



OUR LADY OF
LOURDES
 CATHOLIC PARISH

THE LOURDES WORD

SUMMER 2022



Summer Theme ~
 Why I Remain a
 Catholic

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Home

by Michele Oertel

For my entire life, the Catholic Church has always felt like home. Where ever I would attend – in my childhood hometown of South Bend, in my college hometown of Bloomington, in my adult hometown of Indianapolis, and even in my vacation towns (especially and surprisingly in Italy with the Mass not in English) – I experienced the comfort of familiarity including sights, sounds, and scents of most Catholic churches.

Through the years, I have come to discover that I am a traditionalist and a rule-follower (most of the time, except when it comes to time!) who embraces history, nostalgia, art, music, symbolism, prayer, education, and fellowship – all of which are realized through the Catholic Church. Our Catholic Christian traditions encompass all of the senses that help me feel the richness of The Good News so that I may more exuberantly “go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”

While the beautiful, old Catholic Church buildings and sacred traditions speak to me, I do believe the heart of Church is the community of believers. And ultimately, Jesus wants our hearts. So even though I have never pondered whether to remain Catholic because that is just part of my life tapestry, I suppose my focus is more on being a “good” Christian than a “good” Catholic. The more seasoned I become in my Christian faith, the more importance I place on having a personal relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Some say that home is where the heart is. And since my heart is with Jesus, then any Jesus-loving/preaching Christian church should fill my spiritual needs. At different times for different reasons, I have attended non-Catholic Christian churches that have been quite fulfilling. However, my Catholic heritage and my Catholic faith define me, and the Catholic Church will always be my home.



Why Am I Still a Catholic?

by Sally Ann Welch

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On April 16, 2022, I celebrated my 30th anniversary of entering the Church. Now, 30 years is less than half of my lifetime and so, it might be unfair of me to say why I am STILL a Catholic. But please indulge me, as I am fairly certain that I can explain why I am a Roman Catholic.

A little over 30 years ago, my husband Charlie was going through a difficult time, and he decided it was time for him to return to a place that was comforting and familiar to him, the Church. We started going to Mass in the small church near our home. I'd grown up and been baptized into a different denomination, and much of the time I had no idea what was going on at Mass. But to support Charlie, I did want to understand. I found out that Catechism classes were about to start, and so I signed-up. Originally, I had absolutely no intention of converting. I only wanted to learn more about the Mass. But as time went on, something changed. Entering the Church began to seem like a real possibility.

Meanwhile at work, my very caring and skeptical co-worker tried to dissuade me from converting. She brought in religious tracts warning me of the hazards of entering the Catholic Church. Knowing she meant well, I read them. But, I was saddened that anyone would believe the misinformation offered in those tracts.

In learning about the Sacraments, I discovered a truth that I had previously not known. In particular, the one

class that inspired me was taught by a woman named Sr. Maureen. The way she explained the True Presence of Christ in the Eucharist was spellbinding for me. And from that class onward, I knew I belonged in the Catholic Church.

Each week as I watched the people going up to receive Holy Communion, it became more and more difficult for me to not be among them. As Easter approached, I found that I had developed a deep desire to enter the Church. My heart ached to be one with my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Shortly before Holy Week in 1992, my coworker tried one last time to help me change my mind. I knew that she would never understand why I wanted to become a Catholic because she really did not want to try to understand. The one thing that I finally told her that made her desist in her efforts was, "I am absolutely certain that this is what God wants me to do."

And so, there I was. I received four Sacraments in one day: First Reconciliation, First Holy Eucharist, Confirmation, and Renewing our Wedding Vows.

I continue to be drawn especially to the Holy Eucharist. I believe in and cherish the truth I find in my Catholic faith, which nourishes, enlightens, and comforts me.

I am here. Here I shall remain.





