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## **The Second National Eucharistic Congress of the Philippines: A Historical Record**

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*Philippine Studies* vol. 5, no. 4 (1957): 456–482

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# The Second National Eucharistic Congress of the Philippines: a Historical Record

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PEDRO VERCELES

**T**HE Second National Eucharistic Congress held in Manila from 28 November to 2 December 1956 is now a milestone in the history of Catholicism in the Philippines. The secular press, not always partial to religious affairs, noted the Congress third in its choice of the ten top events of 1956.

The idea of holding it was born at a convention of the diocesan directors of the Apostleship of Prayer held at La Ignaciana, the house of retreats on Herran Street, Manila, 2-5 October 1955. The convention unanimously approved a resolution presented by Father Cesar Alcoseba of Cebu which read as follows:

That in order to commemorate with solemnity the centenary of the institution of the Feast of the Sacred Heart, let it be [resolved] that a National Eucharistic Congress be held in the year 1956.

It is therefore further recommended that the national director of the Apostleship of Prayer present this resolution in the form of a memorandum to the Philippine Hierarchy in their next annual meeting in Baguio in January 1956.

Father Alcoseba told the conventionists that the resolution had been suggested by His Excellency Archbishop Julio R. Rosales of Cebu.

## MEMORANDUM TO THE HIERARCHY

Thus it came about that the writer of this article, as the national director of the Apostleship of Prayer, had the honor to

present a memorandum to the Most Reverend Archbishops and Bishops of the Philippine hierarchy in their annual meeting in Baguio from 27 January to 2 February 1956. The memorandum was presented through His Excellency Archbishop Rosales.

The main points discussed in the memorandum included the subject of financing the Congress, the site and date, invitation of a Cardinal legate, and the reasons for holding the Congress. It was also proposed that whatever funds might be collected over and above the needs of the Congress should be set aside for the construction of a Basilica of the Sacred Heart to mark the centenary of the establishment of the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

After a thorough discussion of the above points by the members of the hierarchy, it was decided that the Congress should be held in Manila from 28 November to 2 December 1956. This was to be the second National Eucharistic Congress of the Philippines. The first was held in Manila on 11-15 December 1929. It marked the golden jubilee of Pope Pius XI's priesthood and the 75th year of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.<sup>1</sup>

Archbishop Rosales was chosen chairman of the Episcopal Commission for the Congress with Bishop Alejandro Olalia of Lipa and Auxiliary Bishop Vicente P. Reyes of Manila as members. The present writer was named secretary general.

#### THE EPISCOPAL COMMISSION

The Episcopal Commission immediately went to work. The first meeting held at La Ignaciana on 5 February 1956 was attended by the three members of the Episcopal Commission, by the secretary general and by the Very Rev. Vincent Kennally, vice-provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Philippines, Father Jose Ma. Siguion S.J., and Atty. Jose V. Escobar who acted as secretary. Following the meeting, the Episcopal Commission announced the forthcoming Congress in a pastoral letter dated 11 February 1956. The Pastoral set the theme for the Congress in the words that were to become familiar to the nation: "For a

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<sup>1</sup> On the various congresses, national and international, held in the Philippines see "Eucharistic Congresses in the Philippines" by the Most Rev. Julio R. Rosales D.D. in *PHILIPPINE STUDIES* IV (1956) 553-564.

better world through the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus." It also called for an intense spiritual preparation, "a climate of Eucharistic life" to be brought about by means of sermons, catechism classes, confessions, Mass, Communions, personal sacrifices and Holy Hour devotions. It also made mention of the need for material assistance to insure the success of the Congress.

A month later, in the evening of 12 March, an organizational meeting was held at the Carbungco Restaurant. Presided over by Archbishop Rosales, it was attended by prominent members of the clergy and the laity.<sup>2</sup> As a result of this meeting a national executive committee was appointed composed of officers and committee chairmen.<sup>3</sup> The national executive committee decided to hold monthly meetings during the first few months and bi-monthly as the Congress neared.

#### HEADQUARTERS

The secretary general was commissioned to look for suitable headquarters. Due to its accessibility and convenient location, a room on the ground floor of Santa Isabel College was chosen. A huge neon sign, measuring eighty feet in length by four feet in height, soon proclaimed to Manilans the coming event. Above the neon letters was a large outline of the Sacred Heart in red neons. The headquarters soon buzzed with activity. A regular staff of paid and volunteer workers filled various positions under Atty. Enrique Zafra as administrative officer. The secretary general held regular office hours at Sta. Isabel

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<sup>2</sup> Among those present: Archbishop Rufino J. Santos of Manila, Bishop Mariano Madriaga of Lingayen-Dagupan, Bishop Olalia of Lipa and Auxiliary Bishop Reyes of Manila.

<sup>3</sup> The officers were: Archbishop Rosales, chairman; Mariano Santos and Jose Ma. Hernandez, vice-chairmen; Pedro P. Veceles S.J., secretary general; Herman Martens C.I.C.M. and Jose Ma. Rosauero S.J., assistant secretaries general; Jose V. Escobar, cashier; Enrique Zafra, administrative officer. The committee chairmen were: Bishop Madriaga, exhibits; Bishop Olalia, program and invitation; Bishop Vicente P. Reyes and Msgr. Jose Jovellanos, religious functions and ceremonies; Bishop Gonzaga and Father Jose Ma. Rosauero S.J., conferences; Francisco Dalupan and Ernesto V. Lagdameo, finance; Gabriel Daza and Hermenegildo B. Reyes, planning; Manuel Lim and Jose Galan Blanco, procession; Justice Pastor Endencia and Gabriel Prieto, housing and transportation; Senators Francisco Rodrigo and Decoroso Rosales, government participation; Hon. Gregorio Hernandez, public school participation; Teodoro Evangelista, private school participation.

and was substituted in his absence by Father Jose Ma. Rosauro S.J.

