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# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



## A Brit Crosses the Tiber

By Sue Cross

It started with a phone call from my son one summer's evening. "Mum, do you mind if I become a Catholic?"

I was taken aback but quickly gathered my senses and replied, "Well, it's really nothing to do with me. It is your decision. Yours and Samantha's." I put down the phone and began to ponder our conversation. Being an Evangelical Christian at the time, I had received some negative teaching over the years about Catholicism, and yet my heart was at peace when I heard the news that my son was about to dive into the deep waters of Catholic spirituality. I would never have guessed that several years later, I too would be plunging into the same waters.

My own upbringing had not included church, neither was there a Bible in the home. It was only after a serious illness at the age of twelve that I was sent to a convent school. My time there as a teenager was a positive one and the Catholics that crossed my path were good, kind people who lived their faith. As the old saying goes, "they preached the gospel at all times, and when necessary, used words." At school, I never went to Mass and, in retrospect, I think that perhaps my mother had forbidden it. I remember receiving a scolding when she found a veil in my satchel and I had to apologize for sneaking into the school chapel. This was something that I did on a regular basis, as I was drawn to the peaceful Presence that lived there. I would venture in alone during the lunch break and pray. It was strange that my mother was against the Church, as her best friend was a devout Catholic. Even when I became a born-again Christian in

1971 she was displeased and showed no interest in religion.

### Becoming Christian in Hong Kong

My actual conversion to Christianity happened in Hong Kong at a charismatic, ecumenical meeting. I asked Jesus into my life, hands were laid on me, and I experienced what we believed was baptism in the Holy Spirit, accompanied by speaking in tongues. The next ten years were exciting as I witnessed many miracles, especially among the Triads (Chinese organized crime) and drug addicts through evangelist Jackie Pullinger's ministry. On returning to England, it was a struggle to find a church where I felt at home and, like many Evangelicals, shopped around until I found one that seemed friendly and open to the Holy Spirit's gifts. In the meantime, eight years after my conversion my husband, Peter, had his own "Damascus road" conversion.

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Journeys Home

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

After starting our own business (manufacturing skin care products) we decided to move from Lincolnshire to Gloucestershire, which had been our home before living abroad. It was in this lovely county that we joined a nondenominational church. The people were friendly and the praise and worship lively but it gradually became clear that everyone there had their own interpretation of Scripture. The “rapture” is very much at the forefront of the Pentecostal and Free Churches’ teaching and the End Times is a popular topic of conversation. And yet when we later joined an Anglican church we were told that this was a false teaching and there was no such thing as the rapture. We were confused. It seemed that everyone was their own pope!

### Son’s Influence

My son went through six months of instruction before he was received into the Catholic Church! With Catholicism, apparently, it was not a matter of simply raising one’s hand to accept Jesus and then being left to make one’s own decisions — or, in actual practice, to accept the interpretations of whatever leader had brought one into the flock. My son attended a Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) course at his local church and thrashed out his own misgivings, until he arrived at a place of understanding, acceptance, and peace. I watched him change from an angry young man into a gentle Christian soul. He developed a strong missionary zeal, giving me a missal, a rosary and several books to read. His wife, a cradle Catholic, renewed her own fading faith. I think it was observing these changes that started me on my own journey home.

After a year of reading various materials, my interest was kindled. I devoured a biography of John Henry Newman and was intrigued to learn about this academic theologian’s conversion using both faith and reason. I had previously been led to believe that reason was an encumbrance to faith but now began to wonder if God might have given us the gift of reason to use in our search for Him. I also read about the lives of St. Teresa of Avila and St. Francis of Assisi. Discovering these lively saints from the “Dark Ages” was a new and exciting experience for me, as I had for some reason believed, up to this time, that “true Christianity” was only rediscovered at the time of the Reformation. My mind was buzzing with new questions. I thought that I knew my Bible well but now I wanted to hear the Catholic interpretation of every passage, particularly with regard to the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. I read John 6:53-69 with new eyes — particularly the passages wherein “many of his disciples” stumbled at His teaching and “drew back and no longer went about with him.” Maybe Jesus really did mean His disciples to take eating His flesh and drinking His blood literally. If not, then surely He would have recalled those who stumbled over a simple misunderstanding, and assured them, “It’s okay — it’s not to be taken literally, it’s just symbolic.” But, He did not.

