

"Father into your hands I commend my spirit

I was born into a Christian family, the son of a Southern Baptist minister. I learned at an early age who God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are and what they have done for us. I became aware of my sinful nature at age five and was baptized. I then grew up and spent about twenty-five years of my adult life doing very well professionally but made many mistakes in my personal and spiritual life. I quit going to the Southern Baptist church but I never forgot who God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are and what they have done for us.

During late spring of two-thousand five, I found myself alone in my condo. I had superficial relationships with my siblings and only a few close friends. I felt truly alone. I recalled a very frank conversation with one of my close friends. She had advised me to light a white candle a short time before sunset and start praying to God, asking him for happiness, fulfillment and companionship and to repeat my prayers until after dusk and to repeat this daily for at least five days. I decided to do exactly what she had advised me to and asked God to guide my life. Little did I know that God would answer my prayers as I commended my spirit into his hands.

I prayed daily for five days and, although I felt a sense of peace, I didn't notice any difference. This is obviously a product of our generation of expecting "instant gratification" but, as they say, 'the Lord moves in mysterious ways'. I had become an avid hiker and outdoorsman and went hiking several times a week. On April thirtieth, not more than a week or two after my prayers, I met Corrie Llamas on a group hike in

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the San Gabriel Mountains. We talked a bit and got to know each other during the hike. Two weeks later we just happened to be on another group hike together. We talked some more and got to know each other better. On the second of June, days after our first date, the light began to come on. I decided then that, if this was God's way of giving me happiness, fulfillment and companionship, I was going to open my heart, once and for all, to His will. I called Corrie shortly thereafter and asked her for another date. To make the long, beautiful story short, we were married on October twenty-second two thousand five.

Within a month I attended Mass here at Saint Augustine's with Corrie and my mother-in-law. I heard the Word of the Lord once again that I hadn't heard for so long and felt the calling of the Holy Spirit like never before. I was a bit perplexed by this because I had been told in my protestant up-bringing that Catholics were very ritualistic and thus non-spiritual people – not "true Christians". Very soon thereafter, I decided that I would convert and become Catholic for the sake of family unity, remembering how important it is to make God the center of your Marriage and Family. When I made this decision, I still felt confident in my knowledge of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit and that I would still worship my own way. The light that began to glow in June of two thousand five had not reached full intensity.

I entered the RCIA program and quickly found out how little I knew about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. I purchased and read books about Catholic faith, history,

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spirituality and Reconciliation then proceeded to devour them. The more that I found out, the more I wanted to know. I was confirmed and received first Holy Communion at the Easter Vigil Mass, 2006; almost two years ago. I have continued to learn about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit and His One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Corrie and I were invited to join the RCIA team of Catechists that following September and I was overjoyed at the opportunity to share with others the experiences that I had had and to learn more.

In September of last year I shared with Father Kevin, our Pastor, that I had been discerning a call to service from the Holy Spirit for some months and that I had determined that I would continue to open my heart to God's calling and enter Diaconal Formation at the next possible time. I have since been provided with new opportunities to serve God and His Church and will continue to do what His Holy Spirit leads me to.

The best part of the story, as you can see, is that God led me back to Him, to the fullness of true Christianity using Corrie to sow the seeds that now flourish. She is the perfect mate for me and through her God has given me happiness, fulfillment and companionship. I have also found deepening relationships with my protestant siblings. They are excited to know that I am serving our Lord, Jesus Christ and intrigued that I have found the Holy Spirit in the Catholic Faith. I have been blessed and will continue to be blessed because I prayed, in effect, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit".