

Finding home

Kate Childs Graham | Jul. 16, 2009

This week, my partner, Ariana, and I bought our first home. Now, those of you who have recently bought a home know that the process is sometimes a little more than complicated, with a fair share of both ups and downs. Through this home-buying journey, I could not help but notice the similarities between finding a physical home and a spiritual home.

Like many younger folks, after leaving my parent's home and establishing my own, I have been searching for a new spiritual home. Nothing has fit yet, although I have found solace in a great faith-sharing community made up of likeminded young adult Catholics. While I treasure this community, I am still on the journey to finding a spiritual home in a church community.

When we set out to buy a home, Ariana and I made a list of the qualities we were looking for in both the house itself and the neighborhood: openness, light, warmth, joy, a strong sense of community, diversity, hardwood floors and so on. Save hardwood floors, the qualities I was looking for in a home seem to match up with what I am looking for in a spiritual home.

Certainly, different people have different ideas about home, spiritual home or otherwise. I have friends, deeply-grounded seekers, who find themselves at home wherever they go. For me, I have found that I need a home to feel like home. I need to know everyone's name, be familiar with the four walls and know exactly what to expect.

In terms of spiritual homes, it seems that too often we don't make room for these different notions of home. Many of my friends have told me of awkward Sunday afternoon conversations with their parents, when the parents ask whether they have been to Mass. Most of the time, participating in Mass makes me feel at home. However, lately it has been hard to find myself at home at any Mass. And so, I recognize that sometimes people are -- maybe for all time or maybe just for the time being -- in need of a different experience to feel spiritually at home.

In addition to explicitly laying out the qualities we were looking for in a house, we needed a good deal of guidance in finding that perfect home. In the home-buying process, our guides were our lender and realtor. They carried us from start to finish, fielding our many phone calls and making sure what we got in the end was just and right for us.

In the quest to find a spiritual home, we also need guides. My guides are the members of my faith-sharing community and my partner, not to mention other friends and family who have helped to keep me accountable throughout the years.

When we were living in Costa Rica, the Catholic church in our little town was not very welcoming. Its fire-and-brimstone aura combined with my limited comprehension of Spanish did not appeal to my spiritual needs. As going to daily Mass had been my prime mode of spirituality before moving abroad, I was ready to give up. Then, my partner helped me realize that I could find God in other ways, whether through daily prayer, playing

songs from the infamous Gather books, having post-Mass conversations about the readings and Gospel and creating our own rituals. These things combined with Sunday Mass helped me feel spiritually grounded throughout that year.

Once you buy that house or find that spiritual home and community, it takes a great deal of work. It can seem daunting; I know I am a bit overwhelmed when I think of the work that needs to go into our new home and community. Every spiritual community, whether it has two or 2,000 members, needs and deserves work. After all, community isn't something that happens to you, it is something you build.

A founding member of my hometown parish, my mother has always worked hard to build a healthy spiritual community. Whether it is putting together the bulletin, planning the annual St. Vincent de Paul fundraiser or helping with the Christ Renews His Parish retreats, she is always willing to get her hands dirty. Because of her and others like her, my hometown parish is one of the strongest communities I have ever been a part of. Which, upon reflection, may be why it has been so hard to find a new spiritual home; nothing measures up.

Throughout the ups and downs since we put the bid on our home, life has been equally joy-filled and anxiety-ridden. However, when we turned that key for the first time, it all seemed worth it. I know when I find my spiritual home I'll feel the same way. Until then, I will not stop searching.

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