Then there was the question of Mary. Like most Protestants, I believed that she had been little more than a surrogate mother to Christ and that she had borne additional children to her husband, Joseph, after the birth of Jesus. But if so, why did Our Lord ask the Apostle John to take care of her as He was dying on the cross? (Jn 19:26-27). If Jesus had multiple siblings, surely one

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## FEATURED RESOURCES

### Deep in Scripture CD



In this exceptional *Deep in Scripture* program, Marcus Grodi and Gary Michuta talk about the importance of the Deuterocanonical Books of the Bible and how they impacted New Testament passages like Hebrews 11:35.



### How to Go from Being a Good Evangelical to a Committed Catholic in Ninety-Five Difficult Steps — By Christian Smith

American Evangelicalism has recently experienced a new openness to Roman Catholicism, and many Evangelicals, both famous and ordinary, have joined the Catholic Church or are considering the possibility. This book helps Evangelicals who are exploring Roman Catholicism to sort out the kinds of concerns that typically come up in discerning whether to enter into the full communion of the Catholic Church. In simple language, it explains many theological misunderstandings that Evangelicals often have about Roman Catholicism, and suggests the kind of practical steps many take to enter the Catholic Church. It is an insightful resource both for Evangelicals interested in pursuing and understanding Roman Catholicism and Catholics seeking to help Evangelical seekers who come to them.

\$35

Receive a *Deep in Scripture* CD for a \$35 donation.

\$50

Receive *Good Evangelical to a Committed Catholic* for a \$50 donation.

\$75

Receive a *DIS* CD and *Good Evangelical to a Committed Catholic* for a \$75 donation.

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Obtain premiums by returning the envelope included with your newsletter, calling 740-450-1175, or by going online to [chnetwork.org/premiums](http://chnetwork.org/premiums).

See page C for how to enroll in our *Premiums Club* and automatically receive these resources each month!

# “Southern Baptist Seminarian Leaves to Become a Catholic”

INTERVIEW WITH ANTHONY BARATTA



This month we are happy to present another Signposts interview. Anthony Baratta was a committed Southern Baptist who found out that his father, a Protestant pastor, was returning to the Catholic Church. This sparked his own search for answers and for a rooted Christian faith, ultimately leading him to become Catholic as well.

Anthony discusses his faith journey as well as his relationship with Christ. Watch this and other Signposts interviews at [chnetwork.org](http://chnetwork.org). — *JonMarc Grodi, Manager of Outreach*



## 1) Thanks for joining us today, Anthony. Start by telling us a bit about your family and spiritual background as a Christian.

I grew up going to a church camp called Camp Oty'Okwa that I love to this day. I went there in fourth grade, my parents were counselors at the time, and I gave my life to Jesus Christ at an altar call. I remember it being a very real experience and I recommitted each year after that. I also went in highschool as a camp counselor. There were lots of experiences along the way but Camp Oty'Okwa really solidified my faith as a Christian. I'm so thankful for that experience and I wouldn't have had it any other way.

My relationship with Christ was very personal. I didn't question the existence of God. I didn't question a lot of these things because Christ was real to me. The only doubts I really had were, "Am I in the right church? Am I where Christ wants me?"

My Dad was an Evangelical Protestant pastor most of my life growing up. I loved the church and grew up as a pastor's kid but really didn't have a bad experience from it — I loved it! I was able to grow in the church, help lead youth groups, and I never really had any doubts about my faith. It wasn't until after I got back from a summer spent evangelizing Catholics in Poland that I found a book that my Dad had been reading called *Born Fundamentalist, Born Again Catholic* that I started to have a few questions.

