

the R.C.I.A. class a look. But we backed down for two reasons. First, we were not quite ready for the world to know of our leanings towards the Catholic Church, and some of our classmates in R.C.I.A. were from our neighborhood. Second, we realized that even if we completed this class, we were at least temporarily ineligible to enter the Church because of a marital commitment I had made prior in my early 20's.

Well! Maybe here was an issue that would save us from the Church! We never dreamed we would face such an obstacle, and angrily thought of many worse sins we could have committed which would not have prevented us from becoming members of the Roman Catholic Church.

After much pondering and prayer, we soon realized that this requirement of obtaining an annulment was yet another great reason for seeking this traditional Church and her teachings. I initially had been attracted to the Catholic Church because it seemed to be the only one which held fast to those things that serve to strengthen and preserve families. Every other denomination had become lax towards abortion, contraception, marriage, divorce, etc.

So I swallowed my pride and took my first big submissive step, bowing to the awesome power and majesty of the authority of the Church. We really did it together, because Marcus was there, so supportive, every stage of the process. The annulment process turned out to not be as daunting as I had imagined, but rather a blessing to both of us and our marriage.

Nine months later, after we had moved to Steubenville, Ohio (a pretty good place to learn to be Catholic), we were informed of the decree of nullity, and within a month, on December 20, 1992, we were not only received into the Church at St. Peter's parish, but our marriage was blessed with a re-exchanging of vows and rings. What a joyous occasion we shared with many new friends.

So . . . Marcus isn't now known to many as Reverend. But I'm glad that I was a pastor's wife for a time, and am eternally thankful that our entire family is enjoying the riches of the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church.

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Pamphlet 158

“I Never Wanted to be a Minister’s Wife Anyway!”

Marilyn C. Grodi

This was the tongue in cheek reply I shared at the first Coming home Network gathering in 1993. The statement was definitely true until I met my husband-to-be at the Second Presbyterian Church of Newark, Ohio. It had only a few months since I returned to church attendance. Here Marcus had been called as the assistance minister and singles group coordinator.

I was a “baby” Christian struggling to live as one, becoming more and more aware of my sinfulness, as well as my inability to make the needed changes. I was also working in the field of alcoholism as an educator and counselor. As I sent people to Alcoholics Anonymous, I knew I needed a spiritual recovery as well as many of my clients.

A friend in our single's group gave me a verse that made sense but was difficult: “Delight in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.” So I began praying everyday while running, or when I'd wake up in the middle of the night. I received counseling from the minister who later married Marcus and me, and during a torturous two years of struggle and backsliding, I desired to turn my life completely over to God.

I was miserable and had been most of my adult life, living my life “my way.” I had “looked for love in all the wrong places,” so

I really wasn't sure I knew how to recognize it when it was available. I became more involved in the church, thinking teaching High School Sunday School and things like that were reasonable requests from God. BUT marrying a minister?! This was just a little too much to ask.

The string of relationships behind me also made me feel completely unworthy of such a role. I finally prayed the prayer, "Lord, not my will but yours; if you want me to be single, that will be fine." Suddenly, I was completely released from a relationship at my work that I believe Satan had been using to keep me almost immobile. Soon after, God seemed to take a "two-by-four" to both Marcus and me, and we became engaged.

Three months later, after much reminding from my fiancé that "you are a new creation in the Lord," we were married. (I didn't even have to attend a school for minister's wives-to-be.) Wow, was married Christian life a rewarding, exciting roller coaster ride. And with many challenges, too. I became the director of a crisis pregnancy center, and our first child, Jon Marc, was born the day after our first anniversary. Hallelujah, being a mother was the ultimate! Living with Marcus alone has always been interesting. He's always full of creative and sometimes scary ideas. I quickly learned that I need not get overly excited with every single idea, for many were just that. Usually, I'm the one who likes things to stay the same.

When we moved from our small, country church in central Ohio to a large evangelical congregation in northeast Ohio,

I thought this is it! This active, vibrant church was quite appealing and with buying a house, my roots were down for at least ten years (or so I thought). Being a minister's wife was actually quite fun: I was free to do whatever I wanted—teach Sunday School, redecorate the nursery, and develop relationships with many like-minded people. Then Marcus got a bazaar idea. Being restless about his ministry as well as issues in our Presbyterian denomination, he decided to incorporate his science background into his present career by studying bioethics. He left his pastoral position to study full-time while we also began looking at other denominations that might be a better fit. We both had become discouraged about how issues were dealt with at higher levels of our denomination: abortion, inclusive language, etc. Little did I know how much affect some of Scott Hahn's tapes had had on Marcus. Leaving our church was a great disappointment to me and to many in the church; it had only been one and a half years.

Marcus was now driving to Cleveland each day to Case Western Reserve University, while I was caring for our preschooler and newborn named Peter (of all names). Isolation was beginning to take place, since we still lived in our old neighborhood near our church and friends, who didn't understand what we were doing, and neither did I. We were church hopping for a summer while Marcus was studying not just genetics; he was reading everything he could get his hands on about the Catholic Church.

Miraculously, we both found ourselves open to the truths of the Catholic Church, and much was making sense that never had before. We had never in our wildest dreams thought seriously about this historic Church, which, at least to me, had always been one of myths and misguided people. Marcus rather quickly came to the point where he felt he could no longer be a Protestant, but neither of us felt that we could actually become Catholics.

When we began attending mass, it was awful: the parish churches seemed so cold and unfriendly; there were no welcoming Sunday school programs or nurseries for the little ones. The worst part was when we would come to the sacrifice of the Mass. I just wanted to break down and weep or run. Without having dealt with the issue of the Eucharist, I intuitively knew that here was the pivotal difference.

Even though Marcus stated that the kids and I were welcome to continue attending the Presbyterian Church, we did not want to go to separate churches on Sunday mornings. Fortunately, we discovered a parish across town that resembled many Protestant churches: they were a little friendlier with even coffee and donuts afterwards; CCD was held on Sunday mornings for children (it felt like Sunday school). These rather superficial things actually helped a lot as I was making the transition into the world of Catholicism. So each Sunday we would drive, tearfully, past our old church, as we became more convinced about what we might have to do.

Then we ran into a most unexpected barrier. Marcus and I decided we would give