



(Left photo) Christchurch Mayor Bob Parker (right) welcomes Philippine Ambassador Joaquin B. Sison (center) and Philippine Honorary Consul Peter Wait (left) meet Joanne Bevan, Mayor.

21 March 2013 - A touching and meaningful Civic Memorial Service was held in Latimer Square, Christchurch on February 22 to commemorate the second anniversary of the 2011 Canterbury earthquake.

New Zealand Prime Minister John Key and Christchurch Mayor Bob Parker, together with the diplomatic corps, the bereaved family members of the earthquake victims, survivors and other distinguished guests, attended the commemorative event hosted by the Anglican Christchurch Cathedral.

The Philippines was represented by Philippine Ambassador to New Zealand Virginia H. Benavidez.

The service was multi-faith and included a one-minute silence at 12:51 p.m., the actual time the earthquake hit Christchurch and claimed 185 lives, including 11 Filipinos.

After the ceremony, Ambassador Benavidez, accompanied by Philippine Honorary Consul Peter Wait, Third Secretary Glenn Joseph Obach, and Christchurch-based Godofredo Bernadas, Jr., visited the area where the CTV Building used to stand and the site where the Filipinos died. They also offered a moment of silence at the location of Oxford Terrace Baptist Church, where 185 Empty Chairs painted by Pete Majendie as an act of remembrance, were on display.

Ambassador Benavidez, together with some Filipinos led by Delia Richards of the Christchurch Migrant Center, then proceeded to Avonhead Park Cemetery to offer special prayers and flowers.

The Avonhead Park Cemetery is a special interment site for unidentified remains of the earthquake victims. Filipino priests Rev. Fr. Rodello Rempillo and Rev. Fr. Joselito Quinones led the memorial service at the Cemetery.

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