The ‘Candle of Nazareth’: feast, devotion and tourism in Para (Brazil) O ‘Círio de Nazaré’: festa, devoção e turismo no Pará (Brasil)

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The ‘Candle of Nazareth’: feast, devotion and tourism in Para (Brazil)

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Introduction

A global definition of tourism does not exist. It is deemed as such to be the temporary movement of people to different destinations, which are more than 50 miles away from their working and living locations, or that remain more than 24 hours at the locations visited. It includes, as well, the activities performed during the stay of such travellers at the location visited, of every way and motivation (vacations, leisure, business, study, sporting and religious events, purchasing, health, visiting friends and relatives, etc.).

Under an economic focus, the activity generates production of economic resources with alternative applications, which are distributed for consumption by the entire community (Lage and Milone, 2001: 44-45).

Tourism is deemed to be the most dynamic and promising economic sector in the world, having direct impact over about 50 other segments, besides demanding a complex set of sectoral actions to ensure its development. In Brazil, according to estimates, tourism shows a participation of around 10% in the Gross Domestic Product - GDP, and a human

Keywords: ‘Candle of Nazareth', religious event, regional tourism
various information types provides better understanding of the subject under study. The qualitative investigation features bibliographic studies that constitute theoretical references, averaging the understanding of the reality that is facilitated by the participation of the authors of this contribution, for the last five years, in the said festivity or commemoration, in addition to surveys with religious entities, seeking information in newspapers, periodic scientific journals and magazines and other sites. As Pedro Demo states:

The etymological origin of ‘quality’ indicates what there would be that is core or essential in some phenomenon’ (2011, p. 104).

The Metropolitan Region and the City Of Belém (Pará - Brazil)

Pará, one of the Brazilian 27 States, is situated at the northern region in the country, and has received, over the course of time, high numbers of Portuguese, Spanish, Italian and Japanese immigrants, in addition to many African and, of course, Indian influences. Belém’s Metropolitan Region (see Table 1 and Figure 1) includes that city, the capital of the State, as well as 6 municipalities. In aggregate, the area totals: 3,566 km\(^2\); a population estimated at 2,381,661 inhabitants (60% of which live in the capital); a demographic density of 668 inhab/km\(^2\); GDP per capita of around resources involvement corresponding to 6% of the economically active population (work force) of the country.

Religious tourism, according to Silveira (2004) includes the movement of pilgrims traveling by the mysteries of faith or devotion to some saint. Souza (2000), stresses that such tourism is motivated by culture, whose main feature is the displacement of people with strongly religious connotations, such as visits to churches and sanctuaries. According to data from the Brazilian Ministry of Tourism (2014), such category displaces in the country over 15 million faithful people, while faith and religiosity constitute some of the remarkable signs of national culture, such as, for instance, pilgrimages, processions and liturgical holidays, which gather up crowds to honour the saints of devotion. The country appears within the segment’s worldwide leaders, beside nations such as Spain and France (Brazil, Ministry of Tourism, 2014).

In this context, this contribution analyses the ‘Candle of Nazareth’,\(^1\) one of the largest Catholic religious, Brazilian and worldwide events, which occurs on the second Sunday of October, in Belém, capital of the State of Pará, the Brazilian metropolis of the Amazon River region. This paper considers economic advances and religious integration, joining devotees from Pará and elsewhere, dynamising and growing trade. It seeks to clarify the religious configuration, particularly of the population of this federation unit located at the country’s northern region (see Figure 1).\(^2\)

The study is of an exploratory nature with a qualitative approach, grounded on religious and economic assumptions, and identifying the determinants of such tourism. According to Lima (2008:30), the exploratory aspect arises from the expectation that a collection of various information types provides better understanding of the subject under study. The qualitative investigation features bibliographic studies that constitute theoretical references, averaging the understanding of the reality that is facilitated by the participation of the authors of this contribution, for the last five years, in the said festivity or commemoration, in addition to surveys with religious entities, seeking information in newspapers, periodic scientific journals and magazines and other sites. As Pedro Demo states:

