

COME AND SEE

Since becoming Catholic in 2004, I have asked myself over and over, why I was never invited to attend a Mass. I could attend funerals and was invited to a few weddings, but not one Catholic ever invited me to Mass.

I was obviously a believer, I loved the same God, I taught the Word of God and many Catholics came to an interdenominational group Bible Study I taught. I always behaved well; I would never have embarrassed anyone. The Catholics who came to class all seemed to like me. I have always been approachable. Why, in over 35 years, did no one ever once ask me to visit his or her parish for Mass? Why didn't they ask, "Will you come to Mass with me Sunday and let's go out for brunch?"

My husband, Tom, and I went to our first Mass at the Cathedral on February 2, 2003. The minute the Mass ended, we turned to each other. Wide-eyed, I said, "This is worship!" Tom said, "Yes, and we are coming back!" As we stopped to say hello to the priest Tom told him, "We want to become Catholic." One visit to one Catholic Mass; that is all it took. That one visit and a ton of grace - but God provided the grace! The time was right for us. The time was perfect.

We attended Mass for one year and one day - and on February 3, 2004 we were received into full communion in the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. It is true, we did not "get" to come forward for the Eucharist for one year and one day, but it was always clearly stated in the Cathedral bulletin, "All those who have not yet made their First Communion, and those who are not members of our faith, are invited to come forward and receive a blessing. At that time, please cross your arms across your breast and come forward for a blessing . . ." We could live with that! What was wrong with that? A blessing! We loved it! We loved that blessing for one year and one day!

I can remember one of our grandchildren, hearing we could not "take" Communion "yet" said, "Grandmother! They would not let YOU take Communion? You are the best Christian I know." But I told our grandchild, "The Eucharist is so special - first, the Eucharist is a sacrament - second, they wanted us to fully understand what the Catholic Church knows and teaches as Truth - it is like waiting for the wedding night - being ready for it - anticipating - and we loved the blessing while we waited."

Tom and I keep inviting people to Mass; we invite our family now, but others, too. We both know that our believing Brothers and Sisters "in Christ" in the many other Protestant denominations, although not believing in the "Real Presence" in the bread and wine at the consecration, do understand that Communion is not just

a sip of wine and a chunk of bread. We know we all love the same God.

So what is the reason many Catholics don't invite friends to Mass? Is it because we can't explain to our friends or to our family that they will have to wait, like everyone else had to wait, until they understand what Catholics believe before they are ready to receive the Eucharist?

Any person who is secure in his or her faith would find it easy to come to Mass with us. The stronger the Protestant believing Christian is in his knowledge of the Bible and his faith, the more he is going to see the Mass as beautiful. He will know the untruths of what many Protestants have been told in the past - that Catholics crucify Jesus all over again and again, it is a bloody Mass, or Catholics have a death cookie at Communion. He will know we don't worship Mary, or the saints but we do worship Christ who has died, Christ who has risen and Christ who will come again! He will be amazed at the beauty of the Old and New Testament seen and heard in the liturgy and how much Sacred Scripture we hear at Mass every day. He just might fall in love all over again with the Lord and want to come worship with us. Tom and I did just that.

We have it ALL in the one holy catholic and apostolic Church - why then are we all not sharing it? Pope John Paul II told us to be evangelical. Why do Catholics keep this a secret - this wonderful worship - exquisite worship? It is clear we do keep it a secret! If we don't ask friends or family to come with us to a Mass, most of them are not going to fall in the door of the Cathedral when they walk by, as Tom and I did.

Sure, you will be turned down. I can promise you that. You will be rejected! Embarrassed? Yes, you will be embarrassed and some people will tell you things that hurt you about your faith. Who cares? Call it suffering if you like - Catholics do that well. Catholics understand suffering and how it unites us to Christ. Protestants get turned down right and left when they invite people to church, but they still invite people. Do you know why? Because they believe, with a passion, that faith is a life and death situation. Do we believe that? Do we believe, with a passion, that faith is a life and death situation? Sure we do! Do we want others to know what we believe and why we believe it? Sure we do! For some reason we just don't know how to tell them. The Mass may show them.

Faith is more than a matter of life and death! Faith is a matter of divine worship. Absolutely divine! Invite someone to come to Mass this week. Bring a friend for a blessing! Tell them in the words of Jesus, "Come and see." They will like it. We did.