

Part of the story of my Catholic Faith is not exactly what you might expect. I've tried to make it brief but it's difficult to do so. I am a native San Franciscan, raised in the Sunset-Parkside district on 36th Ave between 18th & 19th Sts., 1911, in a house my father built - the 2nd of ^{oldest} 6 children - 3 of them triplets. In 1911 there were about 20 homes from 37th Ave between Ulloa & Santiago up as far as 19th Ave. Taraval was partly paved - Ulloa was a dirt road - the L Car was not in operation at that time - eventually it came as far as 33rd & Taraval St. What we called a dinky ran from 20th & Taraval to 33rd Ave - South to Ulloa - West to 34th and over to Gloat Blvd. where we could catch the #12 car. Ours was the only house on the west side of 36th and one house near the corner of Ulloa on the east side. Lupine bushes, milk weeds, wild rabbits, quail & other birds were abundant and sand was everywhere. The first St. Cecilia's Church came into being about 1917 and we walked 21 blocks to 15th & Taraval for Sunday Mass, daily Lenten Mass, Stations of the Cross on Fridays and for Confession. Walking was a way of life and eventually the 6 of us could make the 21 blocks in 20 minutes. I had loving parents who had good morals, taught us to love God above all else, to love each other, be fair-minded, respect our elders and those in authority. We lived sort of a sheltered life because we were isolated somewhat from others. In 1921 when I was 9, my father unexpectedly died from a heart condition - he was 34 years old. The house was full of relatives sleeping in most rooms, my mother was busy with preparations for the 3 day wake & funeral. I was unable to tell her then that my father's oldest brother (who came west for the funeral) tried to rape me. Because I didn't want to add more sadness to my grandmother or mother's heartache, I kept quiet about it but made sure he didn't have any further opportunities to molest me. When the chance came two years later, I told my mother in front of my older sister. My mother then explained the facts of life to us in great detail, and added it was our responsibility to see and recognize those who might harm us because could not always be around to protect us. That's when I started saying 3 Hail Marys for my purity & I continue to do so to this day. Because of this early experience that luckily ~~left~~ leave me without any mental or emotional side effects, I was able to quickly recognize & avoid any unwanted attention.

I went to Parkside grammar school & St Paul's High School (someone paid our tuition - we never knew) because our family was on welfare till age 16. In my senior year St. Cecilia's pastor died - it was hard for me to go to confession to any other priest - but I did. However, after graduation, going to work as a typist clerk at Pac Tel & Tel on New Montgomery St, I missed the religious structure that was no longer there. I did go to some parties & dances with girls from St Paul's but I ^{never} missed Mass or the sacraments. I joined the Y.L.D and was put on a dance committee. They arranged a picnic and swim at Lagunitas in Marin County with Mission Council, Y.M.C.A. and that's when I met Maurice. In 1939 we married, I was 21 and Maurice was 24. In 1951 when I was 40 Jon was born and Philip 4 years later a wonderful surprise. By this time we were living in a home on 31st Ave which we purchased in 1941. That year St. Gabriel came into being. Both of us were active in the parish in many different ways and our children attended the school. Because Maurice had a drinking problem which I was not aware of when we married, I secretly went to Al-Anon. I never mentioned it to him until a year before he died (Feb. 1996) and he only then for the first time admitted he had ^{had} a drinking problem. He actually stopped drinking cold turkey about 15 years ago & also gave up smoking. I'm nearly finished but thought you should know the following. In February, 1987 I woke up about 11 PM with a rapid beating heart & wheezing. It didn't stop so I woke Maurice and asked him to call 911 which he excitedly tried to do. I took the phone from him & said "I can't breathe - please come & give our address. They were there in 5 minutes - I was dressed & waiting downstairs. Kaiser worked on me at the emergency for quite awhile - it was touch & go they told Maurice. I knew I was dying but I asked God to let me live if possible because there were lots of things I still needed & wanted to do. He granted my wish. On March 16 in Stanford Hospital I had my aortic valve replaced with a pig valve which I still have. All together I was in the hospital for a month. Since then I continue to enjoy life and people, go to daily Mass, continue to keep active as before. I am in my 3rd year of studying at the School of Pastoral Leadership, Evangelization, after Vatican II, the old & New Testaments, volunteer teaching, Eucharistic Minister, etc. I feel loved by my sons & daughter-in-laws and my 5 grandchildren. We keep in touch & get together often. I do take pills faithfully & regulate my eating habits as per doctors instructions. I'm learning to understand God more fully to love him more & more, to follow the way with Jesus & to call upon the Holy Spirit for guidance & strength.