

Iman Yusuf, Ex-Catholic, USA (part 4 of 4)

Description: How the guidance came to her in the early days of embracing Islam.

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Published on 13 Apr 2009 - Last modified on 25 Aug 2009

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One man walked towards me, speaking in a strange language. Later I found out he was saying "Masha'Allah, masha'Allah" as he came and took my daughter from my arms. "How beautiful she is" he exclaimed, and proceeded to introduce her to the other men.

For some reason I felt no fear of this strange person taking my daughter. He sat her down on top of a desk and handed her pens and pencils and a stapler □ anything he thought might amuse her, all the while laughing and trying to get her to talk. The other men gathered around her as well, and finally Abdul Hamid came to greet me.

I offered my hand but he pretended not to see it □ ah, there was still so much to learn about Islamic etiquette between the sexes □ and began asking me how I had discovered Islam. I told him briefly about Ahmad the Nigerian, and he proceeded to explain the basics of Islam to me.

At least an hour passed, and then he gave me a copy of the Quran, asking that I take it home and shower before opening it. I quickly agreed. He told me that it would soon be time for prayer so he needed to prepare himself.

I thanked him but had one final request. I wanted to watch the prayer. Having been married to an atheist, for some reason I was very interested in watching this man pray. I always felt a man was not truly a man unless he prayed to God.

Abdul Hamid told me I could watch the prayer from the back of the mosque but to please not make a sound. Again I agreed and we went downstairs where he placed me in the rear of an empty space decorated only with beautiful lush carpeting and a niche in the wall. That niche, I would learn, marked the direction for the prayer.

As I watched the men enter, I was startled by a loud noise □ it was the call to prayer. Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar! As I listened I felt as if ice water was running through my veins. It was as if my whole being was awakened by this loud and magnificent call.

Although I didn't understand a word, I felt it speaking to me. Tears filled my eyes and I began to shiver. I crossed my arms and hugged myself, in an attempt to warm myself and calm down.

The tears flowed as I watched the men first bow, and then prostrate themselves in prayer, just as I had done so long ago that sunny day in my bedroom. I was in awe. I was thrilled and moved beyond words. More than that... I was home!

Over the course of the next few weeks, I met more Muslims at the mosque and took

lessons in Islam. I began to sew Islamic style clothes for myself, although I wore them only in my bedroom when I attempted to pray alone.

I began to change. I gave up drinking alcohol and refused to eat pork. My personality changed. I became quieter and calmer. I was at peace. My mother asked about the change in me. She thought I was depressed. "You never laugh anymore", she said. I tried to explain to her that I was very happy – just in a quieter sort of way.

I finally found the courage to tell her about Islam. I even showed her the clothes I had sewn and modeled an outfit for her. She became furious. She hated the clothes instantly.

My mother was always a high-fashion kind of woman. She ridiculed their simplicity and the fact they were loose. She thought they looked like sacks. Her unkind remarks hurt me but did not dissuade me. Nothing would separate me from Islam.

My last Christmas before I said the Shahadah was a nightmare. Even during that time I knew this was Allah's way of sending me out of the darkness of false belief with no good memories. Still they were difficult days.

My mother was angry with me for not participating in the holiday, and my brother, drunk as always, destroyed some of my belongings in a fit of rage and threatened to kill me.

Previously he had entered my room and saw me dressed in Islamic clothing. Although not religious – he didn't even go to church – he too was furious with my decision to become Muslim.

The more they raged, the more certain I became I was doing the right thing. I simply no longer wanted to live the lives they were living.

After a few months time, I made my profession of faith. One Friday evening in the spring, I became a Muslim. I gratefully and humbly accepted the gift of Islam.

My mother insisted I leave her house. But Allah in His infinite mercy had arranged a home for me. The night I took Shahadah, one Egyptian man who witnessed it asked about me for marriage.

My wali (guardian) – the man who had taken my daughter from my arms on my first trip to the Mosque – asked my opinion. My only concern was that he be a good believer. My wali had already checked and he was.

Within 10 days I was married and living with my daughter in my new home with my new husband. He raised my daughter as his own, and alhamdulillah, we had two sons after that.

It's been over 26 years now that I have been blessed to live my life as a Muslim. The years have passed so quickly. They have not been always been easy, but they have been blessed nonetheless.

Allah tests those He loves, but as He says in the Quran..."with hardship comes ease."

And it has proven true.

In the meantime, my mother □ who separated herself from me for many years □ is now living with me in an Islamic country and wearing the hijab voluntarily! I have hope she too will accept Islam one day soon, insha'Allah (by the will of Allah).

Despite the difficult times, I can not imagine living my life in any other way. I thank Allah every day for the mercy of His guidance and for this miraculous journey from darkness to the light of Islam.

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