## 2) That is a great book that shows up in many stories around the CHNetwork. So what happened next?

I was surprised that there were answers to some of the common objections to Catholicism. I had thought Catholics didn't read their Bibles, didn't know the faith, and had these weird traditions that evolved over time. One of them was, why do Catholics believe that Mary remained a virgin, when the Bible clearly says that Jesus had brothers and sisters? I had asked a Protestant pastor friend at one time and he just kind of grimaced and said "They don't read the Bible!" But then I found in this book that there were lots of answers to these questions that had been used throughout Church history — that, well, maybe they were cousins, etc. There were real answers here and, honestly, my ignorance was vast on these subjects.

In the fall of 2011, I got a call from my Dad saying that he was going to return to the Catholicism of his youth and that made me angry. I felt betrayed by him. I didn't understand it all either, and I said, "If you really like this liturgy stuff, can't you just be Lutheran? Why do you have to betray our family and go to the Catholic Church?"

I was, at the time, working as a youth pastor, preparing to enter Southern Baptist seminary. So I spent over 15 hours talking to a Ph.D. in Church history who was a pastor too, asking questions, and trying to prove my Dad wrong. And in that process I did have a few doubts along the way. One time I was watching YouTube videos of the Mass and it just seemed beautiful and wonderful. And I thought, "Well I can never go to a Catholic parish and check it out because I'm a youth pastor right now!" Any doubts I thought I still had, I figured would be dealt with when I went to seminary. I began seminary in January 2012. I loved it the first month but I left by February 28th, and was on my way to becoming Catholic. During those two months, the paradigm shifted.

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### 3) Interesting. What would you say were the main issues that caused this paradigm shift which got you moving in a new direction?

I'd say that ultimately it was the Bible and Church history. Hearing that my Dad was becoming Catholic shook me up enough to reexamine these issues closely. I'd spent a summer evangelizing Catholics in Poland, John Paul II's old stomping grounds. I hadn't really been shaken enough to take any of their claims seriously — so this really shook me up.

So I felt this yearning as I was studying Catholicism to be rooted in something deeper than Evangelicalism. In Evangelicalism the Bible is respected, as it should be, and so I knew so much about the Bible — I had three books of the Bible memorized. But I really didn't know much else besides the Bible. Our praise and worship songs were mostly written after 1990. We didn't even talk about Martin Luther or John Calvin, but if we did, it wasn't really people before then except for the occasional quote from St. Augustine, right? And history just wasn't anywhere to be found. And as I studied I found other Evangelicals who were looking for this history and rootedness, and it was drawing me back to, "Ok, well I at least want to go back to the Reformation." And so I'd read some of these stories of these, kind of, "Protestant saints" and realized, these guys really aren't that old! I can really only go back so far! 500 years isn't that long! And I yearned for something deeper, but then when I tried to go back before that .... they were certainly sounding pretty different. As I found later, they were really paying attention to the Eucharist and that wasn't something I really believed in as a Protestant. So, there was this natural pull to go back, to go deeper, to stand for something, to be rooted ... and I couldn't find it in Protestantism.

### 4) The questions of authority and continuity are always tied together. Talk more about your thought process as you tried to work these things out.

I had three books of the Bible memorized but I couldn't really answer the question of "How do we know we have the right books of the Bible? How do we believe in the authority of the Bible without any outside authority?" So the question of authority — and that related to early Church councils and things like that — that really bothered me. Especially related to Church history. One of my first assignments I did even before I entered seminary was to do a biography of a Christian hero. I picked Martin Luther because I wanted to read where my Dad had gone wrong. And I thought I was going to love Martin Luther, and I really didn't! I really was appalled by what I saw as his being very nonchalant and casting aside a lot of Church history. And as I dug into Church history even before the Reformation, which I hadn't done previously, I saw a lot of these early Christians up to Luther were Catholic! There was a consistency, there was a continuity that I was lacking.

