

*Into which religion were you born? Are you still a practicing member of that religion?*

I was born into the Catholic Church. But at some point, all who grow towards Christ participate in an ongoing an inner conversion, a deepening conviction. We face the choice many times. Just like the atheist can never fully shake off the nagging question regarding the work the Holy Spirit, the faithful often never fully break free from occasional moments of doubt. In other words, being born into the faith does not preclude questioning and doubt and adult reason. At one time, I doubted so much that I was more atheist than Catholic - but I was saved from myself once again.

*Is the Church a necessary part of personal religion?*

That is a great question. The Church is the Body of Christ - the union of the many faithful members into one. So the Church is social. But you ask if the Church is necessary as a facet of my personal religion.

By way of clarification, I wouldn't say "personal religion" because my religion is in no way defined by me. I must give my personal assent and accept the teachings, but these teachings themselves are not mine until I conform myself to them - so there is no personal religion.

But if you mean is the social Church a necessary part of my personal relationship with God the answer is absolutely yes. Christ commands me personally to charity. Christ commands me personally to go out in the world and be a light that will bring people to Him. Christ's work on earth would not have been complete if He did not build one true Church of the one true God, built on rock, here for all of us and for all eternity. The Church is absolutely necessary for me personally to be Catholic, for me to be in Christ and like Christ, who went out and served all other people.

*Do you believe in the existence of Heaven? If so, do you feel you will spend eternity there? Why or why not?*

I am a sinner, and in no way a saint. Not yet. So far, I can only hope and pray for more grace to be more like Christ. I have no idea what will come of me, and I must truly entrust myself to God.

I think it is a stumbling block to sacrifice, service and humility to think to long about the fate of my own soul after death in this way. Trusting the ultimate fate of my soul in God is enough for me. I will spend eternity in the proper place for me.

Thoughts like this should simply lead me to identify where I am good, but also, where I am still not good, and in need of more grace, repentance and forgiveness.

*Have you experienced a specific event, which confirmed or destroyed your faith in God?*

I had a moment at Mass where I found religion to be pathetic and I walked out and left the Church. I was young and didn't think I deserved to be pitied. I saw a statue of Mary looking down in sorrow at me, I just thought religion was some sort of self-inflicted punishment to distract from the pains of the empty void that is reality.

But a few months later, I walked into a Church and told God that if He showed me he was real, I would write it down for everyone and prove Him to the world. I was instantly filled with fear, thinking - "what if He answers." That fear was my answer - that fear was to me, the presence of God. I never understood why I should fear the Lord who is a good and loving and merciful father. But then I realized my size in comparison and realized that fear of the Lord is simply the presence of my smallness before God. I long for that fear now, and have not really doubted the reality of God since that day - that great gift when God answered me and proved Himself to me by teaching me Fear of the Lord.

*Does lack of physical or scientific proof of God, ever make you question your faith?*

Occasionally. Less and less as I experience more and more people. All things I think are true, science or faith, seem to be based primarily and essentially on a choice in my will. The certainty of anything is really just a best estimate and so it is a choice regarding which data we will accept as firmly grounded. We don't really know anything in comparison to the vastness of the scientific universe. So choosing the "certainty" of science versus the "certainty" of tradition in Christ - to me, makes for no comparison. I have as much faith that the sun will rise tomorrow as I do that I have a soul that may be eternal - both are completely up to God and the true workings of such things are unknown. Science is really just a hobby and leads to nothing but facts. Faith leads to truly good things.

*Do you believe there is only one "True" religion? If so, what convinced you?*

My God is the biggest God! The Catholic God is the most full and deep and complex and approachable and real and yet mysterious of all the religions. It is the one true Church. It is the only to profess faith in the Trinity. I truly believe that the only religious people who do not become Catholic, or the only Catholic who leave the Church, are those that do not KNOW the Church. There is nothing that even comes close. Not even Protestant Christianity is close. Protestants, may understand much of the Bible, but they do not understand what the Church is, and they do not understand the Sacraments, and the Eucharist - the real presence of Christ on earth. All other religions do not even have the Son of God made man - a necessity to me regarding my salvation.

*Because of your religious beliefs, does death frighten you?*

My biggest concern regarding death has to do with my three children and my wife. If I was in an accident and dying, it would be hard for me to really trust that they would be okay without me. My trust in God, my religious beliefs are the only solace I can find - so yes my religious beliefs help relieve my fears of death.

But I have no fear of death regarding my own life. I want to live until I'm 130. But I am so curious as to the afterlife, that I don't fear my death at all. I simply pray that whenever I die, I will be spiritually ready, and my family will be safe.