

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 # 3

Dan Mahoney Faith Story, January 2020

I was richly blessed to be born into a Catholic family on Easter Sunday in 1957. My father was a former Maryknoll seminarian and my mother was a convert to the Catholic faith, and was very passionate about her faith as many converts are. My young faith was nurtured through my early grade school years by the Nuns and Priests at Santa Maria Del Popolo Catholic Parish and School in Mundelein, Illinois, and I still reflect fondly on them. I am very aware that God introduced Himself to me very intimately from the beginning of my life, and also that “Much will be required of everyone who has been given much (Luke 12:48).”

When I was eight years old the Second Vatican Council ended, and a year later the liturgical changes from this council started to be rolled out in my Parish in Mundelein. My Father was not happy about them, believing that the documents of Vatican II were fine, but that the “Spirit of Vatican II” was a euphemism being used by many to justify outright dissent from Magisterial teachings of the Church. And so, from the age of nine through eighteen, through a relocation and my continuation in Catholic schools in Seattle, my very loving, faithful, tender and devoted Father, who I was always deeply attached to, gave prolonged and well-informed witness in our home to frustration and anger towards some of what our Church was becoming and what he considered a breakdown in orthodox catechesis in the Church. It is fair to say this influence was the strongest influence on my faith development as I left home and became an adult. It remains a part of my faith today, for better and for worse.

I practiced my faith through college and my early working life, but it was legalistic, mostly solitary and dry. I did not nourish it with the scriptures outside of Mass. My witness to Christ was poor. I did not date much, and at 25 I met a beautiful woman named Linda who had a vibrant Protestant Christian faith (a cradle Catholic who said she first met Christ through Young Life in high school). I saw in her a love of Christ, of the Bible, of Christian music, of Christian fellowship and a boldness to her witness that I had not experienced before and which impressed me deeply. We fell in love and got married in the Catholic Church the next year, both focusing on our shared beliefs and privately assuming the other would convert to our faith tradition soon after marrying. Well, after 37 years this has not happened. God's grace has preserved our love, respect, fidelity and support for one another, and we are very happy together, but the inability to fully share what is of the deepest importance to each of us remains painful to us. Linda's influence on our children was the strongest throughout my busy working life, and our two sons and daughter, though receiving the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation and Eucharist in the Catholic Church at my insistence, ultimately followed Linda's faith tradition. Today I realize this is likely because Linda was joyful in her faith and I remained visibly frustrated with a Church I felt was regularly teaching God's mercy without regularly teaching the need for repentance to obtain that mercy. Sadly, our two sons have abandoned Christianity altogether, while our daughter remains a very godly wife, mother and woman of strong faith.

Despite the shortcomings in the way I have lived out my faith, God has never left my side! 15 years ago, I answered his call to participate in prison ministry in California, and loved it. I have continued this ministry at Airway Heights since moving to Spokane 4 years ago. God has used prison ministry to teach me humility (spending time with prisoners is a great way to be reminded of how blessed and fortunate I have been), to increase the joy in my faith (the kind of joy that comes from serving Him through others), and to teach me the power of love in broken lives (though I still believe true love must reflect, or at least not deny, moral truth). Another call from God I felt and have responded to over the last ten years has been to participate in 40 Days for Life both in California and here in Spokane. This has helped me appreciate Christ's approach to injustice, which is prayerful, peaceful and loving. God led me to this wonderful Parish in Otis Orchards. And two years ago, God prompted me to begin an online Master's Degree program in Catechetics and Evangelization at The Franciscan University of Steubenville, an experience I am loving, and which has drawn me deeply into the Scriptures.

In summary, God has given me profound spiritual and material blessings from the very beginning of my life. I have not always appreciated these sufficiently, and for too long allowed a legalistic view of faith make my faith unattractive to other people in my life. God is sanding off my rough edges, but some remain. I think it is possible to fear God's judgment and justice too much, but that the greater problem these days is fearing them too little. Afterall, mercy is meaningless if justice is not real. Thankfully, God is teaching me to let Him worry about all of this, and to focus more on my own witness to His love. My heartfelt prayer is that people will not need to leave our Church to find a personal relationship with Christ, as my wife felt she needed to. I welcome your prayers for me and my family on this life-long journey!