Christian Smith in *How to Go from Being a Good Evangelical to a Committed Catholic in Ninety-Five Difficult Steps* (**Note: see page 2 or return the enclosed envelope in this newsletter to order a copy of this book.**), he talks about this paradigm shift, the straw that breaks the camel's back. For me it was an Ash Wednes-

day service that just threw the paradigm for me and I said, "I'm done. I'm leaving." It was heartbreaking. There were lots of tears, lots of crying — it was the hardest decision of my life because first and foremost I loved Christ, and I had been kind of taught to think that Catholicism and Mary and these things dishonored Christ and I didn't want to dishonor Christ. But at the same time I felt the Holy Spirit pulling me toward Catholicism.

### 5) And so you did become Catholic! What then have you discovered on the other side? Talk about your relationship with Christ now and what your recommendations would be to someone else of a similar background asking similar questions.

What's been cool is that I haven't so much given up very much to become Catholic, I just filled in the gaps. My relationship with Christ has remained consistent.

Just a few months after leaving seminary, I went to a conference at Steubenville as a youth chaperone. We were on our knees, in front of the Eucharist, singing these songs about "Your grace is enough," all these songs I know, and I realized: I've just added the Eucharist! Like I've been singing these songs, but there has been a shadow and now Jesus is here and I can say: In Jesus Christ is King in these lyrics and He's right here. So that's been wonderful, deepening my relationship with Christ through the sacraments, through the Eucharist, and His Church.

If I had to say one thing to someone considering becoming Catholic, especially from an Evangelical Protestant background, I'd say: now is the best time in the last 500 years to become Catholic. I think we live in a wonderful time of Church history where the best of Protestantism, especially the best of Evangelical Protestantism is being brought into the Catholic Church by converts. We're listening to a lot of the songs Evangelical Protestants are singing. We're reading a lot of the same books. And yet, the fullness of the Christian Faith is here. I think this is a wonderful time with Pope Francis and his outreach to Evangelicals....

I just think that a lot of the barriers that have been there for the last 500 years are starting to fade away and this is a wonderful time, coming up on the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, for us to all come back into the one fold. ■

## MARCUS GRODI'S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

**March 5, 2016**

Catholic Men's Conference  
Diocese of Springfield, MA  
[www.spfldmensconference.org](http://www.spfldmensconference.org)

**March 12, 2016**

Catholic Women's Conference  
Diocese of Rochester, NY  
[www.rochesterercwc.org](http://www.rochesterercwc.org)







# Prayer List



## Clergy

- For Rick, a former nondenominational seminarian, that his interest in the Catholic Faith would develop into a hunger for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.
- For a professor at an Evangelical college in Ohio, that the Holy Spirit would lead him and his family as they continue to discover the truth and beauty of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
- For a retired Anglican priest in New York, that he would find a religious order in the Catholic Church that welcomes late vocations.
- For a former nondenominational minister in Sweden, that the Holy Spirit would guide him as he journeys to the Catholic Faith.
- For Scott, a teacher in an Evangelical school, that he and his wife will be able to connect with a supportive Catholic community.
- For Jeffrey, a minister in Texas, that, as he discovers the truths of Jesus in the Catholic Church, our Lord would guide him to enter into full communion with His holy Church.
- For Michael, a former Evangelical minister, that our Lord Jesus would give him a love and understanding for the Petrine ministry.

- For a nondenominational minister in South Africa, that the Lord Jesus would show him his true calling in the holy Catholic Church.
- For a minister in Minnesota, that the Holy Spirit would assist him in obtaining gainful, fulfilling employment as he loses his teaching position by becoming a Catholic Christian.

## Lay

- For an Evangelical in Indiana who is at a crossroads in his journey and knows that he needs to find answers to his questions about Catholicism.
- For Betsy, who is considering going back to church, that she find helpful answers to her questions about Catholic doctrine.
- For Barbara, who is experiencing alienation from friends on account of her conversion.
- For an Evangelical in Texas who is learning more about the Catholic Faith and is in touch with local converts, that he know how best to proceed with his journey.
- For a convert who hasn't been regularly attending Mass, that she and her husband find a good church home.
- For a Presbyterian who is in RCIA, that he go deeper in his search for truth and find

answers to the questions about Catholicism that trouble him.

