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The Cathedral through Our Eyes

St. Patrick's Cathedral Report

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With towering spires and gorgeous Gothic architecture, St. Patrick's Cathedral is a hotspot for both locals and tourists alike. Located on 5th Avenue, between 50th and 51st Street, the Cathedral is the mother church of the Archdiocese of New York. An archdiocese is a big Catholic district, led by an archbishop. The mother church is where the archbishop has his official seat, also known as the cathedra. Apart from being a place of worship, St. Patrick's Cathedral gives insight into the evolution of the demographics and culture in the city. The history of the Cathedral brings to light topics such as discrimination and religious freedom, which are relevant in the modern day as well.

St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City is one of the most notable representatives of faith, history, and cultural heritage that can fulfill various functions in modern society. Its main purpose as a place of worship is also critical and a spiritual refuge not only to Catholics but to visitors. The Cathedral is also characterized by regular services, sacraments, and religious ceremonies that bring about unity amongst the congregants and help them to develop spiritually. It reminds us of the role played by faith in the formation of personal and collective identities in the urban context of busy everyday life.

Right as you enter the eminent wooden doors that lead into the Cathedral, a large mural that spans across the entrance walls greets your eyes. Painted by Adam Cvijanovic, *What's So Funny About Peace, Love, and Understanding* depicts people from different backgrounds experiencing the same holy vision. There are several important figures painted into the mural, such as Archbishop John Hughes, who was responsible for the creation of the current St. Patrick's Cathedral, and Venerable Pierre Toussaint, who was a philanthropist that majorly helped Catholics in New York. The original vision occurred in the Irish village of Knock in 1879, where fifteen people with varying ages witnessed figures such as the Virgin Mary, St.

Joseph, St. John the Evangelist, and more, surrounded by angels at their church. Everyone was silent as they watched the vision, which lasted for two hours. It was a symbol of hope for the Irish villagers who were going through a period of famine and hardship. Cvijanovic's reimagined mural connects the Irish roots of the Cathedral to the evolving diverse community they have been serving and will continue to serve (*What's so Funny.*).

If you walk further in, you can see the shrines of various holy figures lining both walls. Some examples include St. Teresa of Calcutta, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and Venerable Pierre Toussaint. St. Teresa of Calcutta, also known as Mother Teresa, was one of the most influential figures in Catholicism. She served as a nun and a missionary, attempting to help the "poorest of the poor." St. Teresa had Albanian parents, but she spent most of her life in Calcutta, India, as a Catholic missionary. A major part of her mission was to care for the unwanted and the people forgotten by society. In 1950, she founded the Missionaries of Charity order, which helped create hospitals, charities, schools, soup kitchens, and homes for the needy. After years of her service, St. Teresa was buried in Calcutta in 1997 (Pace, 2026). Despite nobody in our group practicing Catholicism, two members in our group were able to find a deep connection with Mother Teresa's story. To specify, Enaiyah was able to relate to Mother Teresa's Albanian origins as an Albanian herself, and Rafeea was able to find a connection with the city Mother Teresa spent much of her time in as a Bengali. Apart from these cultural connections, something even deeper that resonated between the three of us was the shared ideals between Muslims and Catholics. Going



into this project, we agreed that we were excited to explore the architecture and themes of Catholicism, as we felt it was not something we were particularly familiar with as a group. However, learning about Mother Teresa's story at the Cathedral allowed us to realize that the values between Catholic and Muslim groups transcend religion. In both Islam and Christianity, the importance of charity, compassion, and caring for others is deeply ingrained. So, despite the differences in religion, we recognized that shared ideals made the Cathedral feel less like an unfamiliar space and more like a place with shared values.

Another shrine within the Cathedral was that of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Our Lady of Guadalupe, also recognized as the Patroness of the Americas, is believed to be an apparition of



the Virgin Mary who appeared in 1531 to an Indigenous man, St. Juan Diego, near what is now Mexico City. What is especially significant about her story is that while she could have appeared to someone of higher social standing, she appeared to a poor Native American peasant. She spoke to this peasant, St. Juan Diego, in his native language, Nahuatl, asking for a shrine to be built where she appeared. Juan Diego reported to see Our Lady of Guadalupe four

times before her image was revealed on the local bishop's cloak. Because of this history, Our Lady of Guadalupe remains an important figure for Mexican Catholics after hundreds of years. She played a crucial role in the conversion of millions of Indigenous people to Catholicism, and she helped them feel a closer connection to the religion (*Our Lady*).

