

My Mysterious Journey to The Catholic Church

The story of Onyekachi

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I was born into a strong Anglican family, and grew up with a firm belief in the traditions of the Anglican Communion. My Family attended Church Service regularly every Sunday, but afterwards, scant attention was paid to a more in-depth spiritual development of myself and my siblings. This resulted

in a laid-back attitude towards religion and its finer practices. When I grew to maturity and decided to marry a Catholic, there were no serious objections as should be expected from a serious Anglican family, except that they insisted that I must wed in the Anglican Church.

After the wedding, my wife (who is Catholic) being very pious and strong willed insisted on continuing to attend the Catholic Church. So, on Sundays we usually go our separate ways, each to the denomination we grew up in for about the first six years of our marriage. It was like “To thy tents O Israel”. However, once in a while I would accompany my wife to Church, and I discovered that I was actually enjoying the solemnity of the Catholic Mass, and a certain feeling of awe when the priest raises the Bread, the bells ring and a deep silence falls on everyone in the Church. So, I began to attend the

Mass with my wife more often for about the next five years. Naturally after each Mass, I will make comments on the interesting things I observed during the Mass, especially on the high points of the priest's sermon. Sometimes, I will make a joke about it and we will laugh, and my wife will try to explain to me as much as she knew about the doctrines of the Church, and why the priest made such remarks.

We have two children, a boy and a girl. The girl being the first, is currently in the boarding house in the secondary school. The boy was enrolled in the *Hillrange Primary School*, GRA, Enugu. This school as we found out, is affiliated to Opus Dei, and pays a lot of attention to the spiritual development of their students, and by extension, the parents of their students. All the students undergo catechism classes in the Catholic doctrine as a part and

parcel of the school curriculum. An Opus Dei priest there also provides all necessary spiritual direction to both the kids and staff of the school. On completion of their catechism classes, they are received into the Catholic Church, and start to receive Holy Communion.

When time came for my son to receive his first Communion, it was discovered that he was baptized in the Anglican Church, so my wife and I were invited for an interview, and we gave our consent that the reception should go ahead. Then my wife took the opportunity to plead with the Opus Dei priest that I should also be received into the Church with my son. Her request took me by surprise, because we had not discussed it before, but somehow, I did not object to the idea. However, the priest told her that it would not be possible until I went through some catechesis on the Catholic

doctrine, and understand it well, and be convinced that I really wanted to be a Catholic. I expressed my readiness to undertake the Catechism classes.

One day in July 2022, the priest called to invite me to see him at the Opus Dei Centre in Trans Ekulu. When I arrived, he introduced me to Charles, a supernumerary who had volunteered to teach me the Catechism. Charles encouraged me to buy a copy of the *Compendium of the Catholic Doctrine*, emphasizing that it would be good for me to read it at home at my private moments in anticipation of the classes. My official work schedule interfered a lot, but gradually and patiently, he took me through the book point by point, explaining in detail and with many references, the meaning, implications and the background of each point. He spent more time on those points of disagreement

between the Anglican and the Catholic beliefs. He encouraged me to ask as many questions as possible, on the difficult areas concerning Confession, the Eucharist, especially how Jesus comes to be present in the bread after consecration – a deep mystery, the Virgin Mary, the Rosary, Catholic prayers and spirituality, and he patiently explained them all till I was certain that I had grasped them perfectly. Then, we did a revision, and he asked me questions, and any of the question I could not answer, he repeated the explanations.

It took us about six months of slog, before we went through the book from cover to cover, then the priest examined me to assess my status and was satisfied. That same day, he heard my first Confession. I felt strange, but the priest helped me with a fatherly disposition, smiling all the time and joking at my discomfiture. He fixed my formal

reception for the very next Sunday, and I informed my wife on the phone, to ensure that she will be present. She works as a Manager in a transport company in Nnewi. She was very excited, and quickly arranged for a weekend time off.

The big day arrived, and we dressed in our very best – my wife and son and myself, and were ushered into the small oratory of the Trans Ekulu centre for the Mass. There were a good number of members of the Work, and Charles my guide. The same Opus Dei priest who had accompanied me all along officiated at the Mass, and expressed his joy to be receiving a new brother into the Church, and invoked the Holy Spirit on me to possess my soul from then henceforth. I was absorbed in the celebration. After the sermon, I was called out and questioned on my faith. “Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of Heaven

and earth?" "I DO", I thundered back. Do you believe in Jesus Christ his only son, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born...? "I DO". I glanced at Charles, and he nodded his head in encouragement. So, I kept answering back confidently to the priest's questions until he finished. Then he intoned, "This is our Faith. This is the Faith of the Church... in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Then came the time for Holy Communion, and I was called out first to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, then my wife and son followed. After the Mass, while we were taking pictures, I felt as light as a feather. Everything anyone said to me made me happy and happier. I just cannot explain how all this came about. It is a wonder. I could not tell who was happier, myself, my wife or my son. Many thanks be to God, and to all those who worked to make the

grace of God to come and dwell with me. Amen.

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