

Can I be baptized?

This story of conversion may sound like a fairytale, but it is not. It's true. We may even wonder if God can bring a person to such a degree of faith that he declares, "I feel like I've always been a Lutheran Church Missouri Synod believer." This from a young man born into, not just a different denomination, but a different religion.

When I first heard this story, I wanted to shout the good news from the rooftops, but I cannot because possible harm could come to this student who has left his faith. Some students have been questioned by government representatives when they return to their home countries. To protect him I will do what Doorsteps ([www.ISM inc. org](http://www.ISMinc.org), the LCMS publication published by the International Student Organization) has begun to do when they write about international students. I will share the great news but will omit mentioning real names and avoid photographs as well. I want to tell the story to encourage everyone to realize that God continues to give faith even in the most unexpected ways.

The first time I heard Mohammad's (not his real name) story it was said that when he entered a Lutheran church, he saw the font which he recognized as being for baptism. He immediately asked the pastor why he couldn't be baptized. The pastor heard his confession of faith and said that he could be baptized. One week later he was.

The fuller faith story is that Mohammad's parents came from a Middle East Muslim country. Mohammad was born in this country and raised in a Muslim family with parents and siblings who love him. He says he was always aware of God but didn't know Him. He attended a Christian pre-school in New York City where he learned several children's songs such as "Jesus loves me this I know." He enjoyed the Bible stories, songs, and fellowship, but did not yet understand that Jesus was God's Son.

His early schooling was in a public school until Covid hit. About that time his family transferred him to a Catholic school which had a reputation for high standards and good teaching. Amazingly, the theology teacher in that Catholic school was an LCMS member. He became aware of Mohammad's deep interest in the Christian faith, so he taught him what Lutherans believe and gave him books to read. Along the way Mohammad read books like Luther's Small Catechism and Daniel Preus's Why I Am a Lutheran Jesus at the Center, (CPH 2004). He also watched a number of pastors who preach on television. He felt he was a Christian because of the TV sermons. And yet, as he shared with his Lutheran teacher, he felt something was missing from those TV sermons. He especially doubted TV preachers' teaching on baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Mohammad's teacher scheduled a breakfast with his LCMS pastor so that Mohammad could get answers to his theological questions. They did talk. They did more than that: the pastor realized that Mohammad was a believer and believed the LCMS teachings on baptism and the Lord's Supper. The following Sunday he was baptized in church. That was in October 2021. The

following December 25 he was confirmed and able to take his first Communion, which gave him great joy. However, he did not tell his family until at least nine days later for the simple reason that he was afraid to tell them. Wonderfully, when he did tell them they felt that what faith was doing to their son was better than no faith at all. Not all of Mohammad's aunts and uncles might agree with what he has done, so caution is used in telling the story within the extended family.

This student is a transformed person. He enjoys debating social issues, sharing meals with his college roommate, but most of all his joy in inviting other students to his church, and studying the Bible at the adult Sunday School class before church. He even attends a Sunday night Bible study held at his college nearby, where his pastor, vicar and a church member explain the Augsburg Confession. His joy in the Lord is not forced. He really is very glad to have his faith as a gift from God.

Campus ministry at All Saints is blessed to have students visit All Saints and worship here. Sometimes we meet students who are struggling to keep their faith, students who are unsure of their faith, and students who were raised in the faith, but are wavering now. So, a student like Mohammad is a blessing. What a joy to know that God brings faith even today when we may be inclined to doubt that God can bring faith to a generation that seems determined to push God aside. With the help of Rev. Jacob Deal, Vicar Wessel and Church Member Moses Greenspan, All Saints will continue to be grateful for the opportunity to help nurture college students.

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