#### FUND-RAISING

From the beginning the problem of raising funds for the Congress was faced by the finance committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Francisco Dalupan and Mr. Ernesto V. Lagdameo. As a practical means of getting ready cash, various souvenir articles were prepared and sold to the general public. These served both to propagate the Congress and to perpetuate its memory. These included medals, pins, posters, decals, holy pictures with the Congress prayer printed at the back, fans, banners, veils and bandannas, etc.

Simultaneously with the sale of the articles, an extensive fund-raising campaign was launched. A total of 700,000 tickets representing "One-Peso Offerings" were printed and disseminated as widely as possible throughout the Islands. Six field workers were employed as diocesan agents for the spread of these "Offerings." This proved to be the surest and best way of raising the needed funds, although the money did not come in until shortly before, during and shortly after the Congress.

Meanwhile the finance committee with its various subcommittees also sought donations of various categories from P1,000 to P200 and under.

By the middle of June the various committees and subcommittees were working in full swing, holding regular meetings and reporting their individual progress to the national executive committee. A monthly bulletin issued by headquarters relayed these and other pertinent reports to Catholic organizations, Catholic school heads, parish priests and the parochial units of Catholic Action.

#### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Meanwhile an intense spiritual preparation was going on throughout the archipelago. Religious houses of the various Orders and Congregations for women held regular weekly Holy Hours for the success of the Congress. Parochial Eucharistic congresses were organized in different localities, culminating in diocesan congresses.<sup>4</sup> It is impossible to estimate the tremen-

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<sup>4</sup> Among the more successful of these diocesan congresses were those in Cebu, Iloilo, Samar, Tayabas, Baguio and Zamboanga.

dous amount of spiritual good that emanated from these little congresses. They all contributed greatly to creating that "climate of Eucharistic life" which, in the final analysis, was responsible for the success of the Manila Congress.

#### GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

In the course of the preparations for the big event, the two entities whose aid was immediately sought by the executive committee were the government and Catholic Action of the Philippines.

The President of the Philippines, Ramon Magsaysay, graciously consented to become one of the honorary presidents, the other two being the apostolic nuncio, Msgr. Egidio Vagnozzi, and Archbishop Rufino J. Santos of Manila. The President of the Republic was also asked to consecrate the Filipino people to the Sacred Heart on the last day of the Congress. It is to his credit that he readily consented and that, in spite of bitter attacks in the press, he never revoked his decision. The consecration of the Filipino people to the Sacred Heart by President Magsaysay became one of the hottest controversies of the day. A blessing in disguise, it served both to publicize the Congress more widely and to unite and strengthen Catholics in their Faith.<sup>5</sup>

Mrs. Luz Magsaysay, the First Lady, deserves special mention as honorary chairman and the moving spirit behind the committee for the Day for the Sick and Aged. The idea for this new feature of the Manila Congress was adapted from Lourdes, France, where the sick are brought in stretchers and wheelchairs to the grotto of our Lady for Holy Mass, Communion and individual benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Mrs. Amparo Villamor, head of the Social Welfare Administration, was Mrs. Magsaysay's right hand woman in taking charge of this delicate and difficult feature of the Congress.

The Mayor of Manila, the Honorable Arsenio H. Lacson, also readily consented to present the symbolic key of the city to His Eminence the Cardinal legate. Not only did he offer generous assistance in easing various technical difficulties, but his wife,

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<sup>5</sup> A full analysis of the controversy has been made by Leo A. Cullum "President Magsaysay's Consecration of the Philippines to the Sacred Heart" *PHILIPPINE STUDIES* V (1957) 45-70.



President Magsaysay (honorary chairman) with Archbishop Rosales (national chairman) and the secretary general.





The state banquet at Malacañang Palace. Cardinal Spellman (at the President's right) wears the collar chain of the Order of Sikatuna (highest Philippine decoration) given to him on this occasion.



Mrs. Luchi Lacson, served as chairman for the committee assigned to decorate the city streets and houses.

Various branches of the government, especially the army, the Manila Police and the Health Department, showed remarkable enthusiasm and cooperation.

#### CATHOLIC ACTION

Catholic Action of the Philippines cooperated splendidly and the mandated and auxiliary Catholic organizations and almost all the Catholic schools and colleges performed the task they were assigned.

The Legion of Mary, to mention one example, under City Auditor Jose Erestain, took complete charge of Children's Day which proved such a beautiful demonstration on the part of "the hope of the fatherland." *Adoración Nocturna* and the Apostleship of Prayer took charge of Men's Night.

It is impossible to mention in this brief report all the entities that cooperated with the executive committee, but the members of the committee are agreed that never have they seen such enthusiastic cooperation on the part of so many.

#### AUDIENCE WITH THE POPE

On 21 September the present writer had occasion to go to Rome to participate in the world-wide convention of the national directors of the Apostleship of Prayer. He took the opportunity to seek the Sovereign Pontiff's blessing upon the Philippine Eucharistic Congress. He had previously visited Gethsemani in Jerusalem and Paray Le-Monial in France to obtain stones from these hallowed places with the intention of depositing them in the cornerstone of the proposed Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Manila.<sup>6</sup> During a brief audience granted the secretary general, the Holy Father personally blessed these stones and bestowed his Apostolic Benediction for the success of the Congress. Later in his talk to the Philippines on the last day of the Congress, His Holiness Pope Pius XII twice mentioned the proposed Sacred Heart Basilica.

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<sup>6</sup> From Gethsemani, as the place of the Agony in the Garden; from Paray-le-Monial, as the scene of the apparitions of the Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary and also the scene of the apostolic labors of Blessed Claude de la Colombiere, an apostle of the Sacred Heart.

## VISIT TO CARDINAL SPELLMAN

On his way home, the secretary general paid his respects in New York to His Eminence Francis Cardinal Spellman who had been named papal legate *a latere* to the Manila Congress. During this visit, arrangements were made for the arrival and reception of the Cardinal and the tentative program of the Congress was presented to him for his approval.

## PUBLICITY

Meanwhile in Manila, preparations were in full swing under Father Rosaura, assistant secretary general. Archbishop Julio Rosales called a press conference and explained to representatives of the local radio and press the significance and salient features of the coming event. As the Congress approached, a full time press relations officer was assigned to issue daily press releases to keep the public informed of the preparations and acquaint it with the personalities playing key roles in the affair.

