

# "We Found The Faith"

## Stories by recent Australian converts to the Catholic Religion assembled by The Catholic Enquiry Centre

By Various

Australian Catholic Truth Society No.1553 (1969)

Each writer is a convert resulting from contact with Catholic Enquiry Centre. These true stories are written in the hope that they may interest other people to study the teaching, practice and belief of the Catholic Church. The publication is also an acknowledgement of the support of the many Catholics who make the work of the Catholic Enquiry Centre possible.

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The roads that lead to the fullness of faith are many and varied. One wonders, even after many years of experience with converts, if any two are exactly alike. My work at the Catholic Enquiry Centre has brought me over the years into contact with some thousands of people whose search for an adequate answer to the purpose of life led them ultimately to peace of soul and a living faith within the Catholic Church.

Sometimes I suggest to those who become Catholics that they might write out for me a brief account of the events that led to their enquiries into our Faith and their subsequent reception into the Church. I never cease to marvel at the endless variety of heart-warming stories that come back. They are a constant encouragement to all of us at the Centre. They remind us to renew our own gratitude for the priceless gift of faith which we so often tend to take for granted. They help us, too, in our efforts to appreciate the problems of others who are still searching for divine truth, and asking us to guide them in their search.

This pamphlet is a selected cross section from the many stories that have come to us. Most of these stories were written in the form of personal letters and were not intended primarily for publication. But for that very reason they are all the more personal and spontaneous. We requested permission to publish them because we know that they cannot fail to elicit a sincere "thank you Lord for the gift of Faith" from many Catholics who read them. I am confident that they will also bring grace and courage to many who have not yet reached the end of their search for the true Faith.

The writers of these stories were surprised when I asked their permission to publish what they had written. They had no desire for personal publicity. Yet they gladly gave their permission when I assured them that it would help others to find the faith which had brought them so much happiness.

THOMAS A WHITE, Director, CATHOLIC ENQUIRY CENTRE. June 10, 1969.

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Something Missing in Our Lives

By BARRY JOHNSON, Melbourne, Vic.

It is not unusual for a husband and wife to become Catholics together, but it must be rather unique for a young engaged couple to be received into the Church together by way of preparation for their marriage. This was what occurred in the case of Mr. and Mrs. Barry Johnson of Ashburton, Victoria. Seven weeks before they were married, both were received into the Catholic Church the same day. They are now a very zealous young Catholic couple.

Neither my wife nor I darkened a church door from the time we were twelve until we were twenty. We started going out together when we were sixteen. When I was doing part-time matriculation, I studied modern History beginning with the History of the Reformation and Renaissance. I got "carried away" with Luther and the Reformation (so carried away, in fact, that incidentally I failed modern History due to too much specialization - or was it speculation!)

My girl friend (now my wife) and I often discussed it, and we began slowly to realize there was something missing in our lives, so we started to go to church. As the only friends we had were Protestants, we went to the Church of England and were confirmed there in August, 1964.

However, I still did not feel completely certain of myself, especially regarding the following points:

1. Lack of defined dogma in the Church of England - nobody to say what is definitely right and what is definitely wrong.
2. Different attitudes to Communion - ranging from a mere memorial in the so-called Low Church, to the doctrine of transubstantiation in the High Church.
3. Lack of Sacraments - confession, or penance, anointing of the sick - which I knew I needed to help me live a true Christian life. The Anglican general confession and general absolution recited en masse each week did not help me realize the gravity of sin as I now know true confession does.

There were other things that jarred me, but suffice it to say here that I gradually came to realize that Catholicism, after all, seemed to have the best credentials. It was at this time I took the course merely to examine it and find out.

The priest at the Enquiry Centre patiently helped me unravel any problem. One of my first questions was on the "justification by faith alone" theory. Another was - what was the position of a Catholic regarding belief in a dogma defined by the Pope which he felt in conscience he couldn't accept, e.g., the Immaculate Conception.

I wondered if there was really such a thing as the "Index of Banned Books" and, if so, what penalty was imposed on Catholics who read them. Could I go to confession and have my sins forgiven without becoming a member of the Catholic Church? How did the Catholic Church view my chance of salvation or that of a Presbyterian or Unitarian?

Such questions I felt might sound ridiculous or impious - but I needed the answers to clear the air and overcome years of -prejudices. They were all satisfactorily answered, so now I could take another step forward. The Mass was a bit of a puzzle. How could Our Lord offer Himself to God if he is in fact God Himself in the Blessed Trinity? Can we really sacrifice Our Lord and make him relive the agony of the Cross, or was this a painless sacrifice? If God is infinite and everywhere, how is the Real Presence explained? Is God concentrated in the bread or what? These were questions of vital importance to me.

During this time a grave internal struggle was going on in my mind. While I had sometimes hinted of this internal conflict to my then fiancée, I used to alternate between denouncing and praising the Catholic Church. This gave my fiancée a rather confused idea of the Church.

When four months before our marriage I told her I was going to become a Catholic, she nearly dropped dead. At first, she totally rejected the idea and totally rejected the Church. My interest, however, aroused her curiosity. We studied the course together and in the meantime attended a series of pre-Cana conferences, where we got to know the local priest pretty well.

From being a staunch anti-Catholic Protestant she became a vigorous Catholic, even informing some of her Protestant friends that they were not attending proper churches.

Seven weeks before our marriage, we were both received into the Catholic Church. Our conversion has changed the whole course of our lives for the better. I cannot express how much the Church has changed our lives and our attitude towards our marriage. Our Faith is truly the greatest single factor in our lives today and our wish is to raise a holy Christian family.

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### "I 'Sticky-Beaked' My Way into the Church"

By WENDY BADMAN, Victoria.

When Wendy Badman wrote this brief account of the events which brought her to the Catholic Faith she was a young teacher at a public school in a Victorian country town. Now she is a young mother, happily married to a good Catholic. Since she became a Catholic she has been instrumental in helping her younger sister to find the True Faith.

I suppose you could say I "sticky-beaked" my way into the Church. At 13 years of age I discovered the Catholic Hour when I was given an old wireless for my room. I listened with my ears glued to the barely audible Question Box segment so that my sister who slept in the same room would not be disturbed. I continued to be dubious about the queer practices of Catholics. I listened to the muddled views of my school friends for several years. In my fourth year at high school I answered one of the Catholic Enquiry Centre's newspaper advertisements, but I did not continue after the first lesson because I was afraid someone might discover what I was doing.

It was not until last year, when I was studying for Matriculation, that I began to listen to the Catholic Hour again. I sent for some Catholic Truth Society pamphlets on various religions and to the Catholic Enquiry Centre - this time to complete the full course.

