St. Raymond of Penafort

John Hill

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For my second field trip I decided to attend a Sunday Mass at a Roman Catholic Church. The name of the Church is St. Raymond of Penafort, located in 8750 Pohick rd. Springfield, Virginia 22153. I visited this church Sunday the 25th of October at 10 AM. The name of the presiding officials, or more specific, the reverend is John C. De cellees.

Driving up to the parking a lot, I noticed how big the church looked. It definitely has a very beautiful traditional architecture. At a point, it made me think of a very old looking cathedral, or a museum. As I walked to the front entrance, I noticed big wooden double doors, which faced straight ahead onto a statue of Virgin Mary, and as I walked in, there was a big room which reminded of a greeting area. There were (in my opinion) ushers who greeted me with a big smile, and who overall made me feel really welcomed. Inside this big greeting room, there were glass windows that allowed you to look further into the actual room where the service was taking place.

As I walked into the room where the actual service was going on, I noticed that there wasn’t as much diversity, as I was expecting (with the church being located in Northern Virginia). However, I did notice a good number of Caucasian people over other colored individuals. In the end, it didn’t end up bothering me much, because I felt in a welcoming environment. I took a seat near the middle left, and noticed people (that just arrived) kneeling in front of their seats and crossing themselves. So, I followed through and I got on my knees in front of the Pew.

I did notice that no one really approached me to explain to me what was going on in the beginning. When I looked around, most of the people were keeping to themselves praying or just whispering to each other. In this sense, I didn’t feel welcomed but I also didn’t feel unwanted.

Suddenly, the choir started singing and everybody rose to their feet. Then, four young men walked onto the altar, with one of them holding a crucifix. Quickly behind them, the priest followed the young men.

This was quite a sight, because the priest was wearing a long golden/white robe that went down to his ankles. I also found this part to be really nice and comforting, because as The Priest was walking onto the altar, he was also waving and shaking some people’s hands. At this point, I felt a little better about showing up to Sunday Mass, because I was getting more engaged with the crowd around me, and engaged with the whole service in general.

I found this to be a good first opening of the service, since it made me feel like part of the whole body. I ended up taking this as a neither casual nor a dramatic opening, since the priest walked in with flare and with signs of authority. After the mass started, the priest asked...
Overall, I found the atmosphere of the church to be very beautiful. The Church had a large crucifix right behind the altar, which made it very formal and very serious. From previous experience, I knew that the crucifix gives a meaning of mercy and a second chance, which we got through Jesus Christ dying. The beautiful architecture, with the Priest’s speech gave me a very serious tone throughout the entire Sunday Mass. Personally, I enjoy when I’m at an environment where there isn’t too many rituals to follow. I think that the emotional tone of a service is very important to the individual and when there’s too many steps to follow, a spontaneous emotional feeling is lost (whether that is sadness, happiness, etc.). In the end, every service, every different religion and denomination is left to each person’s interpretation, and each person’s own experience.

Towards the end, after The Priest gave his speech the choir started singing again and baskets were passed around to put money in (an offering). Communion started right after, and before people headed to the front of the altar to pick up the “gifts,” as they were called, they kneeled in front of their pews, and then stood back up to receive communion. I followed through, and after I came back to my Pew, the people around me kept kneeling until everybody finished communion. The service then ended with The Priest saying a simple prayer and the choir singing along in a beautiful freeing melody.

everyone to join him in prayer, and right after, everyone finished with an Amen. The priest then took a seat, and someone from the crowd came up to speak. From my own knowledge, I noticed that it was the Old Testament, a reading from the book of Psalms, and after this reading, there were two more that followed including one by The Priest himself.

All the way up to this moment, I felt a little over whelmed with plenty readings until The Priest started reflecting on everything that was read. He talked about how we should follow the commandments, and how meaningful it is that we abide by the law set upon us. At this point, I really started paying attention to myself, and how I took the words he was trying to get to us. I found myself really thinking about the way I make some decisions in my life and whether they were the right ones or not. The one thing, I really liked about coming to this service, was that it made me really think about my life and how I am living it. I also ended up self-reflecting a lot on the choices the people around me make, and how those choices end up affecting me.

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