

## Patrick Vossen Testimony

### Heritage of Faith

#### Part I                      Seeds of Faith

As a young boy I remember how much I enjoyed going to church. It was a place of peace, and there was an awe and respect in the church that you didn't find any place else. My early years I had a dear place of honour for the priesthood and the work of the sisters. Both were special in my heart, so much so that I felt a calling to be a priest at the very early age of five. My father especially recognised that calling and has been sensitive to it my entire sojourn in this life, and would later on in my teen years begin to try to assist me in such a venture. For my father loved the Church, and always portrayed the Roman Catholic Church in such a special light.

Both of my parents honoured the intent of my heart toward the faith. However, the faith as having to be just Roman Catholic wasn't there goal as much as having a living faith in God. Neither wanted me just to be religious, but to recognised as the scriptures declares ,”

The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments.

Whoever says, "I know him," but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him. This is the way we may know that we are in union with him:

whoever claims to abide in him ought to live (just) as he lived. ( 1 John 2:3-6 ) ”

Yes, life in Him was more than just an abstract knowledge of Him, but to be filled with Him. Being filled with the Spirit and abiding in God's Love. That was the heritage of faith my parents wanted to pass along.

I had my struggles as a young man in the church, but I always attended mass and desired to be an altar boy. However, something happened when I was in fifth grade that toppled everything. That was the death of my dear pastor and friend Father Gordon. He was my shining example of the faith. He would take me into his rectory and talk to me about Jesus, and let me see first hand what all the sacraments met. He'd grant me my first confession and even when deadly

sick and in the hospital, allowed me to visit his room when I was there having surgery myself and prayed for me. He was Jesus to me!

His death left a void I didn't quite escape from. Father Maloney was cool, and others were OK at St. Patrick's in Ottawa, Illinois. However, no one was able to replace Father Gordon in my eyes. My father took us across town to St. Francis soon after, and Father Barnett as wonderful as he was couldn't replace my idol. I had made a young and tragic mistake. I put too much of my faith in the man, instead of the One he was pointing me to.

I soon found myself visiting a Pentecostal church and a baptist church. Both of which impressed me with their “ Bible Knowledge “ and personal devotion. Heck, I hadn't seen that kind of defending of the faith, or personal testimony since my time with Father Gordon. These people's lives impressed me. In my last year of junior high I took the plunge and left the Roman Catholic Church to finally find that piece of Jesus I needed in the Pentecostal church. I received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and spoke with other tongues, and it was absolutely awesome. Yet, I still believed that that same Spirit baptism had entered my being at my confirmation, as I had such an awesome experience in that service. However, the Pentecostals had convinced me that Jesus couldn't honour the church of Babylon. Oh, its membership had been seduced by years of sacred traditions which had annulled the faith. Hey, these people had a passion for God, they knew a lot more Bible than any Catholic I knew, they had to be right. At least I thought so at the time.

During high school I was a witness for God, trying to lead anyone I could to place their trust in Jesus and seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Plus, if they hadn't gotten baptised to do so, as contrary to a lot of Pentecostals I still believed the bible was emphatic about the necessity of baptism for salvation, “

Jesus answered, "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.  
( John 3:5 ) “

Not always a popular view in modern pentecostalism. Nevertheless, a strong biblical position to stand on from my heritage of faith passed on in my Roman Catholic beginnings. Mark 16:16, Matt. 28:19, Acts 10:48, as well as so many other passages made the prerequisite of baptism a biblical standard, not an option. That would be something that would stick with me, and become a stumbling block to my wanting to “ STAY PUT “ instead of returning to Rome.

I would move to Great Bend, KS. from Ottawa, Il. and begin to minister in a small charismatic/pentecostal church where an old time preacher had me learn quick about ministry. His wisdom was awesome and old Pastor Ellis could certainly teach. I spent hours with him studying the scriptures. He was a treasure of scriptural knowledge and experience. Plus, he had me singing and preaching quite a bit as a young man. Believing that practising the faith was essential in growth and development, and if you had a call to preach. Seminary or no seminary you are going to take time to learn and practice the tools of expository homiletics.

Two years later I was off to Texas Bible College. It was a wonderful time in the Lord. Daily devotions and services, Evangelistic Crusades, Singing throughout the South. It was just totally awesome! I saw God do wonderful things, and I began to debate and expand my knowledge in the scriptures. I also began to have a somewhat overzealous attitude that would say to almost anyone encountered, “ Let me at those Roman Catholics, Presbyterian's, Episcopalian's I'll straighten them out!!!“ I was ready for a debate anywhere and any time. I never won a soul to God debating with anyone. It actually profited God's kingdom very little. In reality it was petty and I needed a wake up call and God would soon give me just the one I needed. For I had forgotten a very important passage of scripture. That scripture comes from Proverbs 3:13, “ Happy the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding! “ Man, needed understanding a bit of wisdom to go along with wisdom. For how many preachers had I been warned about who thought they knew it all, and left nothing but prideful thoughts behind. Yet, never bore fruit unto eternal life. Their tree was without the fruit of the spirit and had gotten calloused and cold with self adulation and personal pride. That graveyard

has claimed so many anointed casualties. Whom have left the field of battle, and forgot that our spiritual warfare is not against flesh and blood, but spiritual powers of darkness cloaked in vain desires.

