

Kristine's story: The amazingness of this life

Kate Childs Graham | Apr. 29, 2011

Five years ago, along with hundreds of my classmates, I graduated from the Catholic University of America (CUA). Like most other college students, the moment I turned my tassel was both joyous and nerve-wracking. However, I was fairly confident in the person I was and, more specifically, in the Catholic I was -- in the Catholic that CUA, arguably one of the most Catholic places in the US, made me to be.

Over these past five years, that person, that Catholic has changed, grown and transformed again and again. My life's journey, including my time at Catholic University, has made me think and live out my faith in a way I never dreamed when I first strolled the grounds of CUA. I now have different reasons for being Catholic, different hopes for our church. And I started to wonder if those I graduated with experienced a similar transformation.

So, I asked four of my peers to answer a few questions that speak to both their transformation and steadfastness as Catholics. Over the next few months, I'll share their responses with you. I hope you find their words as illuminating and thought-provoking as I have. We begin with Kristine.

Tell us your life story in 150 words or less.

I am the daughter of two Asian immigrants who love me beyond belief. We immigrated here when I was five and my parents have basically spent their entire lives working towards a better life for me and my brother and sister. I can easily say they've been successful at attaining the "American Dream."

After going to college, I became a teacher and am still interested in education as I'm now working on my Ph.D. I am someone who pursues joy in every capacity, whether it is my career as a teacher, my activities, and my relationships. I have the most amazing husband who is my very best friend and who I thoroughly enjoy playing with every day.

Other than that, I enjoy trying anything and everything (from foods to activities), beautiful packaging and paper, and gourmet cupcakes.

Why are you Catholic?

I am first a Christian because I think the amazingness of this life and this world can only be explained by a God. I believe in the Word of God because it has done amazing things in my life and has proven itself to be true in my heart.

As for Catholicism, I'm Catholic because I think the Catholic Church is the fullest version of Christianity, beginning with Peter as the first pope. In my opinion, the Catholic Church embraces reason but is still the most deeply rooted in scripture and loves all people immensely while still offering the truth of Christ.

How has your faith changed since we graduated?

Since I've graduated from Catholic University, my faith has become much more rooted in the inner core of my thinking. I definitely do not go to daily Mass ever, and don't even regularly attend Sunday Mass (I need to get on this, I know!), but my faith is as strong as ever.

My life as an adult may not have all of the "activities" of the Catholic that I was in college, but it is infused in my daily life in less obvious ways.

What is the one thing you'd change about the Catholic church?

The one thing I wish the Catholic Church emphasized more was creating a community of believers and encouraging a personal relationship between the believer and God. There are definitely sects of the Church that are more into this type of faith and part of me appreciates that there are paths in Catholicism that suit everyone but I wish the joy of a personal relationship with Christ was more visible in Catholic communities.

Sometimes I think the Catholic Church focuses so much on the solemnity of our faith and on theology, but not on the JOY of salvation.

What is the one thing you'd keep?

I would never want the Catholic Church to lose its love of service, social justice, and compassion towards others. I think it is the Church's most beautiful quality because it never seeks anything in return.

What's the biggest challenge we face as Catholics today?

The biggest challenge I think Catholics face today is the fine line between adapting to the times and modernizing our faith and adapting our faith to suit our own needs. As humans, we've adapted with the times and not always in ways that are positive. It's a huge challenge to keep our faith pure but also applicable and livable.

If you could go back in time, what is the one moment you'd re-live from college?

If I could go back in time and relive moments from college, they would hands-down be Eucharistic Adoration on Wednesday nights in Caldwell chapel. Those Wednesday nights were some of the most beautiful moments of growth in my faith. There was always a huge sense of community but at the same time such a sense of stillness with Christ in the Eucharist.

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