There was something very different about Catholicism. Why did Catholics go to church every Sunday? Why did they tell their sins to a man? And did they really have to pay threepence per sin as one friend told me? I was quite interested in finding out for myself. After all, didn't we learn "clear thinking" in English class at school. I read *The Road to Damascus* and other books surreptitiously borrowed from the local library. So many intelligent people became Catholics. Until then I had only heard of a few girls who had "turned" to marry Catholic boys.

About this time I became worried. I was a normal high school girl. I had good, although religiously apathetic, parents. They had sent me to Sunday School and I was a communicant Anglican. My friends talked a great deal about religion and the meaning of life, but few of them attended Church regularly or applied religious principles to daily life. Why should I be different?

I had never been inside a Catholic Church at this time; eventually, I summoned up the courage to ask a Catholic acquaintance to take me to Mass with her. I was impressed by her firm but casual acceptance of her Faith and my interest in it. I had expected to be rushed off my feet when my intentions were known.

I sometimes made visits to the Blessed Sacrament after carefully waiting to make sure no one saw me enter or leave the church in our country town.

The year was slipping by, the final exams were looming nearer and I felt I was going to fail miserably. My study habits were greatly disrupted by the constant knowledge that the Catholic Religion was true and I must become a Catholic to do God's will. This conflicted with my selfish desires and a wish to conform with my family and friends.

At the beginning of this year I was attending Mass regularly and I began to take personal instruction from the parish priest. My exam results came out and I passed. I was convinced that Our Lord and His Mother had helped me.

My doubts and fears vanished and I became more and more aware of God's great gift to me. Five weeks ago, I was received into the Church and I was confirmed last weekend. My crosses have been small ones. My family and friends, although more than a little bewildered at my decision, have come to accept it. Of course, I hope and pray that they will one day share the great treasure of the True Faith.

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### Someone Who Needed Help

By RON SYKES, Canberra, A.C.T.

Mr. Ronald J. Sykes took the Catholic Enquiry Centre's course merely out of his interest in studying various religions. Ronald's first search for truth led him to atheism and then bitterness against the Catholic Church, subsequent to his Catholic girl-friend (who suggested the course to him in the first instance) and himself - having agreed to terminate their friendship on the grounds of incompatibility, arising out of their conflicting ideologies. Ronald is now Secretary of a St. Vincent de Paul Conference and full time worker for the blind. The following is his story.

For me the Catholic faith was a tremendously complicated thing to understand. Though my father does not profess any religion, my mother is a fine Christian woman. They gave us love and understanding, which many professed Christians do not give their children. The surrounding atmosphere in which I was reared was devoid of Christian teaching, but not devoid of anti-Catholicism.

When I became very attached to a young Catholic girl called Catherine at the office I was forced for the first time in my life to examine my "materialistic" philosophy and compare it with Christian doctrine. At her request, I applied to the Catholic Enquiry Centre for their course informing them there that my interest was merely that I was making a study of various religions - which I was.

The topic of religion was my favourite. Catherine and I seldom talked about anything else. Since I knew all the answers I delighted in ridiculing the faith of others. She bought A.C.T.S. Pamphlets for me, which succeeded only in supplying me with more ammunition. Constant discussion and searching analysis led me firstly to atheism. I became pro-Communist in my whole outlook.

Catherine meant a lot to me in those days. When we first met she needed help. I think the early days of our friendship helped her a great deal. When she suggested we terminate the friendship because of our conflicting ideologies, I became frustrated and depressed. Consequent to losing her, I grew to despise the Catholic Church. It was then I sat down and wrote to the Catholic Enquiry Centre eight pages of a diatribe on Catholic beliefs and criticism on what I had read. I often wonder since what reaction the bitterness of the contents evoked from the priest at the Centre!

In it, I doubted the existence of God. For me, the existence of God was pure speculation, something that only some people feel and certainly not me. I could appreciate the fact that if we trace life far enough in its history then we must reach a stage where there is something that we all depend on for our existence. But who could define that "something"? And since no one can define it, how can anyone profess to love it? Furthermore, how do we know we still depend on it. How can we have confidence in this indefinable force or being? To me the Catholic claim that God made us to know and love Him was simply making God an egotist.

The Gospels, as far as I was concerned, were four very ordinary men's interpretations of Christ's actions and sayings. Miracles should have been defined as "occurrences, usually beneficial and unexpected, which man cannot explain". Catholics accredit them to the power of God simply because man cannot explain them.

I could accept Christ as an historical person, but to claim that he was God. Well, what next? We were asked to believe it to be so, simply because he said so and the man was dead for nearly 2000 years. Because people could not explain his powers, they naturally accredited them to divine origin. To me it would have been safer simply to state that this man, Christ, did things that no other man could do. What evidence was there anyway, apart from the word of man, that Christ did actually rise from the dead?

As for the Catholic claim to be the true church with an infallible head! Well, Christ did not actually form any Church. He gave ideas to a dozen men upon which to form a Church. Every modern Church represented these ideas to me except the Catholic Church, which was incorrect in its teachings of bigotry, prejudice and intolerance. I quoted the examples of Galileo, such things as the persecution of non-believers, the selling of Indulgences. These were the policies of the Catholic Church before the Reformation, policies purported to be executed in the name of God! Other Churches were formed because true Christians could not accept the barbarous attitude of the Catholic Church then. The other denominations shed the superstition and fear that the Catholic Church still clings to.

The strength of the Catholic Church lay in the fact that children were taught to fear the unknown from the day they were born and every subsequent day during their schooling, and a child's mind will absorb everything until the age of seven or eight. If the Catholic Church believed so strongly in its ideals, then why couldn't it begin teaching them when a person is at the age to reason for himself.

The Church's claim to infallibility couldn't be true since it was formed and is still governed by men. Christ never said that St. Peter was to have a successor. In any case, the Pope today could not be a successor to St. Peter, if we are to use the word in its true sense. He has been elected by means of the political machinery of the Catholic Church. He has not been appointed by Christ but merely appointed by common man.

I honestly didn't expect much of a letter in reply to my diatribe. Nobody could have been as surprised as I was when a few days later I got a patient and detailed answer to each of my objections

and accusations, together with long notes of detailed proofs and comments from eminent Protestant scholars contradicting my charges.

The logic of it impressed me. I learned that if I were to single-handedly demolish the Church then I would have to revise and improve my arguments by reading and talking a great deal more.

