

Why I Became Catholic: Swimming Against the Tide.

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**Men's Breakfast Presentation
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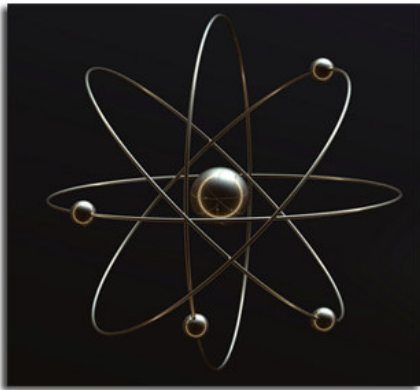
As G.K. Chesterton once said “only live fish can swim against the current.” (or go against the flow). The world is clearly going in a different direction than the Church and God in an increasingly fast way. After going the wrong way for so long, my eyes eventually opened over the course of several years of searching and finding what the heart truly desires.

Father Richard, a man full of zeal and orthodoxy, was our parish priest when we entered the Catholic Church. He invited me to speak today about how I became Catholic. I hope today God will help me to inspire you to appreciate the splendor of the Catholic Church. I am one of the many thousands of new converts who have made their way to the Catholic Church having been drawn to an undeniable and unwavering truth. A truth that naturally attracts the soul, which, in the words of St. Augustine, thirsts for the perfection of truth, goodness, and beauty. The reason any of us should say we have faith in something should be because we believe it to be true. Pope John Paul II once said man must always search for the true goodness of man never compromising what is true in the face of human weakness.

Before I start I would like to preface my conversion story by saying God has brought me where I am through a long journey which started with scientific reductionism which merged into pantheism took a detour into Protestantism until God grabbed hold and brought me home. I should also say it was a journey I took with my mother, my wife Amy and with some help from Father Richard, my family, including my brother and sister in law.

My first experience of Catholicism as a child was going to mass on Christmas Eve while visiting my cousins in Toronto. Seeing them kneeling in prayer, I remembered how pious

and devoted some of the parishioners seemed. The image of them all going up to receive communion and putting that white piece of bread in their mouths, the one that they had just knelt in front of, stayed with me. I also remember asking one of my cousins to bring the bread back so that I could look at it. Thankfully he kept it in his mouth. That was the extent of my religious experience until I was in my twenties. That is aside from my mother, in Buddhist tradition, who used to put incense into fruit and pray from time to time for the dead.



SCIENTIFIC REDUCTIONISM later becomes PANTHEISM.

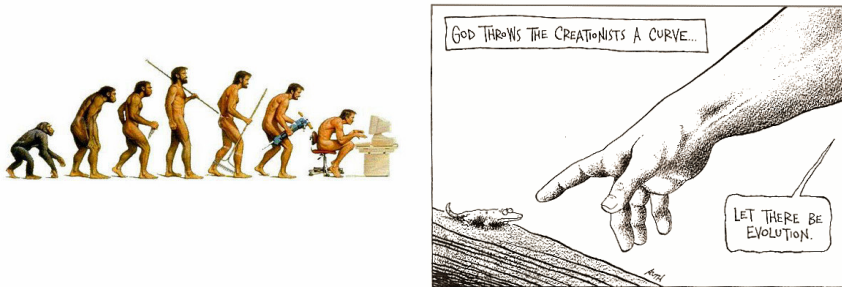
I grew up in a household that cherished reason above all else. My father was a scientist who worked with high temperature plasma, as a potential means of manufacturing microchips, and he always seemed to have the answers to everything that mattered. He knew how everything worked and could explain it. He actually helped me build an electric generator and working steam engine from scratch for my seventh and eighth grade science projects. These principles helped me understand everything from engines to air conditioners to things a professor would later teach me in electromagnetism in University. From my father's love of physics, I came to admire Carl Sagan the astrophysicist and atheist, and enjoyed reading physics texts by such authors like Steven Hawking. I came to see religion as superstitious explanations for scientific phenomena that people didn't understand. I remember reading a book on Greek mythology and thinking the authors of the myths while trying to explain the reasons for natural phenomena were trying to be scientists. From this I embraced the idea that all of nature could eventually be described scientifically; that there are no inherently unknowable facts.

