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2015

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Emilie Urquidi
urquidien@vcu.edu

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Cathedral of the Sacred Heart

by Emilie Urquidi

I attended a traditional Sunday Christian service at a catholic church on campus at Virginia Commonwealth University. The name of this church was the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart which is located at 800 S Cathedral Pl, Richmond, VA 23220. The denominational affiliation of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart is Roman Catholic. The presiding official for the Cathedral of the Scared Heart is Reverend Monsignor Patrick Golden. I attended this service on September 5th, 2015 on Sunday at the 11 AM mass time.

The outside of the Cathedral of the sacred heart is a rather large church. This church is composed of many differing roof styles including domes, and pyramid-hip roofs. The outside appearance of the church is very medieval looking with several crosses at the top of the roofs, including multiple different window shapes. There are two small stairs that one has to go over to reach the beautifully detailed Corinthian 6 column entrance. Right above the 6 columns displays the carved motto "If Ye Love Me Keep My Commandments" (John 14:15).

Inside the Cathedral of the scared heart includes a perfect Italian Renaissance Revival style church. The church contains two glass doors that one must go through to enter the center of the church, on the left a gorgeous giant holy water font for all church-goers to bless themselves with. Straight ahead is a direct aisle to the specifically designed

pulpit with pews on either side. Looking up, the Cathedral of the sacred heart is filled with stained glass windows, beautiful domed shaped windows, and breathtaking architecture.

Walking in, I was not greeted but I most certainly felt comfortable walking in. There was a wide range of diversity in the church with people from multiple classes and races all joining together to hear the word of the lord. The average age of participants were around late 20's, early 30's, and college students. I was absolutely and completely comfortable sitting and participating in the service during the entire time. I felt comfortable because all of this is extremely familiar to me, including the fact that I am confident in my religion. The service went at a nice, easy pace for people who were not Roman Catholic to comprehend and understand. Nobody offered to sit with me because I went with my friend who is also Catholic, but when searching for a seat, there were many open seats with people who seemed inviting. If I were to go alone, I believe that if I asked somebody if I could sit with them they would be more than willing.

The mass service was definitely ritualistic beginning with a greeting to all of the people attending the church that morning, followed by a lively, Christian song. This entrance was somewhat dramatic, but in an animated way. Following this included more prayers, more songs, a beautiful sermon with application to

real life issues and problems that the people attending the church might be encountering, prayer, the Holy Communion, a short time where we are able to shake each other's hands and bless one another, eventually coming to the end of the mass. The tone of the service was celebratory, humbling and lively. I truly felt like everybody in the church was here to celebrate the religion, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The congregational participation was most certainly emotional, as they related to everybody participating and especially connected with one another in our suffering during our time of prayer and repentance. The service ended with a prayer and cheerful song. I noticed several crosses around me, multiple paintings of the saints and disciples, many depictions of Jesus Christ on paintings, statues of Jesus Christ and many candles and flowers. Since the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart is a traditional roman catholic church, the mass contained strictly catholic mass rituals. These rituals included the four sections, that is, the Introductory Rites, Liturgy (Greek term for worship) of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist, and Concluding Rites. The introductory rites help the people attending the church come to the state of prayer and allowing them to humble themselves by encouraging them to remember their sins and glorify God. The Liturgy of the Word, includes readings from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Responsorial Psalm, reading from the Christian scriptures, the Gospel reading, etc. Liturgy of the Eucharist includes preparation of the altar and the gifts of bread and wine, Eucharistic Prayer, and Communion Rite. In the communion rite, bread and wine are given to the church-goers to represent the body and the blood of Christ. This transformation is referred to as transubstantiation. Following prayer, and the conclusion of the mass, the people attending

the church are free to leave the church and continue their holy Sunday after shaking the hands of some of the people from the congregation. I truly enjoyed my first time attending this Roman Catholic Church, the mass ritual and service was very similar to the one back at home. •

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