God saved my ministry during a revival I preached early in my ministry. I had really gotten to think I was something! I was always getting asked to preach or come an be a associate pastor or something. Yet, one meeting way out in western Kansas changed my life. The fourth day into the revival services I was getting upset. I hadn't seen the results I wanted. People were coming out to services. Large attendances each night. However, on the big final night rally the pastor had the audacity not to let me preach!!! A humbling spirit of God entered the sanctuary, and many folks turned to God. That next meeting I asked for anyone whom would like to be baptised in water. Entire families and friends came forward.

I was embarrassed before God, as the Holy Spirit showed me it is not I who leads them to Christ but Him. I have never been so prideful again, and oh so appreciative of God's grace with me, and repentant of my arrogant heart.

Shortly after seminary training I took an associate pastorate at Calvary Church in Windsor Locks, CT.. I would spend seven years there and marry, then begin to raise shortly three wonderful girls. It was nice and I learned a lot, but I felt so empty. I saw folks in the pentecostal or protestant camp saying they forgive people. Nevertheless, they'd sure remember their failures in conversation later. That was something I never truly saw in the Roman Catholic Faith. When we went to confession we became absolved. Sin went out the back door. Restitution and restoration was the theme of our faith. Both of which always seemed with reservation given by most protestants. I began to question the validity of Grace as we taught it, it seemed convoluted, and with exceptions. Not with the overwhelming love and grace that Jesus portrayed through the Prodigal Son's Father in the Holy Scriptures.

After Calvary I left to become the associate pastor and the Hartford Lighthouse. This was a small home missions work, but it was the first inner city work I had ever experienced. The work was rugged, but very beneficial. I learned a lot about ministering to the poor and needy, and caring for many folks whom had no hope without Christ. At the Lighthouse I learned the importance of socially ministering to

generation. Being a Christian in word and action. Putting a face on the faith with compassion and mercy. I have carried that ministry with me to each church I've been at since. Recognising the gospel's command in the story of the Good Samaritan. Reaching out to those whom we might in the natural never touch, but whom Christ compels us to reach out with arms of love.

While at the Lighthouse my spiritual journey continued to point back to my Roman Catholic roots. I would now find myself just stopping in the middle of the day at any Catholic church on the way home and walk in, kneel and pray. Sometimes I'd just stare at the altar, remembering communion and the ministry of the priesthood. I just couldn't stand our once a month communion services! They had holy respect, but no acknowledgement of the presence of the Christ other than asking him to forgive us before we took the bread. It seemed so empty so weak. Especially as Christ kept pointing out the scriptures to me and in particular John 6:53-56 "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him." Oh,

I was truly under conviction, but I didn't know what to do with it. I was an ordained preacher on the rise, I had to stay the course, I COULDN'T GO BACK TO ROME, NO NOT ROME!

### Part III

### The Seeds of Faith Give New Life

After The Lighthouse I left to Old Saybrook, CT. and pastored a charismatic interdenominational church. We had people from all backgrounds in that assembly. It actually was quite refreshing but hard to pastor. For there was a basic simple biblical foundation, but a lot of open areas to. I had liberty to teach though, and instituted a more formal communion service in lines with some liturgy from both Catholic and Episcopal liturgy. However, the compromise still didn't satisfy my soul. Then the next convictions on the list came at my door. How do you deal with the necessity of apostolic succession or sacred tradition?

My first reaction to both those questions were to write in our monthly newsletter an article on Sola Scriptura. Then a few months later I would write an article on Peter, and his leadership of the church, but not necessarily being any Bishop of Rome if you will. Neither did me any good except make me dig even deeper. As I found my friendship with Father Ray Introvigne whom I pastored St. John's in Old Saybrook. Drawing me to the conclusion that I can have the ministry of the Spirit. I can have the Word of God. I can have it all in the Roman Catholic Church. No compromises, no trying to find a quick biblical fix, and I can be at peace with my soul. Well, I didn't give in easy, and I held on for dear life. Yet, ten years into my ministry at FCF I resigned the church. For I had already been taking RCIA classes at St. Mark's under Father Rick Albamonti's leadership and Father Ray as my Spiritual Father. Two weeks after resigning my church I was received back into the Roman Catholic Church. Father Rick and Father Ray had seen my hunger, were more than helpful in assisting me to come home to Rome, and had been there for me in a turbulent time.

During the previous year I had been in contact with James Akin and Scott Hahn online. Neither of which might remember me, but I do remember them kindly answering my questions. Yes, and what can I say about that Assembly of God turncoat Tim Staples. He certainly came from my roots and showed me through his writings and listening to his tapes, that this was the way walk ye in it.

I won't say it hasn't been difficult. My wife was very upset and her family of Pentecostal friends. She even left me for quite a period of time. Saying its either Rome or me, which stood to be the test of the ages in my life.

I almost fell apart and wanted to give up on many occasions. However, God somehow broke through. It wasn't till many years, but Marcus Grodi's novel touched her heart. She still hasn't converted, but she now appreciates and sees the values I have conveyed. God is doing a miraculous work.

Part IV

In Conclusion

I'm now living in North Platte, Nebraska and working a secular job and assisting the local church in any way I can. Hoping soon to possibly become a deacon, as our diocese is opening up new pathways for former Protestant ministers like myself. Please keep us in your prayers, and always know that the Vossen family holds The Coming Home Network close to its heart and indebted to its love. God bless all my brethren and friends in the Network in Jesus name.