This form of reductionism (particularly physics) forms the basis for ontological reductionism—the idea that everything that exists can be explained as the interactions of a small number of simple things (such as fundamental particles like quarks, leptons, gluons, and gauge bosons) obeying physical laws. Although Einstein himself believed in God, the older, so called “Superstitious world-views” have however been largely abandoned in the scientific community, following the so called “enlightenment”, the study of epistemology, and Descartes discourse on method, in exchange for more naturalistic approaches with empirical evidence to support them.

After reading and discovering the world of cosmology, I thought I knew the answers to everything. I began believing in parallel universes, multiple dimensions and the universe itself as a self-creating or perpetually existent thing. I didn't realize it at the time because I was not versed in metaphysics but I was giving the attributes of God to the Universe. I

viewed the universe as eternal, the source of all things, and something that was infinite. In essence, pantheism.

My undergraduate studies didn't change things either. Studying with people who had faith in evolution through random mutation and natural selection didn't help. What did amaze me however was the extent to which nature at its most complex level had molecular machinery that hardly looked random but rather extremely well thought out. In fact most research presumes a kind a purpose for things that we don't know but are trying to discover. Consider that as you sit in your seats listening to me, every second 20 amino acids are being added to each of your hairs. They are not just any twenty amino acids but just the right ones. Unfortunately most people think it is because of efficiency of evolution itself that things function in such an orderly and complex fashion. I think C.S. Lewis had a good analogy when he spoke about the 747 that if it were totally disassembled down to its nuts and bolts, and a tornado came by that it would eventually become fully assembled and functional if you had enough tornados.



While I was searching for the truth, God was also searching for me. When I was doing my graduate studies in Biochemistry at the University of Ottawa, God put into my path a Catholic who actually knew his faith and could explain many questions that still bothered me (like why is there suffering in the world). He was my thesis supervisor (and several years later became my godfather). I think we all need to know someone who has thought of the tough, truly human questions in life, and knows where to find them. I had profound respect for this man. A man of integrity and unwavering consistency in his words actions and beliefs. I think the first important step in believing in something is believing the one who is telling you. Little did I know at the time but the stories he would tell me over lunch were parables of our Lord.

He patiently led me to realize that my understanding of the world was very limited and that not everything could be reduced to the material world of sub-atomic particles and energy fields. After arguing about the nature of free will, randomness as an illusion, creativity (as seen in music and art), and abstract thought as operations and evidence of an eternal soul, I began to realize that I was on the losing side of all the debates. You know when you listen to J.S. Bach or Beethoven there is something in your soul that comes alive and is so obviously more than the neurons and cells that both made them and heard them. Amazingly, free will was something I never contemplated before. But it was so simple and completely irreducible. Were it to be reduced to neuronal activity alone or ultimately matter, energy or energy fields, it would become merely a complex

illusion. We wouldn't actually be free, it would only appear so. Whenever I discuss the nature of freedom with our medical students they are often taken aback by the implications of our freedom and the limits of the material world. Without freedom we would be nothing more than the most developed animals or super complex robots.

As popularized by such movies as Bruce Almighty, I also realized that free will and what flows from it, love and suffering, were the most important elements of human life. Although we all have an inherent and equal dignity and potential, as Peter Parker says at the end of Spiderman 3: our choices are what define us.

Contrary to popular belief it is actually freedom that is real and randomness the illusion.

