

I WANTED TO SERVE GOD AS A PRIEST

THE TESTIMONY OF HOW CHRIST DREW FRANK AND HIS FAMILY TO HIMSELF

By Frank A. Eberhardt

Many people consider themselves to be Catholic because they were born into the home of a Roman Catholic family (they hold to the phrase “I was born a Catholic and I’ll die a Catholic”), although this was also true of my birth it was not the reason I considered myself a Roman Catholic.

THE VON EBERHARDT’S

To understand my thinking you need to know a little family background. My father was born in the United States, they were the Von Eberhardt’s in the 1920’s, but when he was one year old his family moved back to Grotz, Austria. As a child I remember hearing stories of how dad and his brothers went to school in three feet of snow and used the curved wooded slats from barrels to ski down the Alps for fun. Austria was pretty much divided into two major religions back then, Lutherans and Catholics. Dad was Roman Catholic. Things were different at the time. They didn’t have enough priests for all the parishes so the priest would ride a circuit of several churches in order to offer the Mass about once every three weeks. Because of the scarcity of Masses offered the Churches would be very full. First the priest would set up the confession line by selling tickets; any one without a ticket would not be able to have their confession heard for the sake of the time schedule. Second there was Pew rent, if you wanted a guaranteed seat for the Mass the Pew rent was collected when the tickets for the confessional were sold. If you failed to obtain a ticket you were allowed to stand around the out side aisles and outside of the building. This was all normal and the way things were done at the time.

Remember this was in the 1920’s and 1930’s, back then Masses were all said in Latin. I know my father received an excellent education in Europe, he could speak three languages and he knew first aid and basic medicine, he fixed me up enough times when I was young. Dad would show me short cuts for Algebra and Calculus home work. But there was one thing that dad and most other Catholic people were never taught, Latin. Since dad couldn’t understand the Latin in the Masses he attended in Austria he took his Bible with him and read. He reasoned that since the Bible was a Holy book it was good to read it at any time.

When Hitler started growing his power in Germany many in Europe were not blind to the future ramifications including the Von Eberhardt’s. Dad and the family were left with their grandparents in Austria for a time. His parents returned to the United States in order to raise the money needed for the entire family to cross over. Hearing how dad told the story you felt the urgency of the situation back then. Hitler was assuming control and the borders and seaports were being closed one by one, dad was on one of those last ships which were allowed to leave port before Hitler declared the rise of his Third Reich.

Many things were different now but in the United States the Mass was being said in Latin just like in Austria, and old habits dying hard dad took his Bible to Church and continued to read the Scripture during Mass. At this point you may ask, “Ok, so your father read the Bible what

does that have to do with your being a Roman Catholic?" Growing up I remember times when our family, mom and dad, Doreen my sister and myself, would sit at the kitchen table and read from the Scripture to find out if we were living the way the Lord wanted us to live and doing the things He wanted us to do. I grew up reading the Bible and thinking that our Church, our doctrine and our Catholic beliefs were all found and taught in the pages of Scripture. I wasn't a Catholic because I was born into a Catholic family, I was Catholic because I believed it was in the Bible, it was taught by Jesus and the Apostles and that the only way for men to go to heaven was found in the teachings of the Church Jesus had created. I was a Roman Catholic because I BELIEVED in Roman Catholicism as the truth.

What kind of Catholics did reading a Bible (Pre Vatican II) produce? Well, my sister and I attended Parochial school into our College years; we attended Mass weekdays through our Parish Catholic School and on weekends (Saturday and Sunday) with our family at the Resurrection of Our Lord Catholic Church. When we became teenagers Doreen did volunteer work at the Catholic Nazareth Hospital in Philadelphia (our home town) and I taught CCD and continued to serve as an Altar boy (having started in the fourth grade) at our Parish Church.

You could conclude from this that the entire family was devout, yes we did participate at the Mass; I remember a snow storm in Philadelphia in about 1967 with drifts that were eight feet high. You had to walk in the middle of the street because the sidewalks were covered over and the wind and snow were blowing so harshly you could only see about 15 feet in front of you. Occasionally you had to step aside to allow a car the chance to get through. I remember it because we walked a mile in those conditions to the church that night. I was carrying the Cross for the procession of the Christmas Midnight Mass an honor you took very seriously.

Yes, you could say we were dedicated or faithful Roman Catholics. We walked the Stations of the Cross during Easter Season, prayed the Rosary, lit Votive Candles for the sick and other intentions, I carried the Green Scapular in my wallet and we even wore the Brown Lady of Mount Carmel Scapular, if you remember what that was? The Brown Scapular is said to be a piece of the actual garb worn by Mary (Mother of Jesus), when she appeared on Mt. Carmel. She made a promise "Whosoever dies wearing this Scapular will not suffer eternal fire". She left a piece of her garment behind as proof of the veracity of her promise. A thin string was attached to the cloth (we were told it would miraculously never diminish no matter how many Scapulars were formed from it) with the words of the promise and another string attached to a picture representing Mary the Lady of Mt. Carmel. The requirements were simple; you pray the prayer she instructed on the first Friday of the month for nine consecutive months (to the Lady of Mt. Carmel) and she would honor the promise made. This fulfilling of the promise would be done on the first Friday of the month after your death (think about that).

We were Roman Catholics and Catholic people were to serve the Lord with their whole heart, their whole mind and their entire soul. With the type of life I have just described to you it is not difficult to think that each member of our family wanted to do something for Jesus who has given us so much through the Church. My older sister Doreen was the first, she wanted to become a Medical Missionary so she enrolled in the convent. It was an order of Nuns called the Sisters of Christian Charity with their Mother House in Mendham NJ. The Convent told her they were in need of Medical Sisters and because she felt called to this field she happily began her studies with them.

