

My Journey Home

From Fundamental Baptist to Roman Catholic

By Isaac Hathaway, Jr.

Many people have played important roles in my coming home to the Catholic Church, from my unsuspecting parents and grandparents to my loving and patient wife. I could have never imagined how an elderly Sister in a religious community, an instructor at a junior college, a few priests, a couple of aunts-by-marriage, and a knowledgeable commercial real estate broker would be so instrumental in helping me see The Truth.

I was born and raised into a Fundamental, Independent, Bible-believing Baptist home. From day one, I was taught to love God and the importance of a personal relationship with Him. My grandparents were Baptist missionaries to Japan through our local Baptist church. My grandparents dedicated over 25 years of service in Japan and started many Independent, Fundamental Baptist churches from the ground up in Japan.

My dad was raised in Japan as a missionary kid and was very involved with the ministry. After serving as missionaries to Japan from the mid 50's to about 1980, my grandfather became involved in the ministry of our church as an associate pastor. He has since pastored two churches in Missouri and is currently involved in a Japanese ministry and started a widower's ministry at his church. He loves God with all his heart and has a passion to lead all souls to heaven. I have learned a great deal from him and from my father about how to be a strong Christian man who loves God and family. I have an uncle who followed in his father's footsteps and became a missionary to Japan for about 15 years. After serving in Japan as missionaries, my uncle and his wife moved back to the U.S. and my uncle is currently a pastor of a church in Missouri.

I come from a very loving home. We attended church every chance we got. Every week we would go to Sunday school, Sunday morning service, Sunday evening service, mid-week prayer meeting, and visitation. I went to private, Christian church schools from Kindergarten through twelfth grade. All but one school I attended was held at a Baptist church.

At school, we were required to attend Bible class. I was taught at school and at church that the Catholic Church was a false religion based on paganism and all Catholics were "going to hell." When I was in Middle School, I was told by a former Catholic who married a Baptist friend of my parents, that the Catholic Church was a cult. I remember being told that the pope is the anti-Christ and The Catholic Church is the Whore of Babylon. I was told that Catholics were not Christians. I was told that Catholics think that Christ is still on the cross. I was told that Catholics think they can work their way to heaven. I was told that Catholics added books to the Bible so their Bible is false. I remember seeing anti-catholic tracts (including Jack Chick) at the church I grew up in.

Despite being fed a bunch of paranoia against the Catholic Church, my family loved God and was always seeking to do His will. I am angry that I was fed, what I now call

“garbage” while growing up, but my family meant well. They were misled about the Catholic Church and continue to have misconceptions, despite my attempts correct their misunderstandings.

My first experience with a Catholic Church came on Christmas Eve midnight mass at the old Church of the Magdalen in Wichita, Kansas with my girlfriend, Melanie on 12/24/98. It was all bizarre to me yet, I was in awe of the ceremony and rituals. The Mass stirred some emotions within me, but I could never admit it. The whole Mass was a beautiful way to proclaim the good news that a savior was born. Despite all these factors, I still thought that it all had to be pagan and false. I would occasionally go to Mass with Melanie as we were dating. I wanted to pick out, for myself, the things that were “wrong” in the Mass. I also went to make Melanie happy.

Melanie and I grew closer and became engaged to be married in the fall of 1999. We attended an “Engaged Encounter” because it was required of us, in order to be married in the Catholic Church. Our Engaged Encounter priest had an open forum session for questions pertaining to relationships and what the whole weekend was all about.

This turned out to be a time where the protestant fiancés questioned doctrine, dogma, and teachings of The Catholic Church. Both Melanie and I were put off at how the priest answered some of the questions at that time. (Melanie came from a non-practicing Catholic home. She wanted to know some of the answers herself.) I had a closed mind to the teachings of the Church. I “knew” they were all wrong. I couldn’t help feeling this way. It was the way I was taught by my pastors, teachers, and parents and that was good enough for me.

