



June 2015 CHNewsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



Finding the Vanishing Point: My Journey to the Catholic Church

by Enrique Crosby

I sat praying in a Catholic church at Holy Cross Monastery near Tombstone, AZ. This was unusual for me, since I wasn't Catholic. I had accompanied my mother-in-law, who was mourning her husband. This had been a place they had liked to stop and pray. As I knelt, I prayed: "God, I don't understand the Catholic Faith, but I'd like to. This is so strange to me — the candles, the images, the whole culture — but I'd like to understand. If there is anything good here to learn, show me, teach me."

As we drove home to Texas, news of Pope Francis' election was on the radio. I thought it interesting that he was from Argentina. I was thirty-six, married fourteen years, and serving alongside my wife at our Assemblies of God church. I would never have thought that, in a little over a year, I would be a Catholic.

Restless for Truth

About one year before my birth, my mother had begun attending a Spanish-speaking Baptist church after a profound conversion experience she had watching a televangelist. Until then, she had been Catholic, as was my father. Some of my first church memories were of Sunday School stories and lying on the carpet studying the wood grain under pews during long sermons. When I was in third grade, we moved from California to San Marcos, TX and began attending a Full Gospel Pentecostal church. I heard many sermons, attended numerous Sunday School classes, and re-

sponded to about five altar calls. I gave my life to the Lord as my personal Savior and believed that my sins were forgiven and I was saved from damnation, but I didn't feel anything change inside.

As I was about to enter high school, I stopped attending church except for special occasions. After an awkward social period, I was introduced to the party lifestyle. It was then that I really began to question my faith. If I had lived all my life never experiencing an altered state of consciousness, what else didn't I know about? I assumed that Christianity was lacking and sought to discover all the things from which Christianity had "kept" me.

Along with a wild lifestyle, I entered college with a strong spiritual hunger. I would search the bookstores and libraries for information about religion and spirituality, mostly Eastern. I dabbled in Buddhism, Hinduism, Transcendental Meditation, and eventually became strongly New Age. I

Journeys Home

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...Journeys Home Continued...

thought I could find truth for myself through study, discipline, and meditation.

When I met my future wife, Heidi, in 1994, she also was heavily involved in the New Age. We became best friends and loved to talk about spirituality. Our relationship was ambiguous and rocky. We dropped out of college our sophomore year, lived in communal housing for a time, hitchhiked to a hippie gathering, and in 1996 tried giving up our possessions to travel the U.S. in a Volkswagen camper van. (We entered a little late in the game to be hippies, but we were trying.)

Our relationship and life began to fall apart, and in desperation, we gave up our travel after three months. She returned to her family in Virginia, and I went back to Texas. I was so tired and was sick of my life. After all my spiritual seeking, I decided to try going back to church with an open mind.

What got me thinking about Christianity again was a book I had read by Anne Rice in which her vampire character goes through a spiritual crisis over his existence and ends up having a long conversation with the devil about the origins of evil and sin. The theology in the book was horrendous — but deep — and made me realize that Christianity had many facets that I had never considered.

I decided to attend my mother's nondenominational church again. This time I was not going to attend as a "bored teen." I was going to try to see past the people (sometimes unfriendly), the music (not really interesting), the building (a school gymnasium) to what was at the bottom of Christianity.

Ripe

In August 1997, I was ripe. During a preaching on the glory of God, I had a powerful conversion experience during which I

was full of tears and experienced a life transforming vision that gave me the fear of the Lord. After kneeling at the altar (I don't think there was even an altar call) and being prayed over, I got up from that experience hungry to read the Bible and to know who this mysterious, holy God was. If He was the God revealed in the Bible, I had to read about Him and try to understand what was known about Him.

When I phoned Heidi and told her I was Christian, she was upset. She thought I had sold-out on my beliefs and search for truth. She asked me what I thought about tarot cards, crystals, and reincarnation. I just told her that Jesus was alive and loved her and that she should try reading the Bible.

During the next few months, I mailed her worship music on cassette tapes, which she listened to on her drive to work. She said later that she would find herself raising her hand and praising God in her car. When she read about Jesus she felt His love and described feeling that He was in the room with her. She later moved back to Texas to finish college and gave her life to Jesus. She was baptized at the nondenominational church my mother and I were attending. My father was still attending Mass at the time. We didn't have a close relationship, and because of the religious differences between my mother and father, we rarely discussed religion. I still don't know how much my father had been catechized as a Catholic, or how devoted he was to living his faith during that period.

Beginning ministry

Heidi and I — both loving God and wishing to serve Him side by side — married in May 1999. We felt strongly called to work full-time in ministry and wanted to be missionaries, but didn't know where to start. Our first child, Mattie, was born in

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FEATURED RESOURCES

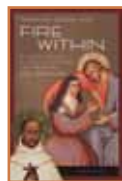


The Holy Spirit as Living Tradition CD — By Dr. Scott Hahn

"The Tradition of the Catholic Church is a 'Living GPS' for our lives!" Renowned Scripture scholar, apologist, and former anti-Catholic Presbyterian pastor, Dr. Scott Hahn, traces the living Tradition of the Catholic Church back to its source in Jesus Christ. He describes some of the myths surrounding the perception of "Tradition" and how those were beautifully broken for him as he discovered the truth of the Catholic Church.

