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Toni Taylor

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# Cathedral of the Sacred Heart: “My Catholic Experience”

by Toni Taylor

I attended a Catholic Church by the name of “Cathedral of The Sacred Heart”. It’s located on 800 s cathedral PI, Richmond VA, 23220. I went on Sunday, October 25, 2015 to the 11 o’clock service. Mike DeNoia was the presiding official. When I first arrived I saw the huge exterior that I see every day while walking on campus. It’s a big gray stone building with wide stairs that stretch around the whole front of it. On top of these stairs are the tall gray pillars that cover the entire entrance. When you first walk in there are tables on each side filled with informative books.

When I walked in further, to my left I saw a room called the baptizing room where it looked like they display sacred things to the public. When I looked up I was amazed to see the amount of detail that was put into this building. The stain glass windows were truly beautiful and the paintings that surrounded every inch of the church were so delicate. They looked like they could have been painted by hand. As I proceeded to walk down the middle aisle, I looked behind me and saw what seemed to be a huge harpe, but I’m pretty sure it was part of the church organ. When I walked into the pew I saw everyone else kneeling and crossing their chests with their hand forming a cross before going to sit down. That was the first thing that made me feel out of place because I didn’t want people to notice that I wasn’t Catholic.

As I looked around I noticed that I was the only

African American present. Most of the congregation consisted of Native American, Chinese, and Caucasian. I was surprised to see several students there as well as one of my Track and Field teammates. As much as I tried to get comfortable, as the service started and went on I just felt more and more out of place.

The service first started with Deacon Mike DeNoia standing and walking to the bible on the pulpit. The congregation immediately stood up as he stood and this happened several times during the service. I never caught onto when we were supposed to stand, I think it is something significant that is done in a Catholic church at every service and that’s why it was so synchronized. They were also synchronized in the things they said. Deacon DeNoia would read something from the bible or just state something and the congregation would state something right afterwards. They would also, sometimes, say “The father, the son, and the holy spirit.”

Because of the several different occasions where we had to stand and speak I would say that the whole service was definitely more dramatic than the Muslim Mosque I visited and my home Church of Christian Faith. Most of the congregation was emotional. They seemed so grateful and most of them spent the whole service on their knees praying. There was a part in the service where they had to all walk up and eat the “body” of Christ and drink of his “blood” from the same cup, in

Christianity this is called communion, but we don't all drink from the same cup.

In my Christian faith communion is to be partaken by saved Christians, and I don't consider myself completely out of sin so I didn't feel comfortable participating in something I don't even participate in in my religion. I saw a few others who didn't participate as well so at that moment I didn't feel as out of place. The service ended with, what it sounded like, the same scripture that was read in the beginning with the congregation speaking out loud on Que. Then he blessed the congregation and everyone kneeled like they did in the beginning of service when leaving their pews. I didn't expect the Catholic service to be that precise or ritualistic, but I'm glad I experienced it to learn that there are differences even within the protestant group of religions. •

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