I discovered a book by a Chinese called Lim Yutang - philosopher and pagan. His philosophy was to enjoy life and forget about an imaginary and sadistic Creator. His philosophy became mine and I vowed to read all his thoroughly enjoyable works. You can imagine my reaction when I discovered in the Canberra Library that my favourite writer and supplier of argument material had written one entitled "Why I Became a Christian". I was stunned to think that Lim Yutang and Christianity could be compatible. The book was very moving and fascinating.

This made me continue the course, where such problems as the justice of God, the inerrancy of the Bible, the problem of evil in the world, presented themselves to me. Having no answers, I sought them from the Centre. Again the answers were detailed, kind and gracious. I noticed I wasn't sent the "Peace Prayer" which was supposed to be enclosed. I wrote for it and got it by return. I was in search of peace of mind. I desperately needed it.

I am sure now it was the loss of Catherine that plagued my subconscious mind. One night I walked miles trying to find some reason or solution for my despair. I walked into a Catholic presbytery and met a priest who has since become a great friend. When he sat me down in his study, he opened a can of cold beer for me. He let me talk that night, but then for two nights a week for eight or nine months he did the talking.

His personality and kindness impressed me. I had always imagined priests to be unsympathetic "businessmen". I can remember vividly seemingly small things that Father said and did that impressed me deeply. I think it was only in our second talk he said that "God is love, justice, kindness and mercy", or words to that effect.

Perhaps it was the way he said it, but the words made sense. Somewhere, I felt he was right. I realized that Christians don't pretend to know everything about God, or picture Him as a bearded gentleman on a throne. His statement that the Church was the only organization which had existed for 2,000 years showed it was either authentic or the greatest fraud of all time. Authentic seemed more acceptable.

In a book he gave me to read, it was pointed out that matter was indestructible. I related it to the Christian claim that after death the body is not destroyed but merely changed.

I began to think that somewhere, somehow, there had to be an answer available to a man if he wanted it. It appalled me to continue believing that we were born to die and decay without any knowledge of our creation or destiny. I used to gaze at the stars and wonder how space and time could possibly be infinite. I recall saying to myself, "There must be God", and I felt I believed this basic fact upon which every tenet of the faith is based.

I've always felt a nagging pity for those unfortunate souls we see daily. Many times I've taken in derelicts to feed. With all the suffering and misery in the world, I knew that the ultimate answer had to be one of goodness. I knew there was a God, and that God was good. Reading the Sermon on the Mount, I felt that the justice, mercy and goodness of God would ultimately triumph over the injustice and inhumanity of man. No man could escape this since "the paths of glory lead but to the grave."

I met a girl called Virginia about this time and I accompanied her to Mass. I didn't understand it because it was a High Mass, but I studied the faces of those returning from Holy Communion, and for the first time I realized that people really did believe. I had always imagined that people only clung to this immense fairy tale wanting to believe in it because they weren't strong enough to face the reality of life. She took me to Mass every Sunday from then on. I am indebted to her because she eased my loneliness, and I pray for her still.

One evening I prayed to be sent someone who needed help. I don't know why I did this - perhaps it was the subconscious mind again. She came under the name of Clare. Clare was passing through troubled waters and needed help badly. She wished to become a Catholic but had several misconceptions that prevented her from doing so.

I am still amazed at the fact that I was able to direct and inspire her. She was receiving instruction when she left for France and I am certain she was baptized there. I had been able to inspire someone with a Faith I didn't know I possessed. In this sense it was Clare who drew it from me, because we discussed the subject constantly.

I became desperately in need of help myself. I began visiting St. Patrick's Church each night. I remember the first time I entered making sure that there was no one else inside. I experienced some relief from my loneliness in those visits and sensed some hope of eventual peace of mind. Prayer was difficult and even embarrassing in the presence of anyone else. Eventually I shed my pride, the greatest stumbling block for anyone in search of God, and knelt and asked: "God, if you are real, please help me to believe." Acceptance of God was my only real problem. If one accepts Jesus Christ, then the tenets of the Catholic Faith seem to fit like pieces of a jig-saw puzzle. All my objections were washed away when I accepted Jesus, because the tenets of the Faith appear in His words in the New Testament.

I began to realize that the Christian person was different than I had imagined. People construct a picture of a group or organization according to their experience with its members. Unfortunately, we tend to take more notice of bad example than we do of good. Small acts of kindness that are occurring about us constantly are seldom noticed or soon forgotten. But anything the least harmful or callous, even if unintentional, is never forgotten and often magnified.

My opinion of the Church has been based on the example of some Catholics I had known. The people who were helping me now presented a different example. Although, this may seem a minor point, its realization took me a big step forward, since I came to realize that the core of the whole question is "What does the Church teach?", never mind about how some of the members apply it. To me the essence of Christianity seemed to be "Love God and love your neighbour." I was also aware that each Christian had the means to reach perfection. I now knew that only Christianity could help each person and thus each nation to be better and more just.

Faith began to grow in me until it became life itself. It was the 'Rock' on which I hoped to build my future life. The privilege of entry into the Catholic Church became my one ambition and it would be one of the happiest days of my life when the Church accepted me. That ambition was realized and that happiness was fulfilled when I was baptized and received into the Catholic Church. On the day of my baptism Catherine had Mass offered for me.

Shortly after my Baptism I returned home, where I met Carol - a wonderful girl whom I love very much. After two years of courtship we were married with Nuptial Mass and we are very happily

married. Carol is the daughter of the former Secretary of the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul of which I am now secretary.

One year after my Baptism, my mother was baptized a Catholic. I seem to be able to pray the more earnestly when I know of someone in need. The blessings given to such people as a result of prayer have indicated to me time and time again the worth of prayer.

Undoubtedly, it was the instruction from the Catholic Enquiry Centre that played the major part in explaining to me the doctrine of the Church. My priest friend showed me how this doctrine can be lived. My loneliness provided the reason for my search for truth and finally led me to discover the meaning of humility.

Only I know how good God has been to me, both directly and through the friends who helped me. I only hope I am able to prove worthy of his love and worthy of membership of His Church.

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### My Curiosity Kept Me Searching

By MRS. MARJORIE E. DAVIES, Canterbury, Vic.

Mrs. Marjorie Davies, whose Catholic grandfather was disowned by his family for marrying a very religious Church of England lady outside of the Catholic Church, was strictly brought up in the Church of England. At thirteen, she worried her parents by becoming too religious. When thirty and mother of four children, she answered an advertisement of the Catholic Enquiry Centre "on impulse", but hesitated about taking the course because, she wrote, "I feel I would be unable to change my faith on account of family union, in which I am a strong believer". As the purpose of the course is not to make people change their faith, but simply to explain the Catholic faith to those who want to know about it, she was enrolled. How the change came, Marjorie tells us herself.

