

Lemar Barbosa

Spiritual Autobiography

Before my dad had a stroke and became disabled when I was about 6th grade, my family life was solid overall. My parents were loving to each other, me, and my brother. My brother and I were very close as well. Once my dad was disabled, his relationship with everyone in the family became fractured since he was more distant and didn't do his best to get better or maintain his health despite our encouragement. Now with my sister in the picture, we still are a strong, loving family: the exception being my dad who is not exactly abusive but taking care of him can be difficult at times because of his lazy and childlike behavior.

One example of how my parents were present to my emotional development was how they were always supportive of me. Whenever I was in a musical performance, my parents did their best to make it to each one they could (and this was even a little after my dad became disabled). They were always willing to talk to me or were there whenever I wanted to talk to them. I could tell them anything before, and I can say the same for now as well.

Fortunately, I have had friends who held good values throughout all my life. Regarding the friends I have now who are mostly Catholic; they are a support system for me that I can go to for both consolation and fun. I think it's easy for me to make friends because I'm joyful, relatable, and approachable. One time when a friend sought for emotional help from me was when they needed wisdom and prayer for a broken relationship they were going through. I did my best through the Holy Spirit to console them. I reassured them of their identity in Christ and encouraged them that all things can be made new through our Lord: they looked more relieved afterwards from what I could tell.

My parents valued my education so highly to the point where sometimes I would feel bad about getting an average grade in any class (mostly self-inflicted shame but sometimes it was from my parents too). I did poorly in my sophomore year of high school because of anxiety and depression, and I also took two medical leaves in college for the same reasons. In general, I believe myself to be a good student who isn't afraid to ask for help, can communicate with others well, and can finish work promptly. Despite changing my major in college from social work to computer science, which I had no experience in, I adapted very quickly by putting time and effort into my studies.

The teacher that impacted me the most was my band teacher from high school. He was the first strict teacher I had who I admired. He taught me the importance of striving for greatness and doing things are difficult to do. I learned many good life lessons from him at the time. Outside of school and computer science, I have a passion for developing my understanding of God and the Catholic Church. I love learning more and more about the Catholic faith and being able to explain it to those who ask.

The most relevant experience for my vocation was being a Catholic-Youth camp counselor in the summer of 2023. I grew a heart that loves ministry because of it. That's when I learned the honor and privilege that comes from leading people closer to Christ, and being in community with others who are also on mission to bring people to Christ. I never would have truly considered priesthood without experiencing how beautiful their role in ministry is.

Things I like that relate to priesthood are having a routine schedule, being actively on mission, and focusing on the spiritual life. Things that I dislike relating to priesthood include the fact that I would have to attend more school and possibly be a priest in an unfamiliar area where I don't know anyone. In terms of hobbies, I like exercising, reading, and socializing.

I have never really had any ambitions for myself until I became Catholic in college. I eventually had this thought that I wanted to become a saint in the future. Although the goal might not be as concrete as, for example, becoming a father or a doctor, my hope to become a saint was and still is the goal I have been striving for ever since. I want to be a saint who follows St. Joseph's example of manhood and masculinity.

I love the concept of marriage because I see the beauty in two people giving themselves up for each other. Also, I see the beauty of raising children in the faith and growing closer to Christ as a family. If I don't become a priest 10 years from now, I would love to get a job in computer science and start a family.

I experienced a few seasons of extreme depression and anxiety throughout my high school and college years. Today, I have an average experience of depression and anxiety that's not as debilitating as it was before. I believe my greatest psychological weakness is my low self-esteem from not being as "successful" (i.e. not graduating college within 4 years, not having an actual job before, and not being in any relationship before despite being 24 years old).

I was born Catholic but didn't care about the faith at all. I experienced depression and anxiety in high school because I fell into the lie that I wasn't good enough and that I had no purpose in life. My cousins invited me and my brother to their Protestant church, and I started my relationship with Christ there. I learned more about the Scriptures and general Christian values/beliefs. My brother questioned Protestantism when I was in college and then convinced me to be open to going back to the Catholic faith. My brother defended the faith well and I had many personal consolations in reverting back, so I became a Catholic not too long after my brother did. Ever since 2019, I have been growing deeper in my Catholic faith, and my relationship with Jesus and the saints in Heaven like Mother Mary.

My prayer life consists of praying the rosary every day, reading the Scriptures or reciting the Divine Mercy Chaplet occasionally, spontaneous worship through song occasionally, journaling prayers or what the Lord might be teaching me often, morning liturgy of the hours often, daily Mass and adoration when possible, and weekly Confession. I have been consecrated to Mother Mary, the Divine Mercy, and St. Joseph as well.

Although my mom was okay with my brother and I being Protestant for a time, she still held on to her Catholic tradition like having the rosary and reciting it. Before we became Protestant, she made us pray the rosary with her and go to Sunday Mass. Without her, I might not have come back to Catholicism so quickly as I did. My brother helped me go back to the Catholic faith through apologetics and walking with me, and my sister got into our Catholic faith despite her young age. Having my sister encourages me to grow deeper in my relationship with Christ so I could be a better example for her. My family enhances my spiritual life because we are all striving for holiness together.

The Catholic Church is needed now more than ever in the world. Especially when considering the consequences of relativism and nihilism, which I have struggled with in the past, people are in dire need of the beautiful truth of the Gospel. The Catholic Church is accountable for advocating for the firm foundation of the family and the value of all human life, which the Enemy has been attacking for far too long.