A third shrine that signifies the role of immigrants in Catholicism is dedicated to the Venerable Pierre Toussaint. Toussaint was born into slavery in Haiti and was later brought to New York, where he eventually gained his freedom. Despite the hardships he faced, he became

known for his commitment to serve others, especially the poor and marginalized. He contributed to building Catholic charities, orphanages, and the first school for black children in New York City. He even helped with the construction of Old St. Patrick's Cathedral, physically shaping one



of the most important Catholic spaces in the city. Today, Venerable Pierre Toussaint is buried underneath the altar at St. Patrick's Cathedral, and he is one of the few laypeople granted the honor of being buried inside the Cathedral itself. Toussaint being buried here symbolizes that Catholicism in New York City was not only built on the bishops and priests, but also by the immigrants who also aided in spreading the faith. These diverse figures, ranging from Europeans, Native Americans, and Haitians, show the evolution of Catholicism since the first

Catholics entered New York. Just like Cvijanovic's mural, these aspects of the Cathedral show the connection with immigrants throughout the years. Together, they demonstrate that the history of Catholicism and the history of St. Patrick's Cathedral were built on the lives of immigrant communities.

The wave of widespread Catholicism in New York City was brought by Irish, and later Italian, immigrants. Between 1845 and 1852, potatoes in Ireland were hit with a fungus that ruined the crops. The increasing scarcity of this staple food led to the Great Famine that killed around a million people (*The great famine.*) To escape starvation and poverty, many people fled to America's East Coast. The Catholic population, which previously consisted of a few English colonists, exploded with the influx of Irish immigrants. The existing Christians in New York

were mostly Protestant, and they did not appreciate the growing Catholic population. The discontent was not only based on differences in beliefs, but also differences in class. Many upper-class Protestants disdained the impoverished and foreign immigrants who made up a large portion of Catholics. The lower class saw the Irish immigrants as competitors for jobs (Byrne.) In the late 1800's, Italian laborers came to New York looking for work. Italy had been unified, but it was still suffering from the years of prior conflict (*The Great Arrival.*) Italian immigrants who came for a better life experienced a similar prejudice to the Irish for their



religious beliefs and class status. They were also discriminated against for their "Mediterranean" features, according to the belief that northern Europeans were superior. Catholic churches were burned, and many Italians were assaulted, attacked, and unjustly incriminated (*Under Attack.*)

Catholics had a rough time thriving in New York. Throughout 1642 - 1763, colonial legislatures, which were mostly Dutch Protestants or English Christians, passed laws that hindered Catholic practices. Thomas Dongan, who was Catholic, became governor of New York in August 1683. For a brief period, all Christians gained religious freedom under the "Charter of Liberties and Privileges," which stated, "No person professing faith in God by Jesus Christ is to be molested or called in question for any difference of opinion in matters of religion." After him, Jacob Leisler took office in New York and worked to exclude Catholics from the government. Following the Glorious Revolution, Governor William Sloughter was appointed in 1691. During his term, the Test Act of 1673 was implemented in the colony, in which Catholics, or anyone

who was not Protestant, were prohibited from public employment. Another governor, the Earl of Belmont, passed the penal acts of 1700, under which “Every Jesuit, Seminary priest or any other ecclesiastical persons ordained of, by power, or jurisdiction of the Pope or See of Rome now residing in the province shall depart from out of the same at or before the first day of November in the present year.” This essentially aspired to kick out all Catholics and anyone who wasn’t a certain type of Christian from New York. The laws went further to state that anyone who stayed after the mentioned deadline would not only be a disturber of public peace and an enemy to the Christian faith, but also be imprisoned. If the prisoner were to escape, he or she would be subject to the death penalty. Additionally, any person harboring a Catholic in his or her home would have to pay a fine of £200 (O’Connor). For context, that amount is worth around \$40,000–80,000 today, according to inflation estimates.

