

## Mario's Story

Looking back on my past, it always amazes me, how God has worked through my life, through the valleys and wilderness, leading me to in my vocation to the Roman Catholic Priesthood. Everything that seems impossible for human thinking, God makes possible by His gracious love, and His beautiful plan in my life. This brief autobiography will tell you, the story about a traveler who was trapped in a pagan faith, but God showed him the way back to the light, as a prodigal son who comes back to the house of the father, the Holy Catholic Church.

I was born in Indonesia, which is more than 90% 'Sunni' Muslims, as the largest Muslim population country and one of the most extreme and fundamentalist Muslim Country in the world. The Christians who live in Indonesia were always under pressure, such as persecution and discrimination, between 1990 and to 2000 alone, there were hundreds of churches burned down and hundreds of Christians, including clergy and lay people were torture, raped, and killed.

Even though I was born Christian, I was growing in the Islamic community and environment. I had my education in an Islamic school until my senior years. My school regulated all students to attended an hour class of Islamic teaching everyday. I've listened to their teachings from Monday through Saturday for years.

Years gone by, and I became more convinced about Islamic teaching and started doubting Christianity. Because my knowledge about Christianity was very limited on that time, many questions crossed my mind about the truth of Christianity. The things I most worried about in those times were the Humanity and Divinity of Christ, the Church, and the 'Omnipotence of God'. I went around and asked many priests (Catholic) and ministers (protestant) for the answers, but for quite sometime, I never received the answers that really satisfied me, I used to think that all Theological and Philosophical can be explained by reasons, I'm kind of 'Rationalism' (used to be). I becoming a Muslim and learned 'Islamic Theology' at Islamic School for years.

A few years after that, I met one protestant minister, that used to be very famous preacher in Islam, and one of their figure. He been known as a Christian debater and used to prosecute Christians or even burned churches. He repented and became a Methodist minister. After few months, I continually listen to his preaching and teaching under the group called Y.M.P.I. I always listen to their discussions and it's really help me. Times gone by until finally Holy Spirit touch my heart and bring me back to Christ through this Protestant minister. He made me realize that I was lost, but the good thing is, God never forgotten me, He still waiting for me to come back to His house, as a prodigal sons who just waste the father money and fed a pigs. Since then, I understood how Christianity and her truth within it, are very difference with any other religions which they call also truth. Christianity is not religion, but it's the way of 'salvation'. Jesus never created a new religion, He is a very devoted Jews, same as all His Apostles. I understood since

then, how Jesus is the way, truth, and the life, which is the only possible way for all human race to have the beatitude with God the Father (John 14:6).

After I repented from my pagan faith, I really wanted to share my journey and my faith experience to the world, I really want to become a teacher. My faith in Jesus Christ is becomes stronger and stronger, but without realizing one thing very important, that the other parts of me still missing and my foundation is collapsing because I don't have a real stone to hang on to. Because both of my parents are a very devoted Catholic, we always discussed about things that I'm sure they know that I'm a very good debater. I keep telling them that all Christian is the same, and Jesus is our savior, Faith saves us not Charity. I becoming so proud of myself and very arrogant but without realizing that I'm lacked and still have a very big whole on my spiritual life, I'm still far from the objective truth. What struck me so much is when my father give me a book written by Karl Keating called "Catholic and Fundamentalism", in this book he try to explains and refute the heresy 'Boettner' in this person book call "Roman Catholicism", wow it's really shock me how Mr. Keating explain about the Catholic teaching. Since then, I realize that it's not enough for me to stop here, I have to continue studying about everything, seek the truth because the Truth will set us free.

I bought so many books, such us "Rome sweet Home", "Catholic and Christians", "Upon this Rock", "Refuting attack on Mary", "Why do Catholic do that", the greatest "One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic", and many other excellence books. In the other hands, in Protestant side I read my books like "Roman Catholicism", "Reformed Doctrine of Predestination", "The Atonement" and many other anti-Catholic books. Very suppresses me that truthfully that Catholic and Protestant Church is have a big gap and differences in their objective doctrines not only subjectively as I understood before.

I graduated in Australia and got my Bachelor degree in business, I flew to the United States of America. I continued my study there for my M.Th degree (Master of Theology) in a Non-Domination (but it is Reform Protestant) Seminary. Some of the professor and the ministers sees my achievement, either through articles that I wrote to the newspapers or/and magazines, and also through my mentorship and teaching assignment. Years later, even though I haven't graduated yet, I was ordained as a minister in the most liberal church the history ever known, Presbyterian Church USA. I can't even imagine now why I accept or even consider that offer???

More I study, more I read good books, more I discerns, more I humble my heart and wish to listen more to God than just talk and ask for something, more I realize how wrong the paths that I took. I realize that my journey to Christ is not fulfilled yet, I'm not yet in the father house. I start to compared and seeking for the truth, which finally I found the one true Church, the Church which is found by Jesus Himself, not by any other people as we know now as the Reformators. Through many help of Priest, discussion with many Theologians especially to my spiritual director, God has lead me back to the house of the Father, come home to the one true Church, the Catholic Church. As St.Cyprian of Carthage says, "Whoever is separated from the Holy Catholic

Church or joined to an adulteress, a schismatic church, he is separated from the promises of the Church. He becomes an alien, a worldling, and an enemy. He cannot have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother." (The unity of the Catholic Church 6, 1st ed. [A.D. 251])?

I immigrated to Canada from the United States to gather with my family years after. I served the local Catholic Community in Toronto as an adult catechist. Through the great help from Fr. Larry Marcille (Vocation Director - Archdiocese of Toronto) I became a Toronto Seminarian, and again, as a Seminarian in St. Phillip's Neri Seminary, held by the Great Oratorian Fathers.