My father was the son of a Catholic man and Church of England woman. This Catholic grandfather of mine was disowned by his own family for marrying my grandmother out of the Church. She loved her Church and I recollect how she often sang hymns and was generally religious in thought and outlook. My own mother was of no particular faith, but was very strictly brought up and had my brother and I baptized in the Church of England when we were only six weeks old. At five, she had us attending Sunday School.

When I was eight, a new Vicar came to our Church. This man was a great religious influence in my life. He stressed the necessity of daily prayer, and even if we were unable to say many prayers, to at least say the Lord's Prayer every day. He made great changes for youth, started junior Church, social evenings, etc. By the time I was thirteen, I could think of nothing but Church. My parents did not attend church and were worried about my becoming too religious.

It was at this time I started to wonder about Catholics. I was allowed to go to dancing classes in the Catholic hall, which was right next to our own church. We had heard all sorts of stories about priests, about confession, about Catholics having large families even though they were poor, and above all how they were allowed to do anything they liked as long as they attended Mass on Sunday. Now, I was meeting them at the dancing lessons. I began to wonder for myself. What was it about Catholics? I was afraid to ask them. But my curiosity grew until one Sunday I sneaked into the Catholic Church to have a look. What I saw, I loved. It intrigued me to see they all attended



Mass together. This made an indelible impression on my mind, and looking back I think it was this that made me become a Catholic many years later.

At fourteen I was confirmed in the Church of England. My grandfather - who couldn't receive Communion in his own church, told me then that I must never forget to make regular Communion a habit. I did this all my life. I was a regular communicant even when I wrote to the Catholic Enquiry Centre years later. Then I listened to every word Catholics said and I read as much as I could. In short, I tried to be a good Catholic in the Church of England.

At fifteen, I met a young married Catholic couple of about 25 years of age, who are still my good friends. Howard, the husband, was a convert. They are a wonderful Catholic family. I loved their children and the example this couple set made a big impression on me. It was Howard first suggested the Catholic Enquiry Centre to me, but I was worried lest my father and mother might be displeased with me, so I didn't write for the course.

At twenty-five I married. I often told my husband of my love of the Catholic Church, but I hesitated to do anything about it. I lacked the courage and also I was a strong believer in unity of religious beliefs in a family. Becoming a Catholic, I felt, would be dividing me from my husband and children. I knew he had no objection to my visiting the Catholic church if I wanted to, but he did not want me to take the children. In my heart I knew I belonged to the Catholic Church. But how could I upset him? I turned to God for guidance.

Eventually, after my fourth child was born, I saw the Catholic Enquiry Centre advertisement in the paper and cut it out to send for the lessons. I did this on impulse and with my husband's knowledge. But one secret I kept from him was when I actually enrolled for the course and began receiving the lessons. I felt guilty about this. My husband is a good family man, who has no objections to Catholics, but neither has he any desire to be one. It wasn't that I didn't want to deceive him, but knowing that his thoughts on religion were not as deep as mine, I felt the time was not opportune to tell him of my growing desire to be a Catholic.

My faith was nearly shattered one morning when I received in the post a book of lottery tickets from some Catholic organization. I could only think of one place where they could have got my address - the Catholic Enquiry Centre. How awful, I thought! And one of the reasons I had taken the course was because it was in confidence. It's not that I object to buying a ticket if asked to, but being sent a whole book to sell! I was so worried. As I was enjoying the course immensely I felt obliged to sell the tickets in appreciation, but decided I'd ask my Catholic friends first. They felt, I was wrong and decided to ask the priest. I was so relieved a few days later when I had a letter from the Director of the Catholic Enquiry Centre as a result of a query from the priest, assuring me that wherever the organization got my address from they certainly did not get it from the Centre, and furthermore that nobody had access to the names and addresses of anybody on the course. It was such a relief!

Papal infallibility was a bit hard to accept - that the Church should have a Pope - a leader - this I could accept. After all, every organization must have a head. But to regard that head as being infallible was different. When this was explained correctly, however, I can well appreciate the need and appropriateness of it. Learning of priests and nuns, I envied them. Living in communities, with set times for prayer, away from everyday hardships and worries makes life easy for them rather than for the likes of me, preoccupied with keeping a family and living in the middle of materialism.

Even after finishing the lessons, I still had problems, but no doubts. The course didn't teach me much more than I already knew, as I did not need to be convinced. But it did give me the determination to press on with my desire to become a Catholic. I visited a priest and had quite a long talk with him. He asked me to talk my husband into seeing my point of view. This may not seem hard, but for me it was a tremendous difficulty. And he also wanted me to suggest sending the children to Catholic schools. At this time I was expecting my fifth baby and decided to do nothing until I spoke to the Sister in the hospital whom I knew very well from my previous visits there.

However, I began to attend Mass, and once again the large numbers fascinated me as they did when I was only thirteen. Their reverence for the altar and the tabernacle, the children and families, the lack of concern how one was dressed because no one was interested in what you were wearing, impressed me. All were there for the one purpose - to worship Our Lord and to pray to him. When I think of the stories I had heard as a child, I wondered how ever sensible people could believe such nonsense.

It took three years to overcome my final difficulties about making up my mind, mainly because of the effect I thought such a decision would have on my children. Each night I asked God to guide me and do whatever he wanted me to do. Finally, the grace came and I was received. My parents and husband accepted it quite casually and had apparently thought I would have changed much earlier. Actually, I often wonder why I took so many years. The day I was received I was so excited I wanted to tell everyone I was a Catholic, but instead I had to walk quietly home.

At present I am busy interesting my family, but I want them to come of their own accord. My children attend Mass with me sometimes and I hope they will all receive the grace to follow me. As yet, my husband has never attended, but I pray that one day he will. While I can never thank God enough for the gift of faith in spite of my hesitation, I pray for so many who, like me, would like to be part of the Church but, not having had the privilege of growing up in it, are too nervous to take the step.

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### Something You Would Hide

"Brought up in a home where religious beliefs were almost unknown, and religion never discussed, unless it was ridiculed", Tom Dicks was introduced to the Catholic Enquiry Centre by his Catholic fiancée, Jan Crisp, and actually studied the course in her name, revealing his true identity some months after having completed the course. The following is Dr. Tom's story.

The names and places in the following story are fictitious as the writer is a doctor and in compliance with medical ethics desires to remain anonymous. The facts, however, are totally true, as given by the writer himself, Dr. Tom Dicks. - Editor.

