

In my articles [‘Losing and Finding it All’](#) and [‘The Day I Heard the Lord’s Voice; The Day I Knew Jesus Is Real’](#) I talked about how I moved from being an Agnostic to a Christian. I wish I could say that I went to prison and found Christ, but that would not be the truth – It was Jesus who found me in very bad condition and gave me a new opportunity at life.

After Jesus spoke to me as I was in the process of trying to commit suicide and said, *"I love you. I am here,"* everything was different. I could no longer deny that Jesus was real and that He was interested in having a personal relationship with me, but some of those issues that troubled me about Christianity for all those years still lingered in my heart.

Ever since I was teenager, I could never understand how those Christians could be in so many different denominations, and each of them teaching so many radically different things that were at odds with what the other denominations were teaching, and, yet, all insisting that they each believed in the same God.

I kept asking myself how could they all believe in the same God and simultaneously accept that their God was confusing them with opposing and competing truths? As far as I was concerned, that was not a God worth believing in.

Moreover, I was not very knowledgeable about the New Testament, but one thing I knew for sure was that the YHWH of Old Testament always kept His people together and for His children there was nothing more important than the Shema, *"Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD"* (Deuteronomy 6:4).

I knew that in the Davidic Kingdom there was only one God, one Temple, and one priesthood. Therefore, as an Agnostic, I concluded that either these Christians were not of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as they claimed, or there was no God.

There in October of 2004 it was good enough for me to finally know that God is real, and He truly does have a Son named Jesus Christ who loves me more than I love myself; so the restlessness and questions in my heart about those Christian denominations would wait until a later time. I was on my way to prison – my new life, and I had to figure out how I was going to adjust to that.

On August 31st, 2005 I was Baptized in prison in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. I suppose that I could have been classed as Protestant at that time and until my conversion to Catholicism, because that (Protestantism) was the brand of theology that I subscribed to at least; even without knowing what I was ‘protesting’ against exactly or knowing anything about the Catholic Church, except what I heard, such as they worship Mary and the Pope. Yet, the Baptism itself was huge step for me in the right direction, because, for me, it meant commitment; it meant that I

was ready to take my walk with Christ Jesus seriously. In the light of Christ having deigned to speak to me personally to save me from myself, I felt that I owed that commitment to God. He gave me my life back, so I felt that I owed Him mine.

It was shortly after my Baptism that all the old restlessness and those questions arose in my heart again. By that time I had become more familiar with the New Testament and it had become absolutely clear to me that I had to belong to a Church, because that was the 'gift' that Jesus gave us through his Apostles, He prayed that we would be one (Cf. *John* 17), Paul admonished us to be of one faith, one Lord, on Baptism, and one God (Cf. *Ephesians* 4:5-6), and the writer of *Hebrews* commands us not to forsake the assembly (Cf. 10:23).

I was just starting year two of a five to nine year sentence, so I felt that I had plenty of time to make up my mind which Church I would join, but for awhile I assumed that I would join the African Methodist Episcopal Church because that was the one my Grandmother Minnie always took me to.

CONFUSION SET IN

In January of 2006, still restless over this issue of competing Protestant denominations, two questions arose in my heart that changed my life for good. It is true; the fruit of our life is only as good as the questions that we ask ourselves. That is, if I don't ask myself good questions, then the result is that my answers in regards to life's difficulties are no good either. In other words, it is only through the process of asking and answering questions that we discover who we are in relation to God and neighbor.

The questions I asked myself that day were, "Well, what happened to the Church that Jesus started through his Apostles? What happened to the Churches in the Bible?" What basic and fundamental questions were these? I thought I was silly for not asking them a long time ago. And, simultaneously, I was worried that I would not be able to find their answers, or that the answers that I would find would be some church that was so small and reclusive that I would not be able to join. Yet, I knew that my heart would be restless until I went on this journey to find the true Church of Jesus.