In 1785, Catholics under the lead of a French consul established the first Roman Catholic Church in New York: St. Peter’s. It was located at the corner of Barclay and Church Street. The evolving Catholic population soon grew too large for St. Peter’s, so the Old St. Patrick’s Cathedral was opened in 1815, amidst Chinatown and Little Italy’s Historic District. The Old Cathedral has a cemetery around the structure itself, within the confines of brick walls. Many prominent figures in Catholic history have been buried there. Venerable Pierre Toussaint's remains were originally at the cemetery before being moved to the new St. Patrick’s Cathedral (*A Few of the Faithful*). St. Patrick’s Old Cathedral also has catacombs underneath the ground, reserved for the loved ones of those buried within. Inside the old Cathedral, there are large stained glass pieces of holy figures, each one commissioned in honor of someone. After the Catholic population outgrew the old Cathedral, Archbishop John Hughes proposed building a new Cathedral in Midtown. His decision was met with skepticism, as the midtown area of

Manhattan was not as booming as it is today. Nonetheless, St. Patrick's Cathedral opened its doors on May 25, 1879, and welcomed its new neighbors.

From St. Patrick's Old Cathedral to St. Patrick's Cathedral in Midtown, there is a clear shift from anti-Catholic sentiment to a Cathedral built with a more welcoming attitude to the immigrant community. In St. Patrick's Old Cathedral, a red, brick wall surrounds the Cathedral.



The purpose of this wall was to protect Catholics from violent, anti-Catholic mobs called Nativists. One of these mobs burned St. Mary's church on Grant Street (the 3rd Catholic Church in New York, founded in 1826) in 1831 as an anti-immigrant spectacle (McCann). These Nativists would often burn Cathedrals and instigate riots towards Catholic people (*St. Patrick's Old Cathedral Brick Wall*, 2023). While most of the intentions of the church remain the same, there is a noticeable

difference in grandeur from the old to the new St. Patrick's Cathedral. Apart from the wall surrounding the old Cathedral, it is also very modestly sized and simple compared to the Midtown Cathedral. This can be seen in both the surrounding areas of the Cathedral, as well as the Cathedral's architecture itself. Today, Old St. Patrick's Cathedral has a very tranquil feeling, especially compared to the commotion of Midtown, where the newer one is located.

Additionally, the two massive spires, which stand at over 330 feet above the newer Cathedral, reflect its splendor (*St Patrick's Cathedral, New York*, 2018).

This splendor also helps symbolize the growth of the Catholic community that the newer Cathedral hosts. Just a few decades after its construction, the original St. Patrick's Cathedral could no longer accommodate the expanding Catholic population due to the influx of arriving

immigrants. From the early 1800s, when there were about 15,000 Catholics, the population grew by more than 1,000%, reaching roughly 200,000 inhabitants by the mid-nineteenth century (*Catholics - Encyclopedia of New York City*). This increase remains present in our current New York. With one of the largest Catholic populations in the world (roughly 36% currently identifying as Catholic), New York City's religious identity is fostered by St. Patrick's Cathedral (*Religious Affiliation of New York Residents by Borough, 2015*).

One major aspect of the Cathedral that still persists in today's times is the support of immigrant communities. Since its origins, St. Patrick's Cathedral has been a safe haven for immigrants. Not only was it "built on the pennies of immigrants," as famously noted by Archbishop John Hughes, but it also served as a social anchor for people by offering services like schooling and food drives. Currently, the Cathedral still supports these same efforts. Examples of



outreach programs hosted by the Cathedral include legal assistance, English and citizenship classes, housing support, employment readiness, food assistance, and more, which roughly support tens of thousands of immigrants and refugees (Mathis, 2025). Apart from the programs offered, the Cathedral's support of immigrant communities can be seen from the art and messages displayed within. As mentioned before, upon walking into the Cathedral, a massive mural that reflects these values can be seen. Serbian artist Adam Cvijanovic's mural is

split into four sections, each representing a diverse group of people united by the Catholic faith. These four groups consist of the predominantly Irish original immigrants, several saints of different ethnicities, modern-day people, and first responders. A major unifying factor among these people, besides their Catholic faith, is the fact that they represent the immigrants who came here to build this city and foster a better life. Cardinal Dolan describes this piece as “a celebration of a city that has been built by immigrants and where immigrants have been welcomed.” (Mathis, 2025). While the Cathedral previously served mainly Irish and later Italian immigrants, the broadening of St. Patrick’s allowed for a new influx of people to be represented by the Church. Currently, the Cathedral serves immigrants coming from Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. In this way, St. Patrick’s Cathedral not only preserves its legacy, but also continues to support the idea of an immigrant-built city.

The unsustainable northward urban expansion of Manhattan comes out at an incredible speed in which the city is stretched. Even in 1858, the location at 50th Street and 5th Avenue was considered “too far out of town.” Critics referred to the project as “Hughes Folly” because it was not certain that the city would go that far north. But by the time of its completion in 1879, the city had passed beyond those lines. The transition, which is recorded by The New York Historical Society, emphasizes the ruthless expansion of the city according to a so-called Grid Plan and its transition to the integrity of an unceasing urban environment (*History & Heritage.*)

The St. Patrick’s Cathedral’s very existence is a testament to the dedication of the Irish immigrant community in the 19th century. When Archbishop John Hughes, mockingly nicknamed “Dagger John,” proposed this massive project in 1850, the Irish were largely impoverished and faced a lot of prejudice. According to the Cathedral’s historical archives, the building was funded not only by a few wealthy donors but by the aforementioned “pennies of the

poor,” the meager wages of thousands of Irish laborers and domestic workers (*St. Patrick's Cathedral*). This reveals a New York where marginalized groups used architecture to assert their permanence in the then New Amsterdam area.

The Cathedral is directly opposite of the Rockefeller Center and reflects New York's ambivalence between business and spirituality. It is located in the center of one of the most costly retail and business areas in the world. According to the National Register of Historic Places, this very adjacency demonstrates that in New York, there is no spiritual and secular world. Rather, the two are inseparably connected. (*National Register of Historic Places*) The Cathedral is a peaceful contrast to the energetic feeling of 5th Avenue, and the city has proven to strike a balance between any highly competitive form of capitalism and the very deepest meditation.

St. Patrick's Cathedral represents a beacon of perseverance and hope, particularly in a crisis. The Cathedral has experienced and reacted to major happenings in its history, such as wars, economic depression, and societal instabilities. For example, during the Civil War, even when materials and labor were short, construction was still happening. The Cathedral underwent a restoration in 2015 with an astronomical \$177 million that astounded New York. From the carvings to the stained glass, all aspects were cleaned and polished. The whole ordeal showcased a devotion to preserve Catholic heritage. Another example is how the Cathedral has adjusted to COVID-19 by providing virtual services and community outreach, highlighting its ability to provide comfort and stability. This flexibility highlights the continued applicability of the Cathedral as a remedy of spiritual salvation in dismal times and a source of community. The Cathedral is still the home of the oldest and longest running yearly events, such as the St.

Patrick's Day Parade, which is an illustration of how a religious site has helped become more of a civic landmark and cultural celebration of all New Yorkers, irrespective of their origins.

St. Patrick's Cathedral is a chronicle of the history of New York being devoted to its architectural and religious legacy today. As a city that cherishes its history despite its blistering pace in the present, the huge \$177 million restoration, which was the largest in its history, makes itself felt. The cleaning of the exterior marble and reintroduction of the complex stained-glass proved that the Cathedral is not another museum piece, but a hub in the middle of the Manhattan skyline that has been revitalized. This conservation campaign brings out New York in the present time, which balances fast-tracked growth with attention to detail in nurturing its landmark identity (Shah, 2025).

More so, the Cathedral is nowadays a special device of continuity amidst the constantly fluctuating demographics. Although it was designed to serve a relatively Irish-Catholic community, there are various items available in a variety of languages and have served the needs of millions of tourists representing all ends of the world. According to recent reports by the archdiocese, the Cathedral has become a house of prayer to everyone, since New York is a world crossroad filled with interconnectedness. It could be the televised funeral of a fallen first responder or the silent meditation of a midtown worker. No matter what, the Cathedral reflects the resilience of the city as a whole and its ability to grieve and celebrate as a people.

As briefly mentioned before, St. Patrick's Cathedral also conducts civic and charitable functions. It holds socially driven events, supports the underserved, and is also involved in interfaith dialogue, developing a sense of inclusivity and social responsibility. Through charitable activities and work by the communities, the Cathedral demonstrates the role of the

church by serving the general needs of society beyond its walls. Such active participation proves that it is intended as a moral compass and a driver of positive social change.