## COMMEMORATIVE STAMP

An interesting sidelight worthy of mention was the issuance of a commemorative stamp. Following a precedent set during the Marian Year in 1954, the Bureau of Posts was requested to issue a stamp commemorating the centenary of the Feast of the Sacred Heart. In its final approved form, the stamp bore a picture of the statue of the Sacred Heart carved out of wood with a penknife by the Philippine national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, when he was a fourteen-year old student of the Ateneo de Manila. Bordering the image was a design of wheat and grapes, symbolic of the Eucharist, which was printed upon suggestion of the Director of Posts, Mr. Felipe Cuaderno. The stamp, which was sold on the opening of the Congress, was issued in twenty and five centavo denominations. Special commemorative stamp albums were presented to His Eminence Cardinal Spellman, a well known philatelist, who remarked: "This is the first time I have been presented commemorative stamps even before they were issued to the public."

## MONSTRANCE FROM FRANCO

Another significant sidelight was the donation by the Spanish chief of state, Generalissimo Francisco Franco, of a monstrance to be used in the final procession of the Blessed Sacrament. The

monstrance was presented to Archbishop Rosales by the local Spanish charge d'affaires, Mr. Tomas Bordulio. It was symbolic of the close ties between the Philippines and Spain, the country which had brought the Faith to the Islands.

#### CONGRESS HYMN

As in past Congresses, a contest was conducted by the committee on the congress hymn and sacred songs under the chairmanship of Manila's vicar general, Msgr. Jose Jovellanos of Tondo. Winner of the lyrics contest in Tagalog was Father Gerardo Maximo, parish priest of Concepcion, Malabon and associate editor of *Filipinas* magazine. Professor Lucio San Pedro, a well-known composer, won the contest for the best musical setting of the winning lyrics.

Upon announcement of the winning lyrics and hymn, recordings of the now official Eucharistic Congress hymn were made separately by the choir of Philippine Women's University and the "tiples" of Tondo parish church. The hymn was sung nightly during the Rosary Hour over Station DZFI. Sister Rosalina Abejo R.V.M., a skilled musician, printed copies of the hymn in various arrangements and these were disseminated widely.

#### ALTAR AT THE LUNETA

The construction of the main altar at the Luneta, which was to be the scene of the Congress, presented a big difficulty to the executive committee. Various designs were prepared by the planning group but most of them were disapproved due to lack of funds. As has already been mentioned, funds did not start to come in from the One-Peso Offerings until during and immediately before and after the Congress. It was therefore difficult to decide just how much outlay was to be assigned for the construction of an appropriate altar. For this reason, the architect, Juan Nakpil, had to make the best of the Quirino Grandstand and to design a fitting altar within the Congress's limited means.

In its final form, the altar constructed was a thing of beauty, dominated by a huge figure of Our Lord with exposed heart. The demands of liturgical decorum were kept in mind. Not the least of these was the problem of accommodating in the sanctuary the thirty-eight members of the Philippine hierarchy besides visiting church dignitaries, the Cardinal legate and his entourage, and

finally the President of the Philippines. It is to the credit of Architect Nakpil and Contractor Mariano Sideco that all the liturgical demands were satisfied and the altar, built at minimum cost, was an inspiring sight.

#### CONCERTS, PAGEANT, BENEFITS

A practical source of funds and a means of propaganda for the Congress were the choral concerts and stage presentations during the entire month of November under the chairmanship of Father James B. Reuter S.J. of the Ateneo de Manila. Various colleges in Manila cooperated towards the success of these projects. The choral concerts were participated in by twenty-four Catholic schools and colleges, and featured such well-known conductors as Dr. Antonio J. Molina, Prof. Lucio D. San Pedro and Miss Liwanag Cruz.

The stage presentation consisted of a pageant entitled *This Hungry Heart* written and directed by Father Reuter and based on the encyclical *Haurietis Aquas* issued on the centenary of the Feast of the Sacred Heart by His Holiness Pope Pius XII.

Another source of publicity and added income was the benefit basketball game arranged by a group under Father Agustin Bello S.J. at the Rizal Stadium between the UAAP champions and the NCAA champions. There was likewise the benefit premiere of the film *War and Peace* managed by a committee on movie benefit under the chairmanship of the Honorable Andres V. Castillo, governor of the Central Bank. There were also the bazaars, rummage sales and parlor games managed by a committee under Mrs. Emilia Q. Lim. Another source of publicity was the testimonial banquet managed by the Knights of Columbus and Daughters of Isabela to honor the Cardinal legate. Among the educational aspects of the Eucharistic Congress was the exhibit centering on the theme of the Congress which opened on the first day at the Letran Gymnasium in Intramuros. Seventeen booths were prepared by the various Catholic colleges in Manila. Each of them developed a particular aspect of the Holy Eucharist and the Sacred Heart. The idea was conceived by Bishop Mariano Madriaga and executed by a committee under Mother Elise of St. Theresa's College (Quezon City). Prominently displayed at the exhibit was the Sacred Heart image carved by Dr. Rizal, the original of the commemorative stamp. There was also the banner of the Sacred Heart woven by the women of Malolos and

taken by an American soldier from Barasoain Church in 1899 and returned fifty-three years later from the United States.

#### THE CONCOURSE

As early as Monday of Congress week, pilgrims from the provinces started pouring into the city. The registration committee under Father Cicero Cebrero S.J. were kept busy, although it is regrettable that only an infinitesimal number of the pilgrims bothered to register. The pilgrims came by every means of transportation. The transportation committee under Mr. Gabriel Prieto had obtained discount rates from the Manila Railroad Co., the Philippine Air Lines and the various shipping companies for all pilgrims to the Congress. Delegates from Cebu, Iloilo, Leyte, Samar and Bohol had chartered interisland ships which, at the same time, served as floating hotels for the duration of the Congress. Davao pilgrims chartered planes.

