



My Personal Testimony

(Circa: August 1978)

A fall from grace and from God's goodness—how does it occur?

Well, if you do not know Him, you really don't have too far to fall—at all.

I was born a Roman Catholic Christian on May 17, 1942 in an era governed by the precepts of Vatican I.

In my childhood and teenage years, I witnessed (on too many occasions to recount) the drunken rage and stupor of an alcoholic stepfather which deeply marred my spirit. During these years I attended parochial schools through high school, and then, following high school, attended Catholic seminaries for three and one-half years to become a priest. However, I eventually left the seminary, finding it very dry and unfulfilling. I did not fully understand it then, but the priestly life being offered me did not include intimacy with God through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Instead, I was being offered a life lived under the power of the law linked to submission and unquestioning obedience.

To undergird this perception, in the three and one-half years of my seminary education never once did I read or study the Scriptures—nor was this study ever offered. Instead, religious formation consisted of wearing clerical garb, attending daily Mass (Latin), saying formal prayers (the rosary, etc.) and reading the lives of the saints. It was thought that this, coupled with a somewhat standardized curriculum, and unquestioned submission to the Magisterium (the teaching authority of the church), was all that was necessary for priestly formation. Consequently, I would remain scripturally ignorant until my conversion in 1978 when the Scriptures were finally opened for me.

After leaving the seminary, I completed my college education at the University of Connecticut and graduated with a degree in English and a minor in Latin (1965). I then entered active military service spending five and one-half years in the Navy as a Naval Aviator. I left active duty in 1970 but remained active in the Naval Reserve at S. Weymouth, MA flying patrol aircraft (the P-2 and the P-3). In 1970 I attended Boston University School of Law graduating in 1973 and then attended an additional two years at BU to obtain a Masters in Taxation degree. I then worked for a short stint as an attorney with the FAA in Washington, DC, followed by a return to Marblehead, MA where I engaged in a private tax law practice for a few years. It was during this period that I was hired as General Counsel for a major regional food wholesaler (1977) and acquired a home in Marblehead, MA. There, my '**new birth**' would occur in 1978.

During these many years before the intervention of Holy Spirit into my life in 1978 I knew a deep and dark loneliness married to a permanent aching in my heart. Yet, as I viewed myself as a '**survivor**', and in spite of my emotional baggage, I was determined to prove to the world that I could become a '**somebody**' and make it on my own. So, I pressed on and I buried my pain and grief as best I could.

Yet, devoid of a deeply rooted faith in Jesus I was not equipped to meet head on the challenges of living in contemporary society as a single young man. While I recognized sin and acknowledged its existence, I did not have the necessary discernment and power that comes from intimacy with God (through the gift of the Holy Spirit) to obey the law. I was to become a victim of sin and its dispossessing consequences. I never wanted to sin and wished to please God, yet the empowerment to do so was lacking. As a result, sin deceived me and offered me a form of light which would lead me into terrible darkness. As a hungry moth I rushed to that light, and it nearly cost me my life.

It was in this vulnerable period that I met an attractive stewardess (1977). This brief relationship led to a pregnancy that she wished to terminate. I knew this was evil and even asked her to marry me. But she would have none of that. I gladly gave her the \$200 needed for the abortion. There was really no love between us and eventually we split up shortly after this event. I remember being relieved of the anxiety of this pregnancy. I also knew that a staged marriage would only have led to tragic consequences and ultimately divorce.

Of the many evils committed during this dark time the sin of abortion grieved me the most. I was inwardly convulsed by its gruesome reality. I confessed this sin to a priest almost immediately trying to wash it from memory. But this confession did not bring light into the darkness of my life. I needed something more. I needed deliverance. I needed a miracle.

If, at this time, you had asked me if I was a '**good person**', I probably would have said "**Yes**". If you had asked me if I was saved, I would probably have said: "**I hope so.**" But, in reality, I was a walking dead man headed for perdition. I did not know how to escape the snare of life's conflicts, nor did I understand the confusing web of events intertwined into my daily life.

Well, God in His great mercy was to provide the needed exit strategy, and this is how it began:

One Friday in August 1978, on a beautiful and warm summer evening, I am in my bachelor's pad in Marblehead, MA getting ready to go downtown to one of my favorite haunts (Jacob Marley's) for a 'few beers'. My house is smallish. I am in the process of rebuilding it after a devastating fire which occurred under previous ownership. After a ton of hard work, it is now livable, but 2x4's and other construction items are still visible. I was planning on this weekend to press on—working towards the completion of what had turned out to be a rather large undertaking.

