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From Shanghai to Rome

Yiran was born in China, in a city near Shanghai. Reading Scott Hahn's "Rome Sweet Home" gave her the final "push" she needed to decide to be baptized soon.

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Hi, my name is Yiran and I want to tell you the story of my life. I was born in China, in a city close to Shanghai. My great-grandmother was the only Christian in my family; all the others were atheists. She

brought me, as a young child, to her evangelical Church, where I began learning something about the Christian faith.

When I was 14 I moved to Spain, to a small town in Cantabria. Since I couldn't find any evangelical Christians there I lost contact with the faith. When the time came to begin studying at the university I decided to major in chemical engineering without knowing much about it in advance, as I like challenges and science has always appealed to me. There I met Fernando, a Mexican-Japanese boy, and I began going out with him. I soon came to see how he lived his Catholic faith and how he had learned to pray in his family. On getting to know his family better, I experienced their strong unity and affection. Although I'm no longer going out with Fernando, this was a first step in my discovering the

Church and overcoming some of my prejudices towards Catholics.

In my second year at university I met Inés, a very normal girl who was fun to be with. We became good friends and after some time she told me that she was a numerary in Opus Dei. I was so surprised! My idea of a person dedicated to God in the Catholic Church was someone boring and sad; but I saw that this couldn't be further from the truth.

After a few months, Inés invited me to a university group organized by people of Opus Dei. There I began to attend some classes of Christian formation; though rather than classes, it would be more accurate to call them dialogues where we exchanged ideas and I brought up all the doubts I had about the faith and the Church. I have a great desire to know more, to discover the "why" of things. My interest in the Catholic

Church was simply curiosity, and I was still far from considering conversion.

But after a while I began to take a more personal interest in the faith, and started attending some more substantive talks, where Ana, another girl I had gotten to know, spoke to us about the Catholic faith and teachings and helped me to overcome my concerns about the Church.

One day Ana recommended that I read "Rome Sweet Home," a book in which Scott Hahn, who had been a Protestant pastor, recounts how he came to ask to be received in the Catholic Church. The truth is I didn't have even a minute free to read it, with all the demands on me from my studies, my work, keeping up my blog on cooking.... So I returned the book to her unread.

When exams were over I took a quick vacation, traveling to other cities in Spain with my camera as my only companion. One day I found myself in Logroño. Walking through the city center I went into a small shop to look for some office items, but it turned out to be a bookstore selling religious goods. On entering I was greatly surprised to see the book by Scott Hahn that Ana had recommended I read. I decided I had to buy it then and there, since this couldn't be simply chance. I read it in one sitting, which is unusual for me as I still find Spanish hard to read.

From there I went to Saragossa and, while visiting the Cathedral of Pilar, I finally realized that my place in life was the Catholic Church. It was a hard decision for me to make, but there was no going back. I saw clearly that I had to convert. I'm sure God's grace was also involved in my decision.

Now I'm preparing to receive baptism and I've started attending Mass on Sundays. I've also discovered how I can find God in simple daily realities: in my work, my hobbies, being with my friends.... For me, time is now a treasure and, since my decision a few months ago, a gift from God.

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