Worthy of mention were the pilgrims from far-off Cotabato and Sulu, from the Batanes and from the Mountain province who came in their native attire. Also worthy of mention were the Vietnamese group of twenty-seven men and eighteen women headed by His Excellency Bishop Pham Ngoc Chi, a refugee from North Vietnam. Likewise, there were some Filipinos from Hawaii led by their chaplain Father Joseph Robeck. Another leading Asian church dignitary who attended the Congress was His Excellency Carlo Van Mecklebecke C.I.C.M., Bishop of Ningsia and Apostolic Visitor of Southeast Asia, who had been a participant in the Asian Congress of the Lay Apostolate in Manila in December 1955.

#### FINAL PREPARATION

On 25 November the executive committee met for the last time at the Congress headquarters in Santa Isabel College. The meeting was presided over by Archbishop Rosales.<sup>7</sup> For the last

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<sup>7</sup> Present at the meeting were: Bishop Olalia of Lipa, Auxiliary Bishop Reyes of Manila, Bishop Gonzaga of Palo, Bishop Madriaga of Lingayen-Dagupan, Bishop Brasseur of Baguio, Msgr. Jovellanos, Chaplain Nicolas Ortega, Leo Vendrome C.I.C.M., Jose Ma. Rosauro S.J. Herman Martens C.I.C.M., Brother Gabriel of La Salle, Dr. and Mrs. Manuel Lim, Dr. Augusto Cortes, Gabriel Daza, Justo Lopez, H. B. Reyes, Francisco Dalupan, Ernesto Lagdameo, Enrique Zafra, Justice Pastor Endencia, Mrs. Aurora Aquino, Mrs. Felicidad Silva, Mrs. Leonarda Ubaldo, Mrs. Luisa Lorenzo and the present writer.

time the details of the setting and program of the religious drama that was to draw world attention in the next few days were thoroughly threshed out.

Everything was now in readiness. The *templete* on the Luneta had been completed. Also constructed at the Congress site were some 3,000 benches set to accommodate an estimated 30,000 people. The lighting and public address system were installed under the management of Gabriel Daza and H. B. Reyes.

The Archbishop of Manila announced that all priests attending the Congress would be automatically granted ministerial faculties provided they enjoyed the same in their respective dioceses. This proved a blessing as it enabled every priest present to minister to the huge concourse of people that graced every Congress function. Sixty bishops, a hundred monsignori and over a thousand priests were expected to attend. Some of them were from neighboring countries like Vietnam, Singapore, Hongkong, Guam, and Hawaii.

#### ARRIVAL OF THE LEGATE

On 26 November at 6:40 a.m. (after a six-hour delay) the Cardinal legate stepped out of a Northwestern plane from Tokyo. On hand to meet him were Archbishop Rosales, Archbishop Santos of Manila, the Hon. Oscar Ledesma, secretary of commerce who represented the President, and the papal nuncio. A thousand people were on hand despite the six-hour delay in schedule. A nineteen-gun salute and full military honors were accorded the legate, after which he and his entourage were taken to Malacañang Palace where he was to be the house guest of President Magsaysay for the duration of the Congress. He was welcomed at the palace by the First Lady, Mrs. Luz B. Magsaysay, after which he said a low Mass in the palace chapel, with the President's family in attendance.

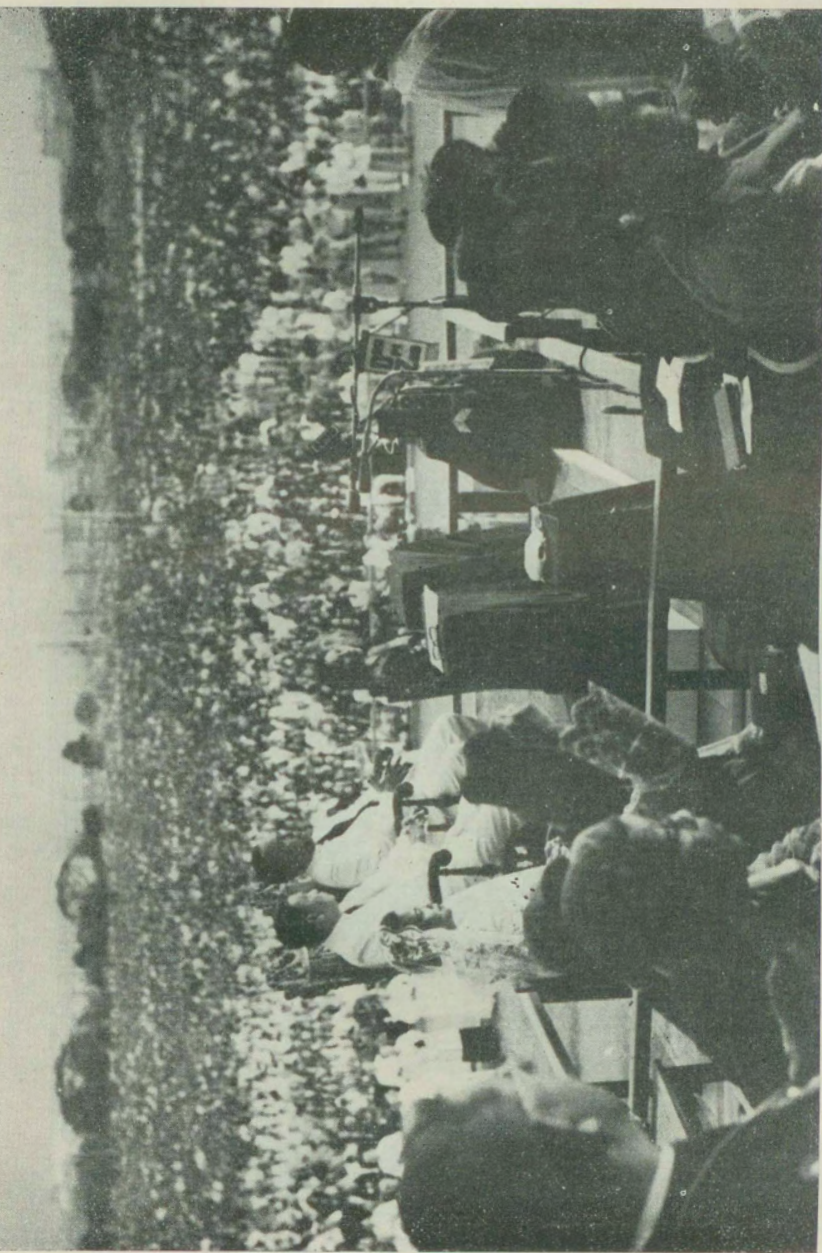
The Cardinal's entourage include Msgr. John Fleming who acted as the Cardinal's secretary and master of ceremonies, Msgr. Aloysius Dineen, Msgr. Richard Pigott, Papal Marquis George MacDonald, chamberlain of cape and sword and grand master of the Knights of Malta in the United States, and Mr. Frank Folsom, papal chamberlain of cape and sword and lieutenant of the eastern lieutenancy of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre.