\$35

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This book is the fruit of Fr. Dubay's many years of study and experience in spiritual direction and in it he synthesizes the teachings on prayer of the two great doctors of the Church on prayer — St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila — and the teaching of Sacred Scripture. It is an invaluable resource for every Christian and is based on the Gospel imperative of personal prayer and the call to holiness. All the major elements of these great teachers are ordered, commented on, and put in the context of their scriptural foundations. *Fire Within* is an outstanding book on prayer and the spiritual life written by one of the best spiritual directors and retreat masters of our time, and based on the writings of the Church's two greatest mystical doctors.

\$50

Receive *Fire Within* for a \$50 donation.

\$75

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From Here to Eternity: Five Essentials of Conversion

PART FOUR: FROM A CHURCH TO THE CHURCH

By Dr. Kenneth J. Howell

Conversion to Catholicism often involves tough choices and a transformation in a person's thinking. This is nowhere more evident than in one's thinking about the Church. Even many lifelong Catholics have difficulty thinking about the Church properly, much less thinking *with the Church*. One reason is that they have adopted many secular ideas from the culture around them.



Ongoing conversion or *metanoia* requires facing truth over and over again. Yet, facing truth is difficult; it requires an inner disposition of humility. Humility is not self-deprecation, much less ill will toward oneself. True humility has a spirit of acceptance of the reality that stands in front of us.

What is the reality of the Church that every convert must face? In the last installment, we saw that the Church is more than an institution dispensing sacraments; it is itself like a sacrament,¹ an embodiment of God's presence and life. This truth follows from Paul's rich teaching on the Church as the Body of Christ in the New Testament and it is expanded in the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* of the Second Vatican Council (*Lumen Gentium*).

Since a sacrament makes the invisible grace of God visible and tangible, God's own life is made accessible to human beings through concrete objects like bread and wine, water, oil, human voices and gestures. If the Church is like a sacrament, the Church must be visible too. If this is true, where is that Church which is the Body of Christ, that embodiment of God's grace? What are the marks of the Church so that we recognize it when we see it? No one should ever doubt how heart wrenching this problem can be, especially for modern people. The problem of identifying the Church today is compounded by two modern facts: 1) the multiplicity of churches and 2) the doctrine of the "invisible church."

The Church Invisible?

While the idea of an invisible church has always been implicit throughout church history — it lies implicit in Paul's teaching and in the Church Fathers — the notion was developed with a new twist in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. One hundred and fifty years after the Reformation (ca. 1650), Europe could no longer be thought of as a *Corpus Christianum*. Now there were Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, and Anabaptist churches, all claiming the name Christian and all having major conflicts of doctrine and practice among themselves. In the face of this startling diversity, some began to conceive of the church, not as identified with any one of them, but as consisting of true believers within all of them. The true church of Jesus Christ, so they said, was the body or collection of faithful Christians in churches with different creeds and different forms of worship (liturgy). The natural effect was to de-emphasize the visible church. Some went so far as to say that the visible forms of the church were manmade constructions or institutions. What

really mattered to them was the body of believers scattered throughout the visible institutions. If the visible churches were man-made institutions, then it was an easy step for individuals to start their own churches with their own personally formulated creeds. These people assumed without argument that the Bible authorized them to start new churches with no connection to anything preceding them. Drive down the street of almost any town in the United States and the evidence for this belief is all too evident. This "sufficiency of the invisible church" doctrine is an assumption that few ever question and which has led to the proliferation of multiple creeds, divergent moral positions, and forms of worship.

Not all forms of Protestantism equally embrace this invisible church idea. Two of the most influential Protestant theologies differed radically on this issue: the Lutheran and the Reformed. By and large, Lutheranism did and still does reject "the sufficiency of the invisible church" doctrine while the Reformed embraced it in a moderate form. Yet, it might not be an exaggeration to say that Calvinism (Reformed) was the most influential theology brought to the American colonies.

The Church Mystical

Today, there are two broad institutional bodies which reject "the sufficiency of the invisible church" doctrine: the Orthodox churches and those churches in communion with Rome (e.g. Roman or Latin, Byzantine, Maronite). While strongly affirming the invisible or mystical realities within the visible church, they also insist that the visible and the invisible cannot be separated or alienated. They are two aspects of one sacramental reality. Within the western (Roman) Catholic Church, there have been varying emphases at times. The greater emphasis has fallen on the visible with the last five hundred years, probably as a response to the Protestant tendency to emphasize the invisible church.

