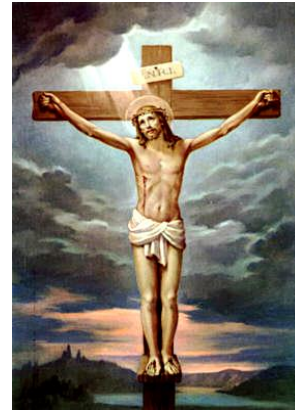




FROM
**ASSEMBLY
OF
GOD**
TO
**ROMAN
CATHOLIC**



*This is an extremely condensed version of my journey from Protestantism to Catholicism. If you wish to know more, need scriptural references, want to question me about something, want to learn more about Catholicism or would like some great web-sites to visit...please let me know.
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PREFACE:

I was raised in an Assemblies of God church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I have so many wonderful memories of growing up in that church. It is where I learned about God. It is where I received my spiritual foundation. I love the wonderful people I have known from there throughout the years.

BACKGROUND:

My first contact with the Roman Catholic Church – albeit minimal – occurred in the winter of 1994. My grandfather was dying in a Catholic hospital in Tulsa. I often went to the hospital chapel to pray. I remember feeling close to God there.

A year or so later, I was in (heavily Catholic) Green Bay, Wisconsin. It was Good Friday, 1995. The sign outside Saint John the Evangelist Catholic Church announced their noon service. I had never been inside a Catholic church before but was kind of curious. So I went. I sat near the back of that beautiful old church and took-it-in. The service seemed rather 'old-school'. I was used to spot-lights, drum-sets, and video-screens. They had none of that. But it seemed they had something richer...an ancient faith. As I had in the Catholic hospital, I remember feeling close to God there.

But how was that possible? Growing-up, I heard people say things like: "The pope is the anti-Christ", "Catholics aren't allowed to pray to Jesus (they have to go 'through' Mary)", "Catholics consider the pope equal to God", "Catholics worship the pope/Mary/saints/statues", "Catholics aren't allowed to read the bible", "Catholics think Jesus is still hanging on the cross", etc. So how was it possible that I - raised Assemblies of God - felt close to God in these Catholic surroundings? Maybe what I heard about Catholicism wasn't true? Maybe the spirit I was feeling wasn't God?

CHRISTIAN HISTORY:

I was back in Tulsa in the fall of 1997 and began a journey for answers. My love of history led me to study the history of Christianity. I had never even thought about doing that before. It never even crossed my mind. (I learned/knew more about the history of my country, than I did about the history of my faith.)

I think so many who were raised as I, think Christianity started at Azusa Street (100 years ago), or at the very most the Reformation (500 years ago). But I discovered 2,000 years of Christian history!

For the first 1,500 years, there was virtually one Christian Church. One. Martin Luther left that one (Catholic) Church in the year 1514. He 'protested' it and started his own - that is where the word 'Protestant' comes from. In the 500 years since Luther's 'protest', Protestantism has continually divided into 30,000 denominations. One of those, the Assemblies of God, was mine.

CATHOLIC DOCTRINES/BELIEFS:

In studying the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, I quickly realized there were many misconceptions (like the previously-mentioned ones). Misconceptions believed by many sincere people, but misconceptions none-the-less.

Doctrinally, Roman Catholicism was more complex. I was used to black-and-white, rigid doctrinal interpretations and positions. With Catholicism, there were some grey areas. At first, I was suspect of that. I saw it as weak, wishy-washy, playing both-sides-of-the-fence. But, I remained open. I had 'ears to hear'.

Eventually, after a long while, I became completely convinced of the validity of the doctrinal claims of Roman Catholicism.

There were, however, a handful of truths that shook me to spiritual my core! Among them:

- The Roman Catholic Church was the foundation of Christian truth – not the bible!
- The Roman Catholic Church existed almost 400 years before the bible!
- The bible came out of the Church (not the other way around)!

Those things shocked me! They still shock me!

Though foreign to me, these and other beliefs were the historical, biblical, Christian beliefs.

CHURCH FATHERS:

One of the most important factors in my becoming Catholic was the Church Fathers. Now, I had no idea who or what a Church Father was. I had never heard of them. I was never taught about them.

The Church Fathers were the first, second and third generation of Church leaders. They led the early Christian Church. The Church Fathers were chosen by the Apostles and were given their authority – just as Christ chose the Apostles and gave them His authority.

And the reason I was never taught about them? They were Catholic! These men were my spiritual forefathers and they were Catholic! These men were the Founding Fathers of our faith and they were Catholic!

I read their (preserved) writings. I studied the Christian doctrines they were charged with spreading. Whether it be – baptismal regeneration, infant baptism, salvation, the papacy, apostolic succession, the Blessed Virgin Mary – these men were Catholic in doctrine!

The writings of the Church Fathers were a gold-mine of Christian truth. Yet I was never told or taught anything about them. Since we didn't hold to everything they taught the early Christian Church...they were kept from me.

Sure, there was common ground – one God, the Virgin birth, the Trinity, etc. But when there was contradictory teaching...who was right? For instance, when my church interpreted the biblical/Christian meaning of baptism one way, and the Church Fathers did another...who was right? Somebody had to be. Was I suppose to believe that the successors of the Apostles were wrong? And my 90 year-old, American church, was right? That was a pretty big pill to swallow.

THE CHOICE:

I had before me a choice. Two churches. Both Christian. Both with fine qualities. Both filled with many sincere people who loved God. Both loved by God.

But the complete truth had to prevail. Not just which church possessed some truth (even the Mormons and JW's posses some truth) rather which church possessed the fullness of Christian truth.

Through all my studying, researching, questioning, praying, listening, watching, I kept coming back to a few central questions. I kept coming back to a few simple comparisons.

One church:

- Was the original Christian Church
- Was founded by Christ and will endure forever
- Was united (world-wide) by the unity of doctrines it proclaims
- Taught identical doctrines to those of the Apostles and early Church
- Was authoritative and governs with the power given it by God.

The other church:

- Was probably around the 12,000th Christian church
- Was founded by E.N. Bell, in Arkansas, in 1914

- Had some unity in doctrine with themselves – but they have/can change
- Taught against many of the doctrines of the Apostles and early Church
- Admitted it has no authority outside the bible

My choice was looking pretty obvious. I mean, what choice did I really have? If I hadn't learned all I had – Christian history, Catholic history, Protestant history, the bible, the Church Fathers, etc. - that would be one thing. I could claim ignorance. You can't be held responsible for something you don't know, right?

But how do you 'un-learn' something you've learned? How do you 'un-know' something you know?

You can't. I couldn't. If I was to remain a Christian, I had to become Catholic.

No longer would I pick a church because of how it made me feel, or how good the music was, or how friendly the people were, or how many activities they had.

I couldn't settle for a church that was an off-shoot, of a church-split, of a division, of a schism, of the original Protestant church. I wanted the original.

It was the Easter Vigil of 1998, at the Church of Saint Mary, in Tulsa, OK, where my journey came to an end. Christ accepted me into His Holy Catholic Church! After twenty-nine years, I was home.

I was now a part of the largest Christian church the world has ever known! Home to one out-of-every two Christians in the world! And one out-of-every five people in the world! And now, home to me.

It's good to be home.

*1998 – I entered the Catholic Church
at Saint Mary's, in Tulsa.*

*1999 – My beautiful Alexandra
was baptized at Saint Mary's.*

*2001 – We became members of Tulsa's
Holy Family Cathedral.*

*2001 – Joshua was baptized
at Holy Family.*

*Alex & Josh love going downtown
to mass at the Cathedral.*