Like a veil being lifted over my head, I realized my understanding of the world was so short sighted and I longed to see further ahead. Searching for a deeper understanding, I came to assume and later believe that all things happen for a reason. It is fundamentally the basis for science. The reasons may be hidden or very complicated but need to exist, otherwise studying it serves no purpose. In other words, if things can happen for no reason whatsoever, what is the purpose in studying it? True randomness is actually an illusion. Elements in chaotic systems must obey cause and effect although in a complex fashion. Therefore the causes, or "reasons", are hard to see and predict given the many variables that overwhelm our limited models and mathematical formulas. So what was the underlying reason or cause of all things?

Physics becomes METAPHYSICS

Was there a first or primary cause or intelligent design behind everything? Was it possible to know? I came to appreciate that the Jews, and the Christians and Muslims who followed, had a view of God that was unique. That God created everything from nothing and was the source of all things. Have you ever wondered why the Judeo-Christian God logically has infinite power and knowledge? I came to realize that for God to create everything from nothing requires an infinite amount of power. Since God creates and is the power source from nothing, remember in our universe now we do not create things from nothing, energy and matter are interchanged. From the theory of relativity our current understanding of reality has space and time linked together. Similarly time itself is a creation. In a way the ultimate cause has been eternal since it is the source of time itself. The metaphysical principle of efficient causality suggests that the big bang had a big banger and he defined what big is.

All of these wonderful explanations were beyond my scope of experience or understanding until my eyes were opened. These explanations that came from a religious faith ended up seeming the most reasonable of all. Contrary to popular belief, I came to realize that reason was completely compatible with faith and didn't need to contradict each other. In a way they were actually made for each other analogous to marriage. They complement each other and it is hard to understand one without the other. One could say that Faith completes the intellect. Moving from natural knowledge to a higher knowledge. A more full explanation is possible in the words of St. Anselm as "faith

seeks understanding”. God gives us an intellect so that we can seek him out and believe. Although faith and reason are not the same, they overlap like VEN diagrams. As John Paul II said “Faith and Reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.” “I believe that I may understand” as St. Augustine once said. Faith and reason are indeed interdependent. One of the great secrets of the universe is that reason leans on faith every bit as much as faith leans on reason. You cannot believe in something that you also think cannot be possible (you may believe in a miracle without a natural explanation, but accept that there may be a supernatural or hidden cause).

Science (which is derived from the Latin word scientia, meaning knowledge) in its purest sense is like this. We have empirical evidence for things which form the basis of modifiable theories but there is always more to discover. To explore. To research. To understand. Some things we have to accept are difficult to understand now but we believe we will eventually come to understand later. Science and faith are not so dissimilar. The Church makes it clear that it is not the arbiter of science but rather faith and morals and relies on the opinion of scientists for this reason. The church and bible tell us how to go to heaven not which way the heavens go.

I came to realize later that University education and the development of science itself was something that was developed and fostered by the Church in centuries past. Reading Thomas Aquinas, and Augustine for that matter, should suppress all doubt that reason was absent from Church history. Much of the propaganda about the Church suppressing knowledge and opposing reason remains completely false.

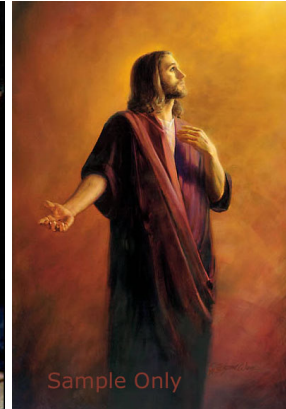
THEISM



So I came to accept that there clearly was a God. The unmoved mover (or ultimately the reason for all things) as described by Aristotle, gave me and all of us, free will and what ultimately flows from it, love and suffering. Could there be a connection with this infinitely powerful source of everything, including reason itself, and the mystery of love and suffering? Could we relate to God as a person? Could there be a human face to God? How could creatures such as us ever approach a being from whom all things owe their continued existence. The GOD who is I AM. The I AM that IS the source all existent being and who is being itself. As the tense of the verb AM would suggest, eternally in the present. I still remember reading Peter Kreeft’s Christian apologetics and reflecting on the erroneous world view that all religions have equal value. It is now a commonly held view that religions take many diverse and culturally different roads winding ever upwards to the top of the mountain that represents God. What Kreeft said that really struck me was that man commonly makes two assumptions. That man made

the roads and that all the roads go upwards. If religion is man's search for God then surely Christianity is God's search for man.