- For a man in Europe who will have heroic and long-term sacrifices to make if he would proceed with his interest in the Catholic Church, that he clearly know God's leading in his life.
- For Janelle who is attending Mass regularly and is continually drawn to the Catholic Church.
- For Mary Jo who is practicing Catholic devotions and is learning a lot through EWTN, that she know how best to move towards full communion with the Church.
- For a convert from Australia who loves being Catholic but misses some elements of his Anglican background.
- For a Presbyterian who is drawn to the Eucharist, that he soon be able to receive our Lord Jesus in Holy Communion.
- For Jim, that he find good local Catholics to support his continued journey as a Catholic.

In every issue we include timely prayer concerns from the membership. All members are encouraged to pray at least one hour each month before the Blessed Sacrament for the needs, both general and specific, of the CHNetwork and its members and supporters.

Please submit all prayer requests and answers to CHNetwork Prayer List, PO Box 8290, Zanesville, OH 43702 or email prayer requests to [prayers@chnetwork.org](mailto:prayers@chnetwork.org).

We use only first names to preserve privacy.

## EWTN'S THE JOURNEY HOME on television & radio, hosted by Marcus Grodi, president of CHNetwork



### TELEVISION

Mondays at 8 PM ET — Encores: Tuesdays 1 AM ET, Fridays 1 PM ET  
*The Best of the Journey Home*: Monday-Thursday 1 PM ET

### RADIO

Mondays at 8 PM ET — Encores: Saturdays 7 AM ET, Sundays 1 AM ET and 5 PM ET  
*The Best of the Journey Home*: Monday-Thursday 12 AM ET

#### January 4

Dr. Norman McCrummen\*  
*Former Presbyterian minister*

#### January 11

Paul Keough\*  
*Revert*

#### January 18

Rose Sweet\*  
*Revert*

#### January 25

Michael Goodwin\*  
*Former Evangelical*

\*Schedule is subject to change.



## ...Journeys Home Continued...

► “Journeys Home” continued from page 2

of these would have been there to care for her if this was true. I also turned to Revelation 12:1-5 and read about the woman clothed with the sun, whose Child was the Great Serpent’s mortal enemy. Surely this woman must be Mary. Who else could it be? It was as if a veil was slowly being pulled from my eyes — a process as uncomfortable as it was wonderful.

### Wanting More

I became hungry for knowledge and so I put the question to my husband, Peter: “What do you think about attending a RCIA course to learn about Catholicism?” He had experienced a lot of upheaval through the years already — church splits and so forth, often over trivial matters — and so, at this point, he simply said, “No. You can go if you like. I’m happy to go alone to the Anglican Church.”

Deciding to go ahead on my own, I broke the news to my son. He was surprised but then told me that I’d make “a brilliant Catholic,” which touched me. There was one snag. The RCIA course started in September and ran through the winter. It was during this time that we ordinarily lived in Spain, and so I started to doubt my decision.

In the meantime, Peter and I had made a last minute decision to take a two week winter cruise to the Canary Islands, little knowing what was in store for us. During such cruises, an inter-denominational service usually takes place every Sunday. The service on this cruise was conducted by a crewmember and we found it bland and not very uplifting. We spotted on our daily notice sheet, however, that a Catholic Mass was offered every morning in the ship’s card room. Mainly out of curiosity, we decided to attend this as well. Father Gerard was a soft-spoken priest and led the service in a gentle, holy way. We felt at peace during the Mass but did not receive Communion. As might be expected in a gaming room, there were no trappings — just a small crucifix and a table adorned with a white cloth, which became a makeshift altar. We were drawn back the following day and this time we were invited, as non-Catholics often are, to step forward with the others to receive the priest’s blessing in lieu of Holy Communion. This turned out to be a powerful moment and, as we left afterward, I noticed that my husband was very touched.

