



FAITH: A FRESH TAKE



August 1, 2013

Learning to Make Decisions Based on Faith Not Just Friends

My name is Adrian Clukey, I am a member of St. Stephen's Parish in Caseyville.

I'm a 21-year-old college student, pursuing a degree in nursing. I attended SWIC for two years and will be attending SIUE starting this fall. My goal is to travel to Third World countries, helping those less fortunate than those in the United States.

I was home schooled from kindergarten through my senior year in high school. When I was in grade school, my family belonged to a home-school group in the St. Clair area, and most of those families were Christians, but not Catholics. This allowed me to see how other religions worship and provided a good example of how to actually live your faith because most of the families put God first in their lives.

In addition, I believe it strengthened my faith as a Catholic because when my friends asked me questions about my religion and I did not know the answer, it encouraged me to find the answer so I could come back and tell them.

Once I entered fourth grade I was allowed to join the St. Stephen's sports teams. That was eye opening, because

my friends who attended Catholic school and Catholic Church did not seem to know that much about their faith.

In high school I began taking actual religion courses and I learned a lot more about morality and the details of our faith. There would be times

my friends would want to do something I knew was not right, but I caved to peer pressure and did it.

Knowing that I was doing something wrong really ate at me, and sometimes I wished that I had not learned so much about my faith so then I could just go along with what my friends did without feeling bad.

Now that I am in college, I continue to face challenges, but am working on making decisions that are in accordance with my faith instead of just doing what makes me happy at the moment.

Once I start at SIUE, I intend to become an active member of their Catholic community so I can learn from, and grow with, people who face the same struggles of being a young adult in today's world.

— Adrian Clukey



Cradle Catholic Passes on Faith to Her Children As She Encourages All Youth

I am Emily Harrison, a true cradle Catholic. I have been a member of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Church in



Mt. Vernon since my baptism in 1982. I attended St. Mary School from first through sixth grade, as the school did not have the upper grades at that time.

Although I attended the public junior high and high school, I remained active in my Catholic education. I attended PSR classes regularly (at times, even bringing my non-Catholic friends with me!) and was always eager to serve as an altar server or as a cantor.

I participated in as many CYO activities as possible, always proclaiming how awesome it was to share my faith and beliefs with other teens.

I began to help organize and lead many of the high school events and eventually took over as the leader of our Youth Choir.

While attending college, I began working on my Youth Ministry Certificate. I continued with my involvement at St. Mary School, helping with teaching "church songs" to the students and preparing children's liturgies for their daily Masses, teaching religion classes, and directing the annual school Christ-

mas play.

By this time St. Mary School had added seventh and eighth grade, offering me the opportunity to stay connected with the junior high students. I found myself encouraging them to become involved with all of the activities I found so rewarding when I was their age. We planned and went on trips to the Shrine for World Youth Day as well as many other local events.

As they became high schoolers, I was excited too when they came to me looking for things to do. I encouraged them to stay involved with Mass, as servers, singing in the choir, becoming cantors themselves, or as ministers in any way they felt comfortable. They looked forward to their time together with other Catholic teens at World Youth Day, DYC, and NCYC.

NCYC was an awesome experience that I encourage every young Catholic to attend and perhaps even more importantly, I encourage every parent of a young Catholic to attend.

Again, some time went by and I am now married with two beautiful little gifts from God. My husband and I have been blessed with a son, Kayden, who is now 3 years old. (Just a little note: Kayden attended his first NCYC at the ripe old age of 6 weeks old), and we were blessed a year ago with beautiful daughter, Stevi Jane.

I must admit, that while I advise and encourage the youth leaders and the teens in our parish, the bulk of my attention is focused on raising Kayden and Stevi Jane in our Catholic faith.

Beyond a doubt it is challenging to say the least to stay in a prayerful state of mind at Mass, while wrestling two little ones; however, watching Kayden walk into church, dip his fingers into the beautiful baptismal font, walk to a pew, and watch his attempt at genuflecting towards the tabernacle is more than a just reward.

When I am not chasing my own two awesome gifts from God, I am busy chasing 20 or more little ones, as I am the director of the St. Mary School Educational Daycare. Again, challenging in so many ways, but more than satisfying in so many more ways.

I have continued my involvement with the teens as well by becoming an involved member of the DYC Steering Committee and working with DYMAC.

— Emily Harrison



The Harrisons

Student & Fraternity Brother Close to God

I am 19, a sophomore at the University of Evansville with an Athletic Training Undergraduate/Physical Therapy Major.



I am a member of Newman Center, Athletic Training Club, Physical Therapy Club, a Third-Degree Knights of Columbus member, and a brother of the Indiana Epsilon chapter of Sigma Alpha Epsilon.

I spend a majority of my time in the athletic training room as a part of my major, but when I am not in the AT room or in class, I am usually hanging out with friends and brothers, or playing intramurals.

I attended the Newman Chapel on the University for Mass, but a former member of the Diocese of Belleville turned monk, Father Godfrey Mullen, has recently located down the street, and I have been going to Mass there now.

I am the son of Doug and Cindy Kuhl, and the brother of Kristin (23) and Logan (17). Kristin recently graduated from Southeast Missouri State and Logan is currently starting his senior year of high school at Mater Dei Catholic High School in Breese.

I had just left home for the first time and found my way at the University of Evansville in Indiana. I was both excited and nervous to begin this new chapter in my life.

Upon arriving on campus, my parents and I arranged the room to the way I had liked, and then they had left me on my own. After walking around and exploring the campus, I started talking to a group of young men who later invited me to hang out with them. Little did I know that these men would become my family away from home and keep me close to my faith.

I went through formal rushing at U of E and accepted a bid to become a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon. I learned a lot about the fraternity before I rushed there, and they were not like a stereotypical "frat".

These guys were actually very involved in their faith and active with community service. There was not a weekend that went by that we as a chapter were not out and about serving the community to the best of our abilities. Some of the ways we served were helping to build a frisbee golf course, helping in a local Easter egg hunt, and cleaning up a local park.

I think that through all of these community service opportunities and with the help of my brothers, I have stayed close to my faith.

I have seen people who have lived or (now) live less fortunate lives and that helps me to realize how blessed I am. Every day, I wake up and thank the Lord for the blessings he has given me in my life and how he has helped me to get to where I am. It is what helps me get through the best and worst days and keeps me close to God.

— Austin Kuhl

This page for, about and by young adult Catholics in the diocese

This is an online-only page dedicated to young adult Catholics, their interests, their needs, their challenges and their faith.

We're tapping into young adults who have been active in their parishes and who have reached out in faith to begin lives of their own.

To make sure this page is about you and what you want to see, we need your input. Send us your story ideas, your concerns, your hopes and your stories of faith.

Email us at cathnews@bellevillemessenger.org with questions, suggestions or for more information.

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