As I prepare to go out, I turn on the TV to kill some time. Immediately on the TV pops up the image of Billy Graham. He is in a large stadium, in the process of making an altar call to the thousands of people attending his crusade. He invites them to come down to the field to make a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. I watched this with curious interest. I can't say that I knew much about Billy Graham, other than the fact that he was a renowned Protestant evangelist. In fact, my ignorance was such that I did not even know how to open the Bible to the scriptural verses he referenced. At the end of his altar call I thought to myself: "**Interesting.**" I then shut off the TV and meandered off to Jacob Marley's. Yet, God had captured my attention.

Another work week passes by, and it is another lovely Friday evening in Marblehead. As in the prior week I am preparing to go off to my favorite haunt. Also, as in the week before, I turn on the TV to fill in the time.

Then—would you believe it—there he is again—in full color—Billy Graham—inviting guests to come forward to commit to Christ!

This time I watched and listened to Billy Graham's message more intently. During his message, he mentioned that if you really wanted to know about Jesus, and how to come to Him, you could send for his book [*How to be Born Again*](#). He then gave an address to use for this request, indicating that this book would be promptly mailed to you as a free gift. My curiosity heightened, I wrote down the address and during the week mailed a letter requesting the book.

Obedying that instinct was providential—and I shiver to think where I would be today had I not done so!

Well, sometime later (perhaps a week or two) Billy Graham's book arrives in the mail. I look at it, and since it is not very large, I decide to read it in bed at night before going to sleep. Now, this is where the unimaginable occurs! By this, I mean that as I begin to read the book I am actually stunned by the exposition of scriptural truths presented. All of this is radical and new to me. My overriding emotion was one of incredulity and amazement. I remember saying over and over again:

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I felt as though the Catholic Church had intentionally kept me, my friends and my family, in a perpetual state of '**lock down**' (to use a prison term) to ensure our obedient behavior. I was overwhelmed, shocked and incensed—all at the same time!

What was so new? For the first time in my life, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the role of the Holy Spirit, was clearly presented to me without bias and free of confusing doctrinal banter. It was utterly freeing. It is impossible for me to understate this, so great was this revelation! Of course, this range of evocative emotions all relates back to my earlier description of my Catholic upbringing and education, including seminary training. This simple gospel message was never meaningfully or clearly presented for consideration to me—or to my friends. It was either assumed as known (unlikely) or buried under the baggage of a historical tradition where privilege and prerogative were so often evoked as primary truth (more likely).

Nonetheless, my journey home had begun! Getting cleaned up would not occur overnight, but God was planning to give me an energizing 'jolt' to move things forward.

I understood after reading Billy Graham's life-changing book that I needed to pray. But honestly, I did not know how to pray other than formal religious prayer. Yet, I did remember that fasting was a form of ascetic prayer, and for some reason this appealed to me. I then and there decided to fast on bread and water one day a week as a form of prayer. I did this faithfully on Wednesdays. As I began this practice, I noticed a certain '**softening**' occurring within me. I could actually perceive my inner man morphing into something new and I began to feel '**lighter**'. Moreover, the weight of my heart ache began to subside, and I began to experience joy which had always eluded me before. Then, on a lovely Saturday morning, after about ten weeks of my fasting regiment, I arose from bed to continue the almost perpetual restoration of my house.

Little did I know what lay in store for me!

So, there I am, driving a nail into a 2x4 to frame the upper stairway area when the Holy Spirit comes suddenly. He pours the fire of His Love into me and then in my ear announces the words: "**Expect great things!**" I must have dropped my hammer as the next thing I remember is my running around on the plywood floor of the unfinished parlor like a drunken sailor singing in Latin:

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus

Dominus Deus Sabaoth.

Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.

Hosanna in excelsis.

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.

Hosanna in excelsis.

Holy, Holy, Holy

Lord God of hosts.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Whoever heard of a God willing to leave His glorious throne to visit His creature, alone in his home, working with a hammer and driving nails, in order to make Himself known? I had never heard of such a God, and I could never believe that He cared enough for me to stage a transcendent visitation. But He did! Love came and rescued me!

On that day, God came to me in great mercy while I was dead in sin and delivered me from the bowels of Hell. I would never be the same again. Getting fully cleaned up did not occur immediately. It took some time and processing. In fact, the process continues to this day. I

needed to learn about the things of God. I needed discipleship and formation. I also needed a great deal of inner healing.

During this sometimes very difficult journey, I remained faithful to the Roman Catholic Church seeking to serve it (as well as other Christian traditions as my ministry is ecumenical) by any available means, primarily through use of the [Alpha Course](#) and sponsoring teaching conferences emphasizing healing and deliverance ministries.

In 1986, I also obtained a Masters in Divinity degree from the Weston School of Theology in Cambridge, MA (Jesuits) to further deepen my faith experience. Finally, for as long as the Lord permits and provides, I (like my mentor Billy Graham) intend to serve the Lord with all of my heart until the day He calls me home.

Blessed Be His Glorious Name!