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## Cathedral of the Sacred Heart

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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 Janelle Hertzog

On September 30, 2015 I went to a Catholic Church Service at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. Service started at 12:05 and I arrived with another classmate at 12:06, a minute late. The Cathedral of the Sacred Heart is located at 800 S Cathedral Pl, Richmond VA 23220. It was about a five-minute walk from where I live. The presiding official of the service was Father Patrick Golden; we later found out that he also goes by Monsignor Patrick Golden. For starters this experience was very different for me as I was not raised Catholic, I was baptized in a Methodist Church and for the last ten years I have been going to a Non-Denominational Church called Life Point in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

Ever since my freshman year of college, which was just last year, I had always walked past the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart and admired how beautiful it was and always thought about how badly I wanted to go inside and take a look around. I have never once been inside of a Catholic Church and the mosaics on the outside of the Church made me want to come in even more, I love beautiful mosaics. Walking up the steps to the platform in front of the church was a little intimidating because the Church is so big and beautiful and I was very nervous to see what was going to happen. The outside of the church had six very large stone pillars beautifully crafted and above them read the words "IF YE LOVE ME KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS". Also hanging from the pillars was a sign that explained that the

Cathedral welcomes the new people coming in from the bike race, which made me feel a little better. I cannot explain enough how nervous I was. We stood outside and took a few pictures of the church on the outside.

When we walked into the Cathedral the service had already started and everyone was standing up. The reverend had his arms held out, I believe he was saying a prayer but I am not exactly sure. His arms were held out which gave me the impression that he was welcoming everyone in. The inside of the building made my mouth drop, it was so beautiful. There were angels all around the ceiling, giant pillars all the way in the front, the ceiling was a very high dome with wood carvings, the outside lighting lit up the mosaics filling the cathedral with color, there were candles burning and everything put together was amazing. I was awestruck at its beauty.

There were quite a few older people at this service, the service held only about 20 people. The ethnicities of everyone was quite different, there was an African American lady who was sitting next to me and there was an older Asian couple sitting in front of me. I was actually surprised to see a lot of males at this service, more males than females actually. No one talked during the service so I was not able to ask any questions while service was taking place and nothing was explained to me. I was still very nervous when walking in and attending the service.

The service was very interesting to me because I was not in any way shape or form used to that type of service. The service was full of life and very active. Father Patrick Golden would read something from his book and then the people of the Church would say something back to him, and they always knew what to say and when to say it. That made me a little uncomfortable. Then as we prayed, which was three or four times, we had to get down on our knees on this cushioned stool while he recited the prayer. This was all so different for me, at my church there was little to no movement and now being at this church where there is a lot of getting up and down and being really active. The service seemed really personal to me yet at the same time very serious also. The opening was casual to me and soft. The church did communion where each person when up and ate a piece of bread and drank from a cup filled with juice. I was nervous about that and decided not to do it. The service only lasted about 20-25 minutes, which was also very different for me because my church lasts an hour to an hour and a half. At the end we wanted to talk to Father Patrick Golden but he did not talk to anyone. We talked to one of his helpers and he said the important thing of the church or goal of the church was public prayer. He also said that a successful mass was an offering of ourselves as an offering to God in return for God giving himself and that there are two forms of worship in spirit and truth. All together it was a very interesting experience and I am glad I went through it. •

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