

JOURNEY OF FAITH

I was born into a family where I knew the Catholic Faith had been important.

My mother left the church because of circumstances beyond her control. I know it was a heavy weight that was on her shoulders. I was told very little about this time, but consequently I was never made to go to church. I always liked to go and sit in a church though. In those days churches were open all the time.

As I got older I just went to church because I wanted to but I often wondered about the Catholic Faith. As I got into my teens some of my friends were Catholics and St. Paulinus seemed to weave a web slowly drawing me in.

I got married at Thornhill Parish Church but met my husband at a wedding at St. Paulinus.

As the years passed I knew how upset my mother was at leaving the church. I got to know a cousin of my mother's and told her about my mother's sadness. She said she would have a word with the priest, which was Fr. Pat Smyth at the time. He who went to see my parents and they had a long talk. They got a new wedding ring which father blessed and my mother came back to St. Paulinus. My father also came to St. Paulinus with my mother and the church also became very important to him too.

My mother's health deteriorated but she carried on going to church. My father took her in a wheelchair until she became housebound.

Fr. Pat went to give her Holy Communion at home which was so important to her. My father carried on going to Mass even though he was not a Catholic. St. Paulinus had done its work and had hooked him in.

As I sat at my mother's side as she was dying she was reciting 'Make Me a Channel of Your Peace'. She had a picture on the wall of Our Lady. As I sat Our Lady just seemed to come away and I found myself saying 'Hail Mary'. I

had never said it before and I could not remember the words afterwards. My mother passed away shortly after.

I have not told many people of this story as you know people are very quick to make fun. I know what happened and that is all that matters.

After my mother's death my father's health deteriorated and I started taking him to Mass on a Saturday night. I would sit and wait for him in my car outside the church.

One Saturday night I thought why am I sitting outside? I have always gone to church and so I came in to the Mass and it felt as if I had come home.

People who had gone to school with my mother really welcomed me. After coming to Mass for quite a while I really missed not being able to take Holy Communion. I decided to take further steps into the Catholic Faith and once again Fr. Pat met me every Saturday afternoon to coach me. It was decided I would be accepted into the church on Easter Saturday Night. Fr. Pat said he thought my father should be accepted also, even though his health was very poor.

We both had our feet washed on Maundy Thursday Night and were accepted into the church on Easter Night. The Easter Vigil was like no other - to say it was special is an understatement. The only way I can describe it is to say, I had the picture and the Catholic Faith coloured everything in and made it all the richer and more precious.

I have found you to have wide shoulders. Your comments about what it is to have a faith and be a Catholic are acceptable to me as they are what I believe. I would not dream of saying these things to those without faith.

There is a sadness that my family have not let Our Lord into their lives, or rather to recognise he is with them whether they know it or not. They accept I go to church and are always willing to come and support me. At times they go and light a candle so I will continue to pray that they will come to trust in Our Lord.

I have been truly blessed that I have known priests that have made such a difference and who have enriched my life and faith.

Fr. Pat Smyth did so much for me and my family.

Fr. Nicholas Hird was a great support to both myself and my father.

Fr. John's Easter Masses enriched and gave me a sense of renewal.

Fr. Jonathan who is a big personality with an equally big heart.

I thank you one and all. I will never forget you - you have all made my faith so much the richer.

Thank you.