St. Patrick's Cathedral is an important institution in the modern world, which upholds faith, history, and persistence, as well as social responsibility. It is still a worshiping site, a cultural landmark, hope, and a communal center. The variety of its meaning makes it still significant and relevant in modern surroundings, where generations are motivated to see the timeless strength of religion and tradition. The fact that the Cathedral continues to hold relevance even up to date reflects the need to conserve spiritual and cultural heritage in a fast-changing world.

New York City-born structural engineer James Renwick primarily designed St. Patrick's Cathedral. He previously worked on projects such as Grace Church, Vassar College's Main Hall, and the New York Public Library. He was well-versed in Gothic architecture, and his work set a precedent for future Cathedrals in the United States. He worked with architect William Rodrique, who designed the chapel for Fordham University's Bronx campus (McNierney, 2004). Renwick deliberately chose the Gothic Revival style, which was originally popular in medieval Europe. Gothic Cathedrals were traditionally designed to inspire awe and lift the eyes of those who saw them up towards heaven. They had pointed arches, ribbed vaults, and tall spires that all worked to increase height. Another key feature of the Cathedral are the stained glass windows, which are used to tell biblical stories and showcase the lives of saints. The most notable aspect of the Cathedral is the exterior, which is covered with Tuckahoe marble. This particular white marble, which is quarried in Westchester County, New York, has been chosen because of the brilliance and durability it possesses. Renwick selected it because it would make the Cathedral visible in a darker brownstone city typical of Manhattan in the 19th century. In other parts, other than

aesthetics, the composition of marble, a compact dolomitic limestone, was admitted in terms of its capability to be shaped into the delicate, lace-like textures of the Neo-Gothic style and enable the building to resemble the Cathedrals that are in Europe; except this time, this Cathedral is built with local American stone.

In Gothic architecture, marble is not only construction material, but it is also intended to be a sermon in stone. The brightness of the white marble is a planned allusion to the transfiguration and innocence of the soul. The reflective nature of the stone is meant to bring the upward movement of the eye, which is a movement where the physical beauty brings the mind to the divine. The lighter materials used on the interior and the huge amount of stained glass also help to underline the idea of the “New Jerusalem,” where the light (the symbol of God) permeates the world of the Earth.

The exterior is dominated by marble, but the interior materials have their layer hidden. The high altars and the Lady Chapel of the Cathedral are designed with Lasa marble and Carrara marble, which make an oriental connection between the New York archdiocese and the seat of the church in Rome. Moreover, there was wood and plaster used to make the original roof look like stone. This concealed replacement was both a practical requirement because of weight limitations and the lack of money, but it also serves to express the modest, improvised genesis of one of the most famous landmarks in the world.

The ceiling is one of the most explicit “secret” elements of the Cathedral's welfare. Though one might take it as heavy, ribbed stone vaulting, it is really made of lath and plaster, which is painted and stippled to appear to be rock. This was one tactic used by Architect James Renwick in saving costs and more importantly, saving structural weight on the walls so that we could have bigger, brighter stained-glass windows. The upper part of this faux-stone roof is the

“Garden of Heaven,” a series of over 300 distinct religious carvings at the junctions of the ribs, each with a botanical design or animal, including an owl as the symbol of the infinite diversity of creation by God.

It would have taken a combination of both cooking stone masonry methods of the past and new modern tools of industry to construct a structure of this magnitude in the middle of the nineteenth century. Due to the fact that the Cathedral was conducted mostly by hand before the emergence of electricity, the building process depended on numerous tools. To begin with, there are mallets and chisels. The masters of these immigrant chisellers were iron and steel. They carved the thin foliated capitals and the lace of the marble tracery with them. Secondly, there are block and tackle pulleys. In the absence of the modern crane, a massive marble block weighing several tons had to be lowered into position through the use of complex ropes, a wooden derrick, and human or horse energy. Plumb bobs and spirit levels were successively applied. These were basic devices that were necessary in keeping the 330-foot spires in an upright position, and 32 huge marble columns lined up to hold the roof weight (*St Patrick's Cathedral, New York*, 2018). Last but not least, we have the drills on the notorious hand-crank. These were applied in making the first holes in the marble in order to insert a bunch of clamps that kept the stones together as the mortar was set.