CHRISTIANITY



I asked the question that I am sure all of you have asked and much of the whole world has asked since the incarnation. Who was Jesus of Nazareth? Who was the man who lived, ate, and breathed the same air we breathe today? Who was the man Ghandi called the greatest moral teacher of all time? As C.S. Lewis once put it he was either Lord, Liar, or lunatic. What shocked me was the realization that there was no logical historical alternative to Jesus as Lord. Lunatics lack the capacity for principled reason. Anyone who has read the bible would conclude, as Dostoevsky once said “No man made up this story”. Liars lie for selfish reasons. Jesus and almost all his early followers were tortured and killed. The common belief that Jesus was merely a great moral teacher whose central teaching is a lie is ludicrous and inconsistent.

But why does a world that rejects him seem so confused? As G.K. Chesterton once said “Man has his head pointed towards the earth and has his legs kicking and flailing at the heavens.” We just have everything backwards. As Peter Kreeft says the only real argument against Christ's divinity is that the story is too good to be true. That the infinite would bind himself to the finite. That creation through the hypostatic union would be forever tied to the creator through the incarnation, passion, and resurrection. It would be analogous to Shakespeare becoming a character in his novel and marrying someone and bringing his loved one back to become a member of his family.

WHICH DENOMINATION?

After I had come to believe the greatest love story ever told, that is the Jesus of history, I wanted to know more. But where to look. At the bible? At a Church. Which one? I never knew what it was like to regularly attend Church as a child. I began exploring for myself. The claims of the Catholic Church fascinated me. Although all faiths claim to have some special knowledge, revelation or enlightenment, the Catholic Church is unique

in its claim to be infallible (remember that Jan Arden song...what if God was one of us...what if no one was on the phone except the Pope maybe in Rome). Everything at first seemed so outrageous (it was either diabolical or true), then, slowly it all came into place. For me, the central issue was a question of authority. The Bible-alone premise of most Protestant churches didn't seem to make sense – if all Christians could learn all the truth from the Bible alone, why was there no single doctrine that all Protestants could completely agree upon? I would challenge anyone to find one. Consider salvation and the often times debated necessity of works with faith, baptism (infant or not, immersion, sprinkling, when, does it really do anything), forgiveness of sins, even the divinity of our Lord. Forgetting Jehovah Witnesses that see themselves as Christians, Bill Phipps, the former moderator of the United Church in Canada from 1997 -2000, once said "I don't believe Jesus was God", that he didn't consider the resurrection a fact, and that he was agnostic on the question of an afterlife. If you can get this wrong I realized that the bible alone principle certainly was missing something. The Catholics clearly had more than the bible and they had a unified faith with an authentic tradition going back to our Lord himself. I came to see that Church and the bible are analogous to a horse and rider. They are not trying to win a race but complement each other to their final destination. Scripture is clearly God's word but not His only word. Christianity is not a religion of "the book" but the Bible is a book of the religion. Protestants often have difficulty with what is referred to as the problem of the canon. That is, the Church authoritatively defined what books made up the bible.

While I started to express an interest in Christianity, Amy, who was my girlfriend at the time, was also expressing a re-interest as academia and university life lured her away from her childhood faith. I figured to be fair to her we should go to the Protestant church where she grew up and had so many close friends, and family. Although we made some good friends who were examples of Christians who knew and loved their faith, things just didn't sit right with me but I felt guilty about not embracing or searching for the fullness of truth. We began attending Protestant bible study groups and adult Sunday school classes but their understanding of many scriptural verses were often different than mine leaving me feeling frustrated. There was one verse that kept haunting me, Mathew 16:18, where Jesus asks Peter, who do you say that I am? My understanding was more literal and frankly very catholic with a capital "C".