During my grade school years a priest named Father McCafferty had a great impact on my life. He saw something in me and began to call for me to serve the Mass with him and to participate at different functions. He taught about giving back to the Lord, and our obligation to

do for the Lord and others. I never forgot those days and two years after Doreen went away to the Convent I left to join the Order of Saint Vincent De Paul; I wanted to serve God as a priest. The order was also known as the Congregation of the Mission (CM's) with priests serving in Panama, Latin America and China. These priests teach at St. John's University and Niagara University among others here in the States.

What were mom and dad doing at the time? They remained faithful Roman Catholics supporting us (Doreen and myself) in what we felt the Lord had called us to. You do not fight the Lord and win. They pushed back in their hearts the thought that God had given them only two children (dad had 6 brothers and 2 sisters none of whom went into religious life and mom was an only child) and with both children in religious life they would never see any grand children and our part of the Eberhardt family would end with my sister and I.. They felt sad that other families in the Parish had five or more children and none of them were called into the religious life. They told me years later that it hurt, it felt like God was taking their children from them but they were not going to question the Lord.

HOW MANY MASSES

For the first time our family members were all in different places with different restrictions placed upon us. My sister was in northern New Jersey in the town of Mendham two and a half hours from Philadelphia, visits to the convent were allowed once a month with no phone calls allowed except for emergencies. I was in the town of Kingstown New Jersey with visits quarterly and one weekend home per month. Until a phone booth was installed all calls were taken in the presence of the Prefect, the director of the Seminary. Both of us had our mail read and censored by the nuns and priests, we were told this was done so no distracting communications would hinder our studies. The classes were five days a week with a half day on Saturday, running from 8:00 Am through 3:15 Pm, Saturday classes were later eliminated. And yes I did study Latin for four years.

We observed daily prayers, Lauds, Vespers and Compline, Lauds or morning prayers beginning at 6:00 o'clock with personal meditation concluded by participation at Mass. Vespers or noon prayer beginning before lunch usually repeating the Psalms of the day in Latin finishing in Chapel with communal prayer. Finally, there was Compline or evening prayer when we recited prayers together at the Chapel before lights out at 11:30Pm. There were 2 additional periods daily for prayer and personal reflection where we did Spiritual reading and had devotions to Mary Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.

There were questions during my first two years that I never voiced thinking that I was the one there to be taught and if I waited a little I would study those things I was interested in. We had vacations during the summer that were three weeks long. During that time we were required to work with our home Parish priest learning the activities and life of the priest first hand. It was during this summer that everything began to change.

After the last Mass before I was to return from vacation an elderly lady we knew approached me with a question. She began by telling me of the death of her husband and her concern that he would make it to heaven. Then she asked "How many Masses do I have to buy to get my husband out of Purgatory and into heaven?" Don't get mad at me, every one speaks a little differently and that is exactly what she said. If you are unfamiliar with the concepts of Purgatory, indulgences and the Treasury of the Saints let me explain. In Catholicism there is a place called PURGATORY where the soul of a Christian (this is only taught by the Catholic

Church) is to go before entering heaven. It goes there to cleanse itself of any remaining Temporal Punishment due to sin. According to the teaching of the Catholic Church Jesus died to forgive us from the Eternal Punishment of sin while the Temporal Punishment still remains to be dealt with through various means. A person can gain INDULGENCES for themselves through their prayers and good deeds etc. while still alive. However, they may not have earned enough grace to eliminate their total time of punishment in Purgatory so others still alive may pray for them and obtain indulgences from the TREASURY OF THE SAINTS. These are graces left over from Jesus and the Saints who through their holy lives accumulated more grace than they themselves needed, so this extra grace is used for those who are in need in this place of Purgatory the Indulgences we obtain for them draws from the Treasury only what has been earned on their behalf. In the last century only one full pardon or Plenary Indulgence was granted on behalf of President John F Kennedy when his wife Jackie requested it from the Pope himself at a donation of \$50,000.

Every few years some priest tells the people that the doctrine of Purgatory has been changed or eliminated and this rumor takes off. Remember there must be a special Doctrinal Council convened (the most famous being the Council of Trent) in order to deal with any doctrines within the Catholic Church and no such council has been called in many years. In fact the last council, a Pastoral one was Vatican II ending in 1972. The truth about what Catholicism believes can be illustrated in what they do. At funerals there is a table for condolence cards and at a Catholic funeral this table will also contain Mass Cards, the promise of prayers for the dead. Why, if Purgatory no longer exists are prayers being said for people who should now be in heaven? Are they suffering in heaven? Are they trying to get in or out of heaven? During the funeral Mass you will hear a sermon on how this Roman Catholic person is now in the presence of the Lord but just a few moments later the priest will call for prayer for all the souls of the faithful departed that they may one day enter into their rest with the Lord. Finally, the newest exhaustive Catechism of the Catholic Faith was produced in 1994 and I think it contains 6 pages concerning the doctrine of Purgatory. Catholicism teaches the place of Purgatory exists today as a place where you pay the punishment for sin you have committed; the punishment which they say was not paid for by Jesus Christ our Saviour.

“How many Masses do I have to buy to get my husband out of Purgatory and into heaven?” this is what this dear lady asked of me. She wanted to know that if her husband was indeed in this place called Purgatory suffering as payment for his sins how quickly could she get him out and into heaven? Her question was solely one of love and concern. When I was growing up I was taught that the most highly indulgent form of prayer was that of the priest during the Mass because the offering of the body and blood of Christ takes place at that time. This lady must have remembered that teaching because she asked about the use of Masses as indulgent prayer. Her concept was that she needed to purchase them since the priest does not specifically pray for an individual by name unless a donation is made; Masses may be purchased in groups as 2 Masses for \$3.00 etc.