Despite St. Patrick's Cathedral being the largest one in the United States, there are some similar Cathedrals that compare to St. Patrick's in New York City and around the world. The New York landmark is contrasted with a huge European one in Milan, Italy. St. Patrick is a 19th-century Neo-Gothic Revival edifice, whereas the Duomo di Milano is a colossal Italian Gothic masterpiece of several centuries. The comparison between the two is gigantic; the Cathedral of Milan was constructed over the span of 579 years, and it is way bigger than its

American counterpart. Although St. Patrick's is a good emblem of religion in North America, Milan Cathedral is still considered to be one of the biggest and most complex Gothic buildings that have ever been envisioned (*Milan Cathedral: The Mother Church of the Diocese*).

The architecture of St. Patrick's was directly inspired by that of Cologne Cathedral in Germany. They are both iconic Gothic structures, with St. Patrick's having been constructed in the 19th century as a Neo-Gothic tribute to the medieval grandeur of Germany. Cologne is much taller, however. Specifically, it is 157 meters (515 ft) tall with its two well-known twin spires. By contrast, St. Patrick's, with a height of 339 feet, embodies the essence of the German medieval design at a scale appropriate to the then-growing Manhattan landscape of the 19th century (Shah, 2025).

The Basilica of St. Peter (Vatican City) symbolizes the final analogy of the catholic meaning, but it is in American style as a total contrast. While St. Patrick's follows the pointed arches and spires of the Gothic tradition, St. Peter's is a Renaissance and Baroque marvel that is characterized by massive domes and vast colonnades. St. Peter's is the headquarters of the Catholic Church, and the largest church in the world, while St. Patrick's is the major seat of the Archdiocese of New York and the main spiritual home to the faith in the United States (*St. Peter's Basilica | a Masterpiece to Explore*, 2024).

The most common point of comparison of St. Patrick's in the city lies in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Morningside Heights. It is the seat of the Episcopal Diocese of New York, often called St. John the Unfinished, and is amongst the largest Christian churches in the world. While St. Patrick's is entirely Gothic Revival, the mixture of Romanesque and Gothic styles is observed in St. John the Divine. It is very large in internal volume, and it is cavernous and

grander in its interior when compared to St. Patrick's. St. John's shows a contrast to the slender and finer proportions of the Fifth Avenue building (*Cathedral of Saint John the Divine*).

Brooklyn Cathedral Basilica of St. James is an equally historical and important artifact of the religious architecture of New York. Being the episcopal church of the Diocese of Brooklyn, it was established earlier than the current St. Patrick's Cathedral. Its first building was established in 1822. Architecturally, it is a Neo-Georgian edifice which is in sharp contrast with the statuesque spires of St. Patrick's. Although it is by no means as enormous as the Manhattan Cathedral, it has a strong attachment to the history of immigration to the city, as well as the development of the Catholic Church in the boroughs (*St. James Cathedral Basilica*, 2019).

Another Neo-Gothic landmark that closely resembles St. Patrick's is Grace Church on Broadway, although this is mostly due to the fact that they were both designed by James Renwick. It was not finished until 1846, hence Grace Church may be regarded as a precursor to St. Patrick's. It has the same daintily worked stone-pate and gracious Gothic ornamentation, but upon a still smaller, still more parish, basis. The two buildings can be regarded as a manifestation of the skill of the Gothic Revival style by Renwick and his significant impact on the formation of the aesthetic identity of New York City (*History - Grace Church in New York*, 2026).

To conclude, St. Patrick's Cathedral holds significant historical weight for Catholics of all backgrounds. It began with the influx of Irish and later Italian immigrants, both of whom faced discrimination and harassment. Early laws in colonial New York restricted Catholic practices, and churches were sometimes attacked by nativist groups. Over time, however, the Catholic population grew rapidly. The Old St. Patrick's was too small, leading Archbishop John Hughes to push forward the construction of the current St. Patrick's Cathedral. The history of Catholics in New York is something that people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds can relate

to. It is a tale of overcoming the bigotry and prejudice of others in order to thrive. The Catholic population of today is multitudes larger than it once was, and that is all the work of the Catholic immigrants who first came to New York.

