is a dance that gives us a glimpse into the Cebuano’s psyche, an expression of the devotees’ religious experience of God’s constant love and care.