The difficulty I had was that even in Catholic Seminary I was never taught how to devise such a specific number. The practice of hearing Confession even had a formula. With time being short we went immediately and asked the Pastor, Father Kern and he said that it would be impossible to know. You would need to know if he died in a state of grace, how many venial sins remained on his soul at the time of death if he had stored up any indulgence against the day of his death etc. The answer he gave was that it is impossible for any one to know that answer. Seeing her in such disappointment at that answer I explained how that I was returning to

Seminary later that day and that I would ask the Theologians and teachers for a better more explicit answer. And I did; on the first class day back I asked her question, “How many Masses do I have to buy to get my husband out of Purgatory and into heaven?” The first response was that she doesn’t understand Catholicism. Standing up for her, I continued she is 70 years old and devout and like many others she may not know or understand clearly every doctrine like a priest does, but as a Catholic she is who we are trying to teach and still deserving of an answer. Then the response was much the same as that of Father Kern the Pastor, no one can know that answer.

WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY AND HOW

I don’t know about you, but my mind doesn’t work that way. If I am looking for an answer I will do all the research necessary to find it. Later in pressing the priest after class I asked this question. “Can we agree that Pope John the XXIII was one of the greatest Popes of our day? He began the Second Vatican Council and started a new Spirit of Ecumenical unity?” “Yes, we can.” “Then as the Pope chosen of God to lead the Church for his day how long will Pope John the XXIII spend in Purgatory?” There was a great deal of commotion until that point then it seemed like everything just STOPPED.

Two other priests who had also finished their classes came to join us and to hear the first priest’s answer, and it was a good one. It went like this, “since Pope John was chosen of God, superintended by the Holy Spirit and a servant of the Lord he probably went straight to heaven at his death”. Thinking this a good answer that God would specially provide for His chosen I thanked him and began to walk away when one of the other priests interrupted. “I would disagree with that” he said “yes he was chosen to do a task that doesn’t automatically absolve him of sin, and he was only superintended by the Holy Spirit in matters of the Church concerning Faith, Morals and Doctrine. Pope John the XXIII could spend a two or three years in Purgatory.” This also sounded like a reasonable answer then I heard the third priest enter the conversation. He said “We don’t know the private life that John XXIII had nor if he had confessed his sin before he died nor even if he died in the state of grace, he could theoretically spend two or three hundred years in Purgatory, we just don’t know.” Now that answer troubled me. It is reasonable to think that if the greatest Pope of our time will spend three hundred years in purgatory then I could be there ... a very long time.

It was after this discussion that the chief Theologian of the Seminary provided me with several books to read on the subject of Purgatory. That lady still had no answer to her question and I had to write her at the time to do whatever her conscience felt was right in the sight of God. Now this began to bother me. Dad taught me “in order to solve a problem reason it out”. You would apply the questions, **WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY AND HOW** to the situation to find the answer. You learn by the ability to piece the answers together from all the relevant facts so keep notes or have a good memory. When trying to solve a problem I often think of my memory like a filling cabinet where I store information, I start pulling related facts out of draws until things start to match up. This matter of Purgatory just wasn’t matching up. As the only Christian denomination which teaches Purgatory **WHY** don’t we know enough to answer this question?

Seeing the way my mind worked that first year in Seminary the Prefect assigned me to the Library, and by the third year I was the head Librarian with the key to the Archives. After reading the books suggested to me on Purgatory I was left with more questions than answers. For example, did you know that the Theologian who wrote and defined the doctrine of Purgatory

more than any other was Alfonse DeLagurie of the 19th Century? That's right this is one thousand years after the doctrine was pronounced, **WHY** did it take 1,000 years to define? **WHO** knows if he was correct since he was not superintended by the Holy Spirit as the Pope is said to be? **WHERE** did he get his research since so little was written on the subject until him?

DeLagurie defined the following about Purgatory. DEFINITION OF TIME: serving one day in Purgatory is like suffering one thousand days punishment on earth. DEFINITION OF DEGREE: one Venial sin deserves one thousand days punishment in Purgatory. Remember one day in Purgatory is like a thousand days suffering on earth, multiply 1,000 X 1,000 and that equals = 1,000,000 days or the equivalent of 2,738 years for one venial sins punishment. **WHEN** did God define any thing like this in His Holy Word? DEFINITION OF PUNISHMENT: the fires of Purgatory are Seven times hotter than the fires of hell in order to expiate the punishment of sin and forgive the sinner. **WHAT** does God say about forgiveness of sin? *John 3:16* "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And *Luke 5:21* "Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" God forgives sin because He accepts the sacrifice of His Son Our Lord Jesus Christ who died on the cross for our sin.

With these and many more questions in hand I did what you do in Catholic Seminary, you ask the priest. All I wanted were some answers, if I could come up with these questions other Catholics must have come up with them as well and as teachers we need to be prepared with answers. If the people don't receive their answer from the priest the fathers of the Faith they will start going else where. Well by now you've guest it, I didn't receive any good answers, some more books to read and when I continued with more questions they gave me work list. It is as it sounds; like in the Military when you do something to incur the disapproval of your superiors you are given repetitive or menial tasks to remind you never to ask such questions again.

Being Head Librarian gave me still another way to continue investigating Purgatory. Using excuses like "I need to repair a binding on an old book" etc. I was often able to shirt the lights out bell at 11:30Pm and continue researching in the Archives. The definition of Purgatory from the Catholic Encyclopedia is "**This state is not defined in the teaching of the Church, but it existence is A TRUTH of FAITH defined by the Council of Trent. Purgatory is an intermediate state in which the departed souls can atone for unforgiven sins before receiving their final reward.**"

In explaining this definition of Purgatory the books all followed a certain pattern; however, they almost always began with the reference 2Mc.12:39-46. This spoke of the Captain surveying the battle field and gathering the bodies for burial. They found that many of the slain Israelites had taken the idols of their enemies and their gold and hidden them under their coats; the Lord had forbidden them to take anything from the enemy. Hearing the news Judas the Captain said that they were killed by the Lord because they disobeyed Him and he commanded that money for sacrifices be sent to Jerusalem so the sin of these dead men may be forgiven. This is a great story showing the love of a Captain for his men. What General would not say to his men "pray for those who have fought so hard for us this day"? That is what happened here. The Captain admitted that they had disobeyed the Lord, and that the Lord killed them for it, and that they were now condemned sinners under the law. The startling move was to make sacrifices for the dead; the priests of Israel had never done this. The Blood on the altar was to make atonement for the soul (*Lev 17:11-14*) of the living because the soul that sins shall die (*Ezk 18:20*) so all sacrifices were made for the living once a person died it was too late. Captain Judas did not

understand the law or chose to make a gesture by his actions because this behavior is never repeated again through out the Old or New Testaments.