THE SEARCH BEGINS

My journey began with a challenge to God. First, I thanked Him for saving my life and added that if that experience was real and if the Bible is true and you told the truth when you said that gates of Hell would not prevail against your Church (Cf. *Matthew* 16:18) and you do not want your people to be divided and fighting each other, then the Church that you started through your Apostles should still be here today.

I told Him that I believe that you are that powerful and that loving that you would not leave your people guessing for the truth or dividing in competing factions, but if you could not do that little thing then you are not worth my believing in. Finally, I told him

that I needed Him to help me answer this question and that I would go wherever He led me.

My search for the Church of Christ began with Scripture. More precisely, it began with the premise of 'truth' and that would remain as the underlying foundation of my search. There are two things that Scriptures says are always true: the first is Christ Jesus, who calls Himself 'The Truth'. "I am the way, the truth, and the life . . ." (*John 14:6*); the second is the **CHURCH**, – "But if I should be delayed, you should know how to behave in the household of God, which is the Church of the living God, the Pillar and Foundation of Truth" (1 *Timothy* 3:15).

Because I started with the foundation of the Old Covenant, it allowed me to understand Jesus' words "*Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill*" (*Matthew* 5:17) under the context that everything that was in the Old Covenant is now in the New Covenant, but in its fulfilled sense. That is why I immediately dismissed the Protestant notion of some 'invisible' unity, because the Old Covenant offered a clearly visible unity amongst the people, priesthood, Temple, and God.

I understood that all Christians are one in 'Spirit', but, clearly, Scripture is not talking about an invisible unity. Jesus prayed that we would be one so that the world will believe and know that the Father sent the Son. He did not pray that we would be thirty-three thousand different denominations. Moreover, the unity that Jesus prayed for is a right now unity; meaning that it was something was instantly present, as opposed to something that Protestants believe will come at the end.

Because Jesus prayed that we would be one, so that the world will believe and know that the Father sent the Son, it follows that if we are not one, then the world has every reason not to believe and every reason not to know that the Father sent the Son. I am an example of the failure of Christians not living up to Jesus' prayer. The disunity of Christians harmed me as a youth. Because they were not one – I rejected them. I had not known about the Catholic Church.

It troubled me greatly back in January of 2006, after I started the process to find the Church of the Apostles, when I immediately had to dismiss every Protestant church on the grounds that not a single one of them is older than five hundred years. That meant that none them could be the actual Church that the Apostles started.

On top of that, each of them was started by some man: the Lutherans by Martin Luther; the Presbyterians by John Calvin; the Anglicans/Episcopalians by King Henry VIII, the Baptist by John Smyth; the Methodist by John Wesley, and etc. In addition, the motives of these men starting these Churches seemed to be scurrilous and suspect – clearly not of God. I began to be scared of what I was about to find.

Soon thereafter, I saw that the Catholic Church was actually Christian, and I understood that because it was the Church that the Protestants were protesting against meant that it was older than them. Still today, most Protestants today have no clue what they are protesting against. Yet, at this point in my research, I figured that I would eventually discover that the Catholic Church was started some time in the middle ages (like I had always heard from Protestants). Having heard so many strange things about Catholics and what they believe, I had no reason to believe that it was the Church that Jesus Christ started through His Apostles.

THE PAPER TRAIL

Whenever I research, I never go straight to a biased source. My initial research here was done through good encyclopedias and non-religious books. What I discovered from a number of sources is that by the late first century, [the same Churches that we read about in the Bible had begun to call themselves catholic.](#)

That was an odd discovery for me, but I didn't immediately connect it with the Catholic Church, because 'in context' all they were expressing is what the word 'catholic' means in Greek (that is, one, whole, united, complete). In addition, I was just like everyone else in this country – I had a built in prejudice against Catholics and the last thing that I wanted to be was a Catholic, more especially a Black Catholic.

Next, I came across some documents from the first and second century – they were letters to and from the [Bishop of Rome](#). He was not being called the 'Pope' yet ('pope' only means 'father' in Italian), but the new questions that I was being forced to answer myself was: 'Why were these Churches far outside of Rome writing to the Bishop of Rome to resolve their disputes at a time when the Apostle John was still alive?' 'Why was the Bishop of Rome writing to Churches far outside of Rome, like Corinth, and telling them what to do?' 'Who did the Bishop of Rome think he was?'