In the one hundred years or so prior to the Second Vatican Council, an awareness grew within Catholic circles of the need to return to the invisible, or better, the mystical dimension of the Church. Numerous articles and books on the mystical nature of the Church appeared in the first half of the twentieth century, culminating in the encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* of Pius XII (1943). This encyclical is a treasure trove of good spirituality and theology of the Church.

The Lineaments of the New Testament Teaching

When questions and doubts abound, it is crucial that the conscientious Christian return to the *Continued on page 4* ➤

¹ Please see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* paragraphs 774-776 and *Lumen Gentium* 1.

sources of his faith and that means returning to the New Testament for a fresh look. A survey of different theologies of the Church (ecclesiology) shows clearly that the Catholic view differs fundamentally from other views common in western Christianity. The Catholic view involves at least five claims:

- 1) Jesus Christ established one Church, not many (the uniqueness claim).
- 2) The one Church of Christ must teach true doctrine of Christ Himself and His official representatives, the Apostles (the veridical claim).
- 3) God intended the Church to be populated with a wide diversity of peoples who bring distinctive gifts and ministries to the one Church (the diversity claim).
- 4) All diversity within the Church serves the greater purpose of unity (the centripetal claim).
- 5) The deepest and most pervasive law of the Church must be the law of love (the animating claim).

It is impossible to provide the basis of these claims in the short compass of this article but everyone must understand these five if his conversion is to be real and lasting. The first claim (uniqueness) says that there is ultimately only one Church on the earth and that it was established by Jesus Christ Himself. Matthew 16:18 has always been taken as the foundation of this belief, “I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” Jesus, of course, spoke in the singular (church, not churches) but He also asserted that this Church is indefeasible. It will never vanish from the earth nor be eradicated by demonic influence.

The Acts of the Apostles records the ministries of Peter and especially of Paul in founding churches throughout the Roman Empire. But the whole narrative of Acts attests that the churches scattered throughout the Empire were considered one Church. This is what makes sense of the Jerusalem council where “the apostles and the presbyters” met to determine what was necessary for the whole Church (Acts 15). The Ecumenical Councils of the ancient Church (e.g., Nicaea, Chalcedon) are further proof of the belief that the various churches strung throughout the world must be unified in doctrine. Ancient Christians embraced an idea which many modern Christians may find hard to accept. They accepted as unproblematic the idea that there is only one Church and that this Church should always be unified in the Faith.

Passages like 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 and Ephesians 4:13 show that unity of doctrine or teaching is essential to the Church. Extended passages such as 1 Corinthians 12:1-30 show that God intended the Church to be populated with a diversity of people, ministries, and gifts but also that those diverse expressions of service were all intended to serve a greater unity of doctrine and love. In other words, the force of the Spirit’s work is centripetal, not centrifugal. The work of the Holy Spirit pulls all toward unity.

The only power sufficient for building a universal yet unified Church is the presence of the Holy Spirit, called by many Church Fathers “the soul of the Church.” As the soul and body can only be separated except by death, so the Holy Spirit cannot

be separated from the Body of Christ (the Church) except by the dissolution of the Church. And that is what Christ promised would not happen. It is the supreme law of love that Christ commanded for the Church and which the Holy Spirit infuses into the hearts of believers (see Rom 5:5). On a human level, it is the Christ-like love of the Spirit that allows the Church to be one and to present a unified witness to the world.

The Problem of the One and the Many

Ancient philosophers posed a perplexing problem that is still with us today, the problem of the One and the Many. Christians have their own problem of the One and the Many as well. Amid the dazzling varieties of the Christian Faith, Christians often fall into one of two unhappy solutions. The first is to insist that their own church is the true one while all others are false, opting for unity without any diversity. Some see the Catholic Church in this category but this is not really accurate. The underlying question is how we know which church has a rightful claim to be the original Church that Christ founded. The opposite approach is to affirm diversity without little or no unity. Different creeds, different forms of worship, and divergent positions on moral issues are all accepted as legitimate forms of the Christian Faith. Yet, both these solutions carry with them innumerable problems.

A Christian in the twenty-first century who takes his faith and the Bible seriously is faced with a daunting challenge. The Bible teaches rather clearly that every baptized disciple of Jesus Christ is a member of the Church, but the modern Christian may have a formidable problem in knowing which church is the one Jesus established. Should he consider all churches the same, as legitimate expressions of Jesus’ desire? Or is there one or a few churches which have a greater claim to Jesus’ words? Every convert to Christ must eventually face this question. ■

STAY CONNECTED BY EMAIL!

We have a number of email lists that may be helpful and spiritually edifying to you: Conversion Story Email Club, The Journey Home Program, Deep in Scripture Radio, Deep in History Videos, and more. Visit CHNetwork.org/email to customize your email preferences and stay connected with your favorite CHNetwork content.

NEWSLETTER COPIES

CHNetwork encourages members to make copies of the newsletter and distribute to family and friend. We do ask that copies of the newsletter not be sold. Unless otherwise indicated, the contents of this newsletter are Copyright © 2015 by the Coming Home Network International. All rights reserved.