The next in the pattern I noticed was **Luke 16:19-31** which is the history of the rich man and Lazarus. This has bothered me because Abraham tells the rich man that there is a great fixed gulf making it impossible for those in torment to cross over. The rich man realizing this truth asks that Lazarus be set back to earth to warn his five brothers not to come to this place. So they had a choice in where they would spend eternity. And Abraham responds that they have Moses and the Prophets (God's Word) but the rich man thought that if one came back from the dead (like Christ has) then unbelievers would believe. The answer was simple if they do not believe God's Word they will not believe even when God's Son returns from the dead. The portion that the Church wanted to illustrate by these verses was that Abraham and Lazarus and others were in a place of waiting (like a Purgatory), they had not yet reached heaven. Notice that this can not be purgatory; there was no fire, no punishment, no sin being paid for except by those on the other side of the great gulf which is plainly called Hell; and this place of waiting with Abraham and Lazarus was emptied forever. Remember that Jesus had not yet died for our sin and Heaven was not yet open to anyone (the reason for Old Testament Believers to be waiting), after His death burial and resurrection He led those in captivity (waiting for His Salvation) to heaven (Eph 4:8-10) and this place of waiting is no more. Now when a Christian dies they go to be with the Lord who saved them, **2 Cor 5:8** *"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."*

When I asked the priests about the questions I was finding through study in the Archives I was given work list. It was now the middle of my third year at the Vincentian Seminary and although I was learning Church history, doctrine, Theology, and Latin we had very little Bible even as explanations in our classes. So I petitioned my Prefect for permission to study the Scriptures on my own. I was told that I would study more Bible classes in later years but I was in need of answers in the here and now. You may be wondering why I needed permission to study the Bible, yes we did have a Bible for classes and we did read from the Scripture during Mass and other liturgies, we used it during our Spiritual reading we even used the Latin Vulgate for official translation; but none of those things are study. Since I was not yet ordained as a priest I had not taken any vows. Ordination vows for the Vincentian order were four, we vowed Poverty, Chastity, Obedience and Servitude and as a priest we gave up the right of Private Interpretation of the Scripture. This last one was what concerned the Prefect. He thought I could misinterpret the Scripture because I was under no obligation to defer to the Church's interpretation so he assigned to me a new Father Confessor and granted me permission. The Father Confessor is a priest you chose within the first month of your studies, he acts as a counselor, an example, your confessor and guide while you are in Seminary; they changed mine. I was assigned to the Chief Theologian of the Seminary; he was the logical choice to guide me with my questions in the Scripture.

PRAY FOR FAITH TO INCREASE

Like most people, I didn't know where to start so I decided to get an overview and read the whole Bible. There wasn't much that I understood at first but one verse struck me. **2 Cor 13:5** *"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates"* This hit me because of the

context, it was written to Christians. Christians were told to examine themselves to see if they truly were in the Faith.

Sure, in our daily prayers we had self examination when we would call to mind our sin and ask for forgiveness at confession. We would reflect on our life style and vow to change those things hindering our walk with the Lord. But one thing we never examined was whether we were IN THE FAITH, had personally put our faith in the Lord, and had examined ourselves to see if we were in the right Faith the faith of Christ. We never examined ourselves to prove to ourselves that our faith was the true faith and that we were not REPROBATE (believers of a lie). We were taught from childhood that we were “In the one true Church instituted by Christ for the salvation of souls, the Holy Roman Catholic Church.” We never examined ourselves to see if we were in the Faith we were told we were in the faith because we were born in the one true Church, because we were baptized, and because we were confirmed. In fact you may remember being told, if you questioned the Church and its beliefs you lacked faith and needed to pray to increase your faith. Finish that last sentence as a good English Major. It says, “needed to pray to increase your faith . . . in the Church whose beliefs you questioned.” The Lord never tells us to place our faith in the Church (Rome does that) He tells us to place our faith in Him “*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*” **Rom 10:13**.

We were told to “pray for faith to increase” praying for faith can not work. “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” **Rom 10:17** we must be involved with the Word of God for our faith to increase. The Old Testament has many purposes one of which is to teach us to have faith in the God of our salvation, “*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope* (Faith).” **Rom 15:4**. “*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition* (Teaching us Faith) ...” **1 Cor 10:11** Reading the Scripture shows us Faith in action, we see what God has done and how believers lived. Prayer is asking God to give you faith; The Lord can’t give you faith because He has already asked us to put our faith in Him, God asks for OUR faith. Faith in Christ must be learned from the Scripture it can not be given away. “*He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*” **John 3:18** With all this Biblical evidence why would some one choose not to believe in Christ alone as their only Saviour and be condemned for all eternity? Could it be that they are fooled into praying for faith in a Church whose beliefs they already question, and thinking they were told the right thing they do not realize they have never examined themselves whether they are in the Faith?

