

16 March 1997 - Sunday

I'm sitting in the courtyard surrounding the RC church. ~~of~~ Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Shrine in Caloocan City, Manila.

On the end of the seat where I'm sitting a beggar woman comes to join me. One of many beggars roaming the church.

The time is 11:00 hours and the start of yet another Sunday Service which seem to go on throughout the day - all of which are well attended.

Another, then another beggar woman comes to sit on our, by now, crowded seat. They chat to each other, then two ~~leave~~ rise & go, leaving the one original in charge of their begging pots.

A few yards in front of me a man is selling beautiful tropical birds from a ~~wicker~~ cage. Hanging from the cage and from a yard ^{wire} long stick are mini-cages, made from bamboo strips to enable his clients take the birds away with them.

The church is full and the sounds of the service are transmitted into the courtyard through the open doorways. ^{trails of the system} A small number of vendors ply their

wares in the courtyard, mangoes, Balloon ^{stands}, magazines, Margarete blossom, as well as the birds.

The service is conducted in English.

Outside there is bedlam on the streets. Honking car horns blowing whistles and the bustle of people. People everywhere in this ^{over}crowded city. Even the church is crowded - a nice little earner for the RC Church.

Hanging on the church gates are copies of Vogue, Go, Vanity Fair, InStyle, Good Housekeeping being traded by the vendor. All of them ~~are~~ portraying a way of life that is like being on another planet as far as the average Filipino is concerned.

Survival is what counts here. The luxury items considered normal by western families do not exist in the vast majority of Filipino homes. Getting enough to eat and wear and ~~and~~ maintaining a roof over their heads is the main priority here. And helping the church increase it's already-obscure wealth!

~~many of the magazines~~

The yellow bikini clad girl jumped out of the sea on the cover of Vogue towards me; fit for summer - bikinis are back - the 30 best - getting the body you want - living fat free, were some of the temptations offered in the May edition. I don't know which year it was but as time seems not to matter in this country. Old magazine sell for almost as much as new editions. Current editions of UK computer magazines sell for about £8 instead of the £2.50 in the UK. I was offered a 3 year old diving magazine for more than half it's original cost.

~~There~~ Children run around everywhere, some with their families, others with their friends. Two little waifs begged a few coins from me. So many children here live on the streets and yet the Filipinas keep producing more & more. So many pregnant ladies - almost everywhere you go there are bulges jostling for space in the crowds. ~~The~~ One lady I met, Zenith, is the youngest of 14 - most of whom go on to produce even more. No wonder the RC Church is against contraception, all these happy, smiling, people provide yet more funds to go into the coffers of the church - even though almost half of these wonderful people are undernourished and mostly live in ^{the} inadequate housing of shanty towns.

On another ~~of~~ gate of the church hang cardboard display cards of cheap children's toys to keep the kids amused in the service. The church is full with many ~~of~~ worshippers standing. A little boy is clad only in shorts & plays football with an old Coke can. Then, finding it to be not quite empty, shakes & bangs it until about 20 cigarette ends fall out. Then he lobbs it in the air, mercifully not hitting anyone or anything. Tiring of this he has a go at peering hell out of a cardboard drink container (empty) then shaking a small citrus tree to its roots before a drooping, then chasing after his precious Coke can - almost decapitating me with one of his aimless lobbs.

It is now 12:00. The service ends precisely on time & another starts, One lot of people out - another in, life goes on.

My Diary of Sunday 16 March 1997

I'm sitting in the courtyard surrounding the Roman Catholic church of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Shrine in Caloocan City, Manila.

On the end of the seat where I'm sitting, a beggar woman comes to join me. One of many beggars roaming the church.

The time is 1100 hrs and the start of yet another Sunday service which seem to go on throughout the day – all of which are well attended.

Another, then another beggar woman comes to sit on our, now crowded seat. They chat to each other, then two rise and go leaving the one original in charge of their begging pots.

A few yards in front of me is a man selling beautiful tropical birds from a wire cage. Hanging from the cage and from a yard-long stick are mini-cages made from bamboo strips to enable his clients to take the birds away with them.

The church is full and the sounds of the service are transmitted into the courtyard through the open doorways and outside PA system. The service is conducted in English. A small number of vendors ply their wares in the courtyard; mangoes, balloons, candles, magazines, Margareta blossom as well as the birds.

Outside, there is bedlam on the streets; honking car horns, blowing whistles and the bustle of people. People everywhere in this overcrowded city. Even the church is crowded – a nice little earner for the RC church.

Hanging on the church gates are copies of Vogue, Go, Vanity Fair, In Style, Good Housekeeping, being traded by the vendor. All of them portraying a way of life that is like being on another planet as far as the average Filipino is concerned. Survival is what counts here. The luxury items considered normal by western families do not exist in the vast majority of Filipino homes. Getting enough to eat and wear and maintaining a roof over their heads is the main priority here. And helping the church increase its already obscene wealth!

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the church, even though almost half of these wonderful people are undernourished and live in the inadequate housing of shanty towns.

On another gate of the church hang cardboard display cards of cheap children's toys to keep the kids amused in the service. The church is full with many worshippers standing. A little boy clad only in shorts plays football with an old Coke can then, finding it to be not quite empty, shakes it and bangs it until about 20 cigarette ends fall out. Then, he lobs it into the air, mercifully not hitting on landing. Tiring of this he has a go at beating hell out of a cardboard drink container (empty), then shaking a small citrus tree to its root between dropping, then chasing after, his precious Coke can – almost decapitating me with one of his aimless lobs.

It is now 1200 hrs. The service ends precisely on time and another starts. One lot of people out; another in. Life goes on.