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Site Visit

Catholicism is said to have the largest number of members as it pertains to Christianity. As of 2019 they are said to be over 1.1 billion Christians that have been baptized as Roman Catholic.¹ There are said to be more Roman Catholics than any other Christian denominations and more Roman Catholic members than most of the other religions.² Roman Catholicism is one of the earliest forms of Christianity and is said to have played a major role in the development and formation of western civilization. The foundational beliefs of the Catholic Church are founded on the Nicene creed. The Roman Catholics have their power positioned around the pope; he is considered as the Vicar of Christ on earth. As it pertains to Roman Catholicism a vicar is it's supposed to signify representation, the Pope being the vicar of Christ on earth it's supposed to represent him being the representation of Christ on earth. In theory the Roman Catholics perception of the Pope is him serving as an agent for Christ on earth. The Roman Catholic Church observes seven sacraments baptism, penance, the Eucharist, confirmation, matrimony, holy orders, and the anointing of the sick.³

*“Presbyterians derive their name from the Greek word presbuteros, which means “elder.”*⁴ the naming of Presbyterian churches derives from their churches being overseen by elders. The founder of the Presbyterian Church John Knox was originally a Roman Catholic priest who converted to Protestantism after he began to study the Bible and find some

¹ “Pubblicati l’Annuario Pontificio 2021 E l’Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae 2019 - L’Osservatore Romano” 2021

² *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Roman-Catholicism/The church of the early Middle Ages," 2022, Encyclopedia Britannica.

³ Rhodes, Ron. 2015. *The Complete Guide to Christian Denominations*. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers.

⁴ Rhodes, Ron. 2015. *The Complete Guide to Christian Denominations*. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers

discrepancies. The Westminster Confession of Faith is the primary confession of faith for Presbyterian churches, and this creed has been influential in the foundation of Presbyterian churches. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is directed by its constitutions which are called the book of Order and The Book of Confessions.⁵ The largest group of Presbyterians in America was founded in 1983 when two separate branches of Presbyterianism the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (national) and the Presbyterian Church in the United States (Southern) combined together in Georgia.⁶ The Presbyterian Church observes two sacraments baptism in the Lord's supper.⁷

Christian Church was founded in the early 19th century by three former Presbyterians, Thomas and Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone.⁸ They felt as if denominations as well as creeds were beginning to divide the church, as a result their formation of the Christian Church denomination was an attempt to restore unity amongst the church. Their early motto was that "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." they believe that unity should be formed under Christ and scripture and against the concept of creeds. The Christian Church (disciples of Christ) observe two sacraments baptism and communion.

The first church that was observed was Saint Rita's Catholic Church. Saint Rita's Catholic church is a Roman Catholic church that is located in Brooklyn New York. One of the initial differences with the Roman Catholic Church from the Christian Church (disciples of Christ) was that upon entry there was no one at the doors. In the Christian Church (disciples of Christ) there are ushers at each door that welcome the congregants as they are walking in and help guide them to an open seat. One of the initial observations that was observed about the

⁵ ("Church History," n.d.)

⁶ Rhodes, Ron. 2015. *The Complete Guide to Christian Denominations*. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers

⁷ ("Church History," n.d.)

⁸ Rhodes, Ron. 2015. *The Complete Guide to Christian Denominations*. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers

sanctuary itself was the way that it was decorated. in comparison to the Christian Church (disciples of Christ), there were many obvious differences as it pertains to the decorations within the sanctuary. One of the first things that was noticed upon entry was the very large statue of Jesus on the cross that was directly behind the alter, and above the crucifixion there is a P with an X through it, otherwise known as the labarum or Chi-Rho, which represents the name of Christ in an abbreviated form.⁹ Upon further observation it was then noticed that the windows were nicely decorated with a stained-glass style of windows. In further analyzing the windows it was noticed that each of the windows contained the images of saints. Further observation of the sanctuary also found that there was also a statue of the Virgin Mary. Surrounding the sanctuary on the walls there were images that were made of stone that showed the events that led up to Jesus dying on the cross, and ultimately being laid in the tomb. Roman Catholics refer to those images as the stations of the cross.¹⁰ The church is very well lit, and each light fixture has small crosses on them. It was also observed that there are many candles located within various places in the church and they are all lit which is different from the Christian Church (disciples of Christ). At the beginning of service there was someone that spoke and made a brief introduction mentioned which particular Sunday it was as it pertained to the liturgical year in ordinary time or as Dr. Davis Abdallah referred to in her lecture regarding the liturgical calendar as After Pentecost. After the mention of the particular Sunday as it pertained to liturgical calendar it was then noticed that the altar did in fact have a green covering over it.

