

Good Morning / Afternoon,

My name is Melissa Hoffman, I have been married to my wonderful husband, Errin, for 25 years, and we have 4 children ranging in ages from 22 down to 9 years old.

Although Errin was raised Catholic from birth and practiced his faith up through his days as a medical student, after a few years of our marriage we leaned toward the Protestant faith that I knew from birth.

We attended churches where most people brought their Bibles, attended Bible studies, Sunday School, and small groups during the week.

All of these things helped us to study God's word and learn about His wonderful plan of salvation. However, Sunday worship revolved around a 40-45 minute sermon....And, yes, you did hear me correctly.

The length of the sermon actually wasn't a problem, it was that effective worship was about how good the sermon was and what WE got out of it. In some of the churches we

attended, communion was served only a couple of times per year. But, if it was just a symbol, I guess there was no point to having it more often.

However, coffee was ALWAYS served and you would sip on it while you leaned back and listened to the sermon. There was no kneeling, no creeds, no liturgy, and before the sermon began you chatted with your friends. You would never see anyone come EARLY to pray.

I remember one Sunday leaning over to Errin and asking “Is this really how God wants us to worship Him?”

But, Catholicism was not an option. I believed Catholics followed a man-made religion and did NOT have a relationship with Jesus. I was always careful to say that I do NOT have a religion, I have a relationship.

So, when we decided to transfer our 4th child, Liam, from our public school to Saint Thomas More this past fall, I felt a burden of responsibility to find out exactly what he would be taught in matters of faith so I could intersect that with the TRUTH.

THIS is where things got interesting! I delved into websites like Catholic Answers and EWTN. I learned that instead of being a MAN MADE religion, the Catholic church was actually established by JESUS!

One by one, the dominoes of false beliefs I had about the Catholic Church continued to fall. But, I still had a myriad of questions, and I didn't know what to do about it. SO, I arranged a meeting with Kevin Damitz, Director of Religious Education.

It was evident from our first "Hellos" that Kevin loves Jesus and is filled with the Holy Spirit. By the end of our conversation, he invited me to RCIA. I believe it met that very night.

RCIA taught me SO many important aspects of the Catholic faith and showed me how they were either implicitly or explicitly found in the Bible. My husband, Errin, often said that he wasn't taught all the things we were taught in RCIA.

We were truly BLESSED to have Kevin Damitz, Father John, and a host of volunteers teach us and answer our questions.

IN FACT, I have a nagging suspicion that because Father John spent SO many countless hours answering all of my many questions through email, that MAYBE he asked me to speak in front of ALL of you as pay back.....

WELL PLAYED, FATHER JOHN!! (Explosive laughter from the Audience, lol)

But, because Father John was fully invested in helping me knock down those last theological dominoes, I was indeed confirmed into the Catholic Church on July 27th and my husband Errin was my sponsor.

And, NOW, our Sunday worship experience no longer hinges on a well delivered homily. We do love and crave the spiritual nourishment we receive from the homilies at Saint Thomas....

But, through RCIA and our own personal studies, we NOW recognize that worship is not just about what we RECEIVE, but it is about offering up a most perfect sacrifice on this altar

which Jesus called the New Covenant, and THEN receiving the BREAD of LIFE which is indeed the body, blood, soul, and divinity of our Lord Jesus.

SO, if God is asking you to share our beautiful Catholic faith with someone, or to deepen your OWN relationship with Christ Through RCIA, there will be a NO-pressure informational meeting on Thursday September __17th__ AT 7:00 pm in the __Disciple's Room__.

You could make an eternal difference!

Thank you!