Ok, the answers to these questions were problematic, but I kept prayerfully going. I was starting to tell God that He had to straighten me out, because I was far off track in my research. The Church that He started could not be the Catholic Church.

Next, I backed up a little bit and started studying the teachings of the Catholic Church, because if I could prove that what they teach is not what the Bible actually teaches then I could dismiss this weird religion and find the error in my research, and get back to finding the true Church of the Apostles. I actually was starting to think that Jesus is a liar and a false God that can't even provide the means to keep His people homogeneous. So I went back to the library and checked out several books on Catholic theology and history.

The first books that I dug into were the history books written by Catholics, and they made me feel pretty stupid! Why had I not asked myself basic questions like: 'When was the Bible put together?' 'Who made up our foundation doctrines like the Trinity?'

'Who set the dates for Christmas and Easter?' I found that not only did the founders of the Church, that eventually began calling itself Catholic, write the books of the New Testament, but it was also the Catholic Church who preserved these writings and [canonized \(listed the books\) of the Bible in 382 A.D.](#)

It was the Catholic Church who formulated the doctrine of the Trinity and who set the dates of Easter and Christmas. In a way, we are all Catholics because we accept so many of the Church's teachings. I found that Protestants cannot truly say that they reject the teachings of the Catholic Church, because out of the side of their mouth they must confess that those same teachings form the foundation of their faith.

There are some teachings that are very peculiar to the Catholic Church, like Purgatory, intercessory prayer with the saints (in Heaven), belief that the communion bread and wine is the Real Flesh, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ, and the high honor they pay the Virgin Mary. I deduced that if I could prove that some of the main people of the first three centuries of the Church rejected fundamental and key Catholic teachings then I could rightfully dismiss the Catholic Church.

In other words, because the Catholic Church holds that what She believes now that She has always believed, then if I could prove that orthodox Christians from the first and second centuries believed something other than what the Catholic Church teaches then I could get back on track to find the true Church of Christ.

I was troubled again by what I discovered. Not only was it clearly evident that what the Catholic Church believes today what has She has always believed, but that the saints and martyrs of the first three centuries were clearly members of that Church. The real shocker was the finding out that everything that the Catholic Church believes is Scriptural. But why wouldn't it be?

If this is the Church that gave us the Bible, then why wouldn't She agree with everything in the Bible? I was starting to realize that the problem was not what the Catholic Churches understandings of Scripture. On the contrary, the problem was my understanding of Scripture. Who was I to interpret a book different than its own author has been interpreting it for two thousand years?

Like most people, I had heard some things about the Emperor Constantine creating the Roman Catholic Church and formulating doctrine. I already knew that this old wives tale (demonic lie) had some problems because I had already proven to myself that the Catholic Church evolved out of the first Churches of the Apostles, but what was up with the Council of Nicaea and all those early councils?

MORE QUESTIONS

By March of 2006 I had done a lot of research. God has blessed me with signs that I was on the right path. Yet, a part of me still did not want to be Catholic, but I could not

deny where the Spirit was leading me. I had to admit to myself that this was not my idea to be Catholic, and it felt good that I was not following my own will. It also felt good that I might be able to trust God. If I did not have to figure out the Bible on my own, but, rather, trust the theology of the Church who has been working on explaining Her own book for two thousand years, then that would take a lot of weight off of my back. My next task was to go in undercover and investigate. I had to figure out what the Catholic Church and that Mass thing was about.

The first Mass that I attended changed my life forever. It was everything that I ever dreamed of in a Church. Don't get me wrong – there is a Catholic Church in every country in the world and they all celebrate the Mass slightly different. Even in this country where some Catholic Churches that are predominately Black, Hispanic, or Charismatic, they get down with music, dancing, and tongues and you name it, but the first Mass that I attended was perfect for me.

