

I would like to offer you my own personal testimony so you can see where I'm comin' from and WHY I returned to Catholicism.

I am a cradle Catholic and a "revert" to the faith after being gone for about 34 years. I had left the Church at about age 17 because I was on drugs and then "got saved" at a Campus Life Bible study that was run by a very cool minister. I had always gone to church but never really taken it seriously or read the Bible, even though it was in the house and other members of my family read it. The lack was not in the church (I see that now) but within me. I began to read the Bible for the first time in my life... (the epistle of St. James) and it really hit home. I have always believed in God, but I saw that that was not enough. I did alright for a couple of years, got married and we moved here to Florida, where I stayed out of establishment churches because I figured they were all messed up and did my thing as a "Jesus freak", witnessing on the streets and handing out Christian underground papers and tracts, and "witnessing" to anyone who would listen.

Eventually I and my little family joined a Baptist church because the preacher convinced me that we believed the same things and he liked my no fear witnessing. That was fine until I admitted that I figured that the gifts of the Holy Spirit did not end with the death of the last apostle. That ended my path to being a Baptist minister so we joined a local Assembly of God where we stayed for many years in spite of some really unscriptural and uncharitable things they did. I became a deacon there, but finally we left after they pulled some really lame stuff and blew me off when I pointed out that what they were doing was unscriptural. My letter telling them why we were leaving was 10 pages long.

I intended to find another church, but we never did and so we remained out of any church for many years.

About 5 years ago I hit a real crisis and decided to turn back to the Lord. I found that Jesus meant every word of the parable of the prodigal son. I began to read the Bible again and got a New American Bible which is about like the NIV except this one has all the books (which I liked even though at the time I was still an Evangelical Protestant). This particular edition was fairly big, with a bright green paperback cover that said "The Catholic Bible" in big orange letters. I went diddy-bopping into a meeting one day with that in hand and wasn't in there a hot minute when some guy jumped my case.

"Are you Catholic?" he asked me. "Well...yeah", says I, (since technically I was). "You Catholics worship Mary." "Say what?" I responded. "You Catholics worship Mary. You pray to her." "Look, I know I been outta the church for a long time, and we do pray to her but we DON'T worship her and no Catholic

that knows his ear from his elbow would ever even SAY such a crazy thing. We worship God alone. End of story, Dude.”

He persisted so severely that I finally told him that I’d get some books, check it out and get back to him with what I found out, and that if he was right then I would never enter a Catholic Church ever again.

I found a great book by a priest named Father Oscar Lukefahr of Catholic Home Study Service ([URL=<http://www.amm.org/chss/chss.htm>]The Catholic Home Study Service[/URL] ) and read it carefully and prayerfully. I was happy to find that not only were the Catholics right and that they do not worship anyone but Almighty God, but that their doctrines about Mary are soundly based upon the Bible and that the early Christians believed the very same things. Even the three pillars of the Reformation ( Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli) believed the same things about Mary that Catholics do today. In the end I went back to church and met another Catholic guy, who like myself was returning to the faith as well. We studied and talked and found ourselves having to dig up real answers for people we knew who didn’t like the Catholic Church.

I continued to study Catholic teaching and discovered that a great deal of what I had been taught about the Bible and Christianity was wrong. I found that non-Catholics ignore and “read around” Bible passages that support Catholic teaching and that they completely ignore the history of Christianity prior to the 1500s. Now I know what I believe and why and I will never change, though I promise every non-Catholic that I dialog with that if they can prove that the Catholics are wrong that I’ll be in their church with them every Sunday from now on. No one even comes close...

Now I participate at Mass as often as I can, pray the Rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet almost every day, abstain from meat on most Fridays (just out of devotion to God), and of course read and study my Bible, as well as other Catholic writings. I am Catholic because I know and believe with all my heart and soul that the Catholic Church IS the New Testament church and I believe that the Eucharist is everything that the church teaches it is, the same as the early church did...all the way back to the last supper and the 6th chapter of the Gospel of St. John. I believe it’s really the body and blood of our risen Lord because St. Paul said that if you take communion while living in sin that you become guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and that wouldn’t be possible if His body and blood weren’t really present in the form of bread and wine...just like the last supper. It is the most powerful miracle in all of Christianity, and I love it.

My Christian life is stronger than ever before, my prayer life is powerful, and I have great answers to my prayers like never before. I have always been a soul winner and that has not changed at all. God has used me to win some

people that I sure couldn't have won on my own. Some were very anti-Catholic and now are very MUCH Catholic and very happy and forthright about their faith. It's really very humbling...I feel like a raggedy (unworthy) Styrofoam cup at a feast, filled with the very finest wine.

So... God Love ya, That's it. I'm nothing special. There are thousands of people like me who are returning to the faith each week and many more who are finding their way into it as well. It's been here for over 2,000 years...it won't die off or go away, and the very gates of hell have not prevailed (and will not prevail) against it. Jesus promised and He has kept that promise in spite of the human failings of individual members of His one true church.

This is the real thing. The fullness of truth, and the most beautiful Christianity you can possibly imagine. Nothing outside the Catholic Church even comes close. I cry tears of humble joy during the consecration at Mass because I am so wrapped up in worship of my risen Lord and Savior. I don't care who notices or what they might think. I'm more concerned with making sure that Jesus hears me when I say, "My Lord and my God."