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Table 1. Belém’s Metropolitan Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Households</th>
<th>Density</th>
<th>GDP per capita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ananindeua</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>499,776</td>
<td>2,701</td>
<td>2,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELÉM</td>
<td>1,065</td>
<td>1,432,844</td>
<td>1,345</td>
<td>4,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevides</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>57,393</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>3,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marituba</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>120,305</td>
<td>1,168</td>
<td>1,958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Bárbara do Pará</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>19,197</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>1,263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Isabel do Pará</td>
<td>718</td>
<td>65,251</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>1,862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castanhal</td>
<td>1,029</td>
<td>186,895</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>2,793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>3,566</td>
<td>2,381,661</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>3,656</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) Exchange rate: R$ 3.89 = US$ 1.00 (February/2016)

Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics - IBGE

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1. Etymologically, the term ‘cirio’, from Latin ‘cereus’, means a large wax candle. The word is of Lusitanian origin, where the candles represented a gathering of people organized, in pilgrimage, to go to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Nazareth, in Portugal.
2. Another large religious manifestation occurs on October 12, which day is dedicated to Our Lady of Aparecida, the patron of Brazil. It happens in Aparecida do Norte, a city located in the State of São Paulo, in the Southeastern region of the country.
the activities relating to trade, services, tourism, education (there are 6 universities and a dozen other college institutions) and government. The economy’s secondary sector is represented, although to a smaller degree, by the food, naval, metallurgic, fishing, chemical and wood industries.

From a touristic standpoint, Belém emerges as a big Brazilian destination and is one of the most visited cities in the Amazon region, providing culture and leisure possibilities. In the midst of luxuriant nature, it mixes historical buildings, modern edifices, monuments, parks and museums. Examples worthy of mention include the Peace Theater, the Emilio Goeldi Pará Museum, the Mangal das Garcas park, and the Ver-o-Peso market. Local cookery has a strong Indian influence, presenting typical dishes, such as, ‘pato no tucupi com jambu’, ‘tacacá’, ‘maniçoba’. The regional fruits, such as ‘açai’, ‘bacaba’, ‘cupuaçu’, ‘bacuri’, US$ 3,656 and; a Human Development Index - HDI which is deemed to be high, i.e., 0.729 (2010).

The city of Belém with 400 years of history, is located at the confluence of the Guamá river with the bay of Guajará. With an HDI of 0.746, which is considered high, it is the strategic centre of the system that in the past has organised the remarkable economy of exploitation of rubber extraction, having inherited interesting historical and architectural heritage, in addition to an urban structure and port that remains fundamental to the logistics of a large part of the Brazilian Amazon. In addition, it presents significant national influence from a national cultural, economic or political point of view.

Belém’s economy is responsible for a significant portion of job generation in the metropolitan region of which it is part (almost 80% of the total), particularly
the celebration, highlighting a dispute between the two cities, Belém and Vigia. Such dispute about the event caused the dissemination of this holiday to several other municipalities, particularly Ananindeua, currently integrating the Metropolitan Region of Belém. IPHAN’s records (2006) cite evidence that the first ‘círios’ happened in Belém, where the saint’s image was carried, in the lap, by catholic bishops. Later on the ‘Berlinda’ was introduced, inside which stood the image, which was carried by a car pulled by a couple of oxen.

The celebration in devotion to the Nazareth Virgin is ceremonial, encompassing family, community and church. The procession ritual evidences the devotees projecting outries and thanks to the Saint, considered the mother of the Pará people, who sing

Oh Virgin loving Mother, source of love and faith, give us your blessing, kind Lady of Nazareth.

IPHAN’s records (2006) highlight that the strength of the manifestation rests on people’s participation which cannot be ignored. The devotees, the pilgrims and the promise-payers are the major parties responsible for continuing the tradition over more than two centuries. The Candle of Nazareth is a cultural asset, the importance of Maria de Nazareth’s image in the life of the people cannot be denied, even if the celebration demonstrates, simultaneously, the holy and the unholy.

