



Diocese of Fargo
Our Stories of Faith

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Anna Kneir's Story



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There comes a point in a person's life when he or she comes face-to-face with the big questions: Who am I? Why am I here? In what will I invest my life? In a certain sense, all the hopes, efforts, tears, and prayers of a parent are directed to that moment in the lives of their children. Children will examine the truths they've inherited from their parents, and determine whether what they've been taught is consistent with their longings, their experiences, their vision of happiness.

There comes a moment.

For me, the encounter with the "big questions" has been on-going and has led to a deeper and firmer adherence to the Catholic faith. My parents modeled a consistency of life, investment in our family, and love for truth that shaped my vision of the Catholic faith and provided the foundation on which I could answer the big questions.

I grew up in a home where moral behavior was modeled and expected. "Teen angst" or sighs of "better for them to drink under our roof than out in the streets" were not excuses that would have crossed the lips of my

parents. They knew my siblings and I were capable of good behavior; they taught us the reasons for good behavior, and then they expected it. We were not perfect and perhaps, too, my parents' standards were not perfect. But the principle is sound: your actions should be based on what you know to be true. If you know something is not good for you, do not do it. Live a life consistent with your values.

My senior year at Shanley High School my classmates and I each wrote a letter to our parents.

I remember writing, "Thank you for not letting me watch *The Simpsons*." I may not always have agreed with the limitations on TV, the chore schedule, or the academic standards, but I never had any doubt that my parents were invested in our family, in me. They had standards because they cared. That was a great gift. I try not to take it for granted when we are all home for a holiday and Dad sighs and says under his breath, "It's so nice to have my family under one roof."

The amount of investment it takes on the part of parents to raise a family is mind-boggling. It is a vocation. I never asked the details of it, but I suspect my parents made many a sacrifice in order to be able to send us to Catholic school. The family is, truly, a "domestic church" and points to the

family of God, in which He is so invested that He “became flesh and dwelt among us.” I imagine in heaven the Lord will say, “It’s so nice to have my family under one roof.”

The dinner table, long car rides... these were occasions for lively discussions. We often spoke about literature – Dad teaches it – so we’d spend time parsing characters’ motivations and their tragic flaws. We also listened late evenings as Dad and Uncle John philosophized and solved the world’s problems. Mom and Dad both have logical, curious minds. Their love of learning and of discussion passed to me and it helps make for some engaging conversations with my professors and peers now that I am in graduate school, studying for my Masters in Theological Studies.

A couple of years ago when I was home from college during a break, I asked my mom how she would respond if I told her that I had started watching *The Simpsons* or *Friends* now that I was out of the house. Her response has stuck with me. “I would hope you would make a better decision than that.”

That response betrays the confidence she has in the values she and my father tried to instill in us. It also reveals the love she has for me; she does not want me to make my decisions out of fear, coercion, or mere obedience. Rather, she wants me to confront the world and ask of it, “Are you good? Are you true?” She wants me to take ownership of my decisions. There is an element

of risk for parents to let their children test their wings, but ultimately she and my father oriented my siblings and me toward foundational values and then invited us to choose them in freedom.

I do not practice my faith in a rote manner, irrationally adhering to it because it was the way I was raised. To my mind, that’s just as sorry of a scenario as if I were to irrationally reject my faith out of laziness or ignorance. Instead, my parents prepared me to think critically about truth, to yearn to live a life consistent with the truth, and to throw myself wholly into my relationship with Christ, “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” Now, as an (almost) adult, when I’m home I enjoy praying the Rosary with my sister, talking about Bible study with my Mom, engaging the “big questions” with my Dad and brother. I am able to love Jesus Christ because “He loved me first,” giving me the Church and a family which raised me in it.

2007 Anna Knier (pictured far Left)