From then on I began examining what I believed by the context of Scripture. It is important that we don’t just believe in something whether it is right or wrong, or that we don’t just believe what we are told it may be false; neither of those will save you from eternal hell. We are to believe truth as Jesus said in **John 17:17**, “*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*” Jesus guaranteed our source for truth is God’s Word and He promised us a guide to help us to the truth. “*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*” **John 14:26** We must be convinced of the truth with all our hearts only then can we be saved. “*And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*” **Jer 29:13** “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*” **Rom 10:9-10**

DO YOU REMEMBER THOSE BLACK AND WHITE PICTURES

Now let's go back to Purgatory. In continuing to study the Scripture I began to see that what was said early in the Bible was never contradicted but built upon and explained at a later point. For instance, we have all been taught that the Lord died for our sin, but what does that mean? The whole story doesn't end with death as you know. Build with me as I saw the Scripture did. *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."* **Isa 53:6** According to Isaiah here we have sinned, then we have turned away from the truth but God still laid on His only begotten son the sin of us all, the whole world's sin. This is further built upon in the New Testament when it says **in John 3:16-18** *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."* There is a great deal built here in John, God still gave His only Son for the sin of the world but condemnation is taken away by belief in Jesus Christ, men remain condemned only because they do not believe in who Jesus is and what He did for the world. HE is the one who died for our sin, HE is the one who takes away our sin, HE is the one God the Father requires us to put our Faith (believe) in, this message is all about HIM, Jesus is what we must trust in for our sin to be forgiven.

Do you believe? I thought that I did until I examined myself as I was now learning to do. "I believe in Jesus" I would say, but what I meant was that I believed that Jesus died for my sin and in the celebration of the Eucharist (where He continues to be sacrificed daily for my sin) is where I realize what Catholicism taught me about Him. How many times do we die **Hebrews 9:27** tells us that we are appointed to die once. How many times must Jesus die or be sacrificed for our sin to be forgiven? **Hebrews 9:28** explains that Christ was ONCE offered for sin and if we look to Him (Believe) He will save us. How many times do you think God has to offer His Son to forgive the worlds sin? Scripture clearly and repeatedly states he did this once. Look at some of the references that I had found:

Rom 6:10 *"For in that he died, he died unto sin once:"*

Heb 7:27 *"Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself."*

Heb 9:12 *"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."*

Heb 9:26 *"For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."*

Heb 9:27 *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"*

Heb 9:28 *"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."*

Heb 10:10 *"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."*

Heb 10:12 *"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;"*

Heb 10:14 *"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."*

1 Peter 3:18 “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:”

Two additional verses which put the discussion of Purgatory into perspective are **Rom 5:1, 8-9** and **Rom 8:1-2**. When we were in sin Christ loved us enough to die for us, and this Justified us in the sight of God (why then would we need another place called Purgatory to FURTHER justify us?) NOW we are justified and so saved from any wrath God would impose upon the unsaved. This is what is taught in **Rom 5:1, 8-9** “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” The next verse shows us that when we accept Christ as Saviour we are no longer merely fleshly beings but now spiritual beings set free from the law of sin and death. Sinners die and pay for their own sin in hell for all eternity the Christian was purchased by Christ and does not pay for his own sin, Christ has already done that on our behalf. **Rom 8:1-2** “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”

At this time I was seeing more and more that God’s plan to forgive sin was accomplished by Christ and since it was finished it was available to whosoever would believe it. You didn’t need to join a certain Religion or follow a ritual you needed to believe in what He has done and in repentance call on His name to receive forgiveness as the gift of God. “But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” **Rom 10:8-13**

Intent on finding an answer to these contradictions I was still doing two things, Studying the Scripture and doing work list. The Scripture was presenting a strong and irrefutable case that men are either: lost or saved, in unbelief or believing, condemned or redeemed, going to hell or heaven, there is never a middle or additional step to being saved nor is there an alternate place beside heaven and hell. When are our sins forgiven? “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...” **Romans 8:1** If forgiveness is NOW will this forgiveness last forever or does it need to be renewed again? Jesus answered that saying, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*” **John 5:24** Does this mean that Jesus died for ALL our sin past, present and future? “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. 18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.” **Heb 10:17-18** Where do I go when I die? Paul said it this way, “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” **2 Cor 5:8**

For me the Scripture that most clearly described the truth about this place called Purgatory came from the Latin Vulgate or the Bible in the official language of the Catholic Church. The portion is **Heb 1:1-3** which says, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; 3 Who

being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;” To simply state it these verses mean that in the Old Testament God spoke to men through the Prophets and in the New Testament God has spoken to man through some one much better through His Son our Lord Jesus Christ. Then the Father gives the proof of the Son’s qualifications by saying this Jesus who spoke and made the worlds is the one you need to listen to now. He continues, Jesus is the very glory of God, Jesus is the image of God, Jesus power holds all things. Now the literal translation from the Vulgate differs a little here so let me give it to you. “When He had by Himself made PURGATION from our sins, He sat down at the right hand of the majesty of God.”

Follow this thinking; Purgatory is a place where sin is cleansed, it is from the Latin root Purgia meaning to wash or cleanse. The Latin here says that Jesus by Himself (meaning without the intervention of another) made PURGIA (meaning cleansed me) Ek (from or out of my) sin. Jesus has already by Himself cleansed out of me all my sin. Since Purgatory is a place of cleansing from sin then is not our Lord Jesus the true place of cleansing. If Jesus has already cleansed me from sin the moment I believed with my heart in what He did (in His death for sin, burial and resurrection, the Gospel) then how could there be ANOTHER place of cleansing if sin has all been washed away by Christ? If Christ FINISHED the work and *Hebrews 1:3* shows this by using the phrase “*sat down*” then how can there be the need for further cleansing? When Christ said on the cross, “It is Finished” He meant that the work the Father had sent Him to do is all DONE, the work of Redemption is all done. Remember the verse “*Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.*” *Heb 10:17-18* that means there can be no more Indulgences, no Treasury of the Saints, no more Masses for the souls of the faithful departed. You either believe Jesus or you call Him a liar, you either place your faith in what He has FINISHED in forgiving your sin or you reject Him.