The diversity of people’s Amazonian identities, myths,
structure and the civil community there is a Board of Directors, mainly constituted by citizens selected in accordance with the following criteria:

- History of engagement with the church, as a devotee
- People with status at the Belém community

There is articulation between the church and the community, providing a great event with spectacular rites, culminating with the celebration on the second Sunday of October, which attracts more than 2 million people. The performance and the show, both in the sight of the pilgrim and the vision of the tourist, have an impact on the life of the city.

Prior to the Candle’s day, other events occur, all with the same demonstration of faith and charity. They include:

- **Translation of the Image from the city of Belem to Ananindeua** – According to IPHAN (2006), the idea of the pilgrimage proceeding to Ananindeua originated from a citizen named Ribeiro, the owner of a gas station known as Tokyo. In 1992, he requested the Feast’s Directors that the image should proceed to this city, currently integrating the Metropolitan Region of the Capital Belém, so that the inhabitants of the interior of the State could

Figure 3 illustrates aspects of the celebration, with a devotee paying promise on a route of more than 3.6 km of the procession (a); pilgrims doing the same in relation to the ‘Corda’ (Rope) (this will be described hereafter) (b); and reproduction of the Sanctuary dedicated to the Virgin of Nazareth, in Belém (PA) (c).

### Events Preceding the Candle

The patron of Pará’s people, Our Lady of Nazareth, causes religious commotion well before the second Sunday of October. There is a full programming prepared by the event’s organizers, from the image’s visit to homes, terrestrial and aquatic pilgrimages, and celebrations in the surrounding municipalities. However, the Candle of Nazareth is the main touristic religious event in the State of Pará and one of the largest in the country, possibly in the world, and in December, 2013 was declared, by UNESCO, to be an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Direction of the Candle Celebration, 2014).

Religious command of the feast is in the charge of the Archdiocese of Belém and the parish of the ‘Basilica of Nazareth’ (Silva, 2011). Between the ecclesiastic belief and fervour, are differences that become diluted during this event, as Alves (1980:51) states:

*It is . . . a moment of intense emotion, where the differences dilute, the behaviour is no longer subject to fixed rules, the emotional convergence concentrates around the Saint: to the extent that it serves as agglutinant power, it allows the momentary formation of a large community that shall be beyond time and space, but shall only be possible to be lived and re-lived in the ritual context.*

Ananindeua is the second most populated municipality in the State of Pará, with 499,776 inhabitants (Table 1). The name is of Indian origin and is due to the large number of trees called Anani, which produces the ceraceous resin used for sealing vessels’ gaps. Originated from small creeks, it was considered a ‘dormitory city’, however it has shown considerable development over the last few years, resulting from the lack of space for building new residences in Belem (Brazil, IBGE Cities).
The ‘Candle of Nazareth’: Feast, Devotion and Tourism in Para (Brazil)

Filgueiras de Pinho & de Lima Garófalo

‘feel’ closer to Our Lady. This happens from Friday to Saturday of the week preceding the Candle.

• **Road Pilgrimage** – Pilgrimage of motor or non-motor vehicles (cars, motorcycles and bicycles) is another manifestation of devotion to Our Lady of Nazareth. The course travelled early on Saturday morning is about 24 km, from the city of Ananindeua to the District of Icoaraci. Created by the Union of Cargo Transportation Companies of the State of Pará - SINDICARPA, along the course, families decorate the front of their houses with flowers, balloons and ribbons, in thanks for graces achieved. There are also intense displays of fireworks.

• **Fluvial Procession** – This initiative started in 1986. Originally, the pilgrimage was introduced as a way to involve and reward everyone living and depending on the region’s rivers, such as the riparian population that, due to the inherent conditions, could not go to Belém to render homage to the Virgin. This is currently a strategy for leveraging tourism. The course originates at the pier of the District of Icoaraci, traveling across Guajará Bay to the port of Belém. Several types of vessels, such as the riparian population's boats, yachts, jet skis and large vessels participate, offering a spectacular view of the manifestation, generally of tourism companies that offer to the passengers T-shirts, caps, and on-board services including a complete breakfast.

