

After Church's Fervent Prayers, Ex-Atheist Feels Fire of God and Surrenders to Christ

In November, a short-term OM Italy team met Giammarco Romagna, a 24-year-old Italian man whom God called to salvation through Jesus Christ two years ago. Prior to his conversion, he was a resolute atheist; however, he now passionately proclaims the name of Jesus. Today, Romagna is the only evangelical Christian in his household.

Recently, the OM team had dinner with Romagna's family, as the first Christians to step foot in their family home. The team was humbled to receive Romagna's dinner invitation, knowing they would dine with his non-believing family.

A simple thing such as partaking in a family meal may not sound significant, but Romagna explained that it marked a courageous step of faith for him. His family does not support his decision to follow Jesus, and because of this, they generally choose not to associate with people connected with the church. The dinner was a rare opportunity, and the team shined the light of Jesus that night and trust that God has planted seeds in the hearts of Giammarco's family.

Romagna explained that his parents don't know whether there is a God and view religion as mechanical and impersonal, and that his sister has declared herself an atheist.

"The problem is that for them, God is an illusion I've created in my mind," Romagna states. "On the contrary, we know that Jesus is the only truth."

Like Romagna, most Italians have a family history rooted in

Roman Catholicism and most lack the desire to pursue a personal relationship with Jesus. Romagna admits that being a Christian in Italy is hard, in part because evangelical Christians are extremely rare.

“Trying to explain the real meaning of God’s Word to nonbelievers can be difficult since you are very often seen as an ‘alien’, because you’re trying to destroy a wall that centuries of Catholic-based lies have built around people,” he says.

Romagna’s conversion took place in 2011, when his life began to fall apart at the seams and he eventually hit rock bottom. A friend at university recognized his hurt and invited him to church. Romagna reluctantly said yes. He felt lost and didn’t know where else to turn.

While at the church service, a woman he didn’t know approached him and told him that the church had been praying for him. Romagna was shocked to learn that people who didn’t even know him were praying for him with compassion and love. In this moment, he recalls feeling “something strange” happening in his heart.

Shortly following his visit to the church, he began attending a Bible study. The study was on the book of Romans. Within seconds of reading Paul’s greeting to the Romans, Romagna sensed God beckoning him: “I want to be with you, I want to lead your life. I want you to understand that the storm you’re currently living isn’t caused by chance. I’ve arranged every single detail to make you see that I’m calling you, and that your ideas about Me are wrong.”

Romagna fondly recollects, “I felt something like a fire inside me. I wanted to pray with the people who were there, and in that moment I clearly felt that Jesus was entering in my life.”

Romagna was baptized on Nov. 17, 2012, and travels 90 miles

each way to attend church at Nuova Vita (New Life) in Bologna, Italy. He has a full-time job and will soon earn his master's degree in political science from the University of Bologna.

Romagna asks for prayer often for the salvation of his family. Regardless of his family's willful resistance, Romagna believes it is the responsibility of Christians with non-believing family members to be bold with their faith, and he urges fellow Christians in a similar situation to, "show them who we really are, and what is the real meaning of having Jesus living inside us."

He also asks for prayer that God would give him the fortitude to push through the discouraging days and resist embracing the world and its temptations. Romagna rests in God's sovereignty and encourages Christians to look to 2 Timothy 2:11-13, which reminds that even when we fail to be faithful, we are assured that God's faithfulness never fails.