When I presented these things to my Father Confessor and asked for help to explain these seeming contradictions between the Bible and Catholic Doctrine the Seminary suddenly became very clean. Do you remember those black and white pictures of the Nuns and Monks working in the fields, and scrubbing the hallways with huge towels and brushes? Well that is how it is normally done. When you are given work list however it is a great deal different. You have the bucket and the towels and all the tooth brushes you need to scrub with and you don’t stop to eat or sleep you continue until you are finished the task or until your work meets the approval of the one in charge. 36 hours after I began scrubbing the Cloister Hall (100 feet by 15 feet) I was allowed to return to my normal duties, at the time it meant returning to class. There were other work lists during those days and at first I didn’t let them bother me, I looked on them as building my character.

The one common thread however that would always elicit a punishment was a question concerning the differences between the Bible and Catholic teaching. For instance why are we taught in Catholicism that it is the Mortal Sin of Presumption to teach that men can know they have Eternal life and can be sure of their salvation before death when *1 John 5:13* clearly states “*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life*”? **WORKLIST!** Why do we use the book of Maccabees for doctrine when the book of II Maccabees 15:32 he does not claim the inspiration of God, “If it is well written and to the point, that is what I expected. If it is poorly done and mediocre, that is only the best I could do.”? **WORKLIST!** Why do we charge for prayers, Masses and indulgences when *Romans 6:23* states “*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is*

eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”? **WORKLIST!** Why are we taught to live a good life and do good works in the hope of attaining heaven when **Romans 4:3-5** teaches the opposite, “*For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. 4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*”? And again it **Titus 3:5** scripture says, “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us*”? **WORKLIST!**

The priests did try to answer these questions but usually a debate followed with me asking more Biblical questions which related to the topic we were discussing. This went on for a year and a half, Questions and Debates usually ending with the priest giving an insufficient answer and asking me to put away the Bible or giving me **WORKLIST!** OK, what I once saw as character building I now thought was taking time away from Studying to find answers. I knew the answers were there even if the priest could not provide me with them. In order to stop the cycle of Questions then **WORKLIST!** I just stopped asking questions.

WHERE DOES JESUS FIT WITH YOU FOLKS

While the Lord was dealing with me through His Word, my sister Doreen was also beginning to see things at the Convent which didn't make sense to her. Things like: Why do we put a Statue of St. Joseph on the window ledge facing out and then pray that he will keep the weather fair, don't pagans do this sort of thing? And another question, why do we pray that Mary help us in the hour of our death when Jesus is our Saviour from death and hell? Why do we count prayers on beads like the Buddhist's when God says they are heathens?

Mon and Dad were reading the Bible almost every day since that Lady asked, “How many Masses?” They originally began reading to find what God wanted them to do with their lives; since Doreen and I were gone they thought the Lord may have something for them to do as well. As they read they were realizing that the entire Bible was about Jesus, the Old Testament was full of pictures of what Jesus would do when he came. The New Testament showed how Jesus fulfilled God the Fathers plan for salvation and that He was the only one who could do so. And here is where it starts getting dicey; they didn't hold Bible studies in those days in the Catholic Church so they started looking for someone to teach them the Scripture. They found RB Theme, Herbert W. Armstrong, and even the Jehovah's Witnesses instead of the truth, all the while they remained within the Catholic Church still doing exactly what they had always done. These people (cults) would begin their training and after a few weeks Dad would ask “well what about Jesus, where does He fit in with you folks?” When their answer came back as less than Biblical they asked them to leave.

It was nearing the end of my third year in Seminary and since the Seminary was well cleaned I was given permission to visit over the weekend with the family. When they picked me up we went to see Doreen in the Convent, this unscheduled visit was approved because I was not available during the normal times. It was then for the first time that Dor whispered she was seeing things she didn't agree with but couldn't explain why. We told her to start reading the New Testament and she might see the reasons. When we arrived at home Mom and Dad told me what they had been doing with the Bible Studies and asked if I would sit in that night. It was with the Jehovah's Witnesses. So I sat and listened and after I told them it was a Cult, I didn't realize that before the study because I had never heard of the Jehovah's Witnesses before. It was

clear from the things they were teaching that it was wrong. Dad showed me the 12 volumes they had purchased from the J.W.'s and we looked up several things that night, after which Mom and Dad were sure they could have nothing more to do with them.

Sunday Mass and I returned to Seminary that day worried about the family. We were Catholic because we believed the Church was the truth and now everyone was beginning to question those doctrines we were taught because of our Bible reading. If we were all together in Philadelphia I could say that we had influenced each other but that wasn't the case. We were in different cities and circumstances all being drawn to the Scriptures at the same time. We had never written our concerns in our letters because we all knew that the letters were censored and because we didn't want to harm each other if we were wrong with our studies. The summer passed with very little open discussion on the subject, we were keeping it to ourselves.

Then in January of my fourth year (1972) the Lord moved on our hearts. With me it was the overwhelming weight of evidence the Scripture presented and the lack of reasoned answers from my Father Confessor and the other priests. It seemed that the Bible was going in one direction and the Catholic Church in another. Let me give you a few examples of the things I found:

John 5:24 TRUST IN CHRIST ASSURES NO CONDEMNATION BUT A PASSING FROM DEATH TO LIFE

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

Rom 5:9 WE ARE NOW JUSTIFIED BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST NOT LATER IN PURGATORY

“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”

Rom 3:24 JUSTIFICATION IS IN CHRIST NOT THE FIRES OF PURGATORY

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:”

1 Cor 6:11 WE ARE ALREADY WASHED, SANCTIFIED, AND JUSTIFIED BY CHRIST

“but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

Heb 10:17-18 SINS FORGIVEN, SINS FORGOTTEN, SO NO ADDITIONAL OFFERINGS COULD FORGIVE

“And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. 18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.”