Besides the ritual and drama, what I love about the Mass the most is that it is **all about Jesus!** It is never about some man or his preaching. There are three to four Scriptures read at every Mass and all Catholics in every part of the world hear the same Scriptures every day, because Mass is not just on Sunday – it is everyday. 'They Broke Bread Daily' the Scripture says and Catholics do just that.

Again, the focus of the Mass is not on some man preaching, but, rather, on Jesus. Not on the music, but on Jesus. Not on people praising God, but on Jesus. Yes there is good preaching, music, and praise, but that is not why Catholics go to Mass. They go to the Sacrifice of the Mass to see Jesus. He is there physically and spiritually in the [Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist](#). It is incredible!

I cannot see myself going through life without the Real Manna that came down from Heaven. God is so good and compassionate to come to us in such a little and humble way.

First He came to us as a little infant and now He continues to come to us in a little morsel of bread and sip of wine – that, through the ordained priest, He actually turns into His real Flesh and Blood. I know it sounds crazy, but it is what Jesus and the Apostles taught, Scripture teaches, and what we Christians have always believed for fifteen hundred years until some men came along said it actually wasn't.

Satan won when Christians became divided over the Body of Christ. I feel so sad for people who do not receive the real Flesh and Blood of Jesus. God has never been more intimate with us than He is at the Mass when we take Him into our mouths just as [John 6](#) says we must do to have eternal life. I found that there is only one reason why all Christians are not Catholic and it is the same reason why all Catholics leave the Catholic Church; that is, they believe something different about the Holy Eucharist than what the Catholic Church actually teaches that it is. For, if they truly believed that the

Eucharist is the actual Body and Blood of Jesus Christ then they would refuse to go even a day without receiving it.

I had lots of other issues with the Catholic Church, such as: confession to a priest, the Virgin Mary, praying with dead people (saints), and you name it, but I always came back to some basic facts: (1) That I asked for this; (2) The issue was usually my pride, not Catholic teaching; (3) What the Church teaches is what they have been teaching for two thousand years; therefore, who was I, who had only been around for three something years, to declare that I know the whole truth; (4) The Catholic Church has been consistently counter-cultural and strong on all of Her [moral and social teachings](#) (e.g. pro-life, human rights, natural marriage, and etc.), while the Protestant church has been blowing in the wind on everything; (5) The alternative is belonging to some Church that was not started by the Apostles and has only been here for five hundred or less years; and (6) The fact that the Catholic Church has been tested for two thousand years and has withstood the adversity is a sign of grace from God. Therefore, I resolved those issues in two ways; first, by researching what the Church teaches and why; and second, by trusting God not to lead me wrong.

It feels good to be able to tell God on the day of judgment that I only believed what the Church that He started taught and nothing else. That is to say, that if I was wrong about anything it was His fault – not mine! I don't know what is going to happen to those people who meet God and tell Him that they believed what they wanted to believe or what Martin Luther or John Calvin (not Apostles) taught.

Ultimately, I found myself in a position that I couldn't find a way out of. I had found what I went looking for. It is true – the Catholic Church was not what I expect to find when I began my journey, but it turned out to be everything that I always wanted. The Church of the Apostles is still with us. [The Catholic Church is the Church that Jesus started through His Apostles](#). Still feeling a bit reluctant, the next question I asked myself was the question that concluded my research: -Why would I belong to any other Church, but the Church that was started by the God who saved my life?

On August 8th, 2006 I was Confirmed and received into the Catholic Church, taking St. Joseph as my patron Saint. It was funny; St. Joseph was there as a kid, as I use to ride my bike past St. Joseph Hospital in Warren, Ohio, and there he was again at my hour of conversion in St. Joseph Parish. I suppose he has always been there watching me move along.

God has been so merciful and gracious with me and has never led me wrong. I am so happy that He brought me to His Church kicking and screaming all along the way, because I appreciate the struggle and the journey. Even today, as I knell down at Mass, I have to shake my head with a grin that I am actually a Roman Catholic and the happiest I have ever been in my life.