For me, it was okay for Melanie to go to her pagan church, because she told me that she knew she had Christ in her heart. So, when the priests’ tone changed to that of being put off when he was bombarded with the questions, I automatically knew in my heart that he couldn’t answer them and The Catholic church was not for me.

I see now, in hindsight, that Engaged Encounter was neither the time nor place to question the teachings of the Church. I can fully understand now why the priest was so upset. He was on the constant defensive position. The barrage of questions was relentless. He wasn’t there to be an apologist. We were there to find ourselves in relation to each other through Christ; no matter what “brand” of faith you were from.

Neither Melanie nor I looked at Engaged Encounter as what it was actually supposed to be. We thought we knew each other well enough. I regret now that we didn’t take it as seriously as we should have. I know that I didn’t take much of it as seriously as Melanie did.

Melanie and I were married on August 12, 2000 at St. Francis of Assisi in Wichita, by Father Jim Weldon. My whole family was upset that our wedding was going to be at a Catholic Church. My parents wanted to know why our family’s faith tradition couldn’t be represented at our wedding. In order to please my parents, and with Father Weldon’s

permission, my parents' Baptist pastor agreed, amazingly, to read a scripture passage from the lectionary. That did not make everything "fine and dandy" with my folks, but it did help.

We moved in January 2001 to Eudora, KS, which is just outside of Lawrence. Even though there was a Catholic Church in Eudora, we wanted to attend the Mass offered at St. Lawrence on Kansas University's campus. I was still very skeptical of the Catholic Church.

As I went more and more with Melanie to Mass, I was impressed by the enthusiasm of the pastor, Father Vince. Father Vince's excitement was contagious; even though I mostly shut out the things I didn't agree with or didn't want to hear. Melanie and I would often discuss the content of the mass. I would always ask questions pertaining to the liturgy, incense, sign of the cross, the crucifix, statues, the bowing, the "Lord's Supper," and all the mechanics and details of the mass.

Melanie was very patient with my questions. Sometimes she couldn't answer all my questions, so I took that as a sign of weakness of her Faith. I thought, at the time, that I was getting her to question her own faith in the "pagan" Catholic Church.

I would also receive questions from her about my faith as a Baptist. "Why do you believe this? Where does it come from? Why does the preacher say this or do that?" I would try to answer the best that I could. I must say that Melanie never attacked me, but I know I attacked her about her Faith. She has a gentle, patient, and quiet spirit by nature, where I was always aggressive, bold, and derogatory to her in my questioning of the Catholic Church.

When I would get stumped on a question from her, I would shut down the conversation immediately. I would say, "I don't want to talk about it anymore!" Yet, I was always the one to bring up the topics and the discussion.

Melanie agreed to come with me to try out some Baptist churches in Lawrence. I can see now that she was only doing it to keep peace in the relationship. She never lost her love for the Catholic Faith.

After having attended many Catholic Masses with Melanie, the Baptist service began to seem so foreign to me. With each new church I wanted to try, I never seemed to have the spiritual fulfillment that I thought I would have. It didn't matter what "brand" of Baptist church I went to, I felt very empty inside after each service.

One comment that Melanie made that has stuck with me to this day. After we had visited several churches, she said, "If these are all Baptist churches, why does each one preach, teach, and do things so differently than the other? Shouldn't they all be about the same?" I started to see, for myself, for the first time that she was right. I saw it even more as we would come back to Wichita and I again attended Sunday services at my parents' church.

Even though some of the churches would be in the same conferences, they didn't preach the Word of God from the same version of the Bible, they would baptize a little differently than the next, the music was different, the order of the service was different, and the altar call was never the same format. There were many other issues that didn't coincide from one church to the next. I gave up on trying to get Melanie to go to any church other than a Catholic Church, since I knew she was never comfortable and quite frankly, I wasn't either.

I became complacent in going to mass with Melanie. She would ask me after Sunday Mass what I disagreed with. At first, I didn't have an answer. It was a subtle challenge for me to pay attention, so I did. The more I went to Mass with her, the more I saw how much Catholics and Baptists have in common. I never thought the "Whore of Babylon" would ever have much in common with truly fundamental Baptist doctrine. The more I listened and let the Holy Spirit work in me, the more my eyes were opened to the basic similarities of our Christian Faiths. I had to admit it to myself, "the Catholic Church COULD ACTUALLY BE CHRISTIAN."