“Do you want to go back and speak to Father Gerard?” I asked, half expecting him to decline in his usual reticent way.

“Yes,” he mumbled and we hurried back to speak to the priest.

As I stepped aside to let the two of them talk privately, I pondered what could have happened, suspecting that perhaps my logical, often skeptical husband had been touched by the Holy Spirit ... and he had. Peter joined me in the corridor about five minutes later looking tearful.

“What happened?” I asked.

“When Father Gerard put his hand on my forehead and said the blessing, I was overcome. I think that I’ve been touched by the Holy Spirit.”

“Shall we ask if we can have a coffee and chat with him?”

“Good idea.”

We three met in a crowded ship’s coffee lounge the following morning and chatted amiably for over an hour. Both of us had lots of questions that we posed to him, all of which he answered succinctly. Feeling comfortable in his presence, I put a question to him.

“I had an unusual experience about a year ago.” I continued to tell him about a recurring picture or image that I had when I prayed. It was of a narrow way that was strewn with obstacles but which I felt compelled to take. Upon stepping on the path, it filled with rose petals. What could it mean?

Nodding and unsurprised, he simply wrote on a piece of paper: St. Therese of Lisieux. I had never heard of her but decided to do some research. My husband and I continued with our questions.

Father Gerard must have heard it all before. Protestants usually have similar misgivings about Catholicism, and we were no exception. The usual questions about Mary, the saints, purgatory, and the Real Presence in the Eucharist reared up.

“Why does the Bible refer to Jesus’ brothers and sisters?” I asked.

Father Gerard explained that it was usual in that culture to refer to all of one’s kinsmen (such as cousins or nephews) as brothers, even though they may not have been actual siblings.

“What about purgatory and prayers for the dead? It’s nowhere in the Bible.”

Father referred us to a Scripture text in 2 Maccabees, in which prayers are offered for Jewish soldiers who had perished in a worthy cause — but with an ongoing sin still in their lives. Of course, I was unfamiliar with this passage, as it was not included in my own evangelically-oriented Protestant Bible. Later, I bought a more complete Bible which did contain these books that many later editions have removed.

Finally, I confided a deeper concern: I had become worried that if I embraced the Catholic Faith, I would no longer be allowed to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit as described in 1 Corinthians 12. To my relief Father told us that the Church accepted those gifts and that he too had been involved in the Charismatic Movement as experienced within the Catholic Church. He then explained that he was on sabbatical at this time and that he had felt the Lord telling him to go on this particular cruise. Was this one of those God-instances? Had this dear priest been sent to help us?

After the cruise, we returned home to Spain and attended Mass at our local Catholic church. The priest, a portly man with a jolly demeanor, spoke no English but an Irish lady stood by as well to read out the English responses, since the little church was packed with expatriates like ourselves. Almost everyone made a hasty retreat as soon as the service was over. This seemed so different from the Evangelical services that we had been attending, where people were always keen to approach new visitors in order to find out if you had been “saved.” Fortunately, coffee

was served in a back room and so we wandered along in the hope that someone there could tell us whether any RCIA courses were available on the Costa del Sol. A handful of friendly folk had gathered and I got chatting with a lady with a familiar face. I had met this particular person once before at a Baptist Bible study. She had left that group devastated because someone there had told her she could not be a Christian if she attended a Catholic church. It was a shameful comment, probably made in ignorance. A kindly old lady figured out what Peter and I were asking about and scribbled something on a scrap of paper. *Lux Mundi*, she had written, followed by a phone number.

### RCIA Search

*Lux Mundi* is an ecumenical Catholic organization in the centre of Fuengirola, about twelve miles from where we live in Spain. Their centre is situated up a narrow street and tucked among the terraced houses with ornate wrought iron window bars and tiny courtyards. It would have been easy to miss it. Various organizations take advantage of the facilities for their courses, and the Church of Scotland uses the chapel on Sunday mornings. I phoned the centre and spoke to a volunteer who seemed stunned by my request. She handed me over to another volunteer who was not fazed and was very helpful. Friendly, she had a Geordie accent (northeast England).

