

Becoming Catholic My Journey Through RCIA

By Brian Hirsch

During the summer of 2018, a persistent thought rattled through my head. "Why are you rejecting what I'm telling you when you know nothing at all about it?" I thought about this statement many times over the next several weeks and realized I had made that very comment to my son. At this point I can't even recall what we were talking about, but that phrase stayed with me.

I have been married to a cradle Catholic for almost 30 years. Our marriage was convalidated by the Church, and we agreed before we got married that our children would be raised Catholic. Despite this, my wife and I rarely discussed religion, mostly because I refused to do so. She did tell me from time to time that my absence of faith concerned her, and I knew that she prayed for me daily.

At some point it dawned on me that the reason that phrase kept going through my mind was because I was rejecting faith without knowing anything about it. I mentioned this to my wife and she referred me to an article from the weekly church bulletin describing RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults). At first I was extremely reluctant and would not even consider the possibility of exploring organized religion. No one was going to sell me anything! I decided to meet with Adult Faith Formation Director Kim VanHuffel, who informed me that RCIA was designed for people to inquire about Catholicism. I could go through the program, stop at any

time, or even complete it and not convert. She further assured me that the outcome of this process would totally be my decision and I would not be pressured in any way. I decided to attend a few sessions to learn more about it. I also decided not to tell anyone except my wife, who would ultimately become my sponsor.

During the first meeting we were asked to talk about why we were there. It seemed everyone could point to a concrete reason such as an upcoming wedding or a desire to return to the Church. Then I got up and mentioned the phrase that kept gnawing at me and the concept of rejecting things out of ignorance. I expected this to be met with skepticism, but instead it seemed to be understood. As time went on, I found myself looking forward to each session. I started to talk about RCIA with friends and co-workers and received tremendous support. I also began to realize that something had been missing from my life. I felt at home.

I became Catholic this year during the Easter Vigil. The Church has provided me with a newfound sense of community, and a feeling of being part of something much larger than myself. Through good times and bad, it is comforting to know that Christ watches over us. Some have said that I was called to the Church, perhaps by the Holy Spirit. I didn't believe this at first, but I do believe it now.