



Diocese of Fargo  
*Our Stories of Faith*

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*Mary Bushy's story*

I was born and raised in the Seattle, Washington area and brought up in the Lutheran Church. My parents were religious when I was young but our church, which they loved, was closed and we had to attend another Lutheran church in the area. That was a turning point, as after that we did not attend church as often. There was an Italian Catholic family living just behind us and their daughter was my friend. I got to know her family quite well. Their devotion to their Catholic faith was evident in their behavior and in the physical appearance of their home (crucifix, statue of Mary, etc). I started going to church with them and at some point I knew I wanted to become a Catholic myself. I was 11 at the time. I entered the church at 19, while I was a student at Seattle University. I was baptized by Fr. Armand Nigro, S.J., who I still keep in contact with. Instead of finishing college, I worked for a few years, and met my future husband at the company we both worked for. We married a few months later and moved to the Fargo, ND area. We had four beautiful children, who attended Catholic schools. My spouse and I each became busy with different things which resulted in our growing apart as time went on. We divorced after 23 years of marriage. I had practiced my Catholic



faith during this time, but like everything else I did, it was because I thought it was expected of me. I did not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I didn't think Catholics thought of it that way. I prayed, went to Mass and occasionally went to confession but I was just so busy being a wife, mother, and later a student, as I went back to

school to get a degree so I could teach school. My earlier experiences and devotion to my faith seemed to vanish beneath piles of laundry, chores, chauffer for my four busy children, and being a student. My days were crammed full of activity with no time to think anything through or ask God what *HE* wanted me to do.

After my separation and my college graduation, I moved to California to begin my teaching career as a Special Education teacher. I thought this would bring me fulfillment and fill the hole I felt inside my heart. I quit going to Mass. I had shame in my heart because I had failed at my marriage and I had to leave part of my family behind to start my teaching career. I felt as though I had failed everyone, even myself, as I realized for the first time that my life contained a series of bungled priorities and it seemed too late to do much about

most of it. God was not in my thoughts at that point because I had a lot on my plate, besides, I was sure He was pretty mad at me. It was a lonely, difficult time. This emptiness led me to the realization (eventually) that it was time to be open to the possibility that I could be healed. I missed going to Mass and I longed to return to the Church which had really been there for me when I was younger. I started going to Mass again and fostered a personal relationship with Jesus; I started letting go of my desire to control my life; I began admitting that I didn't have all the answers and I needed someone, something greater than myself. I needed Christ as my Savior! For two years I attended Beginning Experience (support group for divorced people); this helped me to reconnect with God and others who had experienced a similar journey.

One day, after attending Mass and receiving the Eucharist, I heard Jesus say to me, "follow me and devote your whole life to me. I love you, and you are mine, no matter what has happened in the past." I felt a peace I've never experienced before. I then remembered a dream I had a few years earlier, which at the time seemed so real. It was the day before I was going to have surgery and I saw Jesus in a dream and He told me it was time for me to go home with Him. I begged Him to let me stay for a while longer, until my children were older. I don't remember everything He said except this, "When I come again will you be ready and say yes to Me?" I replied "yes" to Him in my dream. I have been a work in progress in saying yes to His call ever since that day. As time moves forward, it is easier to say "yes" to Jesus.

I have learned to pray more, listening for His voice to tell me what I should do next

and then follow through on it. There have been some difficult times, because I needed to change, in order to be who He wants me to be for Him and for others. As I keep praying for His guidance He shows me through events or other people in my life, what His will is for me. Over the past few years, I researched many communities to find the right one for me. I had been married, divorced, had debt to resolve and I'm older than most people who enter religious life. When I first read about the Sisters of the Visitation, I was attracted to their spirituality of humility, gentleness, kindness toward neighbor and inner hidden virtue. I read about the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane Frances de Chantal. I found that, for me, it's about being gentle with everyone including myself and that God doesn't expect us to be perfect all at once and that He is patient and kind. I checked out a few Visitation orders on the websites and was drawn to the one in St. Louis, which I contacted. They were not accepting older discerners, but they referred me to the one in Brooklyn, New York. "This can't be. " I thought, but I contacted them and was invited there for a visit. I had no expectations at all, but it seems God had planned this the whole time.

Since my first visit, I have resolved (with God's help) the obstacles that stood in the way of entering the order as a Postulant, which I'll be doing on September 8<sup>th</sup> 2012. As I go through the discernment process, I realize more and more that it is just that, a *process*. I have much gratitude in my heart for the gifts and blessings God has given me, and the best thing about it is I have a personal ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ, which has filled the empty spot in my heart and life.