THINGS GET PERSONAL

Then something else happened. If it could be said that I developed an appreciation for logic from my father, you could just as easily say that I learned be sensitive and to listen with my heart from my mother. My mother, who was full of fire and passion, became ill with a cancer that had spread to her liver. Through my sister she met with an Orthodox priest and was anointed with healing oils from Jerusalem while in hospital during holy week. We also prayed with her as her faith in our Lord became stronger. We, and many of our friends had prayed for the intercession of then Blessed Josemaria Escriva. He is now a canonized saint. Surprisingly on Easter Sunday evidence of her cancer disappeared much to the surprise of her medical team. I remember talking with them, as

colleagues, and one of them saying, there is just so much we cannot explain, things that are beyond medicine. We had been discussing an ICU admission as she was in septic shock a few days before. She had been extremely ill and was not expected to survive but on Easter Sunday she returned home. She remained home for several weeks. The time with my family, I believe was a gift from God. It is a strange feeling to realize that God sometimes inserts his hand directly into your life to change its direction. Sadly though, her cancer returned and she was re-hospitalized a month and a half after she returned home well. She knew of my interest in Catholicism and wanted to embrace what she and I knew to be true. I remember the lives of the health care professionals who were touched by our prayers and hymns sung in the last few days of her life. She received a conditional baptism and entered the Church a few days before she died. Our lives have never been the same. But from this our family grew much closer together than it ever was. It was also the opinion of a priest that knew her in her final days that she was going to heaven. We now believe, with God's grace, she can be with us and mothers us in a way she couldn't before, with heart that I only knew in part.

After my mother passed away, I experienced some disbelief. I believe the sufferings of our lives help to bring about our dependency on something larger than ourselves. My anger over losing her after I could see the hand of God and His capacity to heal was particularly difficult. I believe now that when confronted with suffering and loss, we can either trust in God or experience despair. If we trust in God we give a meaning and purpose to the suffering. Despite my struggles during this time, which I now see were largely wanting my will to be the will of the infinite and all powerful, rather than the other way around, I continued to be drawn to the Catholic faith while living as a protestant. Amy could sense the frustration and I didn't know what to do.

It was not long after that Amy and I were married. We were married in Amy's church, the Free Methodist church. The fellowship we shared with our Protestant friends was something I still miss to this day. I truthfully enjoyed praying together weekly while sharing our lives and our love of reading the bible together. Our lives as Protestants were fun and fulfilling in many ways but for me something was still missing. I knew you should not settle for half truths, in your search for what is good and beautiful, so I knew I had to go farther. I was partway home but not quite there.

EXPLORING THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

I explored different options including the Orthodox Church, which Amy was actually open to (probably because it was not Catholic). My sister is orthodox and we attended a few of their long services as well. Very beautiful liturgy and worship, music. I explored some of the historical differences including the filioque, the Pope as the first among equals, and ultimately differences in their manifestation of authority. I came to the conclusion that Orthodoxy is very divided on nationalistic lines with different patriarchs claiming authority. The idea of multiple autocephalus churches who are in communion, lacked the true capacity to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

I also came to completely reject the Orthodox Church's notion of the Papacy as a monarchy. As JPII referred to himself, he is the servant of the servants of God. Our popes are not authoritarian dictators but fathers, or papa in Italian, of a family on earth, given, like all fathers, a responsibility to guide the faithful home. I will never forget the image of John Paul II, frail, drooling, barely able to speak, unable to walk, and the millions of youth chanting, JPII we love you. Hard to imagine anyone calling him a king rather than a father to us all. All of us were unexplainably drawn to the truth of the gospel message, the gift of the self, service for the love of others, being part of a family.