2 Cor 5:21 JESUS BECAME OUR SIN, PAID FOR IT AND MADE US RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Jude 24-25 HE PRESERVES AND KEEPS US TO PRESENT US FAULTLESS BEFORE THE FATHER

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, 25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

Heb 10:10 WE ARE SANCTIFIED (MADE HOLY) THROUGH THE ONE TIME OFFERING OF CHRIST

“We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

1 Peter 1:18-19 REDEEMED BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST NOT PAYING INDULGENCES OR OFFERINGS

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:”

Phil 1:23-24 DEPARTING THIS LIFE TAKES YOU TO CHRIST NOT PURGATORY

“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: 24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.”

2 Cor 5:8 OUR CONFIDENCE IS IN THE LORD, AT DEATH WE GO IMMEDIATELY TO BE WITH CHRIST

“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

After finding these and many other Scriptures which shed light on Purgatory the truth seemed to be more and more apparent. I realized the answers I needed were not going to be found in the Seminary so I determined to take a year leave of absence to Study the Scripture then return to Seminary with answers to help others, finally going on to be ordained. But I had to let the family know what I intended and I could not write these things in a letter because it would never reach them. The Lord was good and worked it out ahead of time, while in Seminary I had two jobs assigned to me that of Head Librarian and Driver. A few of the Seminarians were drivers so we were called on to drive into town for mail, dry cleaning, supplies etc. always going in twos. I used the not so good food situation at the Seminary to persuade my partner to split up when gathering our supplies that day by telling him “If we hurried we would have some extra time to stop and get something to eat” he liked the idea. While we were separated I called home and asked my parents to find some place that teaches the Bible like a Bible College or something and I filled them in quickly on my plan.

While this was happening the Lord was also working with Doreen. Even with the questions she had about praying before statues and praying to Mary more than to Jesus our Saviour and being told to work and pray that the Lord would accept her good works in atonement for her soul and the souls of others she still believed that Catholicism must have the answer she just hadn't seen it yet. So the Lord moved her in a much more drastic way. Dor had become very ill that year and the Nuns never told the family. She repeatedly asked to see a Doctor and she was denied being told it wasn't necessary the Lord's will be done. Doreen already knew the Lord's will; it was for her to become a Sister of Christian Charity, that's what she had worked for these 6 years. She began to reason, “Why would He call her to the Convent then suddenly change His mind to have her die in a bed? That wasn't His will.” She struggled to get back to classes and each day for 21 days went to Mother Superior office saying “I believe the Lord wants me to go home.” On the 21st day Mother Superior agreed and took her to the front door where she waited alone for Mom and Dad to arrive.

This call from the convent happened one week after I made my call home (January 16) and one week after the Lord had convicted our parents. That phone call made them search in the Phone Directory for Bible Colleges and there was only one in Philadelphia, the Philadelphia College of Bible started by C. I. Scofield the author of that study Bible. When they called PCB and recounted the story they were transferred to the President's office to speak with Brother Steele. He told them about a graduate of PCB who knew about Catholicism and he put them in touch with each other. Alex Dunlap (the graduate) had begun a ministry to reach Roman Catholic people with the Scripture and the next night he arranged to go over and speak with them.

Again they told their story of reading the Bible and searching for answers among the different religious groups (they didn't realize most of them were Cults), but like Catholicism those groups had no valid answers to their questions. They described the necessity of the Church not Jesus. They all spoke of Jesus as the Saviour but without their Church you can not enter heaven, so who is it doing the saving Jesus or the Church? Alex sat and answered their questions for more than an hour, No you don't call the priest Father **Matt 23:9** *“And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.”* No you don't confess your

sins to another man even if he is a priest **Mark 2:7** “Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?” No the Church doesn’t save your soul only Jesus can do that **Acts 4:12** “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” All you sin, past present and future were completely forgiven by Christ **1 John 1:9** “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” **1 John 2:2** “And he is the propitiation (payment in full) for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” No you don’t need to pray to Mary **1 Tim 2:5** “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”

Alex gave them the Gospel:

Jesus came to earth to bare away our sin as the Lamb of God. He did this through His death on the Cross where He paid the penalty which was too great for us to pay because we are sinners and our sacrifices are tainted or imperfect. **Acts 13:38-39** “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: 39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” You can not be saved by any other because God sent Jesus to save the world, you either believe that or you don’t believe in Gods plan of salvation.

Scripture declares we are all sinners. **Rom 3:10** “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:”

Therefore as sinners we are in need of a Saviour we can do nothing to help get ourselves to heaven. **John 14:6** “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

Good works and Penances and prayers will not justify you from sin. **Gal 2:16** “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

Salvation is by the Grace of God which we can not earn or store in a treasury or accumulate for use it is the once and forever Act of God upon our soul forgiving us of our sin and declaring us righteous. **Titus 3:3-7** “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. 4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

The record of God is that we are sinners and Christ is the only Saviour. If we believe this with our whole heart we are saved, if we believe in Jesus plus any other help (as the Church, Priest, Mary or good works) for salvation we have denied God’s plan and His Grace and we will be lost for all eternity. Which do you chose? **1 John 5:9-13** “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. 10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. 11 And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. 13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

That night January 17, 1972 our parents accepted Christ as their Saviour and saw that they could not remain in the Roman Catholic Church but needed to find a good Bible Preaching Church in order to grow in the Lord. They immediately began praying for Doreen and me to be saved and seven days latter they received the phone call from the Convent to pick up Doreen and take her home. Alex drove them to Cedar Grove Church (an Independent Fundamental Bible Preaching Church) that Sunday telling them that there were a few other good Churches in the area they could visit, but they loved the preaching and stayed. Pastor Parr was a former Roman Catholic and completely understood when they explained the family situation. After a week Dor agreed to come out of her room and go to Bible Church (she called it) with them. There were no statues, no kneelers, no candles, no altars only lots of friendly people welcoming her. Shortly after Pastor Parr begun the preaching she fainted. She was out, her shoes flew off she dropped to the floor and they stopped the service a nurse at the church helped them take her to the back and revived her. We don't know if the fainting was due to her weakened physical condition or the shock of seeing and hearing so many different things that overwhelmed her that morning.

