

The Conversion of a Catholic Seminarian

By Frank Eberhardt

I Wanted To Serve God as A Priest

In 1968 I left home to become a Roman Catholic priest. I thought this was what God was calling me to do. I left home giving up family and friends, and I thought I would be following the right way of God.

To give you a little background – I attended a Roman Catholic grammar school. In 6th grade I first felt that God was calling me. In 7th grade the feeling seemed to be confirmed. In 8th grade I finally made the decision to become a Roman Catholic priest. I chose the Vincentian Order. This particular order had a great devotion to the "Blessed Mother." They prayed to her every Thursday evening in the Miraculous Medal novenas. I liked this Order because they seemed to have good unity and fellowship.

In my first year at the seminary we learned a lot of Bible history from the Old Testament. We had very few studies in the New Testament. This first year I believed everything I was taught as I reasoned, "These are priests so they must know the right way. This is the 'One True Church.'"

I found that as I listened to their teachings many of them did not connect together. When the Bible speaks of something, you can always find it some other place in the Bible confirmed and it relates to something else. But when the priests taught some things, one doctrine would contradict the other or add to the Word of God or subtract from it. So I began to question some things. They taught us to question deeply. They told us that Protestants had perverted the Scriptures and took Scriptures out of context in order to interpret them in their own way, and we were to listen and try to help them but not get hooked on their errors.

Each year we were introduced to more doctrines and the priestly life. In my second year I continued to go along with what the priests were teaching, but in my third year I was seriously questioning what I was being taught.

When I came home for my summer vacation after my third year, I was amazed to find that my parents were studying with the "Jehovah's Witnesses." They asked me to listen in on their classes and I wasn't sure if I should. However, I finally did and this was my first introduction to a Bible study. Actually it was more of an argument rather than a study since we were all Catholics. So I just sat back and listened. This is characteristic of my personality. I don't make a fast decision. I like to think things through before coming to any conclusion. I studied with them for three months in the summer but couldn't agree with their beliefs.

In September when I went back to the seminary I just kept reading the Bible for myself. I began to find that the Catholic Church taught many things that were contrary to the Bible such as: the mass, confession, purgatory, etc. At this time I wasn't sure in my own mind what to do so I just kept reading and studying the Bible and questioning and thinking.

January 16th of 1972 I called home and said, "Mom, I'm going to leave the seminary. I would like you to find me a good college that teaches the Bible." And this is how my mother got in contact with Alex Dunlap and The Conversion Center. She and my father were saved the next day. I didn't really know anything about this until I returned home about February 2nd. Arrangements had been made for my sister and me to talk with Pastor Parr at Cedar Grove Church (the Gospel preaching Church my parents were attending since they were saved).

So I went and for six hours I sat back and listened to my sister (who had been in a convent) and Pastor Parr discussing Catholic doctrine and the Word of God.

Every argument my sister would bring up, Pastor Parr would just show her Bible verses that would answer her argument. He also presented the whole message of salvation to us that evening. I listened to it and tried to decide in my own mind who was right.

I spent Saturday reading the Bible. Many of the Scriptures Pastor Parr gave us came to mind. I looked up many verses in the concordance and they all seemed to confirm what Pastor Parr had said rather than my sister's arguments. Her arguments didn't have a real basis in Scripture.

That day I found several verses that really helped me. Pastor Parr had read, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." I hadn't actually thought of myself in this way. Thinking I had been called of God to do something for His glory, how could I be the sinner described in this verse? After further study I realized my own need before God. I could see how much of a sinner I actually was and why I needed a Saviour, In Romans 3:23 the word "ALL" showed me very strongly that I was a sinner guilty before God. I went to Romans 5:12, 1 Timothy 3:16, Romans 6:23, and James 2:10 and it was at this point that I wanted to accept Christ as my own personal Saviour.

However, I went to more Scripture to be sure of what I was doing and these verses said it all for me: Hebrews 2:10, John 3:3, Romans 10:9,10. I went down on my knees that Saturday and accepted Christ into my heart as my only and all-sufficient Saviour and Lord.

I continued in the Scriptures hungering and wanting to know more of God's Word and His plan and will for my life. I saw through Scripture that the Catholic Church follows man's traditions rather than the Word of God and verses like 2 Corinthians 13:5, Acts 5:29, Proverbs 16:25, and Matthew 7:21 showed me that I must obey God rather than man. The Lord burdened my heart to tell others of His plan of salvation. 2 Corinthians 6:2.

That Sunday I went forward in church and made a public confession of my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I praise God for my salvation and for the love of my parents for me and the help Pastor Parr gave me in acquainting me with the Word of God and the plan of salvation.

After trusting in the Lord, I returned to the seminary to finish two months of academic accreditation. While there, I attended a funeral Mass where there were sixty priests con-celebrating the sacrifice of the mass together. For the first time I really saw what the mass is. It all sounded like a group of witches

standing around a caldron, chanting an evil witches chant, as the priests profess, and Roman Catholic doctrine states, to call Christ down into their host.

I couldn't get over why I had not realized this before. But while I was a Roman Catholic I was a natural man (1 Corinthians 2:14), not having the mind of Christ, as true born-again Christians (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Now I had the guidance of the Holy Spirit to show me the falseness of the unbloody sacrifice of the mass, as spoken in Hebrews 10:11, 12, 14.

How I praise the Lord for taking away the scales from my eyes and ears and showing me I had to leave the Church of Rome, 2 Corinthians 6:17, Revelation 18:4. "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord."

At first I thought that my four years in the Roman Catholic Seminary were wasted, but I know the Lord had a purpose in this and I thank God for the opportunity He has given me to witness to my seminary friends and to discuss with them the studies we had together and compare them with the Word of God.

The Lord taught me to speak, to question, to understand, to reason and to go to the Scriptures for my answers. So I see now that my experience can be used to help others and for the glory of God. I believe very strongly in Romans 8:28, "AND WE KNOW THAT ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THEM THAT LOVE GOD, TO THEM WHO ARE THE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE."

Now instead of studying for the Roman Catholic priesthood, I have been ordained an independent, fundamental preacher of the Gospel, at Bob Jones University.

"ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD, AND IS PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS: THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE PERFECT, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED UNTO ALL GOOD WORKS." (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).