

***St. Joseph's Evangelization Committee*** wants to inspire and encourage each of us to ponder our faith journeys. How has God called us and been present in our lives? As we ponder this, we become more able to share the Good News of Jesus with others. So, we are starting by sharing with you the faith stories of our committee members.

## **STORY # 1**

### **My story – Bob Keneally**

**My wife and I have been attending St Joe's for about 3 years now. We thoroughly enjoy the people and Father Mike and staff. We were asked to share our story – thank you for the honor!**

**I was raised in a strong and devout Roman Catholic family. I was an altar boy in my earlier years and attended a Catholic school up until 7<sup>th</sup> grade. I was taught at an early age that attending Mass each Sunday and regularly going to confession was part of life. During college, I occasionally attended Protestant bible studies and learned more about the Bible. As a commissioned officer, I entered the Air Force Security Forces. While off duty, I assisted the Catholic chaplain on Sundays and taught preteens. Up until this point, I dated primarily Catholic girls. I was looking for a potential wife but had not met her yet!**

**At this first assignment, I met a lady who had lost her husband about a year prior. She was back visiting friends. I was told she was a strong Christian but not Catholic. After dating a short time it became crystal clear she was the one. But there was more to the package than just her – she had 3 very small children and I was a green, young 24-year-old! As time progressed, I was sure I could marry her and be happy, but I wanted a relationship between the children and myself that was as natural as possible. I told Louise this had to happen before we got married. God did a wonderful work between the girls and me. I asked my wife to marry me and she said yes! We married in the Catholic church where we took all the premarital classes together. I soon adopted the girls at the ripe age of 25! At this point, we were attending both churches for about a year, and I felt for the stability of our family we should worship at one church. It was at this point I decided to leave the Catholic faith.**

**I had not shared my dream of becoming an Air Force pilot with my wife mainly because she had lost her first husband in an aircraft accident. I finally shared the dream with her and she surprisingly encouraged me to submit an application. I felt my chances were very slim. There were 9000 applicants and only 90 would be selected. Louise prayed that if this was God's will for our family, then she would be for it also. Miraculously I was selected, and my dream was going to be fulfilled! It was one of the first times I saw God move for me personally and answer prayer.**

**My wife became pregnant with our 4<sup>th</sup> and final baby. At 2 months she almost lost the**

and asking God to let this baby live. Miraculously, the baby did survive and 7 months later we had our first son. I again saw an answer to prayer that greatly impacted my faith in Him.

Over the next 20 years, we moved all over the US, attending Protestant churches at each new location, always being involved as a family. Our marriage remained strong and we worked hard to keep it that way. We attended many marriage seminars and began to teach on marriages and families in our respective church. I was on numerous boards and counsels through the years, volunteering often where help was needed. When we decided to retire from the military, I was offered a position on a church staff as the executive director. The church had a staff of about 20 people. My wife and I enjoyed this position as we worked together in many areas of the church, but mainly with marriages and families. When we would visit extended family back east, we always attended Mass, although I did not receive communion. It always bothered me. Back home we always attended midnight Mass also. Our son married a Catholic woman and he regularly attended Mass with her. After several years he decided to attend RCIA classes with the intention of converting to Catholicism. We visited them and I had the opportunity to meet with his Priest. I asked many questions about the Catholic church and where it stood on many issues. I missed the reverence the Catholic faith showed towards Christ and receiving the Eucharist. I was very open with all these feelings with my wife. I decided I needed to come back to Catholicism after about 35 years! I privately attended confession with our Priest and received communion for the first time in many years. It was a very special time for me. My wife had a longing to learn more about Catholicism and met with my Priest with the intent to convert to Catholicism. After sharing her strong faith and belief in God, the Priest stated she would not have to attend RCIA. But she decided that would be the best route for her as she would learn more about the Faith. It was a very special Easter Sunday when my wife received her first Holy Communion and officially joined the faith.

Through all the 41 years we have been married, our faith in God and serving Him in what ever area was needed, helped maintain our strong family and marriage. At times it wasn't easy raising 4 children and maintaining a strong marriage. We needed help sometimes. But we always received that help through the church we were attending at the time. I would encourage anyone to make sure if there are classes or seminars on marriage or families, invest the time and attend. I'm sure it is what saved us many times!

God has blessed us tremendously, and our children. We have 15 grandchildren, ages 3-20 years of age. We just enjoyed a family reunion this summer in July with all the children and grandchildren here for 2 weeks! God is Good – all the time!!

Look for the faith story of Louise, Bob's wife, next week in the bulletin!