• **Moto-Pilgrimage** – Known as the procession of motodrivers, the entourage travels about 3.3 km from Pedro Teixeira plaza, the location where the patron arrives from the fluvial procession, to Gentil Bittencourt High School, in the center of Belém; the location where, at night, right after mass, the Translation begins. The engines’ deafening noise is a greeting to the Virgin of Nazareth. The manifestation has the logistic support of civil and military policemen, including those linked to the management of urban traffic.

• **Translation** - Saturday night, at 18:00 hours, right after the mass celebrated at the stairs of Gentil Bittencourt High School, the image of Our Lady of Nazareth, acclaimed by the pilgrims and the promise-payers, proceeds along a course opposed to that of the Candle, toward the Metropolitan Cathedral. The beauty of the ceremony comes from the litter lighted by candles, and the Rope that protects the image. At various points numberless homages happen, with fireworks, and innumerable pilgrims paying promises, many doing this course on their knees, others carrying books on their head, as a sign of grace achieved, and others following the procession holding the litter’s rope. Next morning, the litter returns to the ‘Basílica Sanctuary’, in the famous act of faith known as the Christmas of Pará’s people - the Candle of Nazareth.

**The Great Day - The Candle**

The main attraction related to the Candle is the procession that, as mentioned before, occurs on the second Sunday of the month of October, and is marked as the feast of Pará’s population. The reason for joy and meeting of families, the day’s ceremony starts before dawn, when, next to the Metropolitan Cathedral, located in the city district called Cidade Velha (‘Old City’), near the Forte do Presépio (‘Stable Fort’) another touristic attraction of the city of Belém, begins - the gathering of devotees, pilgrims, and promise-payers, anxious to pay homage to the patron.

The event is split into moments: it begins at 6:00 AM with celebration of the mass, after which the faithful place themselves in the streets, along the route. At seven o’clock, the image of Our Lady is brought to the Litter, to start the Candle procession. Under the Catholic tradition, it has ahead of it an entourage constituted of seminarians, clergy and acolytes. Near to them, people position themselves for paying promises, some involving mortifications, such as: carrying a wooden cross; carrying on the head a copy of a small house just-obtained / acquired, or even books; following the procession wearing no shoes; following the entire route on the knees (which features a mystic experience between self-flagellation and overcoming the limits of faith) or; dressing in a shroud or as an angel. The last moment is the arrival at the ‘Basílica of Nazareth’ and removal of the Virgin’s image from the Litter.

The entourage, depending on the route, might take over 5 hours to travel the distance of about 4 km that separates both churches, and involves the participation of more than 2 million of the faithful. Along the route, the Queen of the Pará’s people is honoured with fireworks and religious songs. Special vehicles collect objects resulting from graces achieved with the Virgin’s intercession, such as candles, reproduction of parts of the human body molded in wax (heads, arms, legs, etc.), shrouds, etc. Some vehicles conduct

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6. Icoaraci, with about 300,000 inhabitants, is one of the eight districts into which the Belém municipality is split. The name, of Indian origin, means ‘river’s sun’. Its economy is based on fishing, wood, joinery and palmetto industries, and the location stands as an important ceramic craftsmanship centre (Brazil, IBGE Cities).

7. Entourage is a group of people, following another person or other people, for obligation, politeness or courtesy.
children dressed as angels, and teaching institutions appear with their students forming the respective bands or brass bands.

In the walking order, the Saint’s Litter, symbol of the entire manifestation, the anticipated entity, which is subject to homage and is acclaimed along the whole route, stays at the end of the entourage, being closely preceded and escorted by clergymen (Cardinals, Bishops and Priests). After it, following the procession comes a human bulk of incalculable size.

Avenue President Vargas, one of the streets travelled by the procession, has a large extension with grandstands in place, so that a massive number of people can, with reasonable comfort, watch the pilgrimage and equally pay homage to Our Lady. The edifications along the course are decorated, while windows, doors and terraces are occupied by dwellers watching the passage of the Saint's image.

