



Diocese of Fargo *Our Stories of Faith*

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Susan Braun's Story

“Do you know where you’re going when you die?” asked my well-intentioned Baptist friend. “I know where I’m going.”

The seconds passed slowly as I struggled with a response. We had been friends for several years and religious topics had been discussed before. She was sure she was “saved” and I resolved that day that I needed to figure out what I believed.

I had always been a Christian – raised in a home where the Lutheran church was an integral part of life. I never doubted God’s existence or His love for me. When my college boyfriend and I started talking of marriage, I knew we would need to make a decision about religion. Steve had grown up in an equally devoted Catholic home and even as a college student he attended weekly Mass.

A friend of mine had converted to Catholicism when she got married so I knew that was a possibility. I also knew it was in the best interest for a family to practice one faith. I didn’t know much about Catholicism except that Catholics didn’t convert to something else. It was through that thought process that I decided to convert as a gift to my future husband and children. It couldn’t be all that different from Lutheranism, right?

Steve was visibly touched when I told him I was willing to convert. We joined



RCIA and began marriage preparation. Little did I know that my decision which was based on logic would become so complicated in practice. It didn’t take long to learn there really was a difference. What do you mean the Catholic Church is the one true

church? What do you mean communion is different? What do you mean we can’t use contraception? What have I gotten myself into?!?

As hard as it was to let go of my previously held beliefs, I kept my eyes on the goal of being one faith as a family. Arrangements were made not only for our wedding, but also for my confirmation into the Catholic Church the following day while our family and friends would still be in town. On the eve of our wedding, Steve came to me with His wedding gift for me. It was a delicately beautiful sterling silver rosary and I tried hard not to show him how I really felt. I was expecting earrings or maybe a watch like I had gotten him – but a rosary? I was terribly disappointed as I held in my hand the reminder that I was giving up the religion of my youth for the sake of our new union.

I didn’t have much time to think about being Catholic after I came into the Church. The early years of marriage brought several moves and the addition of four children in seven years. I had to quit working outside of the home because

we couldn't afford the daycare. It was during this time of learning to be a stay-at-home mom that God put into motion a series of events to draw my heart closer to Him. He gave me several wonderful Christian women as friends who taught me the importance of motherhood and homemaking in God's design for the family. I started to enjoy being at home instead of yearning to be back in the workplace. There was only one drawback; none of these friends were Catholic.

Not long after my Baptist friend had challenged me about salvation, there was an article in the church bulletin that caught my attention. It was written by a parishioner, Patti Armstrong, and contained ideas on how to create a truly Catholic home. I gave her a call and asked if she knew of a group for Catholic moms. She didn't, but mentioned that she had a book I might like. During our conversation, I was amazed at the depth of knowledge she had about Catholicism and the ease at which she spoke of her faith.

The book was about Mary and although I had no relationship with the Blessed Mother up to that point, she was now being revealed to me in every page I read. And like the good mother that she is, she turned the attention from herself and pointed me right to her divine son. Patti loaned me book after book on

subjects such as apologetics, conversion stories, and Marian apparitions. I just couldn't get enough as the Lord used wonderful authors to show me the truths of the Catholic faith.

One night, I took out my wedding gift for the first time and learned how to pray the rosary using the pamphlet Patti had given me. It had taken nine years for the object of disappointment to become my treasured gift. It was then that I knew I was truly converted.



I have thanked my Baptist friend many times for challenging me that day. Since my conversion of heart, Steve and I have made it our goal to have a vast understanding of our faith. We love sharing what we've learned and are happy to see the Jehovah's Witnesses show up at our door! But we get the most satisfaction from knowing that we are able to impart a Catholic heritage to our children in which they will know, love, and serve God in this life and be happy with Him in the next.

Susan and Steve Braun have been married for 29 years and attend St. Mary of the Assumption in Lakota. They are the proud parents of eight and have 5 fantastic grandchildren so far. They live near McVille, ND. In addition to home schooling and leading a 4-H group, Susan does free-lance writing on the side.