The fact that the Orthodox Church remains the Church of the first seven councils (they accept them to be infallibly authoritative) means that they are theologically stuck in the 8th century. Although they have had theologians since then their development and opinions are neither universally held nor binding on their own faithful. Their inability to hold another general council also highlights their incapacity to be one. For where would it be held? Who would call it? Who would confirm it? Considering how certain canons have been rejected in various councils, which canons would be accepted? Remember there were many councils that were convened with wide representation from the eastern bishops only later to be rejected and labeled not binding (like the Robber council of Ephesus). The other nebulous formula of general consensus and widespread acceptance with regards to general councils is something that is also difficult to quantify. If widespread acceptance means confirmation from Rome then that is a little easier (the council of Constantinople was essentially a gathering of the eastern bishops that only later was confirmed by Rome).

Considering the history of God's chosen people, golden calves and democracy is not a good way to lead God's people home. Rather than the majority, the faithful remnant may be who God is in union with. Consider that as Jerome once put it, it was Athanasius contra mundo. The west, in the Council of Chalcedon, is widely accepted to be the source of orthodox Christology while orthodox pneumatology (the Holy Spirit) and trinitarian theology through the Capedocians (like Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus) is largely accepted to be a work of the East. Through these four early councils however the unifying source of orthodoxy was Rome who through the work of the Holy Spirit and the promise made to Peter, confirmed these councils. It is unity that makes the Catholic Church, one, holy, catholic and apostolic as referred to in the Nicene creed.

I believe a great source of scandal for the Orthodox Church remains their practice of condoning divorce and remarriage after an undefined period of penance. I do not believe that is what God has intended with the new covenant and contradicts the words of Jesus himself in Matthew 19 after which the apostles conclude it is better not to marry. Considering that marriage is the "great sacrament or sacramentum magnum", in the words of John Paul II, that points to God's relationship with his Church it would be strange, theologically speaking, to accept a union which is not only breakable but unfaithful. I think it is funny that the one Church that states it does not have the authority to overrule the words of our Lord himself, is the one that is often called authoritarian. So I was not interested in Orthodoxy as an option since the Church I want to be part of

should not, theologically speaking, be stuck in the eighth century and should not try to change what God has revealed.

AN INFANT LEADS US HOME

A year after Amy and I were married, we had our first child, Meghan. We knew we both wanted to raise our child up in the Christian faith, but we differed on how that was to be done, more specifically, in what Church it would be done. I hoped Meghan would be baptized Catholic. Amy was brought up in a Protestant denomination that didn't routinely practice infant baptism. If it was done, which was a very rare occasion, it was merely symbolic. People were usually baptized after one had 'become a Christian' by 'accepting Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour', and baptism was merely a symbolic event that served as a public proclamation that one has already become a Christian. While I was researching the history of infant baptism, I realized it was practiced since the early Church and there was plenty of evidence supporting its early practice from Irenaeus (189 AD), Hippolytus (215), Origen (248) John Chrysostum (388), Gregory of Nazianzus (388) and Augustin (400). The letter of Cyprian of Carthage in 253 describes how, they should not delay even to the 2nd or 3rd day despite baptism replacing the covenant of circumcision, which was to occur by the eighth day. As Cardinal Newman, who was an Anglican before conversion to Catholicism, in attempting to dispel the claims of the Catholic Church, ended up concluding that to be deep in history is to cease to be Protestant. Similar to other doctrines where the early Church appears so clearly Catholic and definitively not Protestant, objections to infant baptism came well after the sixteenth century, that is, the reformation. Even then, these first Baptist Christians only sprinkled the adult believer. Immersion, a sticking point amongst many Evangelicals only came about in the seventeenth century. Amy, to my surprise, agreed to have Meghan baptized Catholic, although she, at the time, herself, had no intention of becoming Catholic.