The procession encounters various happenings along the course of the route. One of them, already a tradition and anxiously expected by the celebration participants, is the fireworks in front of the building of the O Liberal newspaper.[8] Another significant action in the list of punctual homages, occurs in front of the building of Banco da Amazônia, and is shared by clergymen, actors and singers. At the 2014 Candle, the clergymen Fabio Melo and Antonio Maria, and the famous, singer Fafá de Belém, celebrated devotion to the Virgin, with prayers, songs and fireworks, a thrilling spectacle, which is difficult to describe. Only those who had the joy of participating in the Candle would be able to express the emotion and commotion of this spectacle.

The entourage, even by enduring the high temperature shown on the street thermometers, demonstrates the sacrifice made by the participants. Actually, along the route, there is distribution, frequently free of charge, of mineral water and, also, the crowd is sprayed with this precious liquid by the fire department’s vehicles. In parallel, due to health problems and emotional instability, those participants who come to faint or suffer other disturbances (see Table 2), are almost immediately attended to by Red Cross volunteers and medical students. It goes without saying that they face difficulties in moving their stretchers in the midst of the compact crowd.

The traditional Rope that embraces the Saint’s Litter is another tradition with multiple controversies as to its origins. In terms of symbolism, there is the sacrifice of ‘carrying’ the image that follows the entourage, which, as indicated, starts before the Cathedral to arrive at the Plaza, currently known as the Nazareth Sanctuary, a distance of 4 km.

From the moment when the Rope, the Candle’s characteristic artefact, is extended on the street to start the procession, there is a struggle among the promise-payers to grab it, for the purpose of ‘pulling’ the litter. This is an action of intensive sacrifice, considering that there are, along the route, narrow streets or ways where, people get crushed and trampled. While the rope originally served for pulling the litter, it is now an element kept by tradition (IPHAN, 2006). This rope is currently 400 to 450 meters long and is carried by people of both genders. In doing so, they become exhausted, with wounds, blisters and other manifestations on their hands and feet, but exult with their accomplished promise. However, since it is a symbol of faith, at the end of the procession the pilgrims cut it, and stubbornly dispute each piece, since it then constitutes a symbol and reminder of the sacrifice they incurred.

The City’s Economy and Change of Routine With the Candle

The Candle event has an impact, in addition to tourism, on the economy of the State of Pará, fostering the region’s development. According to Silva (2011), the importance of the feast might be measured in different ways, such as, the number of participants increasing every year, the ways in which faith is manifest, representations of the festival as cultural reference in local artistic manifestations, (literature, music, theatre, among other), and, particularly, by the contribution to the State’s economy.

From an economic perspective, surveys performed by private and public institutions on behalf of the Direction of the Candle Feast (2014) demonstrate an increase in the flow of tourists at the Candle, evidencing in their number in Pará, during the celebration. This increase over the last eleven years would have been close to 150%, while in absolute figures it has totalled about 100,000 people in 2014 alone. This aggregate includes not only those arriving and spending 3, 4 or 5 days in the city of Belém, but

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8. O Liberal belongs to the Romulo Maiorana Organization that also owns ‘TV Liberal’. It is the largest communication group in the State of Pará, and the 9th in the category’s ranking in Brazil. The newspaper is deemed the most important of the Amazon River region.
also the natives of Pará, living in other Brazilian States, arriving one week before and leaving one week after. The vice-president of the Pará Trade Association, Miguel Gomes Sampaio, stated that trade, which in 2014 faced difficulties, was boosted, thanks to this religious manifestation. The tourists would have spent, according to estimates, approximately US$ 31 million.

However, in the last few years, and as stressed several times in this paper, the Candle event ends in the participation of over 2 million people. As a result, in addition to the favourable exposure of the State of Pará in national and international media, almost every productive sector gets benefits therefrom, particularly the services, trade, agriculture and cattle raising, and industry. In 2014, the event had an estimated cost of about US$ 1.2 million, and injected into the economy of the State of Pará some US$ 380 million (Direction of the Candle Feast, 2014). Around 26,000 people were involved in the organization. On the other hand, according to the same source, around 70,000 to 80,000 people were engaged in the so-called ‘Nazareth Quatrain’, i.e. the fifteen days when the manifestations of devotion to the Virgin occur in the four corners of the State of Pará. Most of those people (perhaps up to 95%), were engaged in informal sectors.