New Easter Converts

By the CHNetwork Staff

Each year, the Coming Home Network International's staff is blessed to receive e-mails and phone calls from members who have come into full-communication with the Catholic Church. We have compiled some correspondence from former Protestant clergy who were received into the Catholic Faith at the 2015 Easter Vigil. We ask that you keep them and all new converts in your prayers as they seek a deeper walk with Jesus.

▶ FROM A FORMER CONTINUING ANGLICAN PRIEST AND CHURCH PLANTER

Easter was glorious! This Lent and Passiontide were the best we've experienced and entering into full-communication at the Easter Vigil was a powerful and joyful time for my whole family. We look forward with anticipation to what God has planned for us, while feeling a great peace knowing that we are faithfully following Him.

Thanks as always for your prayers and support!

▶ FROM A FORMER SOUTHERN BAPTIST MISSIONARY

We had the best Easter ever, because on Holy Thursday we were welcomed into the Church! It was really wonderful. Our kids were all admitted and confirmed along with us, and we all took Holy Communion together...We have resigned from our missions organization and I am currently looking for a job. God is so good, and despite a lot of unknowns, we are ALL so full of peace and joy. We appreciate all your prayers and encouragement. Thanks for checking on us and for the apostolate of CHN...We look forward to staying in contact and supporting others in the journey in prayer and other ways. Thanks again for everything.

▶ FROM A FORMER MISSOURI SYNOD LUTHERAN SEMINARIAN

I qualified for the Tiber Swim Team! The Easter Vigil was such an amazing experience. My parents were both there, which was especially nice, and some friends also came to support me. Being received into the church, receiving confirmation and the Eucharist for the first time! It was all such a great joy, and a true confirmation in my decision to follow Christ's call into His Church! Even as I write this, it's weird to think, I am a Roman Catholic!...I am positive that my decision to become Catholic was what the Lord intends, really, for all of us! Being able to share in the fullness of the faith and participating in the same faith that those 2000 years before me have enjoyed. How awesome!

▶ FROM A FORMER PRESBYTERIAN LAY MINISTER

Just want to let you know I am now back in full-communication with the Catholic Church. I officially resigned from the Presbyterian Church last month. All the necessary papers have been signed and I had confession yesterday. I now can officially partake in the sacraments and am very excited. Thank you for everything you and Marcus contributed to my journey home.

▶ FROM A FORMER WESLEYAN MINISTER

Our Easter was wonderful. We are now a part of the Body of Christ and we are overjoyed at the future. We both have talked since Saturday night and already we are able to see the strengthening of grace in our lives. Both of us have always struggled with certain mind and heart issues that would lead us to sin. We tried to avoid these things and it always seemed like a battle that we could not win. Since our coming into the Church we both have noticed a strengthened ability to not walk our heart and minds into these areas. I share this with you because we had wondered what it would be like to experience the fullness of God's grace once we were in the Church. I do not think that either of us knew just how visible this change would be for us. We are so excited as we begin this journey that it is hard to put into words. It also makes us feel so utterly special knowing that God called us out from where we were at.

▶ FROM A FORMER LUTHERAN PASTOR

I want to thank you, Marcus, and everyone at your ministry for all of your help and encouragement. I was received into the Catholic Church at this year's Easter Vigil Mass...praise God! I'm incredibly excited to be confirmed, anointed, receive the Holy Spirit, and be able to partake of the Eucharist! I have peace, joy, and strength that I've never experienced before. ■

EWTN'S THE JOURNEY HOME on television and 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

June 1

Holly Ordway*
Former Episcopalian

June 8

John Sherman*
Former Methodist and
Nondenominational

June 15

Daniel Ali*
Former Muslim

June 22

Jared Ortiz*
Revert

June 29

Jack Bryant*
Revert

*Schedule is subject to change.

CHResources Challenge

By JonMarc Grodi | jmgrodi@chnetwork.org



CHResources, the publishing outreach of the CHNetwork, was formed in order to make available more books and other resources that we and the rest of the CHNetwork membership could feel comfortable giving away to non-Catholic friends and family. This is not to say that there aren't many excellent apologetic works out there — there are! We regularly direct people to many of these types of resources. However, we recognized that in and through our specific type of outreach — standing beside those on the journey, answering their questions, and listening closely to their difficulties, — we had many unique insights we could bring to the table in the publication of resources intended to help people discover the truth and beauty of the Catholic Faith.

As said, while these resources are important in our own day-to-day work at the CHNetwork, we greatly rely on YOU to help get them in the hands of those who may need them. Many of you graciously met the challenges earlier this year in ordering and giving away \$5 copies of my father's novel *How Firm a Foundation* and Steve Ray's talk *Peter, the Rock, the Keys, and the Chair*. (Did you miss these challenges? Contact us and ask about them.) And many more members over the years have helped to share episodes of *The Journey Home Program*, written conversion stories, *Deep in Scripture* studies,

Deep in History talks, our *Read the Bible and the Catechism Reading Guide*, and other resources.

