

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 # 2

My Story – Louise Keneally

I am honored to tell you my story...I was born into a faith-filled Christian family who taught me about Jesus and how He can be with me all my life, hard times and happy times. My Christian heritage is from my father's family, who were strong in their faith in God and trained their children to trust God. There were many examples of faith in God as a youngster and throughout my growing up years that I saw faith and trust in God evident in our whole family, especially in the face of hardships. My parents were active in our church, generous givers of tithe, time and natural giftings. I remember family prayers, my father read from the Bible each evening, and mornings before school. We went to church each week, Sunday was family day. All of these things gave me a strong faith and trust in God, as I learned to trust Him for my own life, no matter what, I would trust God's plan for me. Little did I know how greatly this would be needed in my life as an adult; I'm thankful for my training.

After high school, came college, I met and married my husband in my sophomore year. He graduated and entered the US Air Force. I was told I would never have children, but, Surprise!.. our first child was born 4 years later. After training, we moved to Michigan, our second daughter was born there 10 weeks premature, with complications that sent her to NICU....our trust was in God for her life, then at just 5 months old, we struggled through a diagnosis of bacterial meningitis....it felt like we just had brought her home from the NICU! Our faith and trust was in God and in spite of being a preemie, she was healed totally!! Thanks be to God... I soon discovered I was going to have another baby, I had complicated pregnancies that required surgeries for me, and the "kind" doctor strongly advised abortions for both of these two precious babies, stating it would "be best"! I refused such advice and delivered another preemie, this time only 4 weeks early. I tell you these faith builder stories of my pregnancies to give God all the praise for His faithfulness to me.

THEN, my worst nightmare...early on a beautiful Sunday morning, my husband's plane crashed, killing 14 men, he among them. So surreal, this tragedy happens to others, not me....I was devastated, three babes 8 weeks, 16 months, and 3 years old! WHAT was I going to do?? TRUST God, that's what! I had to move immediately, as we were living on the AF Base. I trusted God for my future, and oh how thankful I was for my parents who taught me to trust in God's plan for my life no matter what. So, when folks began to ask me what I was going to do, I told them, "I don't know, but I know God has a plan for me". (Jeremiah 29:11) It wasn't long before God showed up and I was introduced to my new Air Force Lieutenant husband, who loved me and my three daughters, making them

trust in Him that our son was born just before our 1st anniversary! His birth was truly a miracle! Our 1st year of married life was trusting God for this baby daily....there were complications and together we trusted God.

When we married, I was a strong believer, however a Protestant by birth. He was a cradle Catholic. We attended both our chosen churches each weekend for about a year. We then, together, chose to continue in a Protestant church, as we moved around the USA via the USAF. We still attended Christmas Mass, Midnight Mass and other times when we visited our Catholic families. There were many opportunities to serve and trust God all through our lives, over our 20 years in the Air Force. Upon retirement from the military, there came an opportunity for my husband to serve as an administrator of a large church. We were both offered positions, and serving God together, side by side, was fulfilling in the beginning of this 12 year Protestant journey. Our hearts were to serve God's people and we very much loved the people. We eventually discovered the motives within the leadership were different than ours. We were disillusioned, we loved the people, and serving them, teaching them, training them, but realized this was not our final place of serving God. We floundered a bit, seeking God for direction through prayer, and much trial and error. We believed it was time to move on. Because of our disappointment with the Protestant churches we had been part of for 30+ years, we decided to visit and explore the Catholic faith again. After meeting several times with a caring priest, I decided to take RCIA classes and learn all I could about the Catholic church. I soon discovered I had beliefs about the Catholic church that were incorrect. The RCIA classes were exciting to me as I learned new truths each week. I was so excited and blessed to join the Catholic church in April 2015.

This is my story in a nutshell...my faith and trust in God is ongoing. I am forever thankful!! As I write this story, I am reminded of God's blessings in my life and I thank Him for my parents who lived their life as true lovers of each other and God for 67 years. My Mother went to Heaven on Sunday the week after my Catholic Confirmation.

I am so very thankful for my husband, who found me as an answer to his prayers for a Christian wife...and for the faithful husband he has been to me for 41 years. I am thankful for the father he was and still is to our children, and thankful for his love for God, and the Catholic church. God has brought us full circle and we are both thankful and blessed beyond measure! We will trust God and his plan for us, no matter what. Our Bible verse for our marriage is Matthew 6:33 "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides."

Louise's husband is Bob Keneally, and his story was inserted in last week's bulletin.