

OMC FaithLife Story: Luke Musselman

Luke Musselman is professional manager of apartment properties. He and his wife JoEllen with their three children (Jonah, Kelsey, and Rowan) have been OMC parishioners for six years since moving to Philadelphia. Jonah is in his second year of college and a recent graduate of Roman Catholic HS, Kelsey is a recent graduate of OMC Parish School and Rowan will be in 7th grade at OMC in the Fall.

“I was born and raised in southeastern Ohio. One of the most important lessons I learned from my parents was the sacrifice they made to send six children to Catholic school. My dad was a blue-collar factory worker but both my parents believed in the importance of providing the best foundation they could for their children...that their job as parents wouldn't be complete otherwise. This had a big impact on me, but I didn't completely understand it until I became a parent.

“Prayer was always important in our life, especially at mealtimes and the evenings. My parents even did it in restaurants, which you don't see a lot. Now as parents, we have made this important for our children, especially as a way to conclude the day – asking forgiveness or mending relationships between brother and sisters.

“The most important aspect of faith was service to people in need, like helping our neighbors when I was young. This remained important to me even when I wasn't practicing the faith very much after college. Now, I practice helping others through the parish St. Vincent DePaul Society.

“Growing up, we kids were surrounded by good people in my faith formation, especially the priests and nuns. This strong foundation was both spiritual and character building. I never questioned my belief in God or Christ, but after college when I was single, my practice dropped off. It became less important because I was deep into my work. I was driven by it. Other things took priority and sometimes it would bother me. Different life events, like the death of my grandfather, made me reflect on this.

“I met my wife through work. She was not Catholic then, and had been brought up in a lot of different Protestant churches. Before we got married, we honestly did not have detailed conversations about what denomination we would be. We were married by a justice of the peace. After a few years, JoEllen wanted to get back into a church community. She assumed I was not a serious Catholic because I was non-practicing except going to mass at Christmas and Easter. She approached me and said she wanted us to go to a Protestant church regularly, and I simply said, ‘No!’

“In her experience, she had grown up hearing that Catholics worship Mary and the saints, and that Catholics believed they have to work their way to heaven. She had been taught that Catholics weren't even Christians. For her the idea of raising their children Catholic made her sad. She had a lot of misunderstanding, but after attending mass for a while, she decided to attend faith formation classes with an open mind but with no promises that she would convert.

“Her faith formation program was excellent, taught by people who were very well educated. She learned more about the faith than I ever knew. After each class, she would come back and share with me what she had learned. I could feel her getting closer and closer to the Catholic Church gradually, without any specific experience that was the decisive moment.

“When I said, ‘No!’ to her about joining a Protestant church that was the kick in the pants I needed. I realized I obviously had faith from the way I was raised as a child and that it was time I started to act like it. When Easter came around, JoEllen was received into the Church and immediately after that ceremony, our marriage was blessed by the priest.

“Her faith formation rekindled in me a commitment to attend mass regularly. And it slowly led to more than just that: a nurturing of our children in the way I remember it as a child. But now my faith is different because it’s not just about me – it’s expanded to my wife, my children, my family and friends who look to me for advice or help.

“We feel like our move to Philadelphia and OMC was the work of the Lord. We have never been in such a welcoming, supportive parish – and we’ve been to many good ones in other places we’ve lived. JoEllen now volunteers at the school working with CYO. In addition to my work with the St. Vincent DePaul Society, I also serve as a volunteer at the children’s liturgy and I’m a member of the OMC Liturgy Committee.

“I know that my wife’s conversion has brought us to where we are now – our life is blessed in so many ways. We believe strongly that things happen for a reason. She thanks me regularly for saying, ‘No!’ to other churches.”