

My Conversion Story

As Julie pieces together her 'chance encounters' with God, she realizes that He has sent many people to help her on her journey: "I feel humbled, knowing I must be important to Him."

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I was born into a protestant Christian family in Johor, Malaysia and, although not baptised, put into bible school as a kid. I looked forward to go to church to meet Lord Jesus and was always delighted to hear His

stories. Since I was alone most of the time at home, in school and in the church, I always pictured Our Lord as a smiling face who would keep me company. I left my church when I reached 13. I wasn't the rebellious type but I felt a distance.

Thereon, I concentrated on my studies to improve my family's financial situation. During that period, I was like the Israelites of yore. I suffered, pleaded to God for help, got delivered, gave thanks and then went away from God. That was repeated countless times! I didn't worship the golden calf literally but I took the CEO, CFO and COO as my role models. Right and the wrong got fuzzy. I became indifferent.

Conscience pricked me. I went to many churches of various denominations. I couldn't find one and worse, my prayers became nonexistent. On the surface, I was

doing fine but I was spiritually dead and nobody knew.

My mom and then my dad passed away within two years of one another. I was crushed and guilt kicked in. My sister-in-law, the only Catholic in my family and a member of Opus Dei, told me that God is like a gardener who picks the blooms when they are at their best. When we were burying my mom, she said that it was her duty to tell me that the Catholic Church is the real church passed down from St Peter. I held onto her words but I didn't know what to do.

Discovering the Faith

After some years, a friend of hers contacted me and gave me, *The Faith Explained* by Leo J. Trese. Tears rolled uncontrollably down my cheeks as I read. I realised God still loves me. That was the start.

Before receiving instruction, I thought, with typical protestant mindset, I could have the cross symbolising the resurrection, without the suffering Christ. Now, I love Our Lord on the cross and hold the crucifix all the time when I say the Rosary.

When I was told about the guardian angels, I believed instantly. So, the intuition that someone was protecting me wasn't just my childhood imagination. As a lone woman making a living, life can be quite daunting. Now, I pray the 'Angel of God' prayer every morning, confident Our Lord watches over me and someone tags along with me all the time.

About Mother Mary, I liken this to my relationship with my mom: the love grows with time. For a start, I give roses to Mother Mary.

About the priests, I actually didn't quite know how to deal with them until I read in *The Way* by St Josemaría Escrivá that the priest is 'another Christ'. So now, I treat them with reverence and love.

About purgatory, I believed instantly too. I suspected its existence long ago and I am glad another nibbling doubt has been cleared.

My first Catholic Church attendance was with a friend on Easter Sunday 2009 in Singapore. I had never entered one before. After that, I set out on my own for my parish church in Johor. When I first stepped into the church, I met two smiling ladies. I quietly asked myself, 'Is this home already, God?' I started my instruction and was baptised in the Easter Vigil mass of 2010.

Discovering God's love

I am so grateful God sent many people to help me on my journey. I feel humbled, knowing I must be important to Him. I am so glad Our Lord called me back to His big family and this time I listened and acted. I couldn't have come this far without God's grace.

After my baptism, a close non-Catholic friend said I have changed. So soon? I thought. But over the year, I feel this indescribable calm, peace and, I dare say, love.

But meeting old friends can arouse some internal conflict as I struggle not to give in to the worldly ways of my past. I still stumble at times but am sorry and pick myself up with the grace of God.

Now, I pray for my friends so they will not be left behind. Missing out on God's love seems wasteful. I am working on being His walking Good News by helping others little by little

along this journey. I am bolder to sprinkle Our Lord's name in conversations as I know now what I am talking about.

I am often reminded of what St. Josemaría Escrivá has written his book, *The Way*, "...the world has to be crossed. But there are no ways made for you. You yourselves will make them through the mountains with the impact of your feet."

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