"I did the RCIA course here with the nuns about six months ago," she enthused.

"Great. Maybe my husband and I could do the same?" I asked.

"Oh no. You see the nuns have left — gone to Malaga. Why don't you come to Mass and speak to someone on Sunday?"

It was agreed that this was what we would do. Joining the Catholic Church was certainly different from the charismatic or Free Churches where, if you raised your hand after an altar call, you were in. Unfortunately, many new members dropped out just as fast, especially if they received no teaching after their initial experience.

After struggling to park in bustling Fuengirola, we arrived at *Lux Mundi* hot and flustered. I could hear singing coming from the gathering of the clans over in the Church of Scotland chapel. Introducing myself to a lady behind the reception desk, I asked her about RCIA courses. An elderly gentleman wearing a short sleeved, open neck shirt sat next to her, listening with a benign expression on his weathered face.

At that moment the Geordie lady breezed in, a woman in her sixties, wearing a broad smile. We were introduced. She looked thrilled to see us.

"Meet Father Rodrigues — he'll be saying Mass in a minute. He speaks a little English."

Things were looking up — or so I thought. We shook hands with the gentleman in the open necked shirt and the younger lady behind reception spoke to him in Spanish, explaining that I wanted to convert to Catholicism. At this news, the priest's face lit up and he shook my hand vigorously. I asked about the course again but was told that this could prove difficult, as there

were no English speakers in the area qualified to do this. Feeling thwarted, we waited for the Scots to finish their service. I knew several of these fellow Britishers personally, who looked bewildered to see me there.

"You've missed the service," one of them boomed.

"I know. We're interested in becoming Catholic," I replied in a whisper. You might have thought that I had told him that we were about to do some firewalking. We would get used to this.

The Mass was lovely. Father Rodriguez, now robed, read the liturgy with a thick Spanish accent in faltering English. The congregation sang the Lord's Prayer, holding hands and the old priest joined us, which was touching. As usual, we could not actually receive Communion and so I wondered how long it would be before we could participate in the Mass fully.

In the meantime, I had done some research into the life of St. Therese and read her book, *The Story of a Soul*. Remembering my mental picture of the rose petals, I was brought to tears when I read about her long traditional association with roses. Unsure about the practice of asking a saint for their intercession, I braced myself and asked Therese for a sign. That day we had been invited out to lunch at a restaurant in Mijas. After the meal, I visited the ladies' room and gasped. The whole of the surface of the vanity unit was covered with red rose petals. Then, as I left the restaurant, a waitress handed me a red rose. Coincidence? Maybe, but I felt that Therese was on my case!

### Discovering the Ordinariate

Two weeks later we were back in England and I phoned our large Catholic church in the town centre for advice.

"Yes, we have a RCIA course starting in September."

"Oh, but we won't be here in September." I explained our situation, how we divided our time between two countries.

"You have a dilemma. Maybe you could do the course in Spain?"

We were back to square one. Peter and I can speak basic Spanish, are able to order food and do shopping, but felt sure that our vocabulary would not extend to theological topics. Maybe we should do a crash course in the language? Finally, Peter had a brainwave.

"The ordinariate," he announced.

"The ordinariate?" I repeated.

"Yes. I'll find out about it on the Internet."

Let me explain.

The Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham was established in 2011 by Pope Benedict XVI to allow Anglicans to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church, whilst retaining much of their heritage and traditions. With the ordination of women and subsequently the talk of allowing gay marriage in church, many traditional Anglicans felt disfranchised. The Pope saw a need ease the path to reunion for such Anglican brothers and sisters and so formed the ordinariate.

We decided to contact Father John, a former Anglican priest, who is now a Catholic priest in the ordinariate. Based in Mal-

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

vern, it was not too far to travel and so Peter made an appointment to meet him in his home. We received a warm welcome and spent several hours discussing our situation, which he fully understood. This gentle, elderly man was kind and generous with his time and so we made an appointment to meet again the following week, this time taking some reading material with us. We found ourselves moving into a period of soul searching — of preparing for our First Confession and providing documentation of our status as baptized Christians via the Anglican Church.