Meghan's baptism was a key event that poured out grace not only upon Meghan, but upon our marriage. We look back and think it is so beautiful that the first Catholic in our little family was to pave the way for her parents' journey into the Catholic Church. I found out later that the reason Amy was so open to baptizing Meghan as an infant was that she figured it didn't do anything anyway, so there was nothing to lose. Amy did, however, feel that she should fulfill her responsibility of raising Meghan in the Catholic faith. So, Amy started taking Catholic doctrine classes, just to know what she should be passing on to Meghan. And during the months that followed, by the grace of God, Amy gradually came to recognize the truth and beauty of the Catholic faith, although she cautiously kept that to herself.

We started going as a family to St. Mary's parish, which has a very charismatic atmosphere. It was similar with a strong sense of community fellowship, but also quite different than we were used to, with some whispering in tongues. Eventually Amy began reading *Rome Sweet Home*, a book that when I picked it up I was quite worried the title would offend Amy. She was growing annoyed with my library of Catholic apologetic books. As it turns out, however, the personal testimony of Scott and Kimberley Hahn

was very moving to Amy, because she could relate to the tension and anguish experienced by Kimberley as her husband Scott was looking into the Catholic Church, the very church that both of them had tried for many years to 'save' people from! Amy's heart melted as she read that Kimberley eventually found the real Truth in the Catholic Church and came to embrace the Catholic Church as her home as her husband had already done. Shortly after reading that book, Amy shared with me that she wanted to become Catholic.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE REAL PRESENCE



It is strange how things turn out. I was so happy and surprised. I couldn't wait to begin my journey. How I longed to have communion with God through the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. I remember several years before, during a dinner for residents, I was speaking to a Catholic who was considering Protestantism, but said her problem was the lack of the real presence in Protestantism. At the time, I thought the most important difference was ultimately a question of authority, with all those differing protestant views about everything, but now I am not so sure. The real presence is something that puts Catholicism and Orthodoxy on a different playing field from our other Christians brothers.

Christopher West once said that being a protestant is like being engaged to our Lord, while being Catholic is like being married. Eucharistic communion is the one flesh God-man marital union (where the two become one flesh) that JP II speaks of. Tasting the fountain of immortality and sharing in the life of the Blessed Trinity, in the most intimate way possible. Wow. I just can't believe how many Catholics don't look excited during the Eucharistic liturgy, or how they keep looking at their watches and the exits. God could say on Judgment day, you know you could really have met me, and I could have become part of you 365 days of the year but you only came 52 times or less. For some this means only 2 times per year. By way of a marital analogy it would mean intimacy only twice per year with infidelity with pagan idols in between. Although the question of authority and causality was my first step in the journey towards Catholicism, it allowed me to fully appreciate how God loves us enough to make us his son or daughter and share in his eternal glory. St. Escriva said the best way to catch a fish is with its head. But Peter Kreeft said the best way to understand something is with your heart. God practically bends over backwards to help us the journey toward Him through the sacraments, His glorious gifts to the Church.

When we met Father Richard he invited us to become active in Adult faith, which we have led at the Annunciation of the Lord for the last 4 years. It has been a true blessing and we have shared and learned much over that time. We have felt, in a mysterious way,

God's direction and presence guiding and being with us. In many subtle ways we could see God speaking to us in the little details of our lives.

When you read the conversions in the history of Catholicism, namely Chesterton, Newman, Knox, Howard, Kreeft, Hahn, Shea, Currie, and Ray you realized you have made the journey that so many others have also made. As Scott Hahn says as he continually rediscovers what the Church Fathers knew we stand on the shoulders of giants and are part of something far bigger than ourselves. That is what I believe faith is, letting something bigger than you live inside your heart.

