

Same Old Same Old

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It was noontime and the crowds were scurrying here and there. Some were heading to restaurants. Others had errands to run. As usual, the summertime sidewalks of Irvine were filled with people going somewhere.

What was strange about this particular lunch hour was the old man wearing a Chicago Cubs baseball hat standing in front of the Nike Store across the street from where I was sitting. He was holding a microphone. From time to time, he would stop passersby. It looked like he was interviewing them.

From my vantage point sitting outside a Starbucks Coffee Shop, I was curious about what he was doing. Could he be a newspaper reporter writing a human interest story for the *LA Times*? Or better yet, a panhandler with a new angle on shaking down people for money?

Having nothing better to do, I crossed the boulevard to check him out.

As I approached him from behind, he turned and looked at me. He motioned with his hand for me to stop. Then, he said, "Would you be so kind as to answer a quick question for me?" I nodded.

"What do you think is wrong with the American Church system?" he asked. Then, he held the microphone in front of my face for the response.

My mind went blank. Normally, I am quick witted and respond without much forethought, but his query caught me off guard. What is wrong with churches? I thought.

To be honest, I am not a religious person. My parents were not church goers. So, from early on, I have not given much thought about churches, one way or another. Of course, I have attended a few from time to time for funerals, marriages and visiting with friends. But I have never been what you would call a regular member of a church.

As I stood there, I thought, isn't church a place where you go and give money to be completely bored? Doesn't everyone think that it is the longest hour of the week? When you exit a church service, you are no better off than when you came, right? And guess what, the following Sunday, more of the same old same old will be offered to you with the same results.

Finally, I shrugged my shoulders. "There is nothing wrong with the American Church system. It's the one institution that never seems to change much."

The man thanked me for my time. I headed back to Starbucks.