Despite all these factors that I was beginning to see, I was nowhere near ready to further investigate the Catholic Church on my own. I could never be a Catholic. My parents would have a fit. What would my grandparents say? What would all my Baptist friends say? I dismissed any thought of ever being Catholic.

Around this time, one of Melanie's aunts, Aunt Kay, sent Melanie some of the *Beginning Apologetics* booklets put out by Jim Burnham along with other apologetic material, including the "proof text" put out by Jim Burnham's San Juan Catholic Seminars.

I know now that it was Aunt Kay's way of getting Melanie to stay strong in her faith, and, if possible, to get me to look at them. I would glance at them and give them a once over. That is about as far as I would get with them. My heart was hardened to seeing what the Catholic Church taught. Part of it was the fact that I was afraid that I couldn't give a good response to the material. I don't remember Melanie ever asking me to read the material, although I think it was implied.

One day, we got a phone call from one of Melanie's relatives that her great aunt, Sister Bea was in the hospital and in bad shape. Sister Bea was a member of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O'Fallon, MO.

I had met Sister Bea previously, at a family gathering in Missouri. She impressed me from the very moment I met her. I had never met anybody from the Catholic religious life, so before I met her, I didn't know what to expect.

Her joy for life and for her calling was contagious. She had a great sense of humor and she had a smile that never quit. As we were in her hospital room, she continued to

have a smile, even in all the pain she was experiencing, due to a hole in her diaphragm. She kept a positive attitude throughout all of her surgery and recovery.

A little more than a month later, Sister Bea passed away and we went back to O'Fallon for the funeral. Her funeral Mass was a great memorial to an awesome lady who dedicated her entire, unselfish life to worship and service to God and serving others. Sister Bea had spent 67 years of dedicated service in the religious life.

The sisters of the convent where she served and where the funeral Mass was held, gave us a room, as well as the other relatives who came. I have never been treated with such dignity and respect as I was by those sisters during the few days we stayed AND I WASN'T EVEN CATHOLIC!

Our stay at the convent and the experience of the great words spoken about Sister Bea was quite impressive and a bit overwhelming for me. My thoughts concerning Catholicism began to shift even more. I had to ask myself, "How could someone who was so involved with a pagan religion, be so holy, kind, prayerful, excited, and have an obvious love and dedication for God?" To this day, I think Sister Bea may have been the holiest person I have ever met. My wall of criticism and dislike for the Catholic Church was beginning to crumble.

In the fall of 2003, Melanie and I, along with my daughter, Valerie moved back to Wichita. We started to attend St. Francis of Assisi, because Melanie's mother still went there and we had been married there, but it was all the way at the other end of town. We would occasionally go back and forth each Sunday to St. Thomas Aquinas or Church of the Resurrection. The more I attended Mass, the more comfortable I felt, even though I never took part in the Sacraments. The more I would attend any kind of non-Catholic service, the more uncomfortable I felt.

Shortly after moving back to Wichita, Melanie and I attended a Sunday evening service at my parents' church. That particular service they happened to be celebrating one of their quarterly services which they had "The Lord's Supper." Melanie had never seen how "we" Baptists celebrated "The Lord's Supper."

I had really thought nothing of it, since I was raised in the Baptist faith. Melanie; however, was overcome with tears when the platter of unleavened bread was passed from one person to another, as well as the dish which held the grape juice. She actually had to get up and leave. She went out of the church auditorium towards the restroom. I wasn't sure what had come over her, so I continued to stay and partake of communion.

As we were leaving church in the car, I asked her what was wrong. She looked at me with a somber look and with tears streaming down her face. She shook her head at me and told me that she could not see how we take communion so lightly. She was obviously upset at how some of the people were talking during communion. She was upset at how the individual shot glasses, which represented Christ's blood, were passed to each person, and at how we each waited to take each part of the communion together at our seats.

