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# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



## Baptist Preacher's Son Becomes Catholic

By Casey Phillips

What would convince a Jesus-loving, hymn-singing, Baptist preacher's son to become a Catholic? This is a question that many have had for me over the past couple of years, whether they have worded it quite as succinctly or not. Why would someone with such a vibrant faith, rooted in a rich, solid family tradition, walk away from it and leap into the arms of the Church of Rome? Though many have probably speculated, citing history, art, or unity, they all fall short of the true reason that my wife and I made the journey across the River Tiber. As the famous Catholic convert, G.K. Chesterton, once put it, "The difficulty of explaining 'why I am a Catholic' is that there are ten thousand reasons, all amounting to one reason: that Catholicism is true." Though it may seem simplistic, it all boils down to that. Catholicism, when taken seriously and studied critically, simply cannot be denied.

My journey began in a small, rural Baptist church in western Kentucky. My wife's began as a member of one of the largest Baptist churches in the state. Though from different church climates, both of us grew up alongside caring, God-fearing people who loved the Lord and wanted nothing more than to serve Him. We both were taught about the atoning death of Christ, the reality and impact of our sin, and the importance of Scripture. We were inspired to live lives totally entrusted to God's love, and though we often took that mission for granted, the impact of that message remained with us throughout our formative years. The Baptist church was the only thing I knew as a child. We would often pass by the Methodist church downtown, but there was always an unspoken

understanding that the Baptist tradition was the correct one. As far as Catholicism was concerned, my exposure to it, and that of my family, was non-existent. A thick shroud surrounded the term Catholicism, and none of us knew enough about it to commend or condemn it. Was it a Christian church? We weren't exactly sure, but we also did not see any real necessity to investigate further. In short, the Baptist church was the only filter through which we understood the Christian Faith and our Lord Jesus Christ.

### The Lunchroom Preacher

As a young child, I fondly remember going to our local Baptist church with my entire family and participating fully in each service. As I moved into adulthood, I was asked to be *Continued on page 2* ➤

Journeys Home

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

the song leader as well as the Sunday school secretary, charged with recording each morning's attendance, Bible reading participation, and offering. This active participation in my church community bled over into how I acted at school among my peers. I was the "lunchroom preacher" who called my peers to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. I recall one occasion when I attended a party, very much out of my character, after graduation. Upon my arrival with a friend, and greeting many familiar faces from school, one of my peers retorted: "Casey, what are you doing here? It's like Jesus is here!" To those around me, my identity was inextricably linked to the faith that I proclaimed. I was not ashamed to stand up for what I believed, and I often did so with vigor. In one instance, of which I am not particularly proud, I made a girl my age cry after expressing to her my dislike for the less than laudable activities that she and some of her friends had planned for Easter weekend. For better or for worse, I was type cast as the "Jesus Freak" among my friends, and I had no intention of rejecting that title.

As I matured, I began to have troubles of my own, and my relationship with Christ was challenged. I had private struggles which no one knew about, that threatened to destroy the image that I had made for myself. At the very least, the perception that others had of me kept me from outwardly manifesting my innermost vices. This tug of war between who I claimed to be and who I was behind closed doors persisted and drove me to ques-

tion my own justification before God. How could I sincerely call myself a follower of Christ and knowingly persist in the sinful ways from which He had died to redeem me? Many days I would return home from church, a cold sweat on my back, in fear that I had somehow lost the salvation which God had given to me at age fourteen. As a Baptist, I believed that God, once He justified or "saved" someone, kept him or her in His graces regardless of whatever sin he or she may have committed. Known as the doctrine of "once saved always saved," this teaching was ordinarily a source of great solace for me. No matter how blinded I became of my sin, no matter how far I wandered away from my Creator, He persisted in holding me tightly in His clutches. Throughout high school, this doctrine was enough to keep me from completely questioning what I believed to be true. As many others have experienced, it was not until my undergraduate years that I was forced to make a decision about what I ought to believe about God. An encounter with other people who believed differently than me about eternal salvation, but who at the same time were God-fearing Christians, sought to frustrate my understanding of who God is and what He wanted from me.