At four o'clock of the same day a motorcade conducted His Eminence and his entourage to the historic church of San Agus-



Cardinal Spellman (wearing collar of the Order of Sikatuna) is escorted in solemn procession up the Luneta altar.





President Magsaysay and Vice-President Garcia, with Mrs. Magsaysay and Mrs. Garcia, attend Mass at the Luneta with a large concourse of people.

tin in Intramuros for the official liturgical reception. The Cardinal rode in an open car along avenues lined with cheering crowds of children and adults. At the door of San Agustin church he was met by the papal nuncio and by members of the hierarchy. The legate marched up the aisle to the sanctuary under a canopy carried by prominent government officials. Seated on his throne in the sanctuary, the papal legate received the homage of the Philippine ecclesiastical authorities. Archbishop Santos of Manila formally welcomed the papal legate, recalling that he had always been a "generous benefactor and friend of the Philippines." In response, Cardinal Spellman declared that the coming Congress was an affirmation of faith made at the frontiers of the Christian world. He urged special prayers for the Hungarian people whose spirited revolt against Russia had led to bitter reprisals, and for Catholics suffering persecution in Communist China. His Eminence then conferred the papal blessing, thus closing the liturgical reception which was attended by over 3,000 people jammed into San Agustin church.

A mammoth crowd heard His Eminence deliver his first major address at the civic reception held in his honor the next day, 27 November, at 5:30 p.m. in the Rizal Football Stadium which was beautifully decorated for the occasion by the girls from Centro Escolar University and the boys from the Ateneo de Manila. High ranking church and government officials, delegates from the provinces, students and Catholic actionists were in attendance. Vice President Carlos P. Garcia delivered the formal welcome address at this civic reception. Mayor Lacson of Manila presented the symbolic key to the city. The seven-inch gold-plated key bore the seals of the City of Manila and of the Eucharistic Congress and was encased in a specially designed wooden box. The key bore the inscription: "Welcome to his Eminence Francis Cardinal Spellman, Papal Legate to the 2nd National Eucharistic Congress. From Honorable Arsenio H. Lacson, Mayor of Manila."

The official hymn of the Congress was sung in public for the first time by a 2,000-voice choir (the combined Glee Clubs of several Catholic colleges) under the direction of its composer, Prof. Lucio San Pedro. Another hymn, *Ecce Sacerdos Magnus*, especially composed for the occasion was rendered by the same choir under the direction of its composer, Father John van de Steen C.I.C.M. of San Carlos Seminary, Makati. The choir also

sang the Ave Maria by Santiago under the direction of Prof. Antonio J. Molina.

#### THE FIRST DAY

Classes had been cancelled in all private and public schools to enable students and teachers to join Catholic Philippines in celebrating the national religious event. Students and teachers, therefore, from Manila and the provinces flocked to the Congress functions every day.

The Second National Eucharistic Congress formally opened on 28 November at 5:30 in the afternoon. In spite of a threatening typhoon ("Olive"), a huge concourse of people estimated at 100,000 flocked to the Luneta to witness the colorful event. Members of the Philippine hierarchy and ecclesiastical guests were in attendance in full regalia as were fourth degree Knights of Columbus.

Msgr. John Fleming, master of ceremonies and secretary to the Papal legate, read the Pontifical Letter naming Cardinal Spellman *legatus a latere* to preside in the Pope's name over the Second National Eucharistic Congress of the Philippines. The letter was read in Latin and in English. The Holy Father said:

We therefore not only approve and heartily commend the brilliant plans prepared by the Episcopate and clergy of the Philippine Islands but we also wish to confirm and enhance the approaching Eucharistic Celebration by Our Authority and in a sense by Our Presence.

Archbishop Rosales of Cebu delivered the formal address of opening. The Cebu prelate pointed out the place of the Eucharist in the life of the Christian and of the nation. He urged frequent reception of the sacrament, which in truth is the reception of Christ, and a renewal of baptismal vows so that the Philippines might become in fact what it is in name, the only Christian nation in the Orient. The archbishop of Manila officiated at the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

That same evening President Ramon Magsaysay tendered a state banquet for the Cardinal legate, during which he also decorated the New York archbishop with the highest Philippine decoration, the Order of Sikatuna. The Honorable Raul Manglapus, Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, read the citation

stating that His Eminence had rendered extraordinary service in the cause of peace and liberty founded on the dignity of the human person and had done incalculable service for translating American friendship for the Filipinos in terms of security and mutual well-being.

Meanwhile at the Holy Ghost College auditorium, a choral concert under Father Reuter was presented by various Catholic colleges for the benefit of the Eucharistic Congress. At ten o'clock that night nocturnal adoration was held in the parish churches of San Jose de Trozo, Quiapo, Pandacan, Santa Ana, Sampaloc and Baclaran church. And throughout most of the night of 28 November until the early morning of the next day, the rains that came with typhoon "Olive" fell without let-up.

