

Featured Author | Dane Graham

Personal Statement

Having converted to Catholicism at the age of seven, I saw firsthand how the injection of a gregarious personality, even into an institution as steeped in tradition as the Roman Catholic Church, could make believers out of non-believers.

When a new priest arrived in Bellingham, attendance at Assumption Catholic Church rose markedly. He was always challenging, slightly, what the Bible said, digging for deeper and alternative meaning within the text. None of us doubted that he believed, but we sometimes wondered if the Catholic Church would embrace him as we did.

When he transferred and was replaced by a greasy chinned, screechy-voiced stiff of a priest, the spell that had been cast over me and many parishioners was gone. I began to notice how uncomfortable the pews were and looked forward to coffee and doughnuts after church more than mass itself. I realized that I had believed because Father Jim believed, because at every mass, in every way, to him there could have been no other explanation for the meaning of things than Jesus. Our new priest might have felt the same way about God, but I only noticed his oil slicked comb-over and the way his eyes stared in different directions.

As a product of the nineties —to borrow a line from Nirvana—“here we are now, entertain us” generation I was blinded by a good performance, but when the performer was gone, or in Carter and Linda’s case, exposed, the religion itself seemed silly and strange. Now, I find moments of spirituality in a good rock show, or a perfect day of skiing.

—Dane

