

## Why One Protestant Left the Denominations to Join the Catholic Church

This new convert sent me a nice e-mail thanking me. I asked if I could share it on my blog. He agreed but asked to remain anonymous and I agreed. He said, "I converted because I lost all the discussions I had with a Catholic workmate - if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

One problem - my Protestant relatives. How do I explain going Papist to them? I ended up sending this email (in which I site you as one of the reasons I went to the dark side, hence, this email to you."

So, here goes the e-mail:

Actually, my relation liked it so much she forwarded it a Baptist relative of hers in Connecticut, whose son also crossed the Tiber. She thought might help her get over the shock!

And now... for something completely different.

Funny you should mention 'bars' in your email and ask if I had any, because I have a doozy. You might want to get yourself a cup of tea for this one.

In my readings and such it became apparent to me in the spring, (probably just after I last wrote to you), that to study Scripture on my own was ok, but that I needed to belong to a fellowship of believers - a denomination of some kind. I can't remember how I came to this conclusion, but it made sense and I thought it was a good idea. So off I went.

The first thing I found was that I had 33,000 choices! I thought it was a misprint, but no - there are an estimated thirty-three thousand Christian denominations. I'm sure some of those are quasi-Christian cults like the Mormons and the JW's, (and their many offshoots), but still, that's a lot to choose from.

Another thing is that there would have to be a church in Edmonton, which I figured wouldn't be too much of a problem because a city of a million people should contain most of the usual mainline denominations. (If Jim Bob's Church of Jesus Christ in Monroe, Alabama is the true Church of Christ, then we're all out of luck!)

So I began reading the small print to this or that church. There were, (for the most part), many points I could agree with, but invariably there was a 'poison pill' in there somewhere. Maybe they didn't have an Ellen White or Joseph Smith, but I would for sure come across a doctrine that I could not stomach. (Gay 'marriage' is one of them, which for me wipes out most Canadian churches, including the one I was baptized in - the Anglican.)

My evangelical workmate filled me in on his Church, where the Holy Spirit is alive and everyone is jumping all over the place. I listened, but in the end that's not my idea of worship. (For me, Jesus is God - not my fishing buddy.) (My opinion, of course!!) I thanked him for the invite and continued on.

My journey was good fun - I was learning about different denominations and what they believed, but at the same time I was also coming to grips with the fact that you can justify almost anything, (morally or theologically), and still consider yourself a 'Christian.'

Another thing that was starting to gnaw at me was, (for the lack of a better word), truth. Christ is the Truth. But does any one of the 33,000 have a complete handle on His teachings? Are they all, (at least in some part), right? Are they all, (at least in some part), wrong? I wanted one that taught the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth - but I was beginning to think that the best place for that might be back in my living room.

And that's another thing that bothered me. I might debate myself on the way home from work, (or brushing my teeth), but in the end I usually agree with myself. Myself and I perfect for each other. And that's what I saw in all these denominations - parishioners staying in a particular denomination until they hear something they don't like, and then off they go across the street to another denomination.

Then they're happy, until they hear something they don't agree with. Then off they go. Again and again and again. I've even read of new preachers coming into a church and teaching doctrines that completely contradicted the views of the previous ministers. So if you don't agree with the teachings, sometimes you don't have to go across the street - you can just replace the minister. None of this made sense to me.

I was getting so exasperated that one time at coffee I said to my other workmate, (Simon the RC), "I'd even consider your church just because of its stance on moral issues." As soon as I said it I couldn't believe I said it, but, (what the heck), I thought it would be fun to dig up one of the many 'poison pills' that church had to offer. I couldn't wait to get home.

But instead of going to one of my websites, I wanted to find a Catholic one and use fodder from that to skewer my workmate - who I like a lot, but, well... business is business.

It didn't take long to find a site called 'catholic bridge.' The guy who runs it is a Canadian, so I figured at least I'd have that in common with him. He's a lay person who is a convert and wants to explain Catholicism to people who are interested - and from what I could tell, that usually meant hostile Protestants!

It was laid out really well, with all the good, juicy subjects there for the picking - so many, in fact, that I ignored Mary and jumped on a somewhat obscure one - Replacement Theology.

Unfortunately, Sue, I was surprised to find that I sort of, somewhat, kind of, didn't totally disagree with what the guy wrote. So I picked another, with the same result. Then another. For the rest of the evening, I may not have totally agreed with what I was reading on subject after subject, but once I was filled in on what they actually believe and practice, (as opposed to what I had always assumed they believed and practiced), I had to admit that there would be no poison pill that night.

Sue, I think you can see where this is going. I'll skip all the lectures, debates and shows that I've watched, the articles I've read, and the all the discussions I've had with my two workmates over the spring and summer. Try as I might, (and as crazy as this sounds), not only could I not find my poison pill, but I was beginning to see how the whole thing fit together - and it fit together beautifully.

So, (after much contemplation and prayer), I have decided to become Catholic.

Sue? You ok? Have a sip of tea. I can explain.

I can explain - but I won't be discussing any points of theology, as that can be done by simply visiting the website I mentioned earlier, (catholic bridge), or a much better one, Catholic Answers. An explanation of doctrine can be done by them.

There are two people in particular who were very influential in my decision - Dr. Scott Hahn, (former Presbyterian), and Steve Ray, (former evangelical.) Their stuff is all over the Internet, and if you want an insight into why I've gone this route, their testimonies, lectures, debates and interviews would go a long way in shedding light on my decision.

Also, The Journey Home, (YouTube), also played a large part. Converts discuss how they made their way to the Church, from atheism, Islam, evangelical Protestantism - you name it. You won't agree with their final destination, but at least you'd understand how they got there.

How I got there mirrors many of the guests on that show. Something makes them curious, so they ask questions. They get answers that make sense, so they ask more questions, get more answers, and finally they read the Early Church Fathers. Then they join the Church. That seems to be the pattern.

I found the most interesting shows to be the ones that involved evangelical missionaries or pastors, because of their theological training, and deep, deep distrust, (or outright hostility), to Catholicism. And then to watch their antipathy vanish into the air was fascinating stuff.

Sister, I simply wanted to find the path, (no matter how roundabout), that was best for me, regardless of the outcome. And believe me, (like guests on the Journey Home), this is the last place I thought I'd end up.

Best wishes to all and God Bless,

New Convert :-) happy