According to IPHAN (2006), in the services sector, the activities relating to tourism, in all of its branches, stand out, whether religious, receptive or events focused, in addition to business tourism. In the hotel area, although Belém has approximately eighty lodging properties (half of them classified as ‘low cost’) totalling to over 12,000 vacancies, at the time of the Candle they are practically 100% full. This happens particularly with hotels located in the districts of Center and Nazareth, where packages for the period start being booked about eight months prior to the event.

The gastronomy area also benefits in a major way, as demand, at both sophisticated restaurants (with typical dishes that captivate tourists enjoying higher incomes) and at the simplest, triples by the second Sunday of October. Even the so-called ‘street barbecues’ controlled by itinerant sellers (a significant share of the informal economy) benefits from the influx of visitors.

The merchants rejoice, and it is generally said that the Candle is their Christmas, with sales growing 100% in this period. The Shopping Centres offer a variety of sophisticated handicraft products, while the itinerant sellers fill the streets around the Sanctuary of the Nazareth Virgin, selling small souvenirs, water, and miriti’s craftsmanship (canoes, boats, dolls, birds, fish, snakes and toys), made of the stem of the palm-tree of the same name, native of the north of the Country.

In addition, associations, groups of dwellers and small merchants, craftsmen and stylists also take advantage of this Candle period, selling craftsmanship, souvenirs, ceramic reproductions and or of other materials of the Saint’s image. Clothing, particularly shirts and T-shirts worked on freestone and paints reproducing the image of the Virgin of Nazareth, as well as flowers, candles, and other souvenirs are sold, and are much in demand at this time.

**Table 2. Procession Candle of Nazareth: main occurrences attended – 2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Occurrence</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fainting</td>
<td>567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check blood pressure</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunstroke</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor injuries</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxation</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyspnoea (shortness of air)</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deydration</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entorces</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,316</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Direction of the Candle Feast

Certainly the study could be enriched with field research, a fact which was not dismissed, but would require resources, particularly financial, which on this occasion were not available. However in the not too distant future, the study should be deepened. The authors are negotiating with government agencies for support to undertake research, especially that related or geared to tourism.

**Final Considerations**

Interest in approaching this topic was multiple. In addition to one of the authors having been born in the State of Pará, the contribution was aroused as a result of several factors. The first was certainly the importance that religious tourism is assuming in Latin America as a whole and especially in Brazil. Another reason was the relationship of the subject to the economy of the area, the field in which the authors are experts. This led to the conclusion that they should focus attention on this flourishing area of study.
To sum up, it is important to note that the Candle of Nazareth, in addition to its inherent evangelizing nature, works as a driver of the State of Pará’s economy, particularly of the capital Belém, generating a large religious touristic flow, and providing opportunities for increased employment and income. The event influences the life of the people in the State of Pará, and of those that in this period feel accepted into the arms of the Virgin of Nazareth.

According to Mauss (1974), the Candle comprises a series of events, with multiple ways to engage social actors, and also articulates the varied spheres of social life - religion, economy, tourism, art, politics and social identities; such meshing of various identities provides a synergy of faith and interchange that embellish the capital of Pará.

The size of this ‘ocean’ of people circulating in the capital of Pará during the celebration impresses even the unbelievers, and participation grows every year driving the local, and perhaps, the national economy. Aimed at demonstrating some peculiarities of this event, this contribution was conceived, because this religious manifestation is at least equivalent to others recorded in Spain and in France.

Much of what the paper presents or offers results from the authors’ experience while frequently participating in this event over the last few years. It is difficult to describe the emotion and commotion of the Nazareth Virgin’s devotees. You must be physically present to understand what it actually represents!