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Appendix

Enaiyah Martini

Going to St. Patrick's Cathedral for the small group project was the second time I've been to this Cathedral; however, my experience of this visit was substantially different than my first, as I was not only able to observe the architecture more closely, but also reflect on its historical significance in a way I hadn't before. My first trip to this Cathedral was for a school mass, as I went to a Catholic High School. During this day, the school bus that brought us to the Cathedral was delayed by at least half an hour, making our grade miss the first couple of minutes of the mass. In addition to this, our school had to wait towards the very back of the Cathedral (since it was filled with Catholic school students by the time we arrived), so I wasn't even able to extensively view the Cathedral's architecture. All I saw was a big pillar in front of my face and the backs of several students' heads. Prior to this small group project, I was somewhat upset with the fact that my experience at St. Patrick's Cathedral didn't live up to my expectations, especially considering the fact that I am Muslim, and would most likely not visit a Cathedral again. Coming back to this Cathedral, however, I am very grateful that I got to experience the church again, but especially in a project-setting that allowed me to closely analyze the art within. It was especially meaningful to see shrines, such as Our Lady of Guadalupe, that I have previously learned about in class. This experience also helped me develop a



closer connection to the Catholic faith in a way. Meticulously noting the religious artwork in the Church helped me form connections back to Islam (the religion I practice) and helped me notice the numerous shared values between them, such as worship, care for others, and charity. One other thing I deeply appreciated was the acknowledgment of how important immigrant stories were to the building of this Cathedral. Especially nowadays, immigrants are treated as second-class citizens, when in reality, they helped create some of the most beautiful structures in our city and nation. The showcasing of this was very prominent, and something I had deep respect for.

Word Count: 374

Rafeea Rahman

When I saw St. Patrick's Cathedral on the list, I was definitely intrigued. Last semester, when visiting Grant's Tomb, my attention and wonder was diverted towards Riverside Church instead. I remember marvelling at the beauty of just the exterior structure. This time, I got to focus solely on the Cathedral, and I also went inside. The inside of the Cathedral was so intricately crafted. By just staring at one pillar, you can see the level of detail and craftsmanship inside the marble. One thing I really love about church architecture, apart from the Gothic style, is the assortment of stained glass pieces. Both the Old St. Patrick's and the current St. Patrick's had beautiful stained glass lining the walls. The way the light comes through the glass makes it seem like the whole piece is glowing. Through doing research for this project, I realized the nature of



discrimination. I was initially confused on why some early Protestants disliked Catholics so much when they were both Christian. As I read more documents, I realized that prejudice doesn't have a logical reason. People can hate others simply because they are different, and that can happen to any religion, ethnicity, or skin color. Laws such as preventing Catholics from holding office or imprisoning those who housed Catholics are all reused techniques. I also thought about the incredible change of demographics from the 1700-1800 to now. For example, back then Italian immigrants were seen as foreigners, yet now they are a staple factor to New York's identity. It's interesting how, no matter who they are, immigrants have to "prove" themselves for a long time before they can be separated from the "foreigner" title. The project, as a whole, definitely made me realize that everyone is less different than one might initially think.

Word Count: 298

Amna Tayyab

As I walked on 5th Avenue and went down the block in front of the Cathedral, you can see the front part of the Cathedral with white marble pinnacles soaring high in the sky. The overall scale of the Cathedral was shocking. The sunshine that passed through the beautiful stained-glass windows made the Cathedral oh so majestic and breathtaking from the inside. The art inside the Cathedral really reflected the effort that the immigrants put in.

The stillness here is intimate even though there are thousands of visitors. You could speak of the flickering light of thousands of votive candles in front of the Lady Chapel, or the gloomy loveliness of the Pieta statue.

Coming out of the Cathedral is like waking out of a dream. You are among the saints and smell of incense one moment and the next moment you are among the skyscrapers. This contrast,

with the holy pose on one and the opposite side of the stores, is what makes Saint Patrick his vital New York experience.

Overall, my experience with the Cathedral was very enjoyable and I had much fun. In my opinion, if one would like to visit the Saint Patrick's Cathedral, they should go on a bright sunny day with no clouds. The weather can really affect your mood and your whole experience on the trip. If someone is going there during the afternoon mass time, they should have lunch at the Pasta Corner which is only 2 blocks away from the Cathedral. To make your lunch even more special, there is a waterfall with a seating area to make the experience even more magical and majestic.

Word Count: 274