St. James Catholic Church
by Theophano Nghiem

Sunday, September 20 Mass started at 10:30am at St. James Catholic Church. St. James Church is located at 830 W. Broad Street, Falls Church, VA 22046. Father Patrick Posey, who has been the Pastor since 2006, is the Pastor that leads each mass. St. James didn't receive its formal recognition as a Parish until 1892. In 1923, the Sisters of the IHM (Immaculate Heart of Mary) began a relationship with the Parish and the school. St. James Catholic School is over 100 years old. Majority of the Sisters that you see at Mass are teaching during the day. As the years went on, St. James number of Sunday Masses increased to six. Six Masses a day, especially on Sundays, was too much. On Sundays, they converted the school’s auditorium, Heller Hall, as a temporary Chapel.

The outside appearance of the church was very welcoming and one of the most beautiful buildings you will see in Falls Church, VA; it is made out of stone rocks. It is a tall church, and stairs that welcomes you to the main door. Just from looking at the church on the outside, you can already tell that the inside will be beautiful. The church is in the shape of a cross. Once you enter the first door, you have an option to sit on the main level or the terrace. Most people sit on the main level. After you enter, you are in awe. The inside of the church is more breathtaking than the outside. The walls have glass windows, where each window represents a stage in the Station of the Cross. The two wings, there windows are just glass-stained windows. In the very front of the church is where the ceremony happens. There is one podium to the right of the Alter and the wall behind the Alter; there is a huge cross. To the left there is a statue of Mary and to the right is where the bread of Christ is kept. The left wing is where the piano and choir is located.

One you arrive at the Church, you aren’t greeted by anyone; you just enter the Church at your own paste. There are families that do stand outside on the stairs, and they will greet you with a “Good Morning,” but there isn’t an official greeting. The Church is filled with people from all ages; most of them have families, which makes the experience and service very approachable. Falls Church, VA is a small city in northern Virginia, and is already known of a loving community. Even though people that attend the Church, do not necessary live in Falls Church, you can tell that they have a strong and loving community.

After picking a pew to sit in, a family of four came and sat next to me: a mom and three kids, the father is over seas. Before the service begins, you don’t really socialize with people around you, you kneel and pray, and when you finish you sit back and wait for the Alter boys and the Pastor to walk out. However, after the service, everyone talks to each other. Being a stranger at this church, everyone makes you feel welcome, cared for, and comfortable being there. At the end of the service, Fr. Posey waits
outside for everyone and talks to them, because of that, this whole experience was one of the best ever. Not only is the church a beautiful building, but everyone that was involved in the service or just families in the pew are very welcoming and helpful.

Entering in the main doors, you are to bless your self with holy water, which is located on either sides of the doorway. In a way, by blessing yourself before you enter the House of Christ. Before entering a pew, you kneel with one leg and do the sign of the cross. After being seated into a pew, you kneel down and pray to the Lord. After you finish your prayers, you sit down and wait for the service to begin. Before the Alter boys and Father Posey enters, the choir starts singing a hymn, then everyone stands for the entrance of Fr. Posey. Everyone joins the choir including Fr. Posey, and when the song finishes the service officially begins. Throughout the service, you feel everyone's positive spirit. After Fr. Posey tells a story from the book of Luke, another song is sung, and then the preparation of communion begins. While communion is going on, the choir goes and receives their Bread and Wine first, so they can sing another hymn while everyone is receiving the Blood and Body of Christ. After receiving, you kneel again and say a prayer thanking the Lord. There is a small moment of silence after everyone has received communion. The service ended in a beautiful hymn, while Fr. Posey and the Alter boys leave the church. Once you walking out of the pew, you do the sign of the cross again, as a farewell to Christ. After leaving the church, Fr. Posey stands outside of the main entrance and greets everyone that was in the service.

Written Fall 2015. © Theophano Nghiem.