

My name is John, my handle on Defenders of the Catholic Faith website is Fish and the story of my conversion is a little unusual so I hope you'll forgive me if I take a different tact than most:

If you can't remember the last time you've heard it, you're one of the lucky few. It's called the "Dig a Little Deeper" homily and they're agonizing to sit through. The Episcopal priest at my old church was the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world when it came to the Dig a Little Deeper homily and used it with cunning effectiveness to scare up a little money for our waning Episcopal church on the edge of suburbia here in Phoenix. His mannerisms, the subtle inflections of his voice, the rise and fall of his cadence were all curiously effective and honed to perfection over a lifetime in service of the Episcopal Church.

After a tearful final curtain-call the elderly gentleman retired, took leave of the Church and promptly bought a Jaguar. Here I am a few weeks before wondering if I'm really giving my very last dollar to the cause when all the while this guy is car shopping in Scottsdale.

But, hey, it was just one guy, life goes on. A few weeks later, I had opportunity to listen to the national head of the American Episcopal Church woman's association (whose actual moniker I've blessedly forgotten). She stood in the pulpit before a crowd of the faithful, flanked on one side by the longsuffering bishop and on the other a statue of Christ raised from the cross, waxing at great length about how she beat out the competition for the job, her reaction to getting it, the praise she's gotten from congregations all around the country, yada, yada, yada. Her big accomplishment? Delivering used books of Common Prayer to destitute Episcopalians in the Philippines probably because if you find a destitute Episcopal in the Philippines, what he really needs is a used book delivered by some fat old biddy and her entourage for whom the Episcopal Church spared no expense because destitute Episcopalians were in trouble and no one could find the FedEx dropoff.

I'm still fuming about it, does it show?

There's a screw loose in the Episcopal Church, folks. But if the Episcopal Church had its boneheaded hierarchy, the Catholic Church had its abominable sex scandals so at this point it was six of one, half dozen of another.

I volunteered one day a month as part of the Episcopal Church contingent staffing the St. Vincent de Paul homeless kitchen in the bowels of Phoenix where nary a Jaguar stray. Rewarding enough, I suppose, even if it was the only visible evidence of Episcopal Church's commitment for fulfilling Christ's mission.

Then came September 11, 2001. The morning of, I watched in stunned silence. The death toll was greater than Pearl Harbor and it wasn't halfway around the world. We were at war. I knew the world changed forever that day but not for the reason others were giving. Over the next several days, I flipped from news program to news program and no one mentioned it—*no one*. Nobody got it. Nobody understood. To this day nobody understands how to win the war on terror—nobody, that is, except for the Catholic Church who has been fighting it under a different name for a long, long time.

Depravation breeds terrorists. Human misery breeds terrorists. You can throw all the guns and troops and diplomats you want at terrorism and it won't make a bit of difference because you can't stop a guy from strapping pipes of fertilizer and fuel oil to his chest and blowing up a train station. The nuclear bombs in the war on terror are the

Mother Teresas of the world who offer a warm meal and a helping hand. Christ conveyed just that sentiment to the Catholic Church who perpetuated it to this day. The Catholic Church *built* the St. Vincent de Paul kitchen where I volunteered, not the Episcopalians.

The week after 9/11 I decided to become a Catholic. I couldn't bring myself to go to a Catholic Church, however, until February 2002 (old habits die hard) and by that time it was too late to go through RCIA (well, they lost my paperwork but that's another story). I became a Catholic on Easter of 2003. There are a lot more tiny things that led to my conversion but this is the "ah-HA" moment when idea became action.

Oh, and the Jaguar the retired priest bought? He sold it because it kept breaking down. If you ever need to prove God exists, there it is.