#### THE SECOND DAY

In spite of the rains, Women's Day, 29 November, became one of the greatest manifestations of devotion in local church history. As early as four o'clock in the morning the women started to flock to the Congress grounds. Some Congress authorities had thought of holding the Pontifical Mass in nearby San Agustin church because of the constant rain. But the multitude of women, estimated at around 400,000, that had come to the Luneta despite the incessant rain was the answer to every doubt. The Luneta became a sea of umbrellas crowded together like dark mushrooms that had sprouted overnight. Archbishop Cuenco of Jaro said the Pontifical Mass. The choir of the Jaro Seminary provided the music under the direction of Father Antonio Mayoral C.M. The Mass started at 7:00 a.m. instead of 6:30 as scheduled, but the rains never ceased. Coadjutor Archbishop Sison of Nueva Segovia seized upon the occasion to thank God and the women for their demonstration of fervent faith.

Shortly after the distribution of Holy Communion, the First Lady of the Philippines, Mrs. Luz Magsaysay, led the congregation in the act of consecration of the Filipino family to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It was a touching sight: the entire crowd, drenched by the rains, knelt in the mud and repeated the words of consecration after Mrs. Magsaysay.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> All the ceremonies of the Congress on this and on the preceding and following days were broadcast over all networks, with Father Harry B. Furay S.J. of the Ateneo de Manila as chief narrator.

At nine o'clock on this and the following days the various conferences arranged by the Congress committees were held in the various Catholic schools and colleges. The conference topics centered on devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Holy Eucharist. The groups were divided into several sections: for priests, nuns, women, men, officers of Catholic Action, labor, college and university men, college and university women, high school boys, high school girls. The conferences lasted three days. Each conference was presided over by a bishop, a chairman and two speakers.

At three o'clock in the afternoon the priests and religious men assembled at San Agustin church in Intramuros for a Holy Hour preached by Msgr. Clovis Thibault P.M.E., prelate nullius of Davao, while in Malate church Father Leo A. Cullum S.J., Rector of the Ateneo de Manila, preached the Holy Hour to the women religious.

Meanwhile on the Luneta Archbishop Santiago Sancho of Nueva Segovia, assisted by priests and seminarians of Vigan, officiated at the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament closing Women's Day. Bishop Alfredo Ma. Obviar of Lucena preached a sermon in Tagalog. Music was furnished by the choir of the Central Seminary of Santo Tomas.

#### MEN'S NIGHT

Men's night immediately followed Women's Day. The rains had now stopped. Members of the *Adoración Nocturna* and the Apostleship of Prayer had organized a Holy Hour for men at ten o'clock p.m. at the Luneta. Bishop Gonzaga of Palo spoke on "The Christian Against the Secularist Mentality."

By midnight over half a million men had gathered around the Congress altar. The statue of Christ dominating the area atop the Independence Grandstand had been torn on the right arm by the typhoon rains, but tonight the skies were clear and the Luneta was ablaze with thousands of lights. Bishop Miguel Mascariñas of Tagbilaran sang the Pontifical Mass. Altar and choir services were supplied by the San Carlos Seminary of Cebu. About 200 priests circulated among the crowds to hear confessions and to distribute Holy Communion. Men of all walks of life were there: government officials, foreign ministers, lawyers, laborers, truck drivers: they had all given up the comfort of their homes to pay homage to the Eucharistic King.

## THE MASS ORDINATION

Early in the morning of 30 November seventy-seven seminarians were ordained simultaneously to the priesthood by eleven ordaining prelates in what may easily have been the most moving liturgical ceremony of the Congress. Eleven altars had been built on the basketball court of the Rizal Coliseum. By means of a loud speaker focused on Archbishop Rufino Santos of Manila, the ordination rites were performed simultaneously, prayer by prayer, action by action, by the rest of the ordaining ministers.<sup>9</sup> Father Leo Vandrome C.I.C.M. as master of ceremonies directed the rites from a microphone, while Father Antonio Piñon O.P. explained them to the faithful and to the radio listeners over station DZST. Altar services were handled by the archdiocesan seminary of San Carlos, Manila, while musical renditions were supplied by the Central Seminary of Santo Tomas. The ordinandi came from fifteen dioceses and archdioceses and included the Chinese students of St. Joseph's Seminary, Chabanel Hall, Quezon City.

## THE SICK AND THE AGED

In the afternoon at four o'clock the sick and the aged were gathered at the Luneta for their own Mass and Holy Communion. Most of them were invited from the various government and Private hospitals, but a great number came on their own from the parishes of Manila and the suburbs.

Transporting the sick and aged to the Luneta was a problem solved by the cooperation of the Social Welfare Administration under Mrs. Amparo Villamor and that of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the various participating hospitals. Chairman of the committee for the sick and the aged was the First Lady, and her interest in their welfare was extraordinary. About a dozen ambulances were used in transporting stretcher and wheelchair cases to and from the Luneta. Over thirty physicians and twice as many nurses and assistant nurses volunteered their services to stand by for emergencies or merely to look after the comfort of the patients. It was a magnificent demonstration of

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<sup>9</sup> The other ordaining prelates were: Archbishop Rosales of Cebu, Coadjutor Archbishop Sison of Nueva Segovia, Bishop Obviar of Lucena, Bishop Olalia of Lipa, Bishop Gonzaga of Palo, Bishop Frondosa of Capiz, Bishop Van den Ouwelant of Surigao, Bishop Cronin of Ozamis, Bishop Surban of Dumaguete, Bishop Madriaga of Lingayen-Dagupan.

faith and courage in suffering and of simple loving devotion to the Holy Eucharist.

Bishop Carlos Mecklebeke C.I.C.M. of Ningshia, China, and apostolic visitor of the Chinese missions in Southeast Asia celebrated the low Mass. Auxiliary Bishop Hernando Antiporda of Manila preached the sermon. Rev. Jose de los Santos led the recitation of prayers in Tagalog during the Mass. His Eminence Francis Cardinal Spellman was present at the Mass and officiated at the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. After the Mass he went from patient to patient, blessing each. About fifty priests distributed Holy Communion. The ceremonies closed with Bishop Antiporda blessing candles which were distributed to the patients. Immediately after the services, merienda was distributed to the participants who had transformed the Luneta for one afternoon into a huge open-air hospital. Volunteer workers from the SWA and from civic and religious women organizations circulated among the patients, wearing red caps, distributing food.

