

Basilica of Ss. Peter & Paul, Lewiston



**Kristie Fitzpatrick**, from Saint Mary of the Visitation Parish in Houlton, had a similar journey of discovery. “Being raised a

Protestant, there were a lot of questions in my mind about different things and different practices. As I came to understand them more, they made sense to me,” she says.

Raised in the Methodist Church, Kristie was drawn to Catholicism after helping her husband, who is Catholic, teach religious education. She also participated in an adult session held while her children were attending faith formation classes.

She says, “The more I learned about it, the more I’ve wanted to learn about it. I’ve understood a lot more than I’ve understood in the past, and it’s really beautiful.”

That is something many of those desiring to enter the Church discover through the RCIA process, which includes several stages of preparation including a period of inquiry.

“A lot I thought I understood about Catholicism was wrong,” says Rebecca Estes-Francis from the Parish of the Resurrection of the Lord, Old Town. “It’s been very interesting. People are very welcoming, and just overall, I’ve learned so much that I didn’t know.”

“It’s just been a wonderful experience,” says Dawna Dearborn of Saint Paul the Apostle Parish.

Dawna says she attended Mass one day with her ex-husband, who would become her sponsor, and fell in love with it.

“I just like the structure of the Mass,” she says. “I went to several churches, but I never really felt at home at any of them, and when I came here, it just seemed like I belonged here.”

## Drawn to Christ

**“T**hese people have found a special meaning by which they, too, seek to guide their lives. In their desire to join the community of the Church, we see God’s loving presence, His guiding grace.” – Bishop Robert P. Deeley

“If this is going to help me grow closer to Christ, which it has already, greatly, then this is where I need to be.”

It is that conviction that led 19-year-old Elizabeth Clark of Bangor to the Catholic faith. Elizabeth is among 107 people who were welcomed into the Church at Easter. They included 65 people, like Elizabeth, who had never been baptized in any faith and 42 others who were previously members of other Christian traditions.

Elizabeth says she was introduced to the faith by a friend who was exploring Catholicism, and while she initially thought of it as a “kind of weird thing” that her friend was into, she ended up being drawn to it.

“I learned a lot about it from her, and then the more I learned, the more I started to like it,” she says.

Raised in the Protestant Church, Elizabeth says she was full of questions. “Questioning the Catholics but also questioning the Protestants and seeing both sides of it,” she recalls.

She turned to books and to Father Seamus Griesbach, former parochial vicar at Saint Paul the Apostle Parish in Bangor. What she discovered led her to participate in the Rite of Christian

Initiation of Adults or RCIA.

“There are certain things that are either true or they’re false. So, as I found out these things are true, things like the Eucharist and just so many wonderful things that are just fuller in the Catholic Church, I said, ‘I think I need to be there,’” says Elizabeth.



St. John, Bangor



Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Portland

Sixteen-year-old **Alex Gibson** says he discovered God while at the Seeds of Peace Camp in Otisfield, but it was the Masses he attended while a student at Saint Michael School in



Holy Rosary, Caribou

Augusta that led him to Catholicism.

“I’ve tried a lot of different religions. I went to a Methodist church for a couple of years, Quaker meetings, but I went to a Catholic school for several years, and I found that I enjoyed going to their Masses,” he says.

Not coming from a Catholic family, he admits it wasn’t easy, as a teenager, to make the decision on his own but says, “I listened to God’s calling, and through prayer, He answered and said this was the right time.”

Saint Michael School also played a role in Craig Marshall’s decision to enter the Church. Raised Methodist but never baptized in any faith, he says he started attending Mass because he wanted to set a good example for his children who are students there.

“I loved it and just felt so much better in overall life because of it,” he says. “Every time I would leave Mass, it was like a weight lifted off.”

He says while he had questioned why some things had happened in his life, after adding God to the equation, he began to understand.

“Everything kind of fell into place, and it’s, like, ‘Aha, OK. This is somebody else’s plan, not mine,’” he says. “Everything that had happened up until that point just became clear.”

It is often during difficult periods of life that people come to know Christ, whether through the guidance of

others or through their own inner searching.

Greg Owen, a parishioner at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Portland, says he came to a greater

understanding of God while participating in a 12-step recovery program.

“I realized, at points in my life when I really needed help, there were people who did things for me that didn’t really need to. Invariably, they were all Catholics. They were people of the Church,” he says. “It’s been an amazing journey over the last year for me. I had no Scripture background. The teachers have been so kind and pastoral.”

Karl Henderson, who attends Saint Louis, Limestone, says he started going to Mass after his wife was diagnosed with breast cancer.

“I started reading the Bible, and Jesus said to get into heaven you have to be baptized.”

He says he chose the Catholic Church because his wife and her family are Catholic. Now, he feels like, “This is my family, the whole Church.”

Families are essential in the work of evangelization, for it is through the witness of grandparents, parents, spouses, and siblings that many discover or grow in their faith.

Susan Gates experienced the joy of seeing her 22-year-old son become Catholic last year and, at the same time, took the opportunity to strengthen her own faith by attending RCIA classes with him.

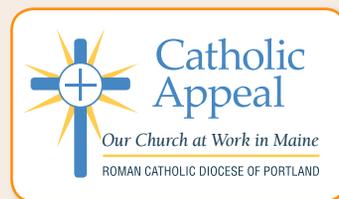
“I have been Catholic all my life, and RCIA helped me to understand my faith a lot better.”

Her participation led her, both this year and last year, to become a sponsor for someone preparing to enter the Church.

“I wanted to do something for the Church, and I prayed to God for guidance,” she says. “I’m following what God is asking me to do.”

And she is helping Shauna Ryan, who received the initiation sacraments this Easter, to do the same.

“The Catholic faith is so colorful and big and exciting,” Shauna says. “Catholicism is such a bright celebration of faith.”



## SHARING YOUR LIGHT with new Catholics

*Lent is a period of enlightenment and self-examination for those preparing to receive the Easter sacraments. To aid them in their journeys, the Office of Lifelong Faith Formation, which is supported by your gifts to the annual Catholic Appeal, offers four Lenten retreats around the state.*

*The elect and candidates, as well as their godparents and sponsors, are invited to attend.*

*The Office of Lifelong Faith Formation also assists parishes in their implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Each catechumen’s or candidate’s path is an individual one, and the office is there to guide parish leaders as needs and questions arise.*

*In addition, the office coordinates the Rite of Election; organizes the Neophyte Mass which, this year, will be celebrated May 31 at 10 a.m. at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Portland; and is sponsoring a TEAM RCIA Making Disciples Institute on May 15-16. The institute is intended to help parishes build thriving RCIA teams and acquire the skills to build an evangelizing parish.*