The service began roughly about 5 or 6 minutes after 9:00am. The service lasted for about an hour. Shortly after the opening introduction of the worship service they began to sing and then there were two priests, they were accompanied by one of the members of the church,

⁹ "CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA: Labarum (Chi-Rho)" n.d.

¹⁰ "CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA: Way of the Cross" n.d.)

who escorted them from the back of the church to the front carrying a cross, as one of the priests was carrying a Bible and displaying it over his head. There were three priests that were present at this service and all three of the priests had on green robes, each robe had slightly different iterations to them, and the shade of these green robes was the same shade as the covering of the altar. This entrance ritual that differs from the Christian Church (disciple of Christ) worship service opening, as in the Christian Church there is no grand entrance of the pastors of the church. The worship service seems to be extremely structured, and it appears that they are following a strict script from a series of books that they have in front of them. during his worship service they sang a couple songs and maybe four songs that most, but the songs are very intentional, they sing the songs, but it doesn't appear that these songs are evoking any type of emotions from the congregation. The priest gave a sermon that was a little under 20 minutes, and that appears to be the longest activity that happened in this worship service. everything else that was done in the worship service was done fairly quickly, the songs were sung with intention, and there were two scriptures that were read. It appears that the most significant part of this worship service was the sacrament of the holy Eucharist. There is a great attention to detail and presentation of the holy Eucharist. The priest one by one carefully prepares the body of Christ and the blood of Christ. He places the body of Christ in golden bowls and the blood of Christ in a golden chalice in which then he and the church prays over it. It appears as if the priests are in real time creating the wine for the congregants to drink, as he is pouring liquids from two separate containers one which looks purple the other one that looks clear. The three priests than come together to pray for and present the body and the blood. The congregation then lines up as the priest are in the front of the church distributing to each of them the body, but it does not appear that the congregants were given the opportunity to receive the blood of Christ, this could

be an alteration in the tradition of the way that the sacrament of holy eucharist is performed do to covid-19, however this is just an assumption based on the observations that were made. The priest then cleans out the chalice that was used for the blood and store it away. This whole sacrament from start to finish was roughly a little under twenty minutes. There were a few announcements that were made and then a prayer. To conclude the worship service another gentlemen grabs the cross that was used in the beginning of the mass and escort the three priests out of the sanctuary. The most important aspects of the mass were the sermon by the priest and the sacrament of eucharist, as those two aspects of the service were allocated about 40 minutes of a service that lasted roughly an hour, which would mean that about 67% of this mass was dedicated to either the eucharist or the word from the priest.

As far as participation platform of the mass, it appears that Roman Catholics invite they come against to be able to participate in the mass in ways that they are equipped to do. it was two different members of the congregation that escorted the priest both in and out of the sanctuary in the beginning and the ends of service. There was also a congregante that opened up the service originally before the priest were escorted into the service. They were also able to allow to participate as in between the scripture readings someone did come up to do a song selection, and there were two members of the congregation that also read the scriptures. There is no evidence that any of these members that participated in particular roles within the church have been ordained or are official at any capacity. There is involvement from both genders as both men and women we're allowed to participate in certain aspects of the service however, the two members that escorted the priest in and out of service were men. It is not clear if the role of the person escorting the priest is gender specific but the observation that the two people who were responsible for this role within this service that day were both men. There were children in this

particular service because they just finished their confirmation class, but it is not clear if the other services are multi-generational in their congregational sense. A young man was the one who saying this song in between the scriptures so there was multi-generational participation within this service. But as stated earlier majority of the service about 67% was led by the three different priests, however they do seek to create space when allowed for the congregation to participate as all of the songs that were sung this Sunday were sung by what appeared to be a worship leader.

The second church that was observed is Clinton Presbyterian Church. Clinton Presbyterian Church is a presbyterian church that is located in Clinton New Jersey. Upon entry you are greeted by large red doors to the entire structure of the building is in white, it gives off the atmosphere of elegance, and was fairly aesthetically pleasing. This church like the Roman Catholic Church does have a cross behind the altar as well, but it is just a cross and not the crucifixion of Jesus on it like it was in the Roman Catholic Church. Similar to the Roman Catholic Church Clinton Presbyterian Church does also have stained glass windows as well, however there are no images of figures within the stained-glass windows rather, they serve as nice decorative piece to the sanctuary. Through observation it was also noticed that there was a bulletin in the front of the sanctuary that specified what the hymnals for that service would be. The sanctuary of Clinton Presbyterian Church more closely aligns with that of the Christian Church (disciples of Christ) sanctuary then the Roman Catholic Church. It can be debated that simplicity is one of the aesthetics of both the Presbyterian and Christian Church (disciples of Christ) as they compared to the Roman Catholic Church. It can be argued that the Roman Catholic Church seeks to tell a story with their aesthetics and their atmosphere while the Presbyterian Church and the Christian Church (disciple of Christ) seeks to foster a more

simplistic atmosphere of worship. The congregation is very welcoming, and they were speaking amongst themselves while soft music was playing in the background before the worship service started.