That evening at seven o'clock in the various churches a Holy Hour was held for women, distributed according to their regions and dialects.<sup>10</sup>

#### CHILDREN'S DAY

One of the most beautiful spectacles of the entire Congress was the Children's Mass on the morning of Saturday, 1 December. The skies shone bright upon a multitude of children clad in immaculate white. Newspaper estimates of 200,000 may be exaggerated, but other estimates of 50,000 are certainly too low. The entire field of the Luneta was crowded. Archbishop Santos of Manila had previously announced that children desiring to

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<sup>10</sup> Msgr. Jose B. Aguinaldo preached in Tagalog in Tondo parish church; Msgr. Esteban Montecillo in Cebuano in Paco Church; in Singalong church Msgr. Nicanor Belleza in Bicol; in Espiritu Santo church Father Isaias Edralin S.J. in Ilocano; in the V.O.T. church Father Potenciano Ortega in Samareño; in Ermita church Father Ciceron Martires in Ilongo; in San Miguel Pro-Cathedral Father Honorio Muñoz O.P. in English. The Chinese community held their own Holy hour in Santissimo Rosario Church (UST). It was presided over by Msgr. Juan Velasco O.P., vicar general of the Chinese missions in the Philippines. Father Oscar Deltour preached the sermon. He spoke of the suffering of the Mystical Body behind the Bamboo Curtain in Red China.



receive Communion on this day could take liquid food one hour before Holy Communion. Archbishop Pedro Santos of Nueva Caceres said the low Mass. The children themselves sang hymns during the Mass under the direction of Father John Van de Steen C.I.C.M., simultaneously with the choir of San Carlos Seminary. Auxiliary Bishop Vicente P. Reyes of Manila preached the sermon in Tagalog. He urged his little hearers to imitate the example of the Child Jesus whom they were about to receive. Shortly after Communion, a public school pupil, Felix Villaluna of the Legarda Elementary School, led the act of consecration of Filipino children to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

In the afternoon of the same day, His Eminence Francis Cardinal Spellman, who besides being papal legate was also military vicar of the United States Armed Forces, officiated at a field Mass for the military. Over 20,000 members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and a great number of the personnel of the Armed Forces of the United States and contingents of R.O.T.C. cadets from various colleges and universities were in attendance. Leading the Philippine Armed Forces were Eulogio Balao, secretary of national defense, and Lt. Gen. Jesus Vargas, chief of staff. Needless to say the congregation presented a striking spectacle as the huge crowd of uniformed men in white knelt, stood or sat with military precision. Cardinal Spellman gave a brief extemporaneous talk after the Mass urging them to fulfill their respective duties to God and country as true Catholics. Bishop Alejandro Olalia of Lipa officiated at the solemn benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The choir of San Carlos Seminary supplied the music.

#### TESTIMONIAL BANQUET

That evening at eight o'clock a testimonial banquet in honor of the papal legate was held in the Fiesta Pavilion of the Manila Hotel. Organized by the Knights of Columbus (Manila Council No. 1000) conjointly with the Daughters of Isabella, it was graced by the presence of Manila's prominent Catholics, representatives from all parts of the archipelago, by civic and religious leaders and high officials of the government. The Philippine Constabulary Band under Lt. Col. Antonino Buenaventura rendered musical numbers. Four after-dinner speeches were delivered. The speakers were: the undersecretary of foreign affairs, Raul Manglapus, Senator Francisco Rodrigo, Archbishop Rosales and Cardinal Spellman who spoke briefly but pointedly

expressing surprise at the anti-Americanism of certain sectors of the local press, stating that nowhere else had he met with such hostile misrepresentations of America, and begging for greater fairness and more understanding.