When questioned about my remaining an active Catholic, I have one quick response: For me, the most important part of remaining a Catholic is the Eucharist. This is the heart and soul of the Catholic faith. Participation in the celebration of the Eucharist gives me strength to live a life as a follower of Jesus. Seeking to live a Christian life, especially in a first world country, is challenging to say the least. The demands of the Gospel commands hard work. While failing miserably at times to meet these demands, I am given strength by the Eucharist to get back up, over and over, and try to do better—in other words, to meet the spirit of the Gospel, which of course, is love.

There are other reasons why I remain a Catholic. However, they all revolve around the Eucharist. Tradition is important. Both the liturgy and theology of the Church add structure to my life; they feed me spiritually. The Catholic Church tradition goes back twenty centuries to Jesus Christ himself. Throughout the ages, the Church has

incorporated and reflected the original Christian message contained in the Gospel, which is Jesus himself. This message of love is a framework by which to live.

I have always been impressed, and continue to be, by the committed people in parishes, hospitals, schools, charitable organizations, and peace movements. Their day-to-day involvement in church life is a following in the footsteps and the spirit of the carpenter from Nazareth. Through their actions, our community of faith inspires a strong belief in Jesus Christ.

Here in our parish, the involvement of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the school, creation care committee, communion deliverers to the homebound or residents of health care facilities, etc., are doing good works for those within and outside the church. Outside of the parish, I frequently reflect back to my college days which were at the height of the Viet Nam war. I took pride in the Catholic Church when numerous priests, nuns, and Catholic laity spoke out and/protested against the war, some even going to jail over their actions.

Another reason why I remain a Catholic began on March 13, 2013. That is the day Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected Pope. Taking the name of Francis, he has been a servant to the world. His action as Pope with his concern for the poor and the environment brings me much joy. His person and causes are lights of hope for the world. His humility as a servant was exemplified on the first Holy Thursday as pontiff. He went to a prison outside of Rome and washed and kissed the feet of a dozen inmates to include a Muslim. His example of love reminds me of a well-known letter from Thomas Merton to Dorothy Day in which Merton wrote, "Our job is to love others without stopping to ask whether they are worthy."

The above are some of the reasons why I, a person of stumbling faith, remain a Catholic. The Eucharist, however, is what everything else revolves around.

Why I Remain a Catholic

by Mary Kay Morgan

My gut reaction to this topic was “What? It’s not a choice! It is what I am and always will be.”

I stand by that initial reaction. Being a Catholic is as much a part of me as my genetic heritage. I am an Irish, English, German, American Catholic... a melting pot. I was born to Catholic parents, baptized and confirmed a Catholic, and there will be no denying it. That’s what I tell my children and siblings, when the opportunity rarely presents itself. Whether or not you are a practicing Catholic is up to you, but the fact you were born and baptized a Catholic will not change. It will always be at least a part of who you are, regardless of current opinions. The doors are always open.

Just as with all other groups of people, there are good and bad, ups and downs...because “to err is human” (Alexander Pope “An Essay on Criticism”), and groups are made up of individual humans. I haven’t always agreed with my parents, but I will always be their child. The same holds true with our American Government, but I’ll always be American, and same with the Catholic Church. I will always be Catholic, regardless of the degree to which I practice. There have certainly been those ups and downs over the years.

The Catholic Church is the one true Church handed down to us by Jesus Christ himself as ordained by God, the Father. Jesus saw fit to bestow the future of

His Church on St. Peter per Matthew 16:13-20 in part, “...on this rock I will build my church...” Peter, the first Pope, obviously was not perfection. His denial of Christ three times is a prime example. Jesus’ forgiveness completes the quote mentioned above from Alexander Pope “... to forgive, divine.”

If placed in the same position as Peter as he makes his denials, I certainly don’t know what I would have done. The same goes for other things done and said by many in authority. I know what I agree with and what I don’t, but I certainly do not judge others or groups for differing views and actions. Of course, there are statements and actions that are quite obviously tragically wrong, which I will never condone or accept. It’s those statements or actions I will stand up against, but I will not go so far as to judge the person or group. I have certainly said and done things I regret and am far from proud of. It is part of the human process. Fortunately, our Lord is kind and merciful as I continue to pray with gratitude for forgiveness, wisdom, and compassion.

