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January 18, 2025

Reflective Journal

Diverse Cultures and Communities

The subject of LGBTQ+ is still so foreign to me. Growing up, it was always talked about as if it was the worst possible thing in the world. My dad often acted as if we touched someone who was gay, we would contract a disease. He was very prejudiced when it came to this topic. As I grew older and encountered people who identified differently, whether it was in school, the workplace, or randomly in public, I noticed the little voice inside my head telling me, “They are people too; and aren’t we supposed to love everyone?”. I am certainly not perfect, so who am I to look down upon others. Now this did not mean I researched it any further or went out of my way to hang out with someone who identified as LGBTQ+. Yes, I know that sounds horrible to say, but more so because I had absolutely no understanding of how I should go about it based on my faith. I always grew up going to church, mostly Methodist or Baptist, but it was really in the past 15 months that a lot of things fell into place for me.

My husband grew up in the Catholic Church and I was absolutely opposed to converting from day one. Over 16 years later, I realized it was the missing puzzle piece for our marriage and family. Now, this is not to try to convince anyone to convert, but it a big part of my mind transformation and how I was able to handle situations I am in today. I do not think I could sit here and write this reflection today had I not joined the church. You see, just a few months after joining, my best friend called me to tell me some “news”. Now this best friend and I met when we moved in next door to each other with babies (now in High School and College) and our husbands deployed for 12 months. We were each other’s support system, and I would not have made it through that deployment without her. However, there was one thing we did NOT agree on, same sex relationships. Thankfully, we learned quickly to just not discuss it, because agreeing to disagree was not an option either. Fast forward fourteen years later when she called to tell me her big news was that her oldest son was Gay. She could not even get through the sentence without breaking into tears, fearing I would never talk to her again. The “me” several years back would have immediately began judging her son and thinking discriminatory things. But, instead I told her I love and her son just as I always have and I began researching. I came across a podcast by Father Mike Schmitz about same sex relationships. Within the first minute of his talk, he says how the church does not “tolerate” same sex marriages, and I thought, “oh no, he is about to say no way, no how, absolutely we do not tolerate or accept this”. Instead, he went onto say how no one should be “tolerated”, but instead we should all feel as if we “belong”. I felt the biggest sense of warmth and love as he said that. I knew right then and there that the love I have for people was confirmed that God wants us to love everyone and make everyone feel that we belong. He went onto explain how his brother “came out” a few years back and he felt so ashamed that his own brother felt he could not have told him sooner for fear of judgement. That is exactly how I felt when my friend told me about her son. I never want to be portrayed as someone who would judge others based off of their life choices, decisions, or actions. This has become even more important to me in the classroom setting. I want not just my students, but any student to feel that they can come to me to talk about anything and feel safe. I want students to come running to me knowing my arms will be wide open with acceptance and love because we are all in this life together, and we need to support each other.

Okay, so that was extremely hard for me to write, not knowing if this reflection is acceptable or not, but it came from my heart and just felt right to express it. I did not want to write a reflection making myself seem like I have it all together and always have when it comes to this subject. I still struggle with it because I cannot honestly say I 100% understand it fully yet. But what I do know is that I have such a huge heart and passion for people in general and will continue this throughout my teaching journey.