This month, I have a new challenge for you. There are many venues — Catholic or religious bookstores, parish libraries, RCIA programs, etc — that don't know about or have access to CHResources (yet) but should. When a non-Catholic Christian engages one of these groups, we think our resources could be a great help in drawing them into greater dialogue and understanding of the Catholic Faith. So, your challenge:

1. Could you share this newsletter OR one of our other printed or digital resources OR the handy flyer at www.CHNetwork.org/flyer with your bookstore, parish library, RCIA program, Bible Study, or other Catholic organization?
2. Whether you yourself are able to share with them, if there is a group you think we should be in contact with about our CHResources, please send your suggestion to me at jmgrodi@chnetwork.org.

Again, our goal is simply to share the beauty and truth of the Catholic Faith with our non-Catholic brothers and sisters, and to help you and other organizations do the same. Thank you for your prayers and generous support. ■

NEWSLETTER DONATION

The CHNewsletter is our primary means of outreach and communication. We request a yearly tax-deductible gift in the amount of \$35 or more to continue receiving the newsletter and remain a supporting member of the CHNetwork.

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Listen to Marcus Grodi and Dr. Kenneth Howell on the Deep in Scripture radio program on Saturdays at 11:00am ET and Sundays at 2:00pm ET on EWTN Radio Plus.

Please visit our website www.deepinscripture.com for live feed, archived programs, and further information.

Calling, Informing, and Empowering

By Marcus Grodi



The Coming Home Network International has been around now for nearly twenty-two years, and the staff and I are very grateful for this opportunity to serve our Lord together in this mission. When the CHNetwork began, however, we never considered the possibility that it would experience such growth. At the time — before email and the internet, and four years before EWTN launched *The Journey Home* program — we assumed the CHNetwork was just a snail-mail fellowship of non-Catholic converts and inquirers. Yet, as we read the constant flow of mail, we began sensing that maybe God was indeed calling us to turn our focus more onto how this fellowship could help our Separated Brethren *come home*.

This morning I was perusing some of my old journals, and found the following entry from November 15, 1995. At that time, the *Network*, as it was then called, had not yet been incorporated; six months later, however, I would resign from Franciscan University to give my full attention to this growing apostolate. As far as I can determine, these were my first recorded thoughts on what God might be calling the Network to become. Frankly, I was not thinking that these words would ever be made public, so I was not worried about being theologically precise; yet, I'm amazed now on how these thoughts are so close to how we have come to understand our mission after all these years.

The work of the Network is for calling back and then empowering our separated brethren into the Catholic Church. Because of their background, they may be ignorant of the Catholic Faith, its history and teachings, and therefore, their institutions and worship may be very irregular. Therefore, the Network reaches out in love to them, as Jesus did, accepting them yet calling them to faithfulness.

Jesus had said to the Samaritan, "Stand up and go on your way; your faith has saved you" (Lk 17:19). Our Separated Brethren are saved by their faith and faithful living. In answer to their prayers, they receive grace for growing in holiness. However, their blindness to the need to actually seek holiness in response to God's graceful assistance robs them of the ultimate blessings, for they, though saved by their faith, will have earned less rewards, [and] will experience less of eternal glorification.¹

The work of the Network is to help fill in the gaps in their ignorance so that they can fully respond to Christ and return to his Church.

Jesus, please guide me in these thoughts. Help me discern the future of the Network.

"[T]o help fill in the gaps in their ignorance so that they can fully respond to Christ and return to His Church." What a rewarding mission we have been given, and yet there is so much more we can and need to do — "for calling back and then empowering our separated brethren into the Catholic Church" — using their gifts for the glory of Christ and His Church!

But whatever we have been able to do, we have only accomplished through your partnership, your support, and your prayers — and your evangelistic outreach to your family and friends! May the Lord continue to bless our efforts together. ■

¹ This idea comes from the many references to "rewards" in the teachings of Christ, combined with the teachings from the Council of Florence (1438-1445), "the souls of those, who after the reception of baptism ... [after death] are purged, are immediately received into heaven, and see clearly the one and triune God Himself just as He is, yet according to the diversity of merits, one more perfectly than another."

SUPPORT CHNETWORK

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Zanesville, OH 43702

Please contact Ann at 740-450-1175 or ann@chnetwork.org if you have any questions or concerns.

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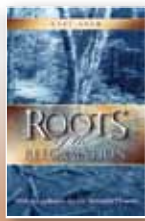
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Visit www.chresources.com

or call 740-450-1175 for these and other great resources to learn more about the Catholic Faith.

Prayer List



Clergy

- For Bill, a retired minister in the Midwest, that our Lord Jesus would give him direction in his journey.
- For a Southern Baptist minister in Virginia, that he may find the guidance to know what to do to support his family in the Catholic Church.
- For Grant, a former Presbyterian seminarian, that the Holy Spirit would guide him as he discerns his path to the Catholic Church.
- For a United Church of Canada minister, that she would be strengthened by our Lord to overcome opposition to her desire to be a Catholic Christian.
- For a Lutheran seminarian in Denmark, that she may be granted the grace to follow God's call to her to enter into full-communion with the Catholic Church.
- For an Adventist minister in Kentucky, that he may find the answers he needs to overcome his objections to the Catholic Faith.