The Catholic Church has always been my primary support column, maybe THE load bearing wall to take that metaphor a step further. Without it there’s a good chance I may crumble at some point. So, I guess the real question to me would be “Why would I NOT remain a Catholic?”... IF it was really a choice in the first place.



I slip inside
And leave behind
A world of pain
And ways unkind

In here is peace
Beyond the world
And hints of promise
Yet unfurled

In here, a world outside of time
Birthed in paradox of love
Eternal in its destiny,
Unbound in power below, above

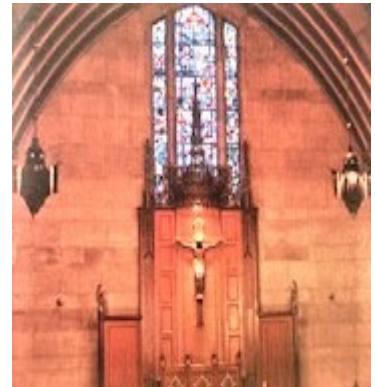
Though scandal, sin, deception, all
Have ruthless been in their attacks
The Church yet stands, upheld throughout
By that which human weakness lacks

For centuries it has prevailed
Though fraught with human frailty
Witness to a thing beyond
All human possibility

But possible in it, all things
When sought with faithful heart
The Whole, Divine, exceedingly
Surpasses every part

And mercy, comfort, healing, peace
No matter where I go, await
One Word proclaimed, one Body, all
I thankfully anticipate

The Church, much more than brick or stone,
Familiar face, or odd
I slip inside, and enter in
The very heart of God



Easter Homily, April 17, 2022

by Deacon Tom Horn

Upon reflecting Deacon Tom's Easter Homily, some members on our publication committee felt that his words entertained the theme of this edition, "Why I Remain a Catholic." Therefore with Deacon Tom's permission, we are including his homily.

Publication Volunteers:

Linda Abner
Kate Cabell
Carol Divish
Andrea Fleak
Linda Hudson
Mark Hudson
Bruce Oertel
Michele Oertel
Bill Walsh

Contributing

Writers:
Deacon Tom Horn
Mary Kay Morgan
Sally Ann Welch



The Lourdes Word
Summer 2022~
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I start my homily with a question. "What brought you to church tonight/today? Top 2 answers: #1 I'm here because it's Easter, a very special holy day or #2 my mom made me (moms, often the great voice of Catholic guilt). Regardless of what led us here, have you ever wondered what our world might be like without Easter? Without Easter, our grocery stores wouldn't be filled with beautiful lilies or spiral sliced hams. We probably wouldn't color hard boiled eggs or search for plastic ones in our yards. I imagine the revenues of candy manufacturers would suffer. But then again, instead of bunnies and peeps, maybe they'd be able to make up some of the lost sales with marshmallow leprechauns or chocolate groundhogs. And of course, there'd be a certain bunny out of a job. But beyond the secular impact, a world without Easter would be vastly different from the one we know today.

Think about it; with regard to worldwide historical influence, nothing compares to Easter. In fact, I would argue that Easter is everything. For without Easter, there wouldn't even be a reason to celebrate Christmas, the birth of our Savior. Frankly, without Easter, I seriously doubt that most of us would even be aware of the Jewish rabbi, Jesus of Nazareth. I concede that never knowing of Jesus sounds outlandish, for sure. But history has provided multiple alternatives to the one that we call Lord and most are far from household names.

