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Student perspectives on worship services from Instructor Jennifer Garvin-Sanchez's Religious Studies 108 Human Spirituality undergraduate course at Virginia Commonwealth University.

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# Cathedral of the Sacred Heart

by Meagan Denton

For field trip three I went to the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. The building is located at 800 south Cathedral Place Richmond, Virginia 23220. This was a Catholic Mass that I had attended. I went to mass on November 29, 2015 at 9:00am on Sunday. The person who did mass was Janet Brown.

The outside of the building is a cream color with a sea foam greenish roof. The outside is very uniquely decorated with different shapes. Most of the decoration is located at the top of the building. There are three tower looking parts of the top of the building. Each one has a cross located at the very top of each tower. There is also this bridge like thing that connects to of the towers and they have these ball objects all along it. When you face the front of the building it has six large columns that end at the top of the stairs. It has a very small staircase at the front of the building. Behind the columns there are three small hanging lights and it has a double door entrances between the columns. Behind the lights are a pattern of circles and rectangles designs. At the top of the columns is a triangle shaped roof with the words "If Ye Love Me Keep My Commandments." The building also has windows that are designed decoratively throughout the building. The building also has small crosses located at different spots of the top of the roof. On one side of the building is a circle shaped window with stained glass. It has several circles with two bigger circles in the middle that are cut into four sections by a plus

shaped design.

The inside of the building is beautifully decorated with columns, stained glass, and religious symbols and murals. The ceiling has beautiful designs and murals all along the length of the chapel. For each of the tower and dome that you see on the outside of the building each one on the inside is hollow with intricate murals and reliefs of angels and God. The walls are a cream color with this green color used throughout the columns and some of the trim. There are three sections of pews in the church. When you first walk in you see the first section of pews. That is the longest section and as you walk through there are two other sections to the left and the right of the "stage" area. At the back of the row of pews on the sides are two large statues. Beside the statue areas are two other areas with statues located on both sides. One side contains a statue of the Virgin Mary. When facing the "stage" area from the longest section of the pews there is a small podium. Behind that is the stairs to the "stage" which has this rectangular box with flower designs all along the sides. On two of the sides are two highly decorated poles that have candles at the tops of them. Behind that is the area where the choir, piano and three chairs are for the officials. You are also able to walk behind the choir seating area through doors located on the sides.

When I went to the service I went with a friend of mine who goes here regularly. He

explained things to me as they were happening. For the mass service there was four parts to it. The first part was the introductory of rites. At this time the mass began and the Priest and the altar servers walked down the aisle. My friend told me that this was the general form of confession at this point in the mass. This took about a few minutes. During this we were seated and then the Liturgy of the word part began. The lector, as my friend told me was the term, started to read passages from the old and new testaments of the day. After this we had to stand while the priest came up and read the holy Gospels. After the priest finished reading we were able to sit again and the priest began his homily which was basically a sermon. This lasted about 20 to 30 minutes and then the third part started. This part was called liturgy of the Eucharist and it was the most sacred part of the Mass. The priest poured wine into this thing called a chalice and then he added a few drops of water to it which was meant to symbolize the union of the divinity and humanity of Christ. At this point the priest also has holy bread which is then lifted into the air above the altar as an offering and he then did the same thing with the wine. Afterwards the priest then ceremonially washed his hands. During this time communion also took place among the congregation. We ate the holy bread and drank the wine that was distributed by the priest to us. At the final part we had the concluding rites which was our final prayer. The priest said a prayer and gave his final blessings to us. Once the priest finished the priest and the altar servers walked back down the aisles and out the doors of the church.

interaction. The opening to me seemed dramatic as the priest and altar servers walked down the aisles. The ritual of communion was used which is where the eating of bread and the drinking of wine signify which signify the holy communion with God as in the last supper. Overall a very interesting experience. •

Written Fall 2015. © Meagan Denton.

The Mass overall was very ritualistic in the way that it was held. The congregation was involved in the service but it was a quiet