

*I was baptized at St. Anastasia in 1990 and made my First Communion here in 1998, but for a variety of reasons, I never completed my Confirmation. In high school, I prioritized friends and sports. Although I thought about returning to it later in life, I always found excuses not to.*

*Even just before beginning the OCIA process last fall, I was honestly more focused on "checking the box" than truly understanding what I was stepping into. I had convinced myself that I needed to be "perfect" or have everything figured out before receiving this sacrament, which left me feeling hesitant and even a bit like a fraud. I also feared being judged for what I did not know or for the areas where I am still struggling.*

*It did not take long to realize how misguided that thinking was. From the start, I felt welcomed exactly as I am. Instead of judgment, I found guidance, encouragement, and genuine support. What began as a room of unfamiliar faces in September quickly became a community I looked forward to seeing each week.*

*The Easter Vigil, and everything leading up to it, exceeded my expectations. I believe that going through this process as an adult allowed me to appreciate it far more than I would have earlier in life. It may have taken me until my mid-30s to get here, but I am proud to say I did.*

*I am very grateful to the OCIA team, especially Lynn Duffy, Father Colin, and my wonderful sponsor, Sharon Carry. Their support helped turn what once felt intimidating into an experience I will always value and remember fondly.*

*-Emily*