At that time I didn't really understand Transubstantiation. I thought that to believe that it could be Christ's REAL flesh and REAL blood was just "silly." When I saw for myself just how distraught she was over what happened, and after some tough questions from her over the issue, it left me to really ponder why we Baptists celebrate communion the way that we do and why it was so different than the way Catholics celebrate it. I still wasn't ready to do any further investigation into the Catholic Faith.

In the fall of 2003, I began to take some classes at Butler Community College. One of the classes I was taking was *Humanities: Ancient to Medieval*. The class was an exploration of art, music, theatre, religion, and the philosophy and how each pertained to Western civilization's culture. The instructor was very enthusiastic about the subject matter and made the class fun and interesting.

I was especially interested in the subject of The Church and how it affected different aspects of humanity. In my studies I began to see the correlation between the thought of each century and how much of it was influenced by religion. I began to notice the early church writers, artists, and historians were all very "Catholic" in their works. I saw no resemblance to the type of religion and church I grew up in. All of these studies in early humanity intrigued me greatly!

The next semester I took the follow-up class from the same instructor entitled *Humanities: Renaissance to Modern*. One of our class periods was spent going to St. George's Orthodox Cathedral. I had no idea what to expect. I was already intrigued by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and now I was very intrigued with the architecture of the early Church and why they were designed the way they were. We were scheduled to take a tour of the church. I had no idea what to expect.

I was in complete awe of the beauty of the design of the church. I think what influenced me the most about our tour was the use of icons throughout the sanctuary. I couldn't believe my eyes. It was sensory overload! After our tour guide pointed out to us that the sanctuary was in the shape of a cross, I had a sense of peace about me. I thought to myself, "So this is what a church is supposed to be like." In the short time I visited that church and when I step foot in the sanctuary, I left behind all my notions that it was anything but Christian.

I was in awe of the beauty of the church, the meaning behind the murals and icons, and how that pertained to my faith. I couldn't wait to get home to tell Melanie about this beautiful church I toured and how it stirred my heart. As I described the artwork and icons throughout the church to Melanie, she smiled at me and was impressed by my enthusiasm. I told her that I wanted to go to a church service there on a Sunday. She obliged my idea and agreed that she would go.

When we finally had the opportunity to attend a worship service, as I called them, we arrived late. Our daughter, Valerie was acting out from the moment we arrived. I went into the sanctuary for all of about 5 minutes until I heard Valerie screaming outside of the

sanctuary. I left my back row seat to help Melanie. After getting Valerie to calm down we agreed that we missed too much of the service and it was time for us to leave. I was disappointed that I could not experience the service and Melanie picked up on my disappointment. She made a comment to me that expressed how similar the Greek Orthodox was to Roman Catholic.

After she mentioned that, I decided that I had not given the Catholic Church a chance. As I sat there and pondered the similarities, I decided that I was willing to give the Catholic Church another shot. I also decided that I was going to pay closer attention to the Mass.

A real eye-opener for me came on Easter of 2004. After attending morning Mass at St. Francis of Assisi with Melanie's mother, we decided we wanted to spend some time with my parents as well. Our plan was to go to their church for evening service, then go out to eat with them afterwards.

I assumed that the Easter evening service would have something to do with the resurrection or they might have an encore presentation of their Easter musical. Boy was I seriously mistaken! My parents' church usually had some sort of teaching service for Sunday nights and not so much preaching. The pastor started to talk about Baptist doctrine and in particular, their doctrines of sola fide and sola scriptura. When the pastor mentioned that one of the congregants, who happen to be the principal of the church-school, studied and followed closely the teachings of John Calvin, I was very intrigued. The pastor went into specifics on Calvinism and his doctrine of predestination versus what some, or most of the other congregants followed. It also seemed that some Calvinism was combined with other Protestant doctrines by other folks. The pastor seemed to be trying to give equal time to each different doctrine that each different congregant might follow.

