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Cathedral of the Sacred Heart

by Tikia Williams

On Sunday September 27, 2015 at 11:00am I attended the Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart. It resides at the address of 9300 Community Lane South Prince George, Virginia 23805. The Pastors' name of the church is Rev. Christopher Hess.

The outside of the church was very large or decent sized to me, it was made of all brick, in all it was a very nice and appealing building to look at. In the inside of the church where they had their mass were of course your rows of pews where the church community sits. The ceiling in the church was very tall like; in the windows were biblical representations or symbols of people and/ or things. I also seen this very tall almost touching the ceiling if not metal instrument in the back where the choir sang. My aunt and her six-year-old son accompanied me to the mass and we were greeted warmly when entering.

People who attended the mass appeared to be middle class, the attending races seemed to be mostly Caucasians and there were a few Asians and Hispanics. I took notice of peoples' clothing also everyone looked as if they wore what ever they wanted to. In my opinion there was no dominant gender it seemed pretty well balanced between the two genders. The average age of the people there that day was an older adult crowd approximately thirties and above, although there were some younger people there but there was not very many, there were a couple babies, and the rest were

most likely in between seven and seventeen and also a couple of young adults in their twenties. The day that I attended the church there was not a very large crowd of people I would say approximately fifty people were present.

I was comfortable sitting and talking with others in the church they seemed very friendly and open to see new faces. At one point during the mass they had a time where you stopped and greeted others by shaking their hands around you. No one came to explain certain things to me about their religion after the mass. I am also not sure if they maybe did not notice I was not a member or if they get visitors often and are just use to people coming in from time to time.

When the mass was first beginning I seen and also could smell that they were burning something in some type of gold cup figure it was somewhat shaped like a ball but domed shaped at the top of it and it had chains connected to it. I came later to discover that it was called a Thurible. A Thurible, which is another word for censer is a metal censer, suspended from chains in which incense is burned during worship services. I cannot remember exactly how many times they did use the Thurible but it was a few times throughout the mass altogether. There was not a very emotional tone to the mass and the opening was not very dramatic to me it was settle. They did seem to sing often throughout

the mass and everyone was supposed to stand throughout the songs, most sang along with the choir to the songs. Looking back the service was reserved; it seemed ritualistic more than spontaneous things were sought out as planned events than just going with the flow. They had different people come up to the podium at a specified time and read things from the Bible at one point. Every time the person walked up the aisle before they went around to get up to the podium they would stand in the middle of the aisle and bow down and they would also do that after once they came back down from speaking at the podium. I was curious to know what that meant and to what or whom they were bowing to. I also noticed it was a lot of standing up and sitting back down again. They also did a symbolic hand gesture I seen, while they were saying something along with the Rev. they would hold both hands out palms up while the reciting the words. I also encountered the main known symbolic hand gesture of Catholics I think every one just about knows when they hold up two fingers and make a cross on their bodies with their finger starting at their forehead then down to their chest across to the left side of their chest then across to the right side of their chest. During the mass I also experienced for the first time ever these smaller and thinner cushioned stands under the benches we sat on. When you pulled the smaller stands out from under the bench in front of you; they were there for to rest your knees on so you could get down and pray. Incidentally I must have attended during the time when they were having communion because they handed out bread and wine. Everyone lined up going toward the front where the podium stood and when you got up there Rev. Chris Hess would say a prayer over your bread then hand it to you to eat and after that you would go over

to the big cup of wine that you and everyone else in the church drank out of together. Even though they wipe the cup off after everyone to their individual sip I did not feel very comfortable drinking from the same cup as everyone else so I chose to not drink the wine. I also noticed during the mass they had offerings twice, which was odd to me because I thought usually offerings were only sent around once but that thought comes from my previous experiences of going to a Christian church. The mass came to an end with the choir singing a song and eventually people began to get up and leave once the song was over. •

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