- For Nick who has been on the journey for a number of years but asks for prayers to know what direction he should pursue.
- For a Lutheran in Pennsylvania, that he will receive the answers to his questions about the Faith.
- For Amanda to find the support and encouragement she needs in her faith journey.
- For the wife of a pastor who was recently received into the Catholic Church, that her faith be enriched and strengthened by the Sacraments.
- For a man in Florida who is very much drawn to the Church, that his wife be able to understand his desire to be Catholic.
- For Josh, a young man who feels drawn towards the Catholic Faith, that the Holy Spirit guide his search for truth.
- For a young man in Scotland, that he will find the answers to his questions about the Catholic Faith.
- For Matthew, that he will have clarity as to what direction he should pursue with his faith journey.

- For a woman who feels pulled towards the Catholic Church but wants to be on the same page spiritually with her husband who doesn't share her interest in Catholicism, that she know best how to proceed.
- For Melissa as she returns to the Catholic Faith, that she find a warm welcome and be able to feel at home in the Church again.
- For a Lutheran, who is considering becoming Catholic on account of a Catholic friend who is sharing her faith with him.
- For Leslie, who is in touch with a local priest about the possibility of returning to the Catholic Church.
- For a young man in the Philippines who is drawn to the Catholic Church and defending Church teachings to his friends.
- For a woman who wishes to become Catholic but her husband won't pursue an annulment, that she not loose hope.
- For Grant who has been drawn to the Catholic Church for a number of years, that he be able to move forward into full-communion.

Layity

- For Peter in Wyoming, as he rediscovers his Catholic Faith.

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.

We use only first names to preserve privacy.

Please also pray for the Coming Home Network International's staff and Board of Directors.

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2001. I worked various jobs and ministry rolls. In 2003, I quit my job and took an unpaid position at a parachurch organization called the International House of Prayer (IHOP) in Kansas City. It wasn't easy for us to raise financial support for me to work there, but my wife and I felt that God wanted us to serve Him in ministry. IHOP is like a Protestant monastery devoted to continuous prayer and worship 24/7. I served in various roles including small worship team and dance ministry. It was a very charismatic environment. My wife and I became house church pastors and worked in healing rooms and on prophecy teams.

We felt God call us back to Texas at the end of 2004, thinking that we were going to start a ministry there. Instead, I completed my Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting and worked with troubled teens at a shelter. For a year, we even worked at Father Flanagan's Girls and Boys Town in San Antonio, house parenting seven high school boys in CPS custody. We became public school teachers, my wife teaching third grade and I teaching high school art and photography.

We were heavily involved at our local Assemblies of God (AG) church. We taught Jr. High and High School Sunday School and worked a lot with the youth on Wednesday nights. We became great friends with the pastor and his family and worked together on fundraisers and conference trips. My wife and I began to study to become credentialed in the AG. I took two years of part-time classes at an AG college, working towards a Master of Divinity degree, but stopped after learning that my three-year-old daughter was deaf and would need to get cochlear implants.

It was during this time period that I found myself kneeling at that Catholic church in Arizona.

A new journey

When I returned to teaching, I learned that one of my students had recently been confirmed in the Catholic Church. Interested, I asked him for a book recommendation on Catholicism. He gave me his *Youth Catechism* to read. As I read it, I found it beautiful, troubling at times, and well thought out. I found myself agreeing with many of the teachings and, when something to which I was initially resistant came up (like the Communion of Saints), I would find the Catholic explanations just as convincing — if not more — than my arguments against those doctrines.

I began a year-long study of Catholicism, during which I watched several *Journey Home* programs on EWTN. Some of the books that had the most profound influence on me during this time were *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*, because of its concise explanation of Catholic teaching that cleared up many stereotypes I had; *A Biblical Defense of Catholicism* by Dave Armstrong, because it helped me understand that Catholic beliefs were not contrary to Scripture; and *Four Witnesses* by Rod Bennett, because it showed me what the Church originally looked like — and why — in the words of the first Christians and Church leaders.

I was excited and frightened embarking on this journey. Excited, because I felt that I had stumbled upon so much knowledge, beauty, and Revelation of my Lord Jesus. Frightened, because I felt this would be very troubling to my marriage, ministry, and church relationships. I had been exposed to anti-Catholic sermons, lessons, books, and videos that told me that the Catholic Church was the Whore of Babylon in the Book of Revelation and that the Pope was the Antichrist. Even if my immediate family and friends didn't hold anti-Catholic views, I knew that people in my town and congregation probably had heard and read some of the same anti-Catholic teaching.