The worship service began with the reverend coming up to front of the church unescorted and informing the congregation that service would be starting, the reverend started the service by saying “Friends, let us start to prepare our hearts, as we come together to worship the living God”, in which all of the outside talking ceased, a piano began to play while they sang a song to commence the opening of the worship service. After the song the reverend asked the congregation to rise and invited them to participate in a call of worship together, in which they all recited. A song was then song which was led by either a choir or a worship team, their role in the service is unclear, but they are all dressed in robes. The lyrics to the hymnals were handed out the congregation in a what seems to be an attempt at creating congregation participation with the hymnals. A confessional prayer was then done afterwards another hymnal was sung. After the hymnal was sung the reverend invited the congregation to greet each other with “sings of peace” and it is apparent by the roaring conversation that was happening within this 60 seconds that this congregation is filled with friendly people who care about each other. The conversations within the 60 seconds were so lively and so heartfelt that the atmosphere within the sanctuary was lifted as each of these members began to speak to each other within this 60 seconds. After the passing of peace, it appears that the worship atmosphere of the service became very stagnant. They started announcements it had several people come up and speak which took roughly about 15 minutes. the Roman Catholic Church did one really quick announcement at the end of their worship service, so in comparison to the two church worship experiences do announcements completely different, and the Presbyterian Church allows way more time for disruption of the

worship service. After the announcements this church did something that they refer to children's conversation in which the reverend brought up all the children in the church and began to have a conversation with them. The reverend asked the children some questions about challenges that they faced, and then used the opportunity to teach the children and affirm their faith in Christ and prayed with them. The concept of children's conversation is a quick sermon for the children it was about 7 minutes, but it was the way that the reverend made sure that the children were also involved within the worship service. They then sang a song and then did a prayer for illumination followed by the scripture reading. The reverend then went into the sermon which was roughly about 20 minutes and closed with the Lord's prayer. Following the prayer, the reverend invited the congregation to come forward with their offerings, which was followed by the doxology and then a prayer for the offering. They sang one last song, and the reverend gave the benediction. This worship service lasted a little bit over an hour. It appears that what the congregation enjoyed the most was singing and the passing of peace. This is when the congregation appeared to be the liveliest during those moments of worship. This church did not partake in any sacraments during this worship service. This church does have a particular focus on singing and it appears that this is their primary source of worship.

As it pertains to participation platform a lot of the service similar to the Roman Catholic Church, is done by the reverend. The reverend was there to lead and direct the different aspects of the worship service, however there was congregation participation within the service. The reverend did not lead any of the songs and there was a worship team that was leading each of the songs that was sung this day. There was also a woman who read the scripture before the sermon. The reverend did also try to incorporate children within their service with the section of the worship service that was titled children's conversation. However, it does appear that the children

are not in the sanctuary but rather in a nursery during the services. They were called out of the nursery to participate in the children's conversation and returned to the nursery upon the conclusion of the children's conversation. As far as gender goes majority of the participants within this service were woman besides the pianist and one of the members of the worship team. It also makes sense to notate that the revenue of this church is a woman. It does not appear that any of the other participants besides the reverend are ordained or their roles being gender specific, but it does appear that there is more women participation within this church as the reverend did make an announcement encouraging the foundation of a men's group.

Each of these three denominations varies in the way that they worship. The Presbyterian Church as well as the Christian Church (disciples of Christ) have more of a worship focus that centers on music and congregation participation through the use of music and singing. These two church denominations sing a lot of songs, and it appears that these churches use music as a form of worship in order to invoke the presence of holy spirit. It is written in Psalm 150 *“Praise the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. “Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with timbrel and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.”* This scripture provides instructions to praise the Lord in His sanctuary as well as methods to praise him. In conjunction with this scripture, it appears that the Presbyterian Church and the Christian Church (disciples of Christ) praising God this way. They are dancing and singing songs to glorify His name, and there is great focus on this aspect of worship within their services, which differs from the worship atmosphere of the Roman Catholic Church. Participating in worship invites the presence of God

and the Roman Catholic Church does not appear to offer as many opportunities for participation in worship as the other two denominations. However, each church worships and does liturgy in the ways that they feel support their beliefs, creeds, and biblical ideologies.

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