### First Confession and Home at Last

It felt strange as we prepared for our First Confession. As Protestants, we had not felt the need to confess to a priest before, and it was daunting as we prepared to bare our souls and our past sins to Father John. But we could not receive the Eucharist as Catholics until we had been to confession. I had been taught as a Protestant that we only need to confess our sins to Jesus and that was more than sufficient. But somehow, being accountable to another human being, in the form of a priest, made the exercise more serious. It finally took place at Hanley Swan, a beautiful old church on the outskirts of Malvern. The church is ornate, in typical Catholic fashion and has many features designed by Augustus Pugin, famous as the interior designer of the Houses of Parliament. Father John put us at ease by suggesting that Peter and I make our confessions in the vestry rather than using the dark, somewhat intimidating confessional box. After receiving absolution, I felt clean and joyful, something that I had not expected. By now, I could not wait for my First Communion.

On 5th July 2012 the day dawned when we were welcomed into the Catholic Church. Our son and his wife were our sponsors and attended the same church in Hanley Swan. It was a scorching day and the air conditioner on our car decided to pack up but we arrived serene anyhow, if a little crumpled. Father John greeted us warmly and proceeded to confirm us, anointing us with oil. It was with joy that we received our First Communion and we felt the Real Presence of Jesus, as promised, in the Eucharist.

In the meantime, we had been watching EWTN, an American Catholic television network. Tuning into *The Journey Home* program hosted by Marcus Grodi, it was fascinating to listen to the many testimonies of people, from all different backgrounds, who, like us, found their way to the Catholic Faith. There were Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, Brethren, and even ex-atheist folk interviewed and, while each story had a common thread, every journey was an individual one. It was heartening to know that Peter and I were far from alone.

We had not told any of our friends in England about our plans, and only a handful in Spain knew. Now it was time to break the news to them. As we kept getting regular emails from our home

church, inviting us to Bible studies and various events, we decided that we could not put it off any longer.

We have some close friends, who go to a different Anglican congregation from the one we used to attend. When we are back in England, we meet up regularly for meals and enjoy our time with them. They are godly people and evangelical in their outlook. They took the news very well, though my friend Heather did ask the usual questions about Mary. Feeling very much the novice, I tried to answer her questions.

“No, we don't worship Mary. We ask her to pray for us.”

I could tell that, despite their politeness, they thought it strange that we should be doing such a thing and I braced myself for more surprised shock as we broke the news to our former vicar. We actually had a very warm response. He told us that he knew that we would not rush into making such a decision. He mentioned that when he prayed about our decision to become Catholics, it felt right, and that he hoped we would enjoy the deep waters of spirituality that the Catholic Church offered. It was a wonderful, encouraging reply.

Visiting another couple with whom we had been close, we were nervous that they might disapprove. She had been an Evangelical missionary in her younger days and both were keen Bible scholars. To our surprise, they too took the news well and, after answering, once again, the usual questions about Mary, we left feeling reassured.

“Don't lose touch will you?” Grace asked.

I was happy. At this stage, we did not have a single friend at the Catholic church. It would have been a lonely road but the peace that I was experiencing was worth any losses along the way. We are still in touch with our Protestant friends and appreciate their loyalty. I am also grateful for the mostly positive input of the Evangelical Christians — nothing on the journey has been wasted, particularly their love of the Scriptures.

It is strange but since my conversion, I often meet Catholics who have wandered away from the Church. I hope that the Lord will use me to encourage them to make the journey back home. ■



*SUE CROSS was born in England and brought up in a non-religious home. She has lived in Hong Kong, Mauritius and Australia and now spends her time in England, and Spain. Sue converted to the Catholic Faith after being an Evangelical Christian for many decades. After selling her business, she took up writing and has published two novels. Sue's website is [www.suecross.com](http://www.suecross.com).*

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