BUT I WAS WRESTLING WITH GOD

The weekend of February 3rd I was allowed home for my scheduled weekend and when I got in the door Mon and Dad told me they were saved. The only thing I could say was "What's that?" They explained a little, I was skeptical, but they told me that if I liked Dor and I could meet with Pastor Parr later that night, he had agreed to answer any questions we had. So at 6 o'clock that evening we met with Pastor Parr.

He asked if we had any questions, Doreen was quiet at the start but she chimed in as the night went on. I told him of my study of the Scripture and began from there. We talked about Purgatory, the Mass, Confession, Sacrifices, the Atonement and Justification and more. With every question we asked he always started his answer the same way, "Let's see what the Scripture has to say on the subject" and he would turn to a passage that spoke directly to the question we had, and there was the answer. He never said "well the Church teaches" or "I think the answer is" and he didn't say "I don't know" or "you shouldn't be asking that". Pastor did what the Scripture instructs all Christians to do, to give an answer. **1 Peter 3:15** instructs us to "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear"

For eight hours Pastor Parr answered our questions, and when he saw it nearing 2 o'clock in the morning he began to tell us the Gospel the reason why Christ came. He explained how we were all sinners **Rom 3:23** "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*" Now I had a hard time with that because I was a Seminarian, called of the Lord, I didn't smoke or rob banks or even hurt people. My mission in life was to help others. I don't deserve heaven but I'm no rotten sinner either. Pastor showed us **Isa 64:6** which says, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." And he described mans sinful condition and need of a Saviour.

Then he gave us this example, suppose heaven were on a cliff exactly 100 feet away from the cliff of earth and since it is a Spiritual place you couldn't use anything mechanical to reach it. That meant you couldn't build a bridge or fly a plain over to it, so how would you reach heaven? I said you would have to jump. Since the longest jump on record is about 32 feet what do you have to do to reach heaven? I said "You'll have to get real good". He answered "right, that is the

way most people think they will get into Heaven by getting real good.” He continued, “So you practice and start to jump 40 feet then 60 feet then 80 feet and then 99 feet, you’re getting real good.” Pastor noticed I had long arms and asked how long they were; I said they were over 3 feet. Pastor said “good, if you missed heaven by one foot you could reach out with those three foot arms and pull yourself in.” I thought that sounded reasonable. He finished the example, “God has called you and you must try to get into heaven, so you jump off the earth and go 60 feet then 80 feet then 99 feet 11 ¾ inches and fall straight into the pit of hell.” I protested and said, “What about my three foot arms?” His answer was simple, **Rom 3:23** “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*” “you will always come short” he said, “because of your sin, you need to be rid of it to have some one take it away then you can reach Heaven.”

Pastor explained that we needed to repent of our sin and be converted to Christ because it is taught in Scripture. **Acts 3:19** “*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;*” Then he invited us to be saved by asking Christ to forgive our sin and be our only Saviour. **Rom 10:8-10** “*But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*”

When we went home I removed my collar and jacket and lay across the bed still very much awake. There was a lot to think about that night. Pastor had been right on target with the answers he gave, but the question of my sinfulness was still bothering me. I was still declaring myself to be a good person when God says I am a retched sinned. I thought my good deed would one day make me acceptable before the Lord. But I was wrestling with God, and we all know who always wins that match up. **Rom 3:28** says, “*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*” It finally sunk in, I wouldn’t be saved by the things I could do, and I would only be saved by accepting what Jesus has already done. At 4:35 the morning of February 4th I had finally found my answer, there was a place where sin is forgiven but it isn’t called Purgatory, forgiveness of sin is found only in a person so that night I accepted Christ as my only Saviour.

That Sunday instead of going to Resurrection of Our Lord we all went to that Bible Church together. At the invitation I went forward to talk to Pastor Parr. I could hear my sister yell at me from the pew, “You traitor”. Down front I told Pastor how I had accepted Christ and I needed help with what to do next. Pastor Fisher the Associate Pastor asked how much time I had left to finish my college degree? It was about four more months so he told me not to waist that year but to go back finish my degree and tell those in the Seminary what Jesus had done for me. So I did. And that is a whole other story.

The month of March I was allowed another weekend and Dor and I went out to see the new Roosevelt Mall near us. There was a printer at Cedar Grove Church who gave me some \$10 bill tracts he had just printed, you’ve seen them they look like a \$10 bill folded over and start out, “Sorry this bill isn’t real but the message of salvation is.” We passed them out as we walked and talked and Dor put one in her pocket. The tract used **Rom 6:23** “*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” All of Doreen’s Convent life she was taught to do good and work hard and live a good life to lay up grace against the Day of Judgment. She was taught to work her way to heaven while saying that Jesus is the Saviour. Those two things don’t mix for salvation you are saved by grace through faith and not

of works as we have seen in *Titus 3:5*. But the part of *Romans 6:23* that really hit Dor was that Salvation is the GIFT of God to every one who believes, it was not by works as she was taught it was God's Gift through Jesus Christ. Later that day she went into the bath room for quite a long time, when I saw her again she told me that she had accepted the Lord as her Saviour. She was wrestling with God and when she realized she wasn't expected to earn salvation she accepted God's plan as a GIFT. That was March 9th 1972.

Our entire family had come to know the Lord. We had gone from thinking Catholicism was rooted in Scripture to seeing that Catholicism was in many ways opposite to the Scripture. We had come from questions about Doctrines of the Church to receiving answers from the Scripture, from hoping to live a good life to reach Heaven to being sure that Christ was our Saviour and knowing He saved us for all Eternity. I went from wanting to serve God as a Priest to serving the Lord as a Preacher. There is still much more to tell including having cars blown up and starting a ministry to Catholic people but that must be for another time.

Thank you for listening to our story
Frank A Eberhardt