GROWING AS A PERSON AND PHYSICIAN

I feel that my faith makes me, not only a better person, but a better father, husband, neighbor, friend, and physician, someone who can truly see the spiritual dimension of man. Although I unconsciously knew that persons were subjects and not objects, I now know explicitly why. Each person is another gift from God, not to me specifically, but to all persons and for all time. When you look at a child or an elderly person you realize they, by the grace of God, will exist forever, unlike the stars, galaxies, or the pyramids. Is there a better thing to do with the time that we have been given than to help create new eternal souls and help them reach their perfection? As you think of your wife remember that you have also assumed the responsibility of helping your spouse reach heaven. You can be an impediment or an inspiration. As a previous speaker for the men's breakfast once said, the best way to get to heaven is to marry a saint. Knowing my wife, I know it was the best way for me. As GK Chesterton once said, families are the factories that manufacture mankind. Mankind who is destined for something bigger than what the world has to offer.

As a psychiatrist, I can see an increasingly, troubled world with rates of increasing depression and anxiety. I can see people who have something missing in their lives but aren't sure where to look. We all seek to find a purpose in life, to find meaning behind suffering, to want love and desire to give ourselves away. Often times what's missing is a reason to live and a reason to die. We often forget why we do things and so much of our life can become an accident. An accident in the sense that as we go through the motions of our daily lives, our intention and will are not applied. In other words we didn't intend for this or that to happen. When we do not assign a purpose to what we do it is not love, for love involves an act of the will. Like Bill Phipps, the social justice activist and Christian Pastor who denies Christ, it is easy to get lost in the forest through the trees. As Christ said, we will always have the poor. We have our marching orders and we are all called to struggle against poverty and suffering. But we cannot forget why we are doing these things. In a world where the disparity between the rich and poor has never been greater, Mother Teresa once said Jesus calls us to not be successful, but faithful. The post Christian west struggles with a different type of poverty. One could argue one is much worse.

As a psychiatrist, what I also see missing in many of my patients is the sense of being part of something bigger than ourselves. As I couldn't before, I truly see all of us as a

family. Each of us is connected to one another both in our love and our suffering. When family members experiences joy, falls away or is hurt, it affects us all. As one can see from the Holocaust, human sins diminish humanity. Similarly, individually our own sanctification mysteriously helps not only ourselves and our immediate family, and not only the whole world, but also the whole history and future of the world. I can appreciate when I attend mass in different countries how we are all one, in communion, praying for each other and for the whole world. We are glorifying God. I also know that my sisters and brothers in faith, those who have passed away and those who are yet to be born, are connected. As I pray, I know I am not alone, that the communion of Saints are listening, that together with a host of angels they are all helping and cheering us on. I also realize I, and all of us here, have a Mother, the same Mother, so close to our Lord, who knows and cares about the small and big details. I often ask Mary to look after my own mother and help her to help us all. I was touched by a Catholic friend who, on the day of my baptism, reminded me that there was likely someone in heaven, I knew, who was rejoicing. I believe she also rejoiced when my brother and his wife entered the Church years later.

CLOSING

In closing, I would like to quote Peter Kreeft who once said that the ancient pagans took the supernatural for granted and doubted salvation while modern pagans take salvation for granted and doubt the supernatural. Who is more wrong? We have to work to turn the tide and restore the ancient sanities. The insanity that many of the insane cannot see is essentially the objectification of subjects. This translates into modern existential nihilism which is a militant attempt to prove a lack of reason or meaning in things. This leads to a lack of a sense of belonging and community, failing to see to true goodness of all of man through the increasing disparity between the rich and the poor, a lack of appreciation for the sanctity of life including abortion, euthanasia, and the 3rd world practice of organ trading, and a sexual revolution that actually makes sex meaningless. The attack has started to render the fabric of society for which its own health depends, that is, marriage and the family.

I no longer have to go with the flow, nor swim against the tide alone anymore, I am on board a boat, the barque of Peter, the Church. It sails to a different destination. It is true that I have fallen off since climbing on board but have always managed to climb back on board with the lifeline of confession. Through these rough seas, where one would surely drown, and constitutes our lives in the world, I hope you all remember you are not alone and that you have a ship, guaranteed not only by the ship maker but the ocean maker as well, to carry you home.