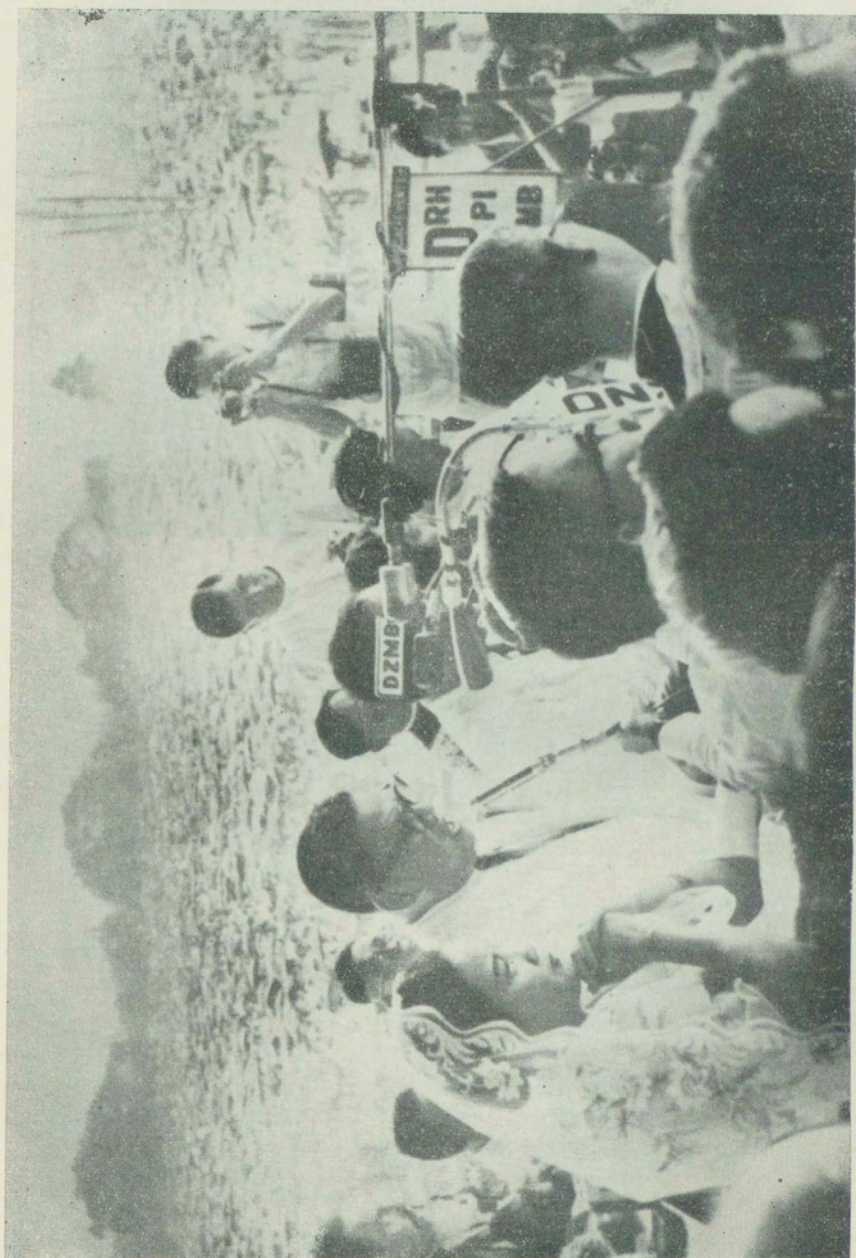
#### CLOSING DAY

On the closing day of the Congress, Sunday, 2 December, a slight rain threatened the ceremonies at the Luneta. The press estimated at over 500,000 the people who had come to attend the solemn Pontifical Mass celebrated by the Cardinal legate at 6:30 a.m. As the ceremonies unfolded, the rains started to fall in earnest but the people stayed in their places. When Cardinal Spellman delivered the homily, he said: "Never in my life have I seen a demonstration of faith more noble and more sublime than the faith of the Filipino people here at this hour." He lamented the poor response of the world to the pleadings of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. He decried the evils that arose from a society divorced from God: man's inhumanity to man, birth control, the perversion of the principle of justice, indifference to the vital problems of the individual, the family and nations. He exhorted the audience to return to Christ, to prayer for peace and to an intimate union with the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus.

At the offertory, President Ramon Magsaysay led the act of consecration of the Filipino people to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This was the act of consecration that had aroused such bitter controversy in the daily press. The rains continued to pour but just at the end of the prayer led by the President, the rain stopped and the sun shone. Except for another slight drizzle later toward the end of the Mass, the skies cleared.

The President and Mrs. Magsaysay as well as Vice-President and Mrs. Carlos Garcia received Holy Communion at the hands of the Cardinal, while an innumerable number of the faithful also partook of the Sacred Banquet from the hands of some 250 priests.

It should be stated at this point that the Fathers and seminarians from San Jose Seminary under Father Federico Escaler S.J. and Father James Griffin S.J., with the cooperation of the Sisters of St. Paul, did yeoman service every day of the Congress by keeping a large supply of consecrated hosts in the crypt of the grandstand. They kept this supply moving in orderly



President Magsaysay consecrates the Filipino people to Sacred Heart of Jesus, Sea of umbrellas shows part of the immense throng that braved the rains to attend the





The closing ceremonies. A million people listen to the Pope's address.



fashion from the large receptacles to the ciboria of the priests from every diocese and religious order or congregation who volunteered to distribute Communion among the crowds.

After the ceremonies the Cardinal legate accompanied by President Magsaysay descended down the altar steps under a canopy carried by prominent laymen. They were enthusiastically greeted by the immense crowd with "*Mabuhay ang Cardenal!*" and "*Mabuhay ang Presidente!*"

### THE PROCESSION

In the afternoon, the Luneta and Dewey Boulevard became a perfect setting for the grand closing of the historic Congress. The rains had cooled the atmosphere and the skies were serene. As early as three o'clock people from all walks of life thronged to the Boulevard and the Luneta, filling up every available inch of space.

The procession started from Malate Church at 4:30. It is estimated that around 500,000 marched in the procession and another 500,000 lined the Boulevard eight-men deep on both sides of the street to witness the procession. Cardinal Spellman knelt before the Blessed Sacrament in a carriage pulled by twelve seminarians. The faithful, both those that marched in the procession and those that stood along the way, sang and prayed in unison as all along the route loud speakers were installed and the prayers and songs were directed through these media.

At the Luneta over a million people knelt at the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, the Cardinal legate officiating and the entire congregation singing.

The address of His Holiness Pope Pius XII to the gathered multitudes at the Luneta was scheduled to be broadcast at 7:15 p.m. But the benediction having ended a little ahead of schedule, the rosary was recited in unison with Dr. Salvador Araneta leading. And then, at the scheduled time, the Holy Father's voice was heard through the loud speakers.

You have transformed your Luneta, as it were, into one vast living ostensorium, and Manila Bay resounds with the perennial supplication of Mother Church to her divine Founder and Sustainer: O Victim, Who hast saved us, and reopened Heaven's gate, the struggle is fierce: be Thou our strength, Thine aid bestow!"

The Holy Father then gave his apostolic blessing on the Filipino people. The papal legate raised his consecrated hand in benediction and the Second National Eucharistic Congress was declared closed.

#### EPILOGUE

The next day at 4:30 p.m. along Ortigas Avenue on Highway 54 in Quezon City the cornerstone of the proposed Basilica of the Sacred Heart was blessed by His Eminence Cardinal Spellman. It was a quiet ceremony, attended by about 500 guests. The Cardinal was assisted by Msgr. Narciso Gatpayad, Msgr. Guillermo Mendoza and Father Samuel Wiley S.J. who acted as master of ceremonies. Justice Pastor Endencia acted as notary and read the dedication papers which were then signed by Cardinal Spellman, the assisting prelates, the bishops, priests and benefactors present. The papers were then deposited into the cornerstone and sealed.

The papal legate left the following day, having also blessed, during his stay, the new chapel of the High School of the Ateneo de Manila at Loyola Heights.

The present writer completed his work as secretary general of the Congress by turning over to the Most Reverend members of the administrative board of the Catholic Welfare Organization of the Philippines the surplus funds of the Congress which were left after all expenses had been paid. The amount was almost ₱200,000. This amount was to be invested until such time as the Philippine hierarchy should appoint a secretariate to manage the campaign for the construction of the proposed Basilica of the Sacred Heart.