

St. Brigid of Kildare RCIA Testimonial- Christine Schillinger: April 2024

My joining the Catholic faith happened slowly, and then all at once.

I was not raised with religion in my family home and my husband is what Catholics lovingly call a “cradle Catholic.” Before getting married, we decided we would raise our family Catholic- easy enough for me since I came with no faith-based strings. Being the planner that I am, I made sure we took all the right first steps: we got married in the church, we baptized our children within the first 3 months of life, and we even attended Mass at our local parish (before moving to Dublin). But, no matter how much I planned, or how many times I took part in our religious commitments; I always felt like an outsider to God instead of in a community with Him.

I needed to make a change; so I did what all inspired people do... I submitted an interest form online and didn't think about it again for about a year...

When I realized my procrastination had gotten the best of me, I immediately emailed Kim Vanhuffel apologizing for the tardiness in my commitment to the program and begged her to let me still attend classes with promises of make-up work, extra hours, etc. Great start right? Kim calmly responded that I was in luck- the program didn't start for two more weeks...Now (whether I was ready or not), I was committed. You absolutely cannot back out on a make-up commitment email like that!

I have to admit, I was nervous at first. Having a plan and executing that plan are two completely different things; especially when it includes shoring up 40 years with God. By the second session, my nerves were calm and I had already learned more about religion than I had in my entire life! Every week we covered topics ranging from Communion to Catholic orders to prayers. Each session was well organized and included fun elements like table discussion, games/quizzes, and guest speakers. The casual collaboration that took place at our tables made for fast connections and easy partnerships. I was making friends with people who were seeking the same consistency and understanding from religion that I was. We bonded over everything: readings at Mass, charity work, social justice conversations, and shared life experiences.

I finally felt seen and loved by God. I finally felt home in my faith. Those feelings surround me today and they get stronger every time I walk onto the St. Brigid campus. Whether it's for Sunday Mass or a volunteer meeting, I feel the vibrations of the community and I see the glow reflecting from the faces of our parish members. Thanks to the support of my family and the amazing RCIA program at St. Brigid, I feel connected to God for the first time in my life and that connection grows deeper every day.