I began to feel awkward around my Christian friends. I had never been one for small talk, preferring to discuss what was really going on in a person's life. Now, I began to feel scared and awkward, because I didn't want to have to share what I was going through in my life. I didn't want to be a person that was trying to convince others that some of the things they had been taught were misleading misrepresentations and that the Catholic Faith was real and right. I didn't want to be viewed as someone who was trying to “take” people out of my friend and pastor's church back to Mass. I definitely didn't want to be the person that would try to explain to my pastor and friend that I felt that neither he nor I had the authority to define doctrines and pastor a church based on our own opinions and interpretations of Scripture and/or the vote of a group of well-meaning but unauthorized believers.

My wife and friends became worried, but I just could not stop reading these books. I wanted to know Jesus and to understand the Bible. I wanted to know the Church Jesus founded, not just my twenty-first century American Protestant interpretation of it. I still have never felt that the vision God placed in my heart in my Protestant church background was wrong or somehow empty once I started learning about Catholicism, but rather, I could see it finding its rightful place.

During this year, my wife and I had many heated and passionate discussions. It saddens me to think of the emotional trauma this season had on our relationship. My wife was adamant that she did not want to be Catholic, nor did she want our kids to be. Although (on good days) she would listen to me share what was burning in my heart about Catholicism, she did not want to read any Catholic books. We weren't perfect, but our faith had given us a strong vision together, and now it seemed like this foundation was shaking.

Through reading the *Youth Catechism* and hearing Catholic teachings firsthand — not through Protestant sources — many of my previous, negative judgments against Catholics were pacified. For instance, when I thought of “incorrect” Catholic doctrines, I always first thought of the Bible verse in which Jesus says not to call anyone on earth “father.” I assumed from this verse that Catholics must not read their Bible, or at least don't value it enough to base their faith practice on it. Dave Armstrong's book broke through my ignorance and helped me realize that I had never considered any alternative explanations

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than the Protestant arguments Armstrong explained that in the parable of “Lazarus and the Rich Man,” Jesus called Abraham “Father Abraham,” and, in his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote that he is a “father” to the Christians in the church that he planted. Paul says they do not have many fathers, but instead he claims to be their father.

It wasn't long until I contacted the local priest to tell him that I was studying the Catholic Faith, and that I liked what I was reading! I remember once that year telling my wife during a heated discussion that I would wait five years until I became Catholic, just to make sure it was the right decision. A month later, I was emailing our local priest telling him that I longed for the Eucharist and would probably have to face the consequences of being misunderstood for it.

I entered the RCIA program.

“Bible Relativism”

One particular stumbling block arose when I would think about becoming an AG minister. When the occasion would arise to ecumenically interact with other ministers in the city, how would we know which interpretation of Scripture was correct? How could I know that what I taught was the best interpretation of Scripture? Could I authoritatively say that I was the man to help lead my neighbors to heaven, speak at their weddings, and comfort them at their loved ones' funerals? The idea of having that responsibility on my shoulders frightened me.

With my new-found Catholic perspective, I felt that my understanding of the Christian Faith was no longer fragmented and abstract, but a continuous historic and physical Faith. I was not struggling to find and then piece together doctrines for myself. As a non-Catholic Christian, I had found my doctrines on topics like assurance of salvation or the Rapture and Tribulation had changed over time towards a Catholic understanding of these. If the Catholic Church was scripturally correct on these doctrines, what else did they know, and how long was I going to struggle to find these doctrinal positions on my own? Along with reading some great Catholic apologetics books, I trusted the Catholic Church on the areas of doctrine I still didn't fully grasp.

Vanishing point

Being an art teacher, I use an analogy based on art to help me understand what has happened to me. Being raised in a post-modern world, I was taught a pluralist relativistic view of life. My world was like a cubist/abstract painting with multiple points of view all stitched together. Just like a cubist/abstract

painting, my life might be interesting, but it didn't make much coherent sense. The modern man is asked to exist in an incoherent reality with multiple perspectives and “truths” being equally correct — but I just couldn't stay there and have peace.

In visual art, to have a painting or drawing be in proper perspective, one must have a horizon and stable vanishing point. Artists like Picasso created cubist art that showed reality from multiple perspectives at once, losing clarity and coherent meaning in the process. When I decided to follow Christ, I felt like I found my horizon and a vanishing point. I could now see more clearly up from down, wrong from right, good from evil. Life was not relative. Although I knew Christ as the vanishing point, the existence of so many different Christian denominations, and, therefore, each person being asked to interpret the Bible on his or her own (creating a kind of “Bible relativism”), caused my vanishing point to continuously shift.

Becoming Catholic was like finding my steady vanishing point. It was a stable point in life rooted in the incarnation of Christ, passed down to today through apostolic succession, and currently in focus with the Magisterium and papacy keeping doctrine stable and not up for popular vote. My Christian worldview was steady now.

