

## REL 402 - Christianity

Today, I stepped out of my comfort zone. I have to say it took a little convincing from a friend and some courage, but I decided to attend Sunday church services at a Roman Catholic Church. This may not sound like a big deal, but for someone who had never been before it was intimidating and fascinating all at the same time. Stepping into the traditional setting of another Church is scary. The church itself was massive and beautiful, and I quickly found myself surrounded by people who all knew exactly where to go and what was expected of them. I wished I could say the same for myself. I could tell immediately that this was going to be very different from the experiences I have had at the various Baptist churches I had been to.

Everybody was well dressed and seemed pleased to be there. It was very quiet as the children even knew that loud noises would not be acceptable. The people were a bit wary of me. I would not call them friendly, but would not necessarily call them rude either. I was confused, which did not help my discomfort. I am used to the wide grins and sometimes plastic smiles that I have found at my church, but cannot say that I received them here. Everybody seemed so serious. This was obviously not just a fun thing for them to do on Sunday morning.

When I first walked in the first thing I noticed was how large the inside was. It seemed like the Virgin Mary was everywhere, depicted in great detail and beauty. It was very clean inside; the pews looked like they had just been polished along with the floors. I could feel the respect and devotion that the people had for their religion. Since I did not know what was happening around me I chose to sit in the last pew and just observe what went on. I tried to follow what was being said, some of it was spoken in Latin so that made it difficult. I found myself participating, and began to feel a bit more comfortable.

I have to say that this experience was very interesting and I learned a lot. The people seemed a little cold to me at first, but after a while I realized that they were not being cold, they were simply at the service for a specific reason; to worship. It was very organized and formal. After the service was over people were smiling and hugging and behaved like a big family. They all looked refreshed as if they had just been cleansed. I suppose in a sense they were. It was obvious that attending mass was an incredibly important ritual for all of the people there and they all took it very seriously. I enjoyed this experience and have gained a new view of Catholicism. I can see why people are so devoted to this faith and have great respect for them.