I was brought up in a home where religious beliefs were almost unknown and religion never discussed. Roman Catholicism in particular was thought to be bad, and most Catholics misguided, brow-beaten zombies who did what they were told when they were told and paid up what they were told.

I was sent to a Methodist College, mainly because my father went there as a lad. We never went to Church and only occasionally did I attend Sunday school.

At the university, religion was a joke and Catholics were not just included in your list of friends. The only time I regularly attended Church was during my National Service, and then in body only, but not in mind or spirit. I feel now that this attitude actually made the way easier for me, when I became interested in Catholicism, as I had no deep attachments to any faith or doctrines.

When I was in my fifth year of medicine at the University I met my wife-to-be. She shook me when she proudly stated she was a Catholic, as I had always felt that this was something you would hide if you could.

Ever since I first took a girl out, my parents always asked me: "What religion is she?" "What does her father do?", etc. You can imagine their horror when I told them Jan was a Catholic, and later when I said we had planned to marry when I finished at the University!

Jan and I spent many hours discussing Catholicism - in fact all our dates were spent at this - before I picked up courage to seek further instruction. I still felt too ignorant and perhaps shy to approach a priest. Jan suggested enlisting the help of the Catholic Enquiry Centre. Because of my parents' attitude I could not have the weekly lessons arriving home, so I got her to enrol in her own name. She passed the lessons on to me, noted my problems and sent them to the Centre.

They weren't serious problems really, rather problems arising out of utter ignorance - the difference between Catholics "going to Mass" and non-Catholics "going to church", the meaning of the word "Pope", what Christ really meant when in Mt. 16:19 he said: "Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall also be loosed in heaven?"

For me the idea of a supernatural life was something new. After all, I had got along quite well with a solely natural life for so long, I didn't quite grasp the necessity of imposing a supernatural life on me at this stage.

Jan, previous to taking me to Mass, had taught me how and when to kneel, how to bow my head in prayer, etc. At Mass I was quite surprised to see people looking around to see who was there, greeting their neighbours in the pews. The lack of reverence by people who claimed prayer meant so much to them shocked me.

I didn't expect to understand any of the Mass and it was just as well. The priest mumbled away to himself in Latin with his back turned to us; there were no hymns, and I felt just like a spectator rather than a participant. The priest spoke of the Catholics as being "God's chosen people". This contradicted what I always thought to be a title for the Jews and certainly Jews and Catholics seemed to have very little in common. How then could they choose the same title?

Of course, Jan sent all my queries to the Enquiry Centre and they were all very graciously answered. In fact, the priests there will never know how really grateful I am to them, first for the opportunity to gain the course (even by subterfuge), and, secondly, for the advice they gave me when I was so confused, and, in a way, frightened.

Rather fearing to take the step, I had tried to talk Jan into a marriage outside the Church. But there was nothing doing. I would have to marry her in the Catholic Church, or not marry her at all.

A new worry arose when I realized I was cheating by taking the course in Jan's name. I felt I had to apologize - probably the most embarrassing and difficult letter I ever wrote in my life. I got an understanding reply that made me feel they knew all along there was something fishy, but went

right along with it for the sake of being able to teach another Nicodemus the true faith. By then I had decided I had to become a Catholic.

Why? You might just as well ask me why I fell in love with Jan in the first place, and not with any other of the girls I had known, I just don't know the answer. Possibly, God in His wisdom wanted me to be another of His "zombies"! Really, faith is a gift. It is a gift from God to anyone who searches for him with an open mind and heart, and a fervent desire to find the truth.

Faith is a tremendous gift. I can never fully express the joy and happiness I have found, and the great help that the faith has been in our marriage. To be able to go to Communion and kneel with my wife; to be able to say the Rosary at night with her - has brought us closer together and has strengthened our love for each other more than I ever dreamed possible.

My parents certainly were not very enthusiastic about my choice. They even suggested I became an Anglican as a half-way measure. However, my parents have now completely accepted my decision and rarely make any objections or deride me about the Church. They love my wife as a daughter and can see how happy we are together. Some of my friends, of course, still think me a bit odd, but they don't voice their feelings very much.

Being a Catholic doctor does complicate my work at times. This mainly occurs when people in poor financial situations or health want advice on contraception, or request that horrible little tablet. However, it does help a lot when people are suffering, or have lost a loved one.

Jan and I were married five years ago with Nuptial Mass. We have a boy, a girl, and another baby is expected shortly. During these last five years I've come to realize what I missed as a child and as a youth, and just what a large hole there was in my life. This has been filled now and I pray I will never lose the faith God has given me. I hope my children will never have the empty lives I had as a child, and one day, perhaps, one of them may become a priest or a nun to help to give to others the chance to find God or the faith.

Being a doctor, I suppose, I find it hard to end without a prescription for the seeker of the truth. Firstly, forget all the tales you have heard about the Pope, Catholicism, etc. (Believe me, you hear some good ones from "friends" who are afraid you might "fall".) Approach the problem with an open mind and heart. Pray for guidance as you've never prayed before. Finally, put all your trust in God.

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## A Blind Prejudice

By JEFF ADAMS, Tasmania.

Born in Tasmania in a district where there was no Catholic church, Jeff Adams got his initial interest in Catholic beliefs and practices from a cousin who was studying the Catholic Enquiry Centre's correspondence course. Knowing little or nothing about any religion he was prejudiced against the Catholic Church, but always had a desire to learn more about God since the time he attended Sunday School as a child.

My parents were never really interested in any religion, although I was sent to a Protestant Sunday school and church. When I turned 14 I stopped going to Sunday school and church. From then on I don't think I thought much really about God or religion for some years, but one thing I did know; I would never become a Catholic.

At that stage in my life I was completely anti-Catholic; I know now that that was due to a complete lack of understanding, a blind prejudice. I remained so until a cousin of mine was telling me about the Catholic Enquiry Centre. She told me that she had been receiving a correspondence course of lessons from the Centre and that she hoped to be a Catholic one day. This seems to have started me thinking about my attitude to Catholics, and suddenly I felt I wanted to know more about the Catholic Religion.

In the meantime, I had seen such great films as "The Sound of Music" and "The Bells of St. Mary's". These played a big part in making me wonder what the Catholic Religion was really. My cousin gave me the address of the Catholic Enquiry Centre and I wrote and told them what I wanted to know. They recommended their weekly booklets on the Catholic Faith and started sending them to me. This was the turning point, and it was here that I realized the magnitude and extent of my own misunderstanding about the Catholic Church.