As more denominations give up orthodox positions on issues like contraception, gay marriage, poverty, universal salvation, and the existence of hell, I hope more non-Catholic Christians will see this as a ramification of the instability of a *sola Scriptura* Christianity. When

people cast off the authority of the Church — that gave us the Bible — it is just a matter of time until people cast off the authority of the Bible itself. For Christians who dislike relativism, I would ask them to see that *sola Scriptura* and the resulting multitude of denominations is a form of Biblical relativism. *Sola Scriptura* allows one to say, “Well, you read the Bible and found that it teaches this view, while I read the Bible and found that it teaches this contradicting view. Because we both have the right to interpret Scripture for ourselves, we have to be OK with contradicting positions.”

Not just a memorial

During that same year, our AG pastor felt led while studying and preaching on the Book of Acts, to have our congregation take communion every week. He felt the Spirit say it would help to end divisions in the church. Ironically, he asked me to lead our AG congregation in the weekly communion service.

I researched, prayed, and prepared each week to lead our congregation in this remembrance. I would often quote 1 Corinthians 11 to the congregation:

“For Christians who dislike relativism, I would ask them to see that *sola Scriptura* and the resulting multitude of denominations is a form of Biblical relativism.”

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So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.” (1 Cor 11:27-30)

It began to sink in that what St. Paul was describing was not just a “memorial” meal. People do not die from a memorial. What was I doing? Further reflection on the Bread of Life discourse in John 6 convicted me that communion was sacred and much more than I was taught growing up.

I brought these concerns to my pastor, but he encouraged me to continue to lead the congregation. Communion became the sweetest and most profound time of the Sunday service for me. Coupled with my study of the *Catechism* and the early Church Fathers, this weekly experience of communion was driving me to long for the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

One day in my one-on-one RCIA meeting, I told the deacon about the conflict I was feeling: leading an AG congregation in communion every Sunday when I knew it was not (and it was not believed by them to be) the Real Presence. He recommended that I stop leading communion in the AG church, because — reflecting on St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 — my conscience was now informed on this matter, and I believed Jesus to be truly present in the Eucharist.

The decision to stop leading communion at my AG church still troubles me from time to time. Had God placed me on a journey to lead that AG congregation and my family on a discovery of the early Church view of the Eucharist, and I simply ran ahead too fast for them? I do feel that it would have been wrong to expect my wife and the people in that congregation to convert with me, to have delayed my entrance until they discovered that desire for themselves. That would be presuming that they would eventually join, and I would be waiting with no guarantee. I still pray that my wife and the folks whom I used to serve will come to study, reverence, and understand the full significance of the Lord’s Supper and the fullness of the Catholic Faith.

Something that made the transition to Catholicism slightly easier for a Pentecostal was belief in miracles and the supernatural. I had already believed in the fact that Paul in the book of Acts had prayed over handkerchiefs and these were laid on the sick so they might recover. I already believed in anointing with oil as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Catholics have always respected the supernatural elements of faith, something that many Protestants rejected after the Enlightenment.

“That they all may be one...”

With my wife and children in attendance, I joined the Catholic Church during the Easter Vigil 2014. I am overjoyed to

take part in the sacred Mass every week receiving the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus in Holy Communion. It was a powerful and profound experience to feel back at home in the original Church Jesus founded. I have begun teaching fourth grade CCE and look forward to helping prepare Catholics for Confirmation.

No matter where I serve in my parish, I am overjoyed to love and serve my family, the domestic church. One of the most challenging parts of this journey is not having my wife alongside me. I can’t blame her for not reading the books I chose to read, or even in asking the same questions I had asked. I have tried to reassure her of my love and support for her continued desire to be a credential AG preacher. I currently attend an early Mass and then join my wife and children at the AG service. Sometimes my wife will accompany me to Mass. At times, I sit in on her Sunday School class as an encouragement. Although I will never be a pastor of a church as a Catholic, I know there are many opportunities in a Catholic parish to encourage, teach, and pray for people without becoming a priest or deacon.

It still vexes me to see so much anti-Catholic misrepresentation online. However, I understand; not too long ago I too used to think the Pope would be the second beast of Revelation! I pray that this ignorance will one day be illuminated by knowledge, love, and truth.

I feel a new freedom to lean upon the authoritative interpretation of Scripture in the Catholic Church. I no longer have to strive to have a cutting edge revelation and interpretation of Scripture that “wows” others. I feel free to focus on loving people, especially my wife and kids, and to seek to lay down my life for my friends. As a Charismatic Catholic, I believe the charisms of the Spirit are at work in a dynamic life-giving way. I pray with Christ that the Church will be one, that the Protestant lovers of Scripture would bring their knowledge to serve in the Catholic Faith, and that Charismatics would bring in their dynamic life in the Spirit to refresh the Church’s sacramental life.

It has not been an easy journey and the temptation was there to say as in the days of Jesus, “This is a hard saying. Who can bear it?” But Jesus is my great reward, and only He has the words of eternal life. ■



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BLOG

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THE **BEAUTY** AND **TRUTH**
OF THE **CATHOLIC FAITH**
WITH OUR NON-CATHOLIC BROTHERS AND SISTERS

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