

My Story – Lee Schmoe

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I realize now that God has always known I was going to become Catholic. It took me 46 years to figure it out. My mom taught me about God when I was little. I'm sure it was hard for her, though, because we moved about once a year and most often lived in small Western US towns without a Quaker community – the faith of both my parents. For most of my life my God was the high-above, abstract God who created the majestic mountains where I grew up, the God who created the giant redwood trees that dwarf us all, and the God who created the innumerable galaxies that continue to instill in me wonder and awe.



Thirty-four years ago Cherie and I married in the Catholic church where she grew up. She has (nearly) always been a holy example for me. Every once in a while, at her encouragement, I would go with her to mass. When the girls came along I started going more frequently. However, I didn't really understand or feel comfortable at mass with all the perplexing Latin words, the standup/sit down/genuflect/kneel thing, and the mysterious sacraments (the Quakers have no sacraments). Frankly, though, I was quite happy with my life. I was a good dad and husband with a wonderful family and a good job. Who could ask for more?

Then 14 years ago two things happened at about the same time that caused me to rethink my life. When my elder daughter had her first communion I could not share it with her. It made me worry: what kind of example was I setting for our girls? Also, that summer a missionary nun talked at mass about the work she was doing with poor kids in Central America. I asked myself: what am I doing for the good of others? I was living a life of my own making – a life that didn't seem to have an important purpose. I promised God during that mass that I would check out the RCIA program that fall. That promise changed my life in so many beautiful ways that I never could have imagined.

In RCIA I learned a lot of about the Catholic faith, its history, and its relevance to living a holy life. More importantly, Christ changed my heart. At the following Easter Vigil I became a newly baptized Catholic and a disciple of Christ with all of its wonderful benefits - and all of its obligations. It has been trying to live up to the latter that has been the most rewarding over these last 13 years. I have been an RCIA sponsor for 10 amazing souls. (By the way, if you want to grow in your faith, be a sponsor. You, too, will be changed.) Cherie and I completed the Formation toward Christian Ministry (FTCM) series of classes. During those three semesters God rearranged my until-then, busy work and travel schedules. Clearly, He wanted me to learn more about His and my missions. I then learned that the Holy Spirit has given all of us (including me!) powerful gifts that we are to

use to help Christ accomplish his plans on earth. I have served on a number of parish councils, committees and ministries – all of which continually inspire me with the holy energy and love in our church. My life has grown from a handful of friends and family to a community of friends and the family of St. Laurence. This transformation has not occurred through life-changing bolts of lightning from above... rather through periodic, gentle nudges and loving reminders. Compared to my old life, my new life in Christ is so much more filled with joy, peace, and purpose.

It has sometimes been a challenge trying to figure out and live up to the commitment I made when I was baptized. For example, as an engineer I tend to have a “prove it to me” attitude toward new beliefs. As you can imagine, this poses a challenge for me concerning things that can only be accepted on faith – like the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Ask me sometime how God answered my prayers for belief in His real presence. He “proved” this to me and showed his unconditional love for me - both at the same time. Also, some of the Catholic teachings have been tough for me to accept, especially those on social justice. However, the engineer in me knows deep down that there is only one Truth and that that Truth is unchangeable. Our Church teachings, including those on social justice, adhere to the one constant Truth.

So if you ask me today who my God is I still will tell you He is the God that created the mountains and the redwoods. I now will add that he is also the Trinitarian God that created me in his own image, loves me unconditionally, and is my unwavering friend and advocate. He is also the Son that died for my sins so that I, my family, my friends, and you (through His grace) will live in love and joy with Him forever.

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you.” My favorite bible verse (Jeremiah 1:5-6) reassures us of God’s eternal love for us, comforts us that each of us is important to His plan, and reminds us that we have work to do.

Lee Schmoe