Historian Harvey Cox, a 20th century theology professor at Harvard's School of Divinity, reports that there were no less than six men claiming to be the Messiah during Jesus' lifetime. Six men claiming to be either divinely appointed Kings or even the promised Son of God. Historian James Tabor points to six more supposed messiahs in the second half of the first century, three of which are mentioned in Acts of the Apostles. And false messiahs have continued to appear and consistently gather followers over the past 2000 years. In fact, I was surprised to learn that in the past 50 years alone, not fewer than 16 different religious leaders have claimed to be the promised one, the messiah and/or the Son of God. Of the 16, the only one that I was aware of was Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church, better known as Moonies. All of these false messiahs preached a kingdom, and all of them are now dead. No one follows a dead messiah! Eventually their followers scattered, and their movements languished as well. And therein lies the significance of Easter. Our Messiah, Jesus the Christ, is risen and He LIVES.

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Had it not been for the Easter miracle of Jesus' resurrection, I imagine that like the followers of the false messiahs, the Apostles and Jesus' disciples may very well have scattered and faded into obscurity. But because the resurrected Jesus visited His followers after His death and lives on in each of us through His Holy Spirit, those first followers had the courage and felt the need to share the Good News, and they established the apostolic Church as instituted by Jesus. Without a resurrected Jesus, our world would be missing more than 2 billion professed Christians spread across approximately 40,000 different Christian traditions, gathering in one of more than 3 million worldwide church buildings. At the core of all Christian faith is one singular, remarkable, unexpected and even un-hoped for event: the Resurrection.

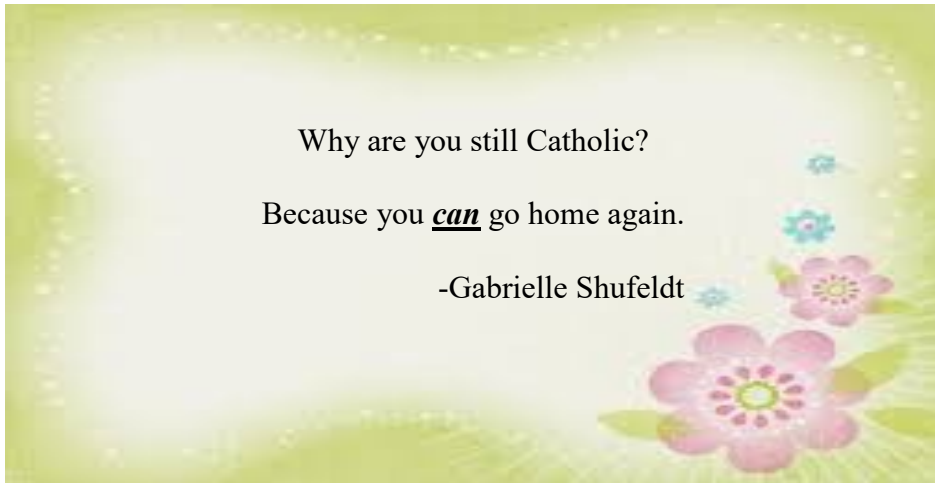
As the result of the Resurrection, the event that we call Easter, the world is changed and so are we. Easter is the foundation of our faith and the source of our hope in Jesus, the true Messiah and Savior. Out of His love for us, on Easter, Jesus returned to us and remains with us so that we might share in His eternal kingdom. Because of Easter, we know that no sin that we commit is beyond redemption, and we know that because of Easter, Jesus has opened the gates of heaven to each of us. Because of Easter, each time we gather at the funeral of a loved one, we do so with the sure and certain knowledge that something far better than this world awaits the faithful.

So again, I ask: Why are we here? We are here because our Lord lives, because He is risen, and because He is with us for all eternity.



~ Parish Mission Statement ~

We, the faith community of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, strive to live, share and be Christ in all we do.



