WHAT TRIBE DO YOU BELONG TO?

I’ve been doing a lot of thinking over the past ten years about my life. The who I am, what I am, and where I belong in this game called life. It’s been a process filled with questions, uncertain answers, joy, peace, pain, and comfort.

Asking myself the questions was the start. But the fact is the starting point was just as confusing as the questions themselves.

I’m going to try very hard to make sense of what I am sharing in a very short period of time. You might be already asking yourselves: What is she talking about? Where is she going with this? And what has this got to do with her faith?

If you’re asking, the answer is: EVERYTHING!

If anything I share brings up a message you can relate to, I’ve accomplished my task.

The word “tribe” is used often in scripture, predominantly in the Old Testament to describe family ancestry. In ancient Rome, a tribe meant political divisions, originally three, later thirty, ultimately thirty-five.

Contemporary definitions include: a social division in a traditional society, consisting of families, or communities linked by social, economic, religious, or blood ties.

The focus of my message relates to both family and religious associations.

MY FIRST “TRIBE”

Some of you may know my story. I was born into a Catholic family with fairly stable parents in Baltimore, Maryland. My father was a physician to those who were institutionalized (mentally ill folks). My mom, a very beautiful, very giving, very controlling (at times), pseudo socialite (not going deep into that one), ran the household, for the most part successfully, while my father devoted himself to his life’s work, his vocatio.
At times, I thought my mom was crazy, but thinking back, she had six children, and over a span of fifty-one years there were at least three children at a time living at home. It was Mom’s job “to raise us”; it was Dad’s job “to make money.”

My father was man of little words. I respected and adored him. He was quietly loving, had control over his emotions, was intelligent, and instilled critical thinking and independence in all of us.

Mother on the other hand often “lost it,” getting angry, though never violently so. Looking back, she “had a lot on her plate.” I seemed to be the one that “bucked heads” with her more than the others. My nickname was “little spitfire”; guess it was because I told her I hated her more than once!

Still she loved, cared for, praised, and gave guidance. I miss my parents.

Part of my mother’s guidance was sharing her faith. Her love of the Catholic religion sent me and my siblings to Catholic school for twelve years; the last four for me were all-girl. Those four years took me into my second tribe.

MY SECOND “TRIBE”

It was in high school that the word “faith” came up. At home my father never uttered the word “faith,” or “God.” He considered himself a Catholic, was active in church – ushering, collections, fellowship – but thinking back, my guess is that my mother was his coach. It was in contemplating this message that I recalled this about my father.

Mother on the other hand would reference faith by telling us to “say our prayers at night.”

Catholic school provided me with wonderful rituals, but my particular high school in Baltimore became the experiment in the ’70s for a “new religion.” Gone were the rituals, mass, kneeling, prayer, the nuns’ habits, weekly confession. Enter discussion groups, “What do you think?” and nuns in miniskirts and makeup. Confusion was an understatement among us students.
Back at home, “How was school today?” was answered with a shoulder shrug and a “fine.”

I am not intending to paint a picture of a negative experience; on the contrary, my experience then brought me to where my faith is now.

My Catholic high school tribal years were confusing, but it was clear that my mind was opening to contemplation of something other than this world. Questions about God, this world, who I am, why I am here, and who do I listen to were a part of my internal dialogue.

Upon graduating high school, I went to college in Florida. I realized then, in my late teens, that I was no longer affiliated with any religious or spiritual organizations, and my parents never asked the question, “Have you found a church?”

My questions still persisted. I continued to “say my prayers at night.” I was alone with my thoughts.

I had an agnostic uncle I loved. He used to tell me his favorite bumper sticker read: “My life became so much better since I gave up hope.” We often had deep discussions about life, though God was not part of the conversation. Still he was enlightened and would provoke wonderful questions about life. They just didn’t include God.

Hope you all are tracking. I haven’t mentioned Jesus much, because up till now He pretty much didn’t exist. From age seventeen till thirty-six, “life” just seemed to happen. College, work, marriage, motherhood, family, friends, life ... Yet questions would still abound. Was I in a tribe???

MY FAITH “TRIBE”

Settling in Southern, California in the early ’90s, I was introduced to the CCCDM* by our “one and only” Barbara Anderson, whom I lovingly refer to as a heaven-sent messenger. I know I’ve shared before that getting involved with any religious organization was the last thing on MY agenda. I had been alone in my faith and was doing just fine, thank you very much!

* Community Church (Congregational) at Corona del Mar
What Tribe Do You Belong To?

So many years had passed and my life “seemed to be working”; it didn’t seem necessary at this point to join a church. Questions, however, were still unanswered. Barbara continued with gentle nudges. I know now it was her faith that directed her to continue her evangelism. I love her for this, I want all to know; I was a tough one.

Eventually, I listened – the ears to hear were opened.

I found my tribe! I found many people at the church that I resonated with. And I really loved Bruce.

The introduction of a “relationship” with the Spirit of Jesus was a NEW and beautiful concept. My life, my questions, began to take on a NEW meaning. Transformation was occurring. Direction, purpose, clarity were only the beginning of my journey. I realized EVERYTHING up to now was preparing me for this.

Getting to “know” the man, Jesus, and His life and His teachings was at the forefront of my transformation. I was worshiping and studying with others, whose thirst for Him was equally gratifying.

I went from “I didn’t know what I didn’t know” to “I want to know what I don’t know.”

Being in relationship with a faith family, backed by and influenced by the life and teachings of Jesus, shifted me into a life of deeper purpose and self-realization.

There has been a price to pay for this “new way” of being. On certain levels, my life has become more challenging. It has cost relationships, with family and friends. The closer I come to living my life as God intended, the harder it is to operate in this world.


My life, however, has become more full of love, joy, and abundance. I live in less fear, have more strength, more trust. I’m STILL working the patience thing.
Finding this tribe has shown that power in numbers is a truth. Being faithful with others holds me accountable, gives me support, allows me to falter, knowing I’m forgiven if I ask.

My relationship with CCCDM is still present, but like the Apostle Paul, my relationship with The New Church reminds me of his relationship with fellow Christian churches.

*The New Church* is now home to my worship and study. The familiar relationships and the newfound ones are about what the Christian faith holds true: Brothers & Sisters in Christ!

I am grateful for this tribe! I am blessed to call it home!

**PRAYER**

Let us pray. Please recite with me the prayer of prayers:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, the glory, forever, AMEN.

**BENEDICTION**

May God bless you, hold you, protect you.

May the Spirit of Jesus guide every second of your days.

May His perfect love surround you, giving you comfort and peace.