

Black Nazarene: Thousands join annual statue parade in Manila

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The annual event sees devotees trying to catch a glimpse of the historic statue of Jesus of Nazareth.

Hundreds of thousands of people have turned out on the streets of Manila in the Philippines for the procession of the Black Nazarene.

The statue was carved in Mexico and arrived in the Philippines in the 17th Century, surviving a fire on board a ship on the way. It is one of the Philippines' most revered devotional objects.

It now resides for most of the year in a church in Quiapo district. But every January it is carried on a 7km (4.5 mile) route through the streets of the capital.

Devotees - who go barefoot - believe touching or being close to the statue can cure illnesses or bring good luck.

The Philippines is a deeply Catholic country, and many devotees are prepared to risk serious injury for a chance of getting close to the Black Nazarene.

The Philippine Red Cross said that by mid-morning they had treated more than 600 people for conditions like breathing problems, fainting and bruises. Three people were taken to hospital.

In the days before the procession, the statue is blessed at the church in Quiapo. Many people bring along their replicas for blessing too.

Church officials say the procession is a sign of the thriving faith of Catholic Filipinos and that amid the chaos there is

also a sense of serenity, AFP reports.

- BBC