

Courtney Hofstetter was received into the Church at St. Joseph parish during this year's Easter Vigil liturgy.
View Courtney's personal witness video about her journey to the Catholic Church on our parish YouTube channel.

Lalita Forsthoefel was received into the Church at St. Joseph parish during this year's Easter Vigil liturgy.
Read Lalita's story in this article published in the March 25, 2022 edition of the Diocese of Covington *Messenger* newspaper.

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Discovering new relationships through faith

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Staff Writer

"When I pray, I feel like God could be my dad, God could be my friend, God can be on the same level as me and I feel like that relationship is closer than what I used to have," said Lalita Forsthoefel, RCIA candidate, St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring.

Mrs. Forsthoefel is originally from Thailand and moved to the United States in 2014. She met her now husband, Ryan, through work; both are engineers for the Thailand and United States locations and met at the company's headquarters in Japan during a seminar. Mrs. Forsthoefel lived in Dayton and Cincinnati, Ohio, before moving to her current location here in Kentucky and marrying Ryan in 2016.

Mrs. Forsthoefel's decision to join the Catholic faith was gradual; it began by attending Church on Sundays with her husband and his family, but she was really influenced by her husband's grandparents. Mrs. Forsthoefel spent a lot of time with Ryan's grandparents when his grandfather became ill. During that time Mrs. Forsthoefel watched how the grandmother cared for the grandfather with such love and care. The grandmother prayed for her husband every day and Mrs. Forsthoefel was inspired seeing the couple's deep love for each other after being married for so many years. After talking with Mr. Forsthoefel's grandmother Mrs. Forsthoefel realized the role faith played in their relationship and wanted that same bond with her husband.

"Loving someone from just a relationship of love is not going to bring you that lifelong fulfillment. During life there are going to be other factors that come into play, and so I think the Catholic faith helped Ryan's grandma and grandpa strengthen their relationship and I want to try and bring that to our relationship," Mrs. Forsthoefel said.

Mrs. Forsthoefel was raised practicing Buddhism with her family, and while she does not compare the two, Mrs. Forsthoefel says there are differences between the two religions.

One difference Mrs. Forsthoefel described when comparing Catholicism and Buddhism is that, "Buddhism has more of a belief in one person, a marked individual, a smart guy ... Catholics believe in God, and he is not just a human being which is a different type of belief and per-

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Lalita Forsthoefel

spective," she said.

Mrs. Forsthoefel has also noticed a difference in how she prays now that she has gained a greater understanding of the Catholic faith. In the past, she looked at God as a boss or someone above her, because in Buddhism monks and priests are looked at on a much higher level than the common people. She never had that relationship with God as a needed friend in the different areas of her life.

"Now, when I pray I feel like God could be my dad, God could be my friend, God can be on the same level as me and I feel like that relationship is closer than what I used to have," said Mrs. Forsthoefel.

That understanding of prayer has helped Mrs. Forsthoefel feel closer to God, but that is not the only thing that has strengthened her belief. As an engineer, Mrs. Forsthoefel said there are many things that science and man alone cannot explain.

"I don't believe that just smarts can convert everything. I am an engineer, but there are so many things that we couldn't explain by science or engineering, and that's kind of part of why I believe in God," Mrs. Forsthoefel said.

Mrs. Forsthoefel's favorite part about the Mass has been praying together every Sunday; gathering in prayer reminds her of a team effort and has allowed Mrs. Forsthoefel to feel and embrace the community of the Church.

Mrs. Forsthoefel's decision to join the Church has been supported by her and her husband's families. She is still in contact with her family in Thailand, and while COVID has restricted her travel home, her family has been very supportive, and her dad always calls and asks how her RCIA classes are going. Mrs. Forsthoefel has also enjoyed learning the Catholic lifestyle and that the "rules" of the Church are more of a way of life.

"Sometimes people look at the Catholic faith or religion as strict with so many rules you cannot be normal, but when you learn and know the reason why these rules are in place and understand that these rules have a

reason to everything, you understand they are not just rules in place for the sake of having rules, they are all in place for a reason," Mrs. Forsthoefel said.

Now expecting their first child and finishing up the RCIA process, Mrs. Forsthoefel says she has found a greater appreciation in the little things and sees more happiness in life, which she feels has increased through her decision to join the Catholic faith.