*If you enjoy writing and would like to submit an article,
poem, etc., then please see the last page of this publication.*

Why am I Catholic?

by Andrea Fleak

One of the songs we would sing at church when I was growing up talked about Christ having no body now but yours, and we are His hands and feet to do his work. This image would stay with me when I went out to do service work. When I started studying Theology, some of the classes had a similar message, how to minister to people by being the hands and feet. What I later would find I was less prepared for wasn't about being the hands and feet; it was being the eyes and ears of Christ. When I sit with someone and see their hurt and listen to their story, I begin to understand in a new way the line from Hillsong's song *Hosanna* "Break my heart for what breaks Yours." It is hard to see suffering and to hear another's pain. Suffering and difficult situations often bring up faith questions, and want to know why. I have listened to the question of why am I Catholic a few different times and, at times, been challenged by the same question by those I was listening to. For each person, the answer is different; the tension between life and faith sometimes weighs heavily.

I first consider the question more broadly—Why am I Christian? I am reminded of why when I read writings I wrote during Adoration during my time in college. In those writings, I see God the way I first did growing up: a God that is caring, always present, loves unconditionally, and that I can run to in difficult times. A God that is personal and understanding of the complexities of life. This image of God is the foundation of my faith, my anchor.

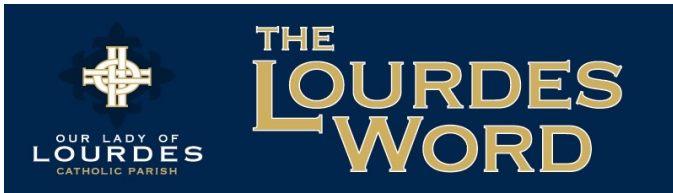
So, why am I Catholic? Vatican II called the Eucharist "the source and summit" of our faith, and it is unique to Catholicism. When I receive the Eucharist I am holding Jesus; I am consuming Jesus. Liturgy has always been something important to me. I first fell in love with the ritual and meaning behind every action of the Mass

when I was an altar server in middle school, high school, and college. I served many Masses that I witnessed Jesus in the Eucharist closely. One moment, in particular, that was powerful to me was during a Holy Thursday Mass. During the Eucharistic Procession, I turned around to incense the Blessed Sacrament. At that moment, I had an awe awareness of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The gift of the Eucharist is that it gives us grace, and it is this grace that helps us go out and live as Catholics.

Along with the Eucharist, Mary has always been important to me. As a child, I connected to her as mother. She said "yes" to Gabriel, knowing the consequences of pregnancy outside of marriage. She was the first disciple, was present for the first miracle, and even in her own pain, stayed at the foot of the cross and watched her Son die. Her story is one of strength and faith that I have drawn upon in difficult times. She reminds me to keep saying "yes" even if the situation is complex and to always stay close to her Son as she did.

Why am I Catholic? The question seems simple, yet the tension between life and faith sometimes makes the question hard to answer. Even in the difficult moments, remembering my anchors helps me and makes me a better representation of Christ. Remembering the God I first fell in love with reminds me of my roots and who God is to me. Remembering all the powerful moments I had with the Eucharist reminds me of the grace that comes from the Eucharist, and it is that grace that will help me in those heavy moments. And then there is Mary; her mission was to give glory to her Son, and she did so by her "yes." She reminds me to keep saying "yes" to wherever I am called to be the hands and feet or eyes and ears.





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Indianapolis, Indiana
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5333 E. Washington St.
Indianapolis, Indiana 46219

Phone: 317-356-7291

E-mail: parishsecretary@ollindy.org

www.ollindy.org

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Our quarterly publication of *The Lourdes Word* is an attempt for us, the followers of Christ, to reflect publicly on our faith journey. Each edition has a specific theme. Contained in this issue are reflections on “*Why I Remain a Catholic.*”



We invite the parishioners of Our Lady of Lourdes to submit writings which they feel will help address the theme of the next publication. All submissions will be reviewed by the publication committee. Please note that due to space requirements, editing may be necessary. Therefore, please limit your submission to 525 words or fewer. The theme for the next edition will be “*My Favorite Saint(s).*” The edited copy will be returned to the author for review before final publication. Please feel free to submit writings through the parish secretary.

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