Yusuf, Ex-Catholic, USA

May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon Muhammad, his family (who are the greatest of progeny), his companions, and those who follow his way until the day of resurrection.

My name is Yusuf. I am from Saint Louis and I have accepted Islam on roughly February 17th, 2011. I was raised in a religious catholic household, although I cannot remember a time when I sincerely believed in it. I remember back in catholic grade school, even as far back as Kindergarten, I would keep asking my religion teachers to explain the trinity to me because I could not understand it. During the course of grade school and middle school I would identify myself as Protestant simply to antagonize my devout father but I still had a hard time viewing Jesus as anything more than an "enlightened man". During the latter part of middle school, I began looking into Judaism and respected many elements of it, such as belief in One God, abstaining from forbidden food, and the more spiritual nature of the Orthodox Jews, yet at the same time I felt something was lacking, such as respect for Jesus as a Prophet, and the focus on the entirety of humanity, since although righteous Jews do focus on the good of humanity, they focus on the needs of the people of Israel first. I also found it weird that Christians had a fanatic love of the Jewish people when they allegedly killed Jesus. By the time high school came I had completely given up on religion and identified myself as an Agnostic although deep down I believed in God because I would pray to God when I needed to pray. I also remember times when I would pray to God asking Him what the truth was because I was confused as to what the true path would be. I know the Liberals say that anyone can go to heaven, yet I found that a bit illogical because there can only be one true faith. At the same time I questioned the existence of religion because of the idea of people going to hell. And at that time I was supportive of gay rights and abortion, but only to fit in with my liberal friends, as I was involved in theatre and choir (before becoming a Muslim) which has a large minority of gays and liberals. One night in March 2010 (Sophomore year of high school) I went on an ICQ chatroom. ICQ chat has lots of different chatrooms, and the ones I found most interesting was the one about Islam. I went

in that chatroom on the spur of the moment, and a man named Haroon gave me intensive dawah (inviting to Islam) within a span of one night. The following morning I already identified myself as a Muslim, but I had not officially taken the *shahadah* (testimony of faith) at the mosque.[1] I eventually began to gradually cut down on pork and learned to make the 5 daily prayers. My parents at first thought it was a phase so they didn't give me too much trouble when I refused to eat pork and prayed, until after a while they realized I was serious and they got really offended at it. My younger siblings have been made fun of at their grade school for having a muslim brother and that began to turn my mom against me because of "the shame" it brought on the family, in addition to having my parent's friends and relatives question them about my beliefs. I asked my dad "can I go to the mosque" and he flat out told me no. The following fall in junior year I got my driver's license and snuck to Northwest Islamic Center and began to learn more about Islam there. The following winter I snuck to Dar ul Islam and took *shahadah*on February 17, 2011, all this without my parents knowing. Later on I have been trying to persuade my parents to stop being harsh about it, but they make bogus claims like "I am only doing this for attention and I am doing it to belong to something." The Quran says in Chapter 2, verse 120 "*Never will* the *Jews* nor the*Christians be pleased with you* till *you* follow their religion." I have not been the greatest Muslim, I sin, and I ask Allah (God) to forgive me. My mom often says that Islam is not the religion for me since I still sin, yet I say to her, "Islam is perfect, Muslims are not". I pray that Allah guides my parents, my relatives, my friends, and my peers, in addition to those who have made fun of me for my beliefs.

For those who are Jewish or Christian, or are former Jews or Christians and now Muslim, this *hadith* (Prophetic narration) is for you:

Allah's Apostle said "Three persons will have a double reward: 1. A Person from the people of the scriptures who believed in his prophet (Jesus or Moses) and then believed in the Prophet Muhammad (i .e. has embraced Islam)...."[2]

Abu Huraira reported many ahadith (Prophetic narrations) from Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) and one is that Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said: I am most close to Jesus, son of Mary, among the whole of mankind in this worldly life and the next life. They said: Allah's Messenger how is it? Thereupon he said: Prophets are brothers in faith, having different mothers. Their religion is, however, one and there is no Apostle between us (between I and Jesus). [3]

For those of you who are reverts in Saint Louis-Saint Charles-Belleville-Festus area, check out the facebook group "Saint Louis Reverts".

Footnotes:

[1] [One does not have to go to the mosque to pronounce the *shahadah*. When a person says the *shahadah* (even if alone), with the intention to become a Muslim, one converts to Islam. However some people prefer to it repeat it in the mosque as an announcement of their conversion.]

[2] Sahih Bukhari Volume 1, Book 3, Number 97

[3] Sahih Bukhari Book 030, Number 5836