



Diocese of Fargo *Our Stories of Faith*

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Fr. Chris Markman's Story



Have you ever thought about what it would be like to be the person you always desired to be, to be the person you always hoped you could be? I remember when I was young that I always wanted to be a superhero. There was, and still is, a desire in my heart to be someone greater than the person I was or am. The desire is not there because I hate the person I am, but it is there because I know in my heart that I really can always try to improve myself and be a better me. I think this is a desire that is found in all people's hearts, but many times we let the world tell us that it is not possible or that we must do it on our own. What we really need to fulfill this desire and be happy is someone greater than us, someone who can help pull the person our hearts desire to be out of us. God is this someone greater. God was not a central part of my life when I was younger. I grew up in a Catholic family and I had respect for the Church, but I eventually slid into the belief that I did not need the Church,

its teachings, or God. I started to believe I could do just fine on my own.

But the truth was I was not doing just fine on my own. There were wounds growing in my heart from my own sins and the sins of others against me that I did not realize were there until many years later. The world and my sinfulness began to trap me in a lie. The lie that says I really could not become a better person, either because I needed to give up that ideal or somehow overcome my woundedness on my own. That lie only brought me more wounds.

Then, in my senior year of high school, a girlfriend came along with her faithful Catholic family. There was something different about their family, almost as though they were more real. I got very close to this young woman and I told her about the sins and pains I had in my heart. Her response was perfect, although hard to hear, "Chris, you should go to confession." I was not ready to tell Christ these sins, what could He really do for me anyway?

In my heart I wanted to confess these things, but I was so afraid and so weak. Finally, a few months later and by the grace of God I went to confession for the first time in a long time. For the first time in the Sacrament of Confession I truly laid

all my sins and wounds before our Lord not knowing what to expect. I began to cry as I really started to realize just how sinful and wounded I had been. Then something unexpected happened.

Through His ordained priest acting in the person of Jesus Christ, God the Father showed me the depths of His mercy and love. The priest absolved me and then told me, "Your sins are forgiven, go in peace!" Suddenly I experienced in my heart where the sin, wounds, and emptiness had been, joy and peace. It was as though my heart was reawakened, it began beating again, and I was again able to see the greatness that lies within me and in our world. I finally started to realize that there was Someone, so much greater than the world to live for. That Someone was truly interested in me being at peace, me being well, me being loved, me being the person I had always desired to be, a person who truly lives life and does not cower from life because of my own faults and fears.

It was truly after that personal experience of God's love and truth that I began to give my life over to Him. It has not always been an easy or a quick process. I still struggle with many sins today. There is a huge difference between then and now though. Before I thought I could tackle the world and sin all on my own. Now, to the best of my abilities and always with the help of God's grace, whether I have sinned or not, I try to give the life that He gave me back to Him. I entrust my life to Him, knowing that He is there loving me in all the truths that He reveals to me through His Word,

*Fr. Chris Markman
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Diocese of Fargo*

through His Tradition, and through His Church. It is that love, knowing that God is always there with me, that has truly allowed me to become the person I always desired to be, to become the person God has always called me to be.

First and foremost, He has called me to be one of His sons, because He truly is my Father. Second, He has called me to be His priest. I never would have discovered the desire for priesthood in my heart if it had not been for God and the graces He has poured down upon me through His Church in the Sacraments, through the teachings, and through the other people He has called into His Church.



The people that God has called to His Catholic Church are some of the realest people I know, precisely because they have confessed their weaknesses, brought their emptiness and pain before God and allowed Him to breathe His life, real life, back into them. This is why I love the Catholic Church, this is why I love God, and this is why I have given my life over to Him as a priest, because I would not even have a true life to give if it was not for the true life that God had first given to me through His mercy, His love, and His truth!