

Back to the Future Screen Bully Is Really a Vibrant Charismatic Catholic

Tom Wilson—‘Biff’ in the famous film—had a charismatic experience as a teen-ager and has recorded a Christian album

At first glance actor and musician Tom Wilson’s 6-foot-3-inch robust stature appears to be that of a professional football player, or reminiscent of the towering figure of his movie character “Biff”—the bully he portrayed in the popular film trilogy Back to the Future.

In fact Wilson is a gentle giant with a very healthy sense of humor. The charismatic Roman Catholic also is a man of fervent faith in God and has a deep compassion for humanity.

As a child Wilson struggled with severe asthma and was a short, skinny self-described nerd. He often was picked on and beaten up by bigger kids in his hometown of Philadelphia.

Wilson grew up in a loving and unconventional Catholic family. In the early years of his adolescence he was first introduced to the charismatic Catholic renewal in the late 1960s by his mother. Wilson began attending a charismatic prayer group in Villa Nova, Pa. At the same time, both of his parents were going to similar meetings at Villa Nova Catholic University.

“That is where the charismatic Catholic renewal spread like

wildfire, on the college campus among students who were searching for a real and meaningful spiritual life," Wilson said.

Soon after those meetings, Wilson began visiting Daylesford Abbey, a monastery for Catholic monks, and attending large interdenominational prayer meetings on Wednesday nights. The charismatic experience became a normal part of Wilson's spiritual life. "At that time I was about 13 years old, and I found great comfort in being with my new friends. I felt I had a place to go where I belonged, and a place to worship God and have fun too."

When the bohemian "Jesus 75" festival took place on a farm in rural Pennsylvania, Wilson and his friends had to be there.

"The 1970s opened up a whole new spiritual experience for Jesus freaks and young people like myself," Wilson said. "It offered me freedom of expression, great friendships, spiritual leaders to look up to, and it brought unity to all who were there. It was a beautiful ecumenical experience. Many Christian denominations were there to praise God together. I truly began to grasp the meaning of the words of Jesus in John 17:21 when He said, 'That they all may be one as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You.'"

By age 15, Wilson started participating in the "Life in the Spirit" seminars held at the Daylesford Abbey.

"I longed to receive the gift of speaking in tongues. During one of the prayer meetings some seminar leaders taught us about the gift of tongues, and they placed their hands on me to pray.

“From that moment on it was ready, set, willing and go. That night I excitedly began speaking in tongues. I found a new way to worship God with my heart and my mouth.”

Wilson is now 41 years old, and he and his wife, Caroline, have four children. He is an actor, writer, artist and musician. He most recently completed a collection of his own contemporary Christian songs on a CD called In the Name of the Father.

Although Wilson has lost contact with Michael J. Fox and other stars from Back to the Future, he is still active in the entertainment industry and has appeared on the Tonight Show With Jay Leno, Knight Rider, The Facts of Life and has a starring role on the critically acclaimed Freaks and Geeks TV series.

Wilson is in the entertainment industry to stay. “I feel I am in the right place right now for a reason.” He finds it fertile ground to share his faith by living it out. What is Wilson’s greatest spiritual passion?

“I want to spread the love and joy of the Holy Spirit and Jesus to everyone in my sphere of influence as honestly and as boldly as I can,” he says. Wilson and his family currently attend Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church in Encino, Calif.