

## Our RCIA Journey

At 13 years old, I was baptized in the Southern Baptist Church. I had a wonderful childhood anchored around our family's faith. We were a deeply religious family, with a focus on active participation in our church. However, I struggled with what I was being taught. I recall being very confused as a child. I was constantly worried that if I made God mad, I was spending eternity in hell. That's a lot for a young child/teenager to process. On July 13th, 1999 I met a wonderful woman. She is from a very small town in Northwestern Ohio that is centered on the Catholic faith. Family and faith are two foundations to daily life. We spent many Sundays with her family attending Mass. Prior to our marriage we met with the priest and participated in Pre Cana. I was impressed how accepting Catholics were of people from different Christian faiths. On September 8th, 2001 we were married at Holy Redeemer Catholic Church in New Bremen, Ohio. Ten years later to the day, we became the parents of a beautiful girl. She was the impetus to my eventual journey into RCIA.

Raised in the Southern Baptist Church, I struggled with what my family would think of my daughter and myself becoming Catholic.

Unfortunately, a number of other Christian faiths do not fully understand Catholicism. I discussed with my family that we planned to have her Baptized into the Catholic Church. While they had many questions, they also accepted and encouraged the journey. That was a great relief. Coinciding with her Baptism, I decided that I would join the Church. I continued to put it off though, always saying I'll do it next year. My father-in-law passed away in October 2015 after a heroic fight with cancer. Prior to his death, I promised him I would become Catholic and raise my family in the Church. Prior to the one-year anniversary of his death, I became very guilt ridden that I had not followed through on my promise. It was almost as if I could hear his deep, baritone voice in my head saying "you promised." After attending Mass one Sunday with my family, I decided it was time. No more excuses. That was one of the best decisions I've made in my life.

I don't have enough adjectives to properly describe the process. Kim VanHuffel, the deacons, Monsignor, and the two seminarians (Luke LaFleur and TJ Lehigh), along with everyone who participated and lead us, made the transition a truly wonderful experience. I feel blessed that we had Kim guide us along this path. She is one of God's great teachers. Everything from my first RCIA class, discussion of the Word during Mass, our retreat, to the Easter Vigil was an amazing experience. The Sacrament of Reconciliation gave me an understanding of what a loving and forgiving God we have. The highlight of my journey was Holy Week and the events leading up to receiving the Body and Blood of Christ on the Easter Vigil. That was one of the most moving experiences of my life. I often think about the peace I had that day in times of stress and uncertainty. I would tell anyone wanting to come into the Catholic Church, joining RCIA will give you a real understanding of how patient, caring, and forgiving our God really is. That has been the greatest gift I have received. While God is just, He is also compassionate. He understands that we are human and we will make mistakes. Our Church is a place of comfort, understanding, and fulfillment. You'll find peace at every turn at Saint Brigid of Kildare Catholic Church. I'm also grateful how it has brought our family together. I am filled with tremendous joy and pride seeing my little girl excited to attend children's church. Saint Brigid is a family-focused place of worship, accepting of everyone, judgmental of no one.



*Kim & Andy Lee with daughter Isla*

I would like to personally thank Kim VanHuffel. Having someone as educated and driven to help others was a real gift. Kim took the time, and still does, to explain the why behind our faith. I'm a very inquisitive person by nature. I always want to know why. As Monsignor expressed multiple times during our RCIA process, there's always a deeper meaning in our faith. Kim was always able to explain that meaning and connect how it affects our daily lives. I also want to thank my fellow RCIA candidates and catechumen. I learned so much from their questions and their journey. It was a blessing to see different people from different backgrounds come together around one truth. Thank you all.