By this time, I began to wish I had never come to their evening service. I felt extremely uncomfortable with the subject matter and I could tell that Melanie was getting upset the more she heard.

I remember an analogy being given about a little boy in a remote African country who has never heard of Jesus Christ. The question was asked, "If that little African boy has never been given the opportunity to hear of Jesus and His saving grace, does he go to hell because of his ignorance of the Gospel message?"

The Calvinist spoke up and said something to the affect that if he never heard the Gospel message and he does not follow Jesus and accept Him as Lord and Savior, that little boy is not one of the predestined or the elect. If God did not send a missionary in that boy's path, then he obviously was not one of the elect. My jaw dropped and I had to calm Melanie down because she was about to go off. Melanie was on the verge of standing up to put in her comments. Before she did, I calmed her down and assured her that we would never have to come back to one of their services again. I was completely

disgusted. I couldn't believe what I had just heard. I was so ready for that service to be over.

When it was over and we were on our way home, Melanie was weeping at what she had just heard in that church. I told her that all of that was news to me and I don't remember being taught those things growing up. Perhaps I was and thought nothing of it. I really can't remember. Maybe I have tried to suppress it. I assured her that I don't think that way at all. That trip to my parents church help me to realize that there can be just as many different doctrines and individual scripture interpretations as there are heads within one Baptist church, not to mention the entire Baptist faith in which I grew up. On top of all that, how could they be talking about doctrine and predestination when it was Easter? I had a real hard time understanding what had just happened. I became angry at what was said and the possibility that I was fed that "garbage" as a young Baptist.

During the spring of 2005, I began to see how many people I knew through work that was Catholic. I started to do little things here and there that were identifiable as Catholic, such as no meat on Fridays during Lent. I slowly started identifying some of my thought with the Catholic Faith.

We were going to Mass regularly at Church of the Resurrection. Initially, I was very impressed with Monsignor Carr. I started to pay close attention to Monsignor Carr's homilies. I found myself agreeing with everything he had to say. The same was true with Father Ken Schuckman. Something that really helped me at the time was Monsignor Carr's enthusiasm and then later, Father Ken's homilies. Father Ken has always had a way to challenge you and to get you to think with each homily. For the entire time I have attended mass at Church of the Resurrection, I have never left mass with a feeling of emptiness, when I actually listened. (I have a short attention span.)

I saw in one of the Sunday bulletins that RCIA was going to start soon. I discussed it with Melanie and expressed my interest. She was quite excited! I set up an appointment with Father Ken about RCIA. He explained the process and I agreed that I wanted to start.

I told my parents shortly before RCIA was to begin, that I was going to find out what the Catholic Church was all about. My dad was quite upset. He suggested that I give the Baptist church equal time to rediscover what it was all about. I told him that I have been Baptist all my life and that was enough time for me to know what they believe. Besides, just because I'm going to go to these classes doesn't mean I'm going to become Catholic. I remember saying to him, "What harm can it do?"

My dad then started to go into the argument that the Catholic Church was a false religion and its origins were pagan. The arguments that he gave me are I arguments I have seen in Jack Chick's anti-Catholic tracts and it's the same arguments you would find in *Babylon Mystery Religion* by Ralph Woodrow. I researched *Babylon Mystery Religion* on the internet and came across Ralph Woodrow's website. It was a great coincidence that Ralph Woodrow has pulled *Babylon Mystery Religion* from publication because he admits serious errors in his research. He says this, "My original book had some valuable

information in it. But it also contained certain teachings that were made popular in a book many years ago, *THE TWO BABYLONS*, by Alexander Hislop. This book claims that the very religion of ancient Babylon, under the leadership of Nimrod and his wife, was later disguised with Christian-sounding names, becoming the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, two “Babylons”—one ancient and one modern. Proof for this is sought by citing numerous similarities in paganism. The problem with this method is this: in many cases there is *no connection*.”

My dad then expressed his concern for the family name if I became Catholic. He was worried about what everyone within the family and all of our church acquaintances would think. I told him that I am doing this for me. I was in search of the Truth. He was not happy at all. We didn't speak for a couple of weeks. We both eventually came around (as we always do) to talk again. The topic of religion was strictly avoided.

