

Why I Am Catholic

The passing on of the faith

My ancestors were all Catholic. The Shautes came over from Austria-Hungary in the second half of the 1800s and continued to practice the faith in the New World. My great-grandfather at one point served under Franz Joseph—the Holy Roman Emperor (and a champion of the faith)—at his palace.

The Ahearns, the Lynchs, and the Bricks all came from Ireland at various points in the 1700s and the 1800s and all were Catholic as well. The Shautes and Ahearns settled in Northern Pennsylvania in the Scranton area. The Lynchs and the Bricks eventually settled outside of Boston, Mass. All helped build up their local Catholic churches. Both sides of my family have had previous vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Sister Mary Reap just retired as President of Marywood College in Pennsylvania.

My parents both went to Catholic schools for at least part of their education. I did as well, attending Catholic schools in South Florida from seventh grade through high school graduation. Those schools prepared me well for higher education and for life.

I have a deep appreciation for how the faith was preserved in Ireland during times when the King of England and the Anglican Church tried to force the Irish to convert. Also for people from many other places and lands where the faith overcame many obstacles and in some cases continues to be persecuted.

May we never take our faith for granted. It has been preserved and spread through the blood of martyrs, through the evangelization of brave missionaries, and through ordinary people who have passed on the faith to their children and grandchildren.