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## Research Of The Catholic Religion

While growing up, my family never practiced any religion or even thought of there being a higher power, so when given this assignment I didn't know how to feel about it. But whilst talking to a relative about this assignment, I came to the realization that this was a great opportunity for me to explore a religion and maybe even adapt it into my life as a way of life. I decided that for this assignment I would attend a catholic church as its one of the most popular religions and I have multiple friends who attend this church. Although my immediate family doesn't practice any sort of religion, my family dates back to practicing Judaism.

I personally identify myself as an Agnostic because I don't believe in any particular god or higher power. I am excited for this opportunity to be able to explore the catholic religion and hopefully finally understand what all the hype is about. As I was deciding which type of church I wanted to take a visit to because I felt like attending a catholic church was to basic but after realizing that this may be more up my alley to visit, I decided to choose it. Although before deciding I did some research about the practice of religion in the South Florida area. Whilst conducting this research I came across a number that shocked me, only 41% of people in this area practice a religion. This number is very low when compared to the rest of the country. I then dug deeper and found that of that 41% who practice a religion, 22% practice Catholicism. So, after this all of this research, I also found some friends that are very into their religion and practice it quite frequently. I asked if they could attend with me as the service would make a whole lot more sense with a true catholic next to me. Catholicism is a very old religion, meaning that it dates back very far in history, as far back as when Jesus Christ was alive.

The main belief of Catholicism is that in order to be saved from all sins and the bad things you must first acknowledge that god is alive and will punish not only bad actions but good as well. A big ritual that takes place quite often between families is the baptism. A baptism is symbolic as it symbolizes purification, the release of any denotation, and rejects Satan while allowing God to become accepted. During a baptism, the priest takes some water and sprinkles it onto the forehead of whoever is being baptized, then proceeds to submerge them in a pool of water. This can take place at church on Sundays either during the parish mass in the morning or in the afternoon after all the masses have concluded for that day. As I took my first steps into the church, my eyes were completely lost by all the beautiful art that was among the ceilings and walls. Each one depicted a different story of Jesus Christ. I later realized that the murals were put up to show respect towards their lord and savior. Much of the artwork was depicted in styles of art I have never seen before, but I figured this was because the church had been around for many years prior and had art from different time periods. Although there were many beautiful art pieces one piece stuck out to me, it's called Siena's Cathedral. Depicted in the piece was a

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cathedral that is located in Siena, Spain and represents different storylines among the religion of Catholicism. After researching the catholic religion, I had a vision of what I thought this Catholic Church would be like but the look of it was a bit different.

Although the building did have the same eye catching cross and pointed roof but was a bit flatter than the ones pictured online. There was more artwork outside, but this was displayed through red and blue stained glass. The seating inside was as expected, with long wooden benches lined straight and facing the podium where the sermon gives the service. Everything was so eye catching. All the artwork was immaculate but what caught my eye the most was a sculpture hanging from the ceiling in the middle of the church. The sculpture was a depiction of Jesus Christ being crucified. Honestly, it was a bit mortifying because I had never seen anything like this before. But I was lucky enough to have come with a friend and was able to ask her the meaning behind the sculpture. I then was told how it was Jesus Christ dying for our sins. The reason for his death was because he wanted to protect his all of his followers from evil. Jesus dying on the cross was the only way to help out his people. My friend's explanation gave me a lot of insight into this religion, it was amazing how something so small meant so much to all of these people. During the research I had done beforehand, I had found out that underneath most catholic churches is a crypt. A crypt is a burial ground for people who have made an impact on the religion. I was surprised to find out that the church I had visited did not have a crypt. From prior knowledge and watching movies I anticipated that everyone would come dressed in their "Sundays best" outfits, I was right. The men were wearing nice dress shirts with slacks whereas the women wore casual dresses. It was exciting to see everyone dressed so proper and cleaned up. The demographic was very diverse seeing as we were in Miami, but it was nice seeing everyone there for one reason and to celebrate their religion. It was great seeing so many people come together to celebrate one thing, especially with all the discrimination and segregation going on in the United States right now.

I came to the realization that it isn't just about the service and the religion, but the bonds formed with people around you that have the same beliefs. The service began with everyone standing and singing along to a choir who was playing religious music. I felt a bit out of place because everyone was singing along, and I had no idea what was going on or what the lyrics were. I do remember the song talking about Jesus and reasons why he had died for his people. There was one line in the song that stuck out to me. I wrote it down because I thought it would be good to research and find out more about it. The line was "Jesus has taken all of our sorrows and joys and built a life for us and our sons". My first thought was that it was a good line that made you think but after rereading it I found something off about it. The song had mentioned "for you and their sons" but never mentions anything about a female. But while thinking a little harder about it I figured that this song must have been an older one and the topic of feminism wasn't a topic that was brought up too often in those days. My reason for saying this was because this church is still using the practices of the older days rather than taking into

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realization that the ways are changing, and females are actually important to society.

Later on, into the service, after all the singing was done the sermon came out and started reading some lines from a book which I assumed was the holy bible. After reading the line he continued to go more in depth to explain what it meant in a way that other could understand since the bible was written during a different time. I was glad that they did this because I was completely lost just hearing the one line. I continued to listen to the service and was really hoping to get something out of this service. I noticed that all the elderly people in the room would reply “amen” to certain things the preacher was saying. I was confused as to why they kept saying it but when I asked my friend she told me that they say “amen” when they relate to something said by the sermon or if it means something to them. It is meant to be a sign of respect for their higher power. As the service started to end, music was playing again, and people stood up and sang along to the songs once more. I still felt like the odd one out because I didn’t know the words again, but I hold so much respect for the people who were in that room. They devoted their lives to a higher power and love every minute they have at each service with the people around them. I had a great time attending this service and am glad I chose the catholic religion to study.

As I became into my own person and started to figure out my beliefs in things, I have always identified as an Agnostic because of many reasons. One of the things that put the bad taste in my mouth toward religion was all the fighting that was put on the news. But this experience gave me a new look on it and made me realize that even though there are bad things that come with religion there are also good things, like having a place of belonging and being able to share something so close to you with so many other people. This site visit taught me to stay open minded when it comes to people and their religion because it may be nothing to you but everything to them. Although this trip made me think a little harder about my beliefs I still think I have the beliefs of an Agnostic. But with that being said I now understand better what all the hype is around religion. As I continue to grow in life, I will take this experience with me and use it to better understand people around me. Even if their views aren’t the same as mine I will still accept them and hear them out in whatever they believe in.

To conclude, this experience was life changing and I’m happy that I was given this assignment. It made me go out of my comfort zone and experience things I never would have thought of doing before. I hope a lot of people have the opportunity to do this assignment because it teaches you so much about life and about people. I am very happy that I was given this opportunity and would do it all over again with another religion.

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