I'm sure I am one of the more fortunate ones because everything in the Church's teachings made sense to me from the start. I had no real difficulty with any point of belief. The more I studied the more I felt that the Catholic philosophy of life was the very thing I was looking for. How strange it was to recall that only a couple of years earlier I had been so prejudiced. Now I know that I was prejudiced only against my own false image of the Church, not against what the Church really is.

While still receiving the weekly lessons from the Enquiry Centre I called on a priest and got help from him with some points I did not understand. When I finished the correspondence course of twenty lessons I decided that I wanted to be a Catholic. I called on the priest again. He took me through a further complete course of personal instruction. I was quite sure then that God wanted me to be a Catholic.

Approximately twelve months after I had first written that letter to the Catholic Enquiry Centre I was baptized. From then on my whole life changed. My new understanding of Christianity gave it new meaning and purpose.

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### The Advocate of Desperate Cases

By MRS. MARGARET BROWN, Montmorency, Vic.

Mrs. Brown and her family were involved in a car accident from which they had a miraculous escape, attributed to the intercession of St. Rita. From her investigations into the life of St. Rita she was led to the Catholic Enquiry Centre and from there into the Catholic Church, bringing her children and husband back with her. This is the story in Mrs. Brown's own words.

I wasn't particularly interested in changing my religion until three years ago. Then, I had been working in a shop and one day found a medal of St. Rita on the counter. I picked it up and seeing what it was I presumed that it belonged to some Catholic. Knowing the owner would probably turn up looking for it, I left it back on the counter, forgetting all about it. However, later, by some mistake, it got mixed in with some change from my shopping and ended up in my purse.

A few days later, my husband Cyril, my brother and myself were driving in our car when we had a terrible smash. A tip truck jack-knifed into us. Some people passing by in another car pulled up to see if we were allright. I vaguely remember one of them saying "God help them. They must be

dead!" That was all I remembered. Many hours later in hospital a policeman told me that my brother and I were being admitted, while my husband was being discharged.

I wondered how Cyril would get home. The car was a write-off. I asked the policeman if he would find my bag and bring it to me so I could get my purse and give Cyril some money. When the policeman returned with my bag he said how amazed he was that we were alive. He had attended far less serious accidents where the people were killed.

With that, he handed me my purse. Then this amazing thing happened. Even before I opened it this medal of St. Rita fell out of it on to the ground. I picked it up and at the time I couldn't even remember how I came to have it. I had forgotten about seeing it previously in the shop.

When, eventually, I was discharged from hospital, I was still thinking about this medal. It was on my mind so much that I asked just about every Catholic I knew who St. Rita was, and no one could tell me. I still had the medal with me.

Shortly after this, David, my son, was in hospital having his third operation in a fortnight, and the doctors didn't think his chances too good. One evening Cyril and I were on our way to the hospital. We stopped by St. Francis' Church to pray for David's recovery and later passed by a Catholic bookshop where behold I saw a book entitled "The Life of St. Rita." I could feel my heart leap. I bought the book.

Sitting in the waiting room outside the theatre where David was being operated on, I began to read the book. From the first chapter I learned that St. Rita was the patron saint of desperate cases. I put down the book and for four hours I pleaded with her to save my son. She did. David came out of the operation and began to recover.

It was then I decided I wanted to know more about the Catholic faith. I enrolled for the Enquiry Centre's course of lessons and found great comfort in the prayers in the folder. I began to say them daily and teach them to David and my daughter Cheryl. Cheryl had never been baptized. David was baptized in the hospital by the hospital chaplain when he was seriously ill. That was something I did which I couldn't really explain. I called the priest at the hospital to baptize him - not for any particular reason except that it seemed the most natural thing to do.

From studying the lessons, my desire to become a Catholic grew, as well as my devotion to St. Rita. I learned, too, what a wrong thing my husband, being a Catholic, had done in marrying me out of his Church. We used to attend Mass, but of course Cyril could not receive Holy Communion. This bothered me too.

Then Cheryl began to ask questions: "Why is it, Mum, that you are not a Catholic and Daddy is?" "Why, Mummy, wasn't I baptized?"

There was only one thing to do, and that was to go and see the priest at St. Clement's. He was the one who taught Cyril at school and I knew him when he was hospital chaplain where I once was a nurse. The whole family began taking instructions from him. Cyril found them as interesting and worthwhile as I did. I was hesitant for a while about becoming a Catholic, as I wanted to be sure it was the right thing for me to do. But I am happy about it now and I feel a much different person.

Cheryl was baptized and David's private baptism was solemnized. I was received and Cyril and I remarried in the Church. I was so full of joy the day that happened. I had inadvertently taken him from the Church and now I can kneel beside him in church again.

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## I Knew I Needed Something

By ELIZABETH BELLINGER, Melbourne, Vic.

Born in England in 1946, of agnostic parents, Elizabeth Bellinger made her first brief contact with the Catholic faith in a boarding school in Germany at the age of eleven. Six years later, she emigrated to Australia with her parents, experiencing no desire for religion, until at the age of twenty "having reached an age", as she puts it, "where a definite void in my life was making itself felt, I decided to understand the Catholic faith in more detail than before".

Having studied the Catholic faith, through the Catholic Enquiry Centre's correspondence course, Elizabeth, a keen and intelligent clerical worker, was received into the Catholic Church at the age of 21. Here, in her own words, is how it came about.

As a child I had no religious training. My parents, while being nominally Anglican, were in fact agnostic, my father especially being very critical of Catholic practice. We were then living in Germany. It was not until I was sent to a boarding school at the age of eleven that I came into personal contact with Catholics. Three of the five girls in our dormitory were Catholics. I was fascinated by a faith so different to the scraps of Anglicanism that I had picked up during my early years. I was most intrigued by a lovely pink "necklace" (which of course turned out to be a Rosary) owned by my closest friend, and the little statue of a lady in blue which stood on her locker.

Curiosity got the better of me. One night after "lights out" I crept over to this friend of mine to find out more. And thus it was that I had my first instruction in the Catholic faith. During my two years in that school I became deeply interested in the Catholic faith, and definitely felt drawn towards it.

As my parents were returning home to England, I left the school, and Catholicism was thrown to the back of my mind by further school studies and the environment of an agnostic family. Three years later I find myself in Australia at the age of 17. It was not until I was 20, having reached an age where a definite void in my life was making itself felt, I decided to understand the Catholic faith in more detail than before. I was then passing through a particularly trying phase and realized I could not stand alone. In some incomprehensible way, I felt that there did exist a Being who cared intimately about the fate of every individual. I was groping in the dark, however, and was unable to theorize further on this rather vague piece of guesswork.

