

A Catholic Revert

By Captain Janie Weishaar

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As a cradle Catholic and a product of the Catholic school system during the 1970's and eighties, I identified as a Catholic in name only. Like so many of us, I fell away from the Church and I didn't even know it. After high school I took off to Chicago to study dance, a path that lead me further away from my faith. After a number of years, and after the realization that my career choice was ill-fated (at best), my father offered me a way back through aviation. It was 1986 and I enrolled in flight school only to find there was a two-year waiting list into the program, but as fate would have it a spot open up and it was offered to me. This new path and the people I met along the way are what eventually lead me back to the Catholic faith—what many of us cradle Catholics are calling a *reversion*.

Interestingly, it was through nondenominational Christianity that started me on this journey. It was at Southwest Airlines that I would meet my future husband. He, along with getting involved in a weekly bible study and other ministries, started to show me Jesus in a whole new light. It was exciting, like any new relationship. However, when the newness wore off, I knew there was something missing.

Once I started attending Mass, I realized that this was the thing that was missing. I set out to rediscover the Mass, and that is what lead me to uncover the truth in all its majesty. The Mass, at the apex of its worship, is the physical connection with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Beautifully, once I realized this truth a whole new world opened up. The scales started falling away and I saw the Catholic Church in technicolor. Being in the Body of Christ is realizing who we are and why we are here. I am a part of the Kingship of Christ, a favored daughter and heir. The mission of the Church is the greatest adventure because life and death weigh in the balance. Jesus says, "All authority in and on the earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always to the close of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20). Our Lord also tells us to gather the wheat and the shaft together and that He will sort it out in the end. (Matthew 13:30). What does all this mean? What does it have to do with faith in the workplace? The short answer is everything.

As a pilot for Southwest Airlines, I'm currently at home on voluntary time off. Over 1000 pilots have elected to take advantage of this program to help our fellow pilots who cannot afford to take the reduction in pay. The Southwest culture is focused as much on their internal customer, the employee's, as they are on their external customer the flying public. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, is the code that we aspire to. I hear from many pilots about their concerns for the future and I reassure them about our history of never furloughing a pilot even after the terrorist attacks of 911.

Southwest is doing all it can to save jobs because it knows that the people are the heart of the company and that is why it is the most successful airline in history. What is the principle at play here? When it's distilled down through the Golden Rule and sacrificing for the good of the other it comes down to love. All of us are naturally drawn to things that are true, beautiful and good. The truth of anything really shows itself during times of crisis. A company that maintains its principles during times of struggle will show its true value. We all know this. This of course makes good business sense. Customers and employees will be drawn to companies like Southwest Airlines.

But what of faith, and of the Catholic Faith in particular, being represented in our businesses and why it matters? Isn't it enough that a company just practice principles that are true, beautiful and good for the sake of turning a profit? I think we can all see the disconnect here. Turning a profit is certainly good but not the greatest good. This principle of love is the greatest good. It works in marriage, friendship and in business wherever it is applied. But, there is a much bigger story here. Regardless of our tradition and beliefs, should it not encompass our entire being to include our work? I enthusiastically say yes!

Many companies support diversity in the workplace and are actively promoting certain groups through various means. I am thankful that there is an opportunity now like never before to gather together people of the Catholic faith into employer supported groups. Not in a competitive way, but by applying the principle of love. The fruits of which would be immeasurable.

As a Catholic revert I am on fire with the faith and want to share the beauty, history, and mysteries with those that have never heard what Catholic's claim to be true. This leads me back to the scripture passages in the bible I mentioned earlier. These passages in Matthew are some of the last words that Jesus tells his Apostles. The Great Commission of the Church is to make disciples of all nations and to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for the salvation of souls. What does that mean? It means that God himself became incarnate in Jesus the Christ; that Jesus is fully God and fully man but with two natures, divine and human; that He is Christ the King of the universe! During His earthly ministry he fulfilled the old covenant and established a new covenant with all people. Establishing his own priesthood and church, the church of which He is the head and we are the body, Jesus has brought to completion the epic story of salvation history. With a promise that He will be with us until the end of this current age. This personal promise is itself fulfilled in the Eucharist, our true food which is his flesh (John 6). God has united Himself with us in an intimate way to strengthen us for our journey into eternity and to prepare our bodies for resurrection.

This and so much more is what the Catholic Church gladly proclaims. And it is my joy to participate in it. It matters, let all who have eyes to see and ears to hear come and fulfill their destiny.