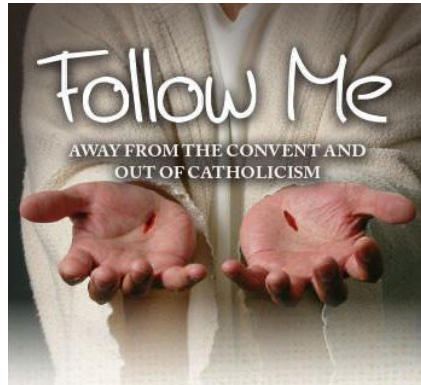


Follow Me - Away From The Convent And Out Of Catholicism

By Former Catholic Nun Flo Santini



I was born in Capestrano, a small village of Abruzzi in Central Italy, about two hours by motor northeast of Rome. Born a Roman Catholic, I was instructed by the local nuns, and attended their day camps and other religious programs.

In 1938, when I was eight years old, my brother and I came to live with our father in the United States. Our mother had died in Italy four years previous.

With the outbreak of the 2nd World War, my brother went into the service, and I, being much alone, read the lives of saints, listened to religious programs over the air, said Catholic prayers, and meditated. But prayers were empty, for they did not express what was on my heart, having been written by others and used only for repetition. My efforts did not seem to bring me closer to God and so I eventually resolved to drop most religious interests outside of attending church, and decided to join the world and have fun.

As the years went by, however, I thought of the future. I considered the religious life and wrote for information concerning religious orders. One tract that came into my possession had a picture of a young girl on the cover and behind her the pierced hands of Christ beckoning with the words printed, "Follow Me." The words spoke to my heart and I knew somehow that they were genuinely the words of Christ. However, the content of the tract—following Him to a convent—did not seem to be of Him. I became reluctant. At a later time when I asked the Lord if He would have me enter a convent, the very idea of being enclosed in a cell seemed to increase and strengthen fetters that had bound my soul even then. The convent grounds appeared to me as leading nowhere—a dead end. Christ had drawn me with the words "Follow Me"; we would be on the move. The answer in my spirit was "no."

In the spring of 1954, a disappointment broke my heart. It was at this time

that God spoke to my heart making it clear He wanted to come into my life. I was prepared. The first thing to do now was to put aside the saints and seek Christ only. His biography was written in the bible, I believed, and so I must get one. But, where should I read? I would ask a Christian acquaintance.

My friend asked me whether or not I knew that I would go to heaven if I died that night. I told her that I believed I was a child of God and would, but could not know for sure—that we cannot know until the time of death. She opened to the Gospel of John, 3rd chapter, verse 16. It read, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” I learned that the promise is eternal life starting now. I believed and received assurance of my salvation! 1 John 5:13 says, “These things have I written unto you that believe ... that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” The Scriptures began to open to me. Salvation is by faith and not by works, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9).

One day, while reading in 2 Corinthians, I came to chapter 6, verses 17 and 18, which read, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” The Lord was referring to Roman Catholicism, for along with this word from Him there came a sense of alienation from Romanism as if a chemical applied had destroyed that which adhered me to it. There was a sense of release and freedom. I was greatly surprised, for I had had no intention of leaving my religion—and the Lord called it “unclean”! This revelation amazed me. In the Bible, evil spirits are referred to as unclean. I was to be amazed again upon reading 1 Timothy 4:1-4, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.” Here the uncleanness of Roman Catholicism was made clear to me, for Timothy states that it has deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. Also, the passage indicates that the doctrines of celibacy and meat control are not of God. In the book of the Revelation, God calls Roman Catholicism a harlot—one who has committed spiritual adultery by forsaking God and worshipping idols. To His own in this system, Christ says, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4). And they that are His do hear His voice and follow Him, according to the Gospel of John and the words of Christ Himself. This I did.

The Lord chose to lead me out in the month of May, 1954, the month dedicated to Mary by Roman Catholics in this country, because of the observance of one of its Sundays as Mother’s Day. This particular May was

special in that it was in the Marian year—the year so-called because of the newly proclaimed dogma of Mary’s assumption into heaven. The worship of Mary is idolatry. In Luke 11:27, a woman cries out to Jesus saying, “Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked!” But He said, “Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.” In Isaiah 42:8 God proclaims: “My glory will I not give to another.” While Roman Catholicism wallowed about in her uncleanness glorifying Mary in processions and in other ways, Christ called me out into His marvelous light, made me clean from my sins, and clothed me in His righteousness. For the first time I began to know what love is and it extended to Roman Catholics. God gave me compassion for those held in the darkness of Rome.

Two years later the Lord spoke the familiar “Follow Me,” and He led me to Bible school.

Enough of my experience. Christ, Who is no respecter of persons, is as interested in you as He is in me, for He is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9b). If you do not have assurance of salvation, He is waiting for you to come to Him believing, for He said, “No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me” (John 14:6b). Repent of your sins, for “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Do you fear your sin is mortal? “The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7b). Are you in bondage to the idea that a priest must be your go-between? “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). Would you like to know more? Write The Conversion Center for more information. — *Flo Santini*

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