Leafing through a Sunday paper, I happened to see an advertisement offering a free correspondence course on the Catholic Religion. My old interest was revived. I felt "This is IT"! I wrote for the course and was enrolled. Having read the first lesson, "God and I", I realized that here was the crystallization of all my vague yearnings, written by people who knew, beyond any shadow of doubt, that what they were teaching was the truth.

For the first time in my life, I began to pray regularly. Although at first they seemed to be a mere formula for belief, I found that after a matter of weeks they were a most beloved formula. One prayer in particular, a prayer for faith and sincerity, helped me infinitely. I don't know why, but I could say it with more devotion than any of the others, except the Act of Contrition.

Gradually a certain peace and tranquility came into my life. I found myself saying "Thank God" when seeing a sight of particular beauty. To my surprise it came quite naturally when ski-ing at Gunnamatta to say "Thank God." While walking to work in the morning, the sight of the wattle and

the cherry blossom in bloom evoked a silent "thank you" to God. Six months ago this would have made me feel sheepish and slightly foolish. Now, it seemed merely right and natural to be grateful for things which I had previously taken very much for granted.

But it was not all sunshine. I am naturally shy. Learning privately about God was great, growing in faith and love for Him was marvellous, but there were problems. How could I tell my parents, especially my father? I love my father and I feared the shock he'd have at my desire to become a Catholic. I lacked the courage to present myself to a priest for a more detailed instruction on completion of the course. I knew very little of the history of the Church, her Popes (except what I had heard about the bad ones), Bishops, the growth and development of the Church down the ages.

There was the question of conditional Baptism. I was, as far as I was aware, baptized by an Anglican minister. Would I therefore have to undergo conditional Baptism, or profess my faith? Did I have to learn the catechism word by word? This question worried me out of all proportion to the problem, as learning by heart is not my forte, and the thought of facing an oral examination was dreadful.

Finally, the greatest obstacle to my conversion - that of Confession. To a person who for many years had been self-sufficient and rather insular the thought of telling my sins to God before a priest made me extremely nervous. God knew of all my various wrongdoings, but having to actually admit them, and to express my sincere sorrow for them, took some screwing up of courage. In fact, it was not until I had received my first absolution that I realized what a barrier my sins had been between God and me. There is still some nervousness present at Confession, but it is not that of a self-willed pride unwilling to confess mistakes; it is only a fear that inadvertently I would not make a full and satisfactory confession.

I cannot stress enough the importance of the tactful advice and guidance given to me at this time of doubt, fear and worry, by the priests at the Enquiry Centre. Through their kind letters and prayers, I began to know for the first time the peace and love of Christ and it meant more to me every day.

My belief in God grew to full fruition of faith under the direction of our local priest who received me into the Catholic Church.

I still have many things to learn about my faith, and there is a lot of room for personal improvement, but it is no longer a lonely struggle for a perfection beyond the reach of a "lone wolf". For now I feel that God is by my side. I have Our Lady and the Saints as examples to strive after, and as intercessors. I have a faith which will never fail a need, however large or small. Thank God!

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## God Finds a Way

By MAX LYONS, Brisbane, Qld.

Max Lyons was an undergraduate at the Brisbane University when he became a Catholic in June 1967 at the age of 20. Since then, he has gone to Europe to continue his studies. This brief account of his search for God was written after his reception into the Church.

My early religious training was fragmentary and diverse in Protestant denominations. In my sub-senior (Year 11) year at secondary school, I gave up religion completely. I believed I was a convinced atheist when I entered the University. I remember seeing advertisements in the daily



papers offering "the Truth about the Catholic Religion", but I felt no desire whatever to answer them. Yet it was one of these advertisements entitled "We would like you to know us better" that aroused my curiosity and caused me to enrol for the Enquiry Centre's course of lessons.

I read the first few lessons half-heartedly - out of courtesy - and seeing that it was the same old (rather meaningless) story, I just started putting them into their folder. The story of the Creation of the Universe from nothing by God was there. My own thoughts on the universe were, why couldn't it be there in the first place? God was inorganic, while the universe was organic. God was self-existent. Why couldn't the universe be equally self-existent? I believed it was. It didn't need God to create it.

I believed that there were two types of atheism. The simple atheist is one whose spiritual power is ruled by his organic power; he does not recognize the existence of a spiritual being. I was one of those. The other, which seems to me to be more common, is the one whose spiritual power has become impaired in some way so that he actually dispels the idea of God.

From the age of fourteen I prayed that I would become an atheist and asked forgiveness in advance. At that time I was religiously inclined to the point of eccentricity. Now in atheism, I was quite genuine and certainly never prayed for religious faith. I felt God had taken away the bit of Protestant faith I possessed; I was afraid he might give me back the true faith purged of anaemic beliefs. I guess I tried to blind myself against believing, as I felt quite content with the way of life I had established for myself. But at the same time I couldn't help trying to visualize what a God would be like. I wrote to the Enquiry Centre for literature on the Catholic idea of the nature of God. A pamphlet which was sent to me, and further reading matter which was recommended strengthened my belief that there must be a God of some kind. But I still felt no personal need for help from God in my own life.

I continued to read the weekly lessons without much real interest until I came to Lesson 15 on the Virgin Mary. This seemed an interesting topic, so interesting in fact that I went back and re-read all the lessons again.

Towards the end of the correspondence course a letter from the Enquiry Centre suggested I should read the Bible. This I did. I found that in spite of my many strong ideas, I still believed the Gospel story of Jesus Christ. However, I could not go along with the expressed ideas of a divine nature and prayer. Divine things were spiritual, earthly things were material. Prayer could be a lifting up of the mind to God, but to me it wasn't very spiritual to be continually asking God for material things.

I read somewhere that God gives these things to people if it is good for them to have them. But, I felt, God would give them anyway, if they were good for me without my praying for them. In this connection I was reminded of Alexander Pope's Essay on Man - "One truth is clear - whatever is, is right." And my conclusion was that our prayers would not make it otherwise or change what "is" to a different "is".

One of the things that repelled me in Christianity (perhaps Protestantism) was the idea of individual salvation. At least, if prayer was effective, there seemed to be more sense in the Catholic belief that people could help each other by prayer. I didn't see the need for prayer in my own life since I felt quite self-sufficient without it, and yet I was always impressed at the endings of the letters from the priests at the Enquiry Centre. They invariably ended: "Be assured of a remembrance in our prayers", or "we would be grateful for a remembrance in your prayers." I felt obliged and I did begin to pray - out of courtesy at first, out of need, later. It surprises me now in retrospect when I remember how

long it took me to see the simple and obvious meaning of Christ's words, "Ask and you shall receive."

