



## The U-Turn

**By Rebecca Billing**

My entry into Catholicism wasn't my choice. But rather, like many of us, it was the choice of my parents. Baptised at three months old, I went on with my five brothers to attend my local Catholic primary school, Maria Regina, Avalon.

We were a good Catholic family that attended Mass most Sundays. Mum oversaw the children's liturgy each Christmas Eve and with Dad, was heavily involved in St Vincent De Paul Society. As a result, so were we. Each year my family would deliver all the Yellow Pages phone books for Vinnies between Avalon and Mona Vale and as an army of six children, we would run behind my family's hardware delivery truck throwing phone books into each driveway. It was vocation by default rather than by choice.

At high school I was perceived as a good Catholic girl, well behaved (except for talking a little too much... sorry Mr Leaver), high academic achiever, altar server and prefect. I looked and acted the part, but like many teenagers I took what I like to call a "faith break".

It wasn't until my early 20s that my faith U-Turn occurred. My cousin who was the same age as me, passed away from cystic fibrosis. I had a faith-filled moment when I realised where I needed to be and what I needed to be doing. So, I quit my job as an investment banker that day and enrolled in teaching at university. Life was too short to be doing something that didn't make me happy and I wanted to make a positive difference in people's lives.

Since beginning teaching, I haven't looked back. I genuinely come to work happy every day. This time my vocation is not by default but rather it is being guided by faith. I have the absolute privilege of witnessing the likeness of Jesus every day in the children I teach. More importantly I have the honour of guiding my students through their own faith journey. There are ups and downs and bumps along the way, that's life. By connecting with each one of them I feel that I am making a difference, no matter how small, to guide them in their own faith journey - to make wise choices, treat others the way I want to be treated, trust God no matter what, and know that he will never stop loving me.

Now that I'm an adult, I have made a personal decision to follow Jesus Christ. It's no longer the faith of my parents, but a faith that I am proudly able to call my own. I have a relationship with God that I express through quiet prayer and meditation. I also feel most connected when I'm alone in nature. The stillness is always something that really resonates with me. We spend time as a family praying before dinner. It's our way to come together and give thanks.

This year has particularly been challenging for our students and families. Not able to look outward to our local parish for faith, we have had to instead go back into ourselves and find who we are in a different way. With churches closed, our students have had to look to God's creation as a sacred space, and we have held many a prayer session out in nature. We have had to connect with our families and communities in different ways. This is what I call the U-Turn of 2020.

The U-Turn in me started with the faith that my family gave me and now I'm passing the same thing to my own children and the students in my school.

Our faith is always with us. There may be times in our journey when we stray, but I have learnt that we are never alone. We have family, friends and God in our hearts. He never leaves us, no matter what. Everyone has a stop sign, everyone has a give-way, and everyone can find their U-Turn.