As I started the RCIA process, I had many tough questions. Melanie wanted to join me in all of the classes because she had many questions about the Faith in which she grew up. Some of my questions included such topics as the Marian doctrines, Purgatory, the Communion of Saints, the papacy, and confession just to name a few.

The entire RCIA team was very patient and gracious to answer questions that any of us had. The format of the pre-catechumen stage was very comfortable and well put together with Vicki Jackson as the RCIA coordinator.

I was completely amazed at how there was scripture verse after scripture verse which held concrete evidence of each Catholic idea or doctrine. I was getting a better understanding of the Catholic teachings on issues that I had been so previously misled.

The RCIA team definitely knew what they were doing for the last pre-catechumen class. We watched a videotaped version of Scott Hahn and his conversion story. It was powerful! I was floored at how he broke down wall after wall that he had built against the Catholic Church. All that I was taught in school and told at church suddenly didn't make any sense. It left an everlasting impression on me to this day. The Holy Spirit was opening my eyes to the Truth.

Much to my surprise and delight, Tony Utter, the knowledgeable real estate broker, was selected to be my RCIA sponsor. I could tell that this guy had done his homework. He had a charitable way of answering each objection that any of the RCIA candidates and catechumens had. I was thoroughly impressed by his knowledge and experiences as a Catholic. I was also very impressed with his knowledge of the Bible and his ability to pull out scripture on the fly. His approach has always been logical. Church of the Resurrection has a great treasure in Tony.

A few weeks later, Tony gave all of the catechumens a copy of *Rome Sweet Home*. Since I have never been much of a book reader, I did not read it right away. Melanie started reading it immediately and finished it in one day. She convinced me that I really needed to read it and that the book is sure to keep my attention. I reluctantly started

reading the book one day and I finished it the very next day. It gave me a great sense of joy to be able to identify with Scott and Kimberly Hahn's testimony of their faith journey.

Some of the parallels in Scott and Kimberly's former theological thought were very similar, if not dead on to what I had believed. After reading *Rome Sweet Home*, I became obsessed with knowing more about Catholic doctrine and The Catholic Church. I started to frequent www.catholic.com, the Catholic Answers website to get even more of my questions answered and to do some further research and investigation.

Since then, Tony has provided me with book after book to read and I have read most of what he has shot my way. *Crossing the Tiber* by Steve Ray was a great book for me to read since I could identify especially with his story as a former Baptist. I also enjoyed reading *Surprised by Truth* by Patrick Madrid.

I was still bothered by my dad's response to me starting RCIA and I did not like the animosity that was felt when we were in each others' company. I felt that I needed to respond to him with a friendly e-mail to give him an idea as to why I was doing this. My e-mail was very charitable and in no way forceful. I even offered an out for him if he did not want to bring up the issue of religion again. I asked him to at least look at some websites, including catholic.com and to read *Rome Sweet Home*. I just wanted him to know why I was doing this.

When he finally responded to me, he expressed how disappointed he was that I was just now taking an interest in church history and I never did as a Baptist. He also made the argument that the Catholic Church was not around until about 330 A.D. and he said, "And that's a fact!" He also asked where the word "pope" was in the Bible. He claimed that the "original" churches were called Anabaptists; "and that's history." He also tried to point out that in Acts 11:26, the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch and not Catholic. Here I will quote the last couple sentences of his e-mail. "THEY WERE BAPTISTS IN DOCTRINE AND THE CATHOLICS CAME OUT OF THIS CHURCH CALLED CHRISTIANS AND EVENTUALLY ANA-BAPTIST AND NOW BAPTISTS. BY THE WAY, THE BAPTIST CHURCH NEVER CAME OUT OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH SINCE THEY EXISTED BEFORE THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. SO THE BAPTIST CHURCH IS NOT PROTESTANT."