My road back to Christ began when I started praying. I did not go to Mass on Sundays because my mother objected very strongly to the Catholic Church. But we had Mass at the University on Mondays and Fridays and I attended these. At first I was not certain what to do at Mass, but I made all the responses. Though religion featured in the conversations of a lot of people at the University, I felt I needed to discuss my problems with a priest.

I went along to one of the priests at the parish church in the hope of having some discussions. When I told them about my mother's strong objections to my interest in the Catholic Faith I was refused instructions. To me this seemed at the time to be worse than apostasy, to turn people away from the Church. I know now that it was done out of consideration for the "peace of the household". On telling my parents of my ideas a row started in the house. But I remembered from my reading of the Gospels that Our Lord had promised us things like this: "Do not suppose I have come to bring peace to the earth . . ." (Mt. 10:34-39), and the passage of the true "imitation of Christ" in Luke 14:25-34. All this helped me to realize my need for divine help through prayer. I became determined. I met the University chaplain and arranged to be instructed by him.

The instructions did not last very long because I had been studying in my own way for two years. The chaplain was satisfied that I had learned all I needed to know from the correspondence course, together with the guidance I had received by letter from the Enquiry Centre and my perusal through books in the library. I started going regularly to Mass, and began to feel a greater need for the God I had purposely pushed out of my life. Though I knew enough to be received into the church, I now knew I'd be learning all my life. The various problems during the two years of searching had all helped to break down my pride in my own self-sufficiency and give me an awareness of my dependence on God. I had discovered the meaning of praying.

On July 12 I was received into the Church. The same day I received my first Communion. Two weeks later I was confirmed and took the name Bernard. I was surprised at how well disposed my parents became and accepted my entry into the Church. The desire to enter a monastery is still with me. I don't know how my parents will react to the idea. But I have learned now to leave these problems in God's hands. If God is really calling me to the monastic life He will find a way. My life is in His hands.

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### A Letter With a Difference

From MRS. P. A. COLE, Adelaide, S.A.

Mrs. P. A. Cole, South Australia, housewife and mother of four boys, the eldest now twenty, took the Catholic Enquiry's Correspondence Course in 1964. While on the course, she politely completed and returned the questionnaires, telling us simply she was saying the recommended prayers, was not discussing the lessons with anybody, never attended Mass, was once shown around the inside of a Catholic Church by a friend eighteen years ago and thought our course would possibly promote greater mutual love and understanding among Australians. She did, however, recommend it to some of her friends, though she considered it more of an outline and suggested we could give more detailed information in the lessons.

Dear Father White, You will no doubt wonder why I am writing to you now, as it's over three years since I took your course! I must hasten to explain that I never replied to your final letter (at least, I did, but never sent it), because things at home were pretty grim at that time, all caused by the fact that I was expressing such interest in Catholicism.

You see, it all began when I was sixteen. Then I had seriously considered becoming a Catholic, but came up against such strong parental opposition that I dropped the whole idea. My parents were strictly Protestant, who considered Catholicism something akin to witchcraft, and certainly something that no nicely brought up young lady would delve into. I decided to let the matter end there, at least until I was twenty-one. Then, perhaps, if I felt the same way about it, I could make my own decisions.

At twenty-one my thoughts were more on a partner than on religion. However, I thought about it on and off (more often "off" than "on" I think) for years. Then about four years ago, for no particular reason that I can think of, I found this "thing" was on my mind all the time. It used to hit me hardest on Sunday mornings in our own church (Methodist). Sitting there in church, I found myself thinking all the time: "This means nothing to me, I would rather be on my knees in a Catholic church." Finally, I decided I had to do something about it.

Why? I don't know. I don't really know why even now. All I know is that I knew deep down inside me, that I had to do something about this thought that kept nagging at me.

I had seen the newspaper advertisements a number of times offering your correspondence course of religious instruction. I decided I'd apply to one. Then I had two reasons in my mind. One, to clarify a few things, as it was many years since I had any discussion with anyone on the subject. Two, rather than make a sudden shock announcement to my husband that I was converting (as I was absolutely sure at that time it was the only thing for me to do), I wanted him to get used to the idea gradually.

I didn't tell him I was applying for your lessons, but, of course, it wasn't long until both he and the boys began to notice my interest in Catholicism. The tension began to grow. It all seems a bit silly now, but the problem was very real to me then, so I do hope you will forgive my rudeness in finally ignoring your last letter. I have been feeling guilty ever since! The derisive comments I got when a letter came from the Enquiry Centre began to make me feel jumpy. So I decided not to write any more.

However, I persevered in my design and was finally received into the Catholic Church on Christmas Eve and made my first Communion at Midnight Mass.

The first year was difficult, to say the least. My darling husband found it very hard to accept my interest in Catholicism. Our (then) Parish Priest gave me lots of jobs to do and I know he did it in order to help me integrate into parish life. Trouble is, I am now so jolly integrated I am run off my feet! Looking back, I can now appreciate that it must have been something of a bombshell for my husband to see his apparently sane wife appear to go slightly mad!

Our four lovely sons took it quite well. The youngest one, Philip (aged twelve years) always attends Mass with me and would indeed like to take the same step I did, but my husband won't allow it just now. We hope and pray. The next year will bring the permission we wait for, I am sure. When Philip will be able to take the step, it will be a happy occasion in all aspects.

After the first year which was so filled with tensions, things seemed to ease up considerably. My husband even allowed two of the boys to attend the Christian Brothers' College here in Adelaide. They have been there over a year now and are very happy and settled. In fact, my husband, after his early reservations about it, is now unreserved about his praise of the school and the Brothers. I think it was a question of time proving that the Brothers were not going to 'brainwash' the boys! So there you have a brief account of my family situation.

You will now understand and forgive, I hope, my not writing to you when I should have three years ago. I must thank you in a special way for sending me the lessons. They simply clarified everything for me. Since my reception into the Church, I have never for an instant had any regrets for the decision I made. To me the Faith is a great gift and I pray that I may be always loyal to it

I don't think there is much more I can say to you. It's sometimes difficult to put things into words. If you wish to reply to this, I shall be happy to hear from you.

Yours most sincerely, MRS. P. A. COLE

(Well, who wouldn't reply to a letter like that! -Father White.)

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The Catholic Enquiry Centre is established in Sydney. It invites interested people who are not Catholics to discover more about the teaching of the Catholic Church. This is done by a correspondence course free of charge and in confidence.

#### 20 Free Weekly Lessons on the Catholic Religion

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