

Chad's Story

My story should perhaps be called "Nominal Catholic Sees the Light", or perhaps "Protatholic Finds Catholic Answers." I am one of the lucky ones who has been graced by always living my life in the Church. However, the period of my upbringing from the age of 10-20.5 was only Catholic inasmuch as my family usually went to Mass and my parents made me go to CCD and receive confirmation. Beyond that, my life and my catechesis were dunghills that wouldn't have even measured up to Luther's standards as being covered with the white snow of Christ. Like many "American Catholics," I was raised to believe that I did not need to confess my sins to a priest, contraception is o.k., and if the Pope were married, he would not have banned it. I was also raised with the belief that abortion is o.k. in some circumstances, like rape and incest. I further extended the logic of this position during high school to include "preventative" abortions of fetuses with disabilities. I was further taught that a certain activity alleged to make males go blind was good to practice, as it would keep my "raging hormones" from leading me to alleviate my urges in the back seat of my '79 Chevy. This is perhaps needless to mention, but that practice makes one more likely to yield to the temptations of the back seat, not less. These are obviously all very bad things, but they pale in comparison to the religious relativism that is a hallmark of my family's particular version of the "truth." I was always taught that it really doesn't matter if you're Catholic, or even Christian, as long as you are a "good person." Basically the idea is similar to karma - if you do evil in your life, that evil can be negated by all the good things you do, and you will go to heaven. This evoked two responses in me. I decided that the Mass was boring, and I expressed a desire to become a Baptist because their church sessions weren't always the same old thing. It also led me to a lack of faith in the Eucharist. For a span of almost 2 years, I refused to receive the Eucharist.

That in a nutshell is my sorry background. I was led away from this quagmire by my own stubborn nature and a challenge to Catholicism posed to me by a Fundamentalist girl that I dated briefly in the beginning of my junior year of college. I am far too bullheaded to just accept someone saying my religion is wrong without investigating things on my own. The challenges specifically brought up were about praying to Mary, salvation by works, and Purgatory. I was enough of a fool at this time to simply tell her that Catholics no longer believed in Purgatory. That year we had just gotten high speed internet access in the dorm, so while I also undertook my first study of Scripture, I went to the net to see what was out there. Low and behold, www.catholic.com filled my browser with all the information I needed to not only understand things myself, but to for the first time see the beauty of our faith when properly taught and the ugliness of my own misunderstandings and desire to put what I wanted to be true before that which IS true. Sola scriptura and sola fide came crashing down in heaps of rubble along with my other unscriptural ideas, especially my denial of the authority of the Church. I began participating in an apologetics list founded by Dave Armstrong and on a pro-life discussion board. I also began attending Mass and slowly I began to let Christ work in me to lead me from my former ways. The next year I served as a peer minister for our campus ministry. I have had serious relapses along the way, both in faith and in morals, and I must admit that the humble pie of confession is still not an easy thing for me to partake in. However, I have learned to accept

that I am still a work in progress, and like Augustine, who I look to as having problems which mirror mine in many instances, I have learned beyond a shadow of a doubt that I would not believe the Gospel were it not for the Church. I am still serving as a fledgling internet apologist, and I am still putting on the full armour of God by listening to Catholic Answers Live and reading the works of the great apologists like Keating, Hahn, Madrid, Howard, Ott, and others. Now, I just need some Steve Ray books. Maybe then I'll be ready to become a saint.