I then responded with an e-mail with the subject title, "Before 330 A.D." I gave some quotes from the Church Fathers including Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp, Tertullian, and Cyprian of Carthage. All of the quotes from these early church fathers completely discredits the notion that the Catholic Church came into existence at 330 or thereafter. I pointed out to him that the word "Trinity" is nowhere in the Bible, yet we agree on that doctrine and believe in a three-in-one almighty God. I also sent an email that had solid scriptural and tradition support for such topics as Peter, the papacy, The Rock, and apostolic succession. He was so frustrated by my e-mails, he was (in Tony's words) in a full-court press. He sent me an e-mail that simply said, "This is rather long to read but will cover about all there is to know. It may take a while to read but it is good." What he sent me is a booklet entitled, *The Trail of Blood*. Following the Christians Down

Through the Centuries . . . or The History of Baptist Churches From the Time of Christ, Their Founder, to the Present Day by J. M. Carroll. As I researched *The Trail of Blood*, I found it to be incredibly hard to read. Stephen Ray said *The Trail of Blood* is “ridiculous and thoroughly discredited” on his website.

All of this was only the beginning of e-mail exchanges between my dad, my grandfather, and me. Each e-mail addressed a different topic that has been misunderstood by my family. When they got too frustrated because I had logical and Biblical support for all of the material I was sending, they threw in the towel. We don't talk at all about our religion to each other to this day.

I ended up in a discussion with a well-known Baptist minister I know about an audio tape we listened to together. The audio tape is one I borrowed from Tony concerning the Catholic defense of Peter, the Rock, and the papacy. The minister did not want to listen to it after only about 5 minutes. He started to talk over it and said that he had heard it all before. He said that there was no proof that Peter was ever in Rome and it went downhill from there.

I started to defend, the best I could, the teaching on the Real Presence in the Eucharist. I asked how he could take the scripture passage of John 6. I quoted verses 53-56 when Jesus says, “My flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.” The minister said to me, “My Bible doesn't say that!” Melanie about jumped out of her chair upon hearing him say that and the both of us responded, “Yes it does.”

The subject was dropped until I showed him in his own Bible. He then later tried to explain it away with the typical Protestant rebuttal that he did not mean it in a literal sense. Just as in “I am the vine.” His arguments were baseless and held no merit with me. I was completely shocked to hear him say that particular passage of scripture was not in his Bible.

It just goes to show how scripture is dissected for Protestants to see what they want to see, just as I was taught. It's truly amazing how scripture jumps of the pages of the Bible for me now, as a Catholic Christian. The Bible has come to life for me. It's so easy for me to see the parallels in scripture from one verse to the next and which scripture passages in the Old Testament prefigure passages in the New Testament.

Now let's fast forward to Rite of Sending at the Cathedral. I felt that I was truly a part of the Catholic community. When my name was called, I felt at that moment that everyone had been praying for me. I was honored to shake the bishop's hand.

When the Easter Vigil happened, I felt as if I were floating on a cloud. Words cannot describe what was happening to me. I kept the tears in the best I could. I felt the Holy Spirit fill me! I have never experienced anything so fulfilling in my life! I was so proud to finally enter into The Mystical Body of Christ.

My RCIA group became my second family. If we had to miss a Thursday night for any reason, it felt completely awkward. I felt a void on Thursday nights after it was all over. The RCIA team and sponsors did a phenomenal job. I can't imagine what it would have been like to have taken RCIA at any other parish.

Vicki Jackson does a great job in coordinating RCIA events and keeping the group tightly knit. Hugh Zavadil did a great job with Breaking Open the Word. Hugh did a great job of causing us dig deeper in our thoughts and hearts to ponder the scriptures, how they pertained to God, and the Church's teachings. Father Ken is a wonderful and thoughtful pastor who led us every step of the way to Easter Vigil. He has continued to be a great support for me and for all who went through RCIA.

Finally, I have never felt closer to God than I do now. Now that I am Catholic, I have confidence that I belong to the One True Church. The One that teaches the fulfillment of Truth. Thanks be to God, I AM HOME!