### Discovering That Not All Christians Are Baptist

Yes, it was during college, that proverbial hotbed of rebellion and dissension, when I was faced squarely with the fact that I may have had it wrong on at least one aspect of the divine. It

## FEATURED RESOURCES

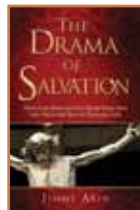


### What Must I Do To Be Saved? — By Marcus Grodi

A growing majority of Christians today believes that all that is necessary for salvation is an individual's faith in Jesus. For them, salvation is merely by faith alone in Jesus alone by grace alone. But is this biblically, theologically, and historically sound? *What Must I Do To Be Saved?* describes what it meant to be saved as a member of the people of God in the Old Testament and how Jesus fulfilled and brought into completion God's plan of salvation through the new people of God, the Church. A correct biblical and historical understanding of salvation in Jesus Christ involves much more than a person's intellectual acceptance and heart-felt prayer of faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

\$35

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### The Drama of Salvation — By Jimmy Akin

The most important question of your life is "Where Will You Spend Eternity?" Few people understand what Jesus did or how it affects us. There are, unfortunately, endless squabbles between Christians of different persuasions, leading to confusion on a massive scale. In this book, best-selling

Catholic author Jimmy Akin uses his expertise in Scripture and Church teaching to cut through the confusion and provide clear answers on important issues like: What we need to do to be saved; Whether salvation is a one-time event or a process; Whether penance is part of God's plan; What indulgences are; How faith and works relate; What the Church teaches about justification; How far apart Protestants and Catholics are on this question; Whether you have to be a Catholic (or a Christian) to be saved. You owe it to yourself to find out the facts about the most important question in life, because the answer will affect you and those you love forever.

\$50

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\$75

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was impossible for me to persist, as I had been doing up to that point, in the sinful acts that had begun during my high school years. This realization did not happen overnight, however, and it took me delving even deeper into sin before I experienced any real awakening. An addiction to pornography had ravaged my interior life with God, not to mention the serious relationship that I had with my fiancée (now my wife). This addiction, which had started when I was a pre-teen and which subsequently worsened when I became a young adult, forced me even deeper

into the role of a faux Christian. But wasn't my salvation secure? Was I not justified before God regardless of my sinful actions? My ruminations on the Baptist doctrine of "once saved always saved" grew longer and more intense. I continually sought to cool my burning conscience through watching and listening to different Protestant pastors or apologists who also promulgated this doctrine. Though they seemed to answer my questions for a time, I always ended up back online, searching the web for answers. The justifications that I had previously used for my ac-

*Continued on page 5* ➡



## Beauty Drew Me In

INTERVIEW WITH DEACON GEORGE BUTTERFIELD  
(FORMER CHURCH OF CHRIST MINISTER)

*I came to know Jesus Christ through my parents who were believers in Jesus. They took us to the little country church every Sunday morning, every Sunday night, every Wednesday night. We were taught to love the Scriptures, to love the story of the church — and we did. By the time I was 15 years old I had my own Bible and was marking it up. I had been baptized and came to totally love Jesus. Becoming a disciple of Jesus totally changed my life. I started on this journey of getting to know Him better, getting to know the Scriptures better, and sharing my faith with others. When I was in high school, we would have debates, and the only Catholics I knew were people whom I debated with.*

*Over the years, I went through a process of becoming more and more Catholic in my thinking. First, the social teachings of the Church really got to me, and I thought, "the Catholics, they've really written on these social teachings, and they're so beautiful!" Then I started visiting Catholic churches, visiting monasteries, and visiting people who knew Jesus, and I thought, "Oh my land!" I came from a background where Catholics weren't even [considered] Christians, and now I got to meet these fantastic people. Now, not every Catholic is on fire for Jesus, but I met a lot of them who were, and they helped me to rethink the Catholic Church.*

*Through a long process of study and discernment, I came closer and closer to the Catholic Church. It wasn't the easiest thing to do; I came from an anti-Catholic background, and so I had to deal with not only head things, but things down in my heart. Through a series of events — knowing people and experiencing Mass for the first time — I came more and more to fall in love with it. Here I was, still a minister in another Christian tradition, beginning to think to myself, "You know George, in many ways, you're just thoroughly Catholic!"*

*Eventually God did lead me out of the church I was in, and into the Catholic Church. When I came into the Church,*

*I found resources to help me to become even more fully Christian. I found a fuller understanding of the Bible; I found the Catechism. I fell in love with many of the other resources, the saints in particular. I found men and women throughout the ages who loved Jesus and showed that love, who gave their lives for Jesus. At the time we had Pope John Paul II, who was such an inspiration to me because he was so dynamic and a preacher of the gospel, and then there was Mother Teresa, who lived that life. I had always admired people who were great speakers and teachers, and then here's this little woman serving the poorest of the poor — it really brought me to my knees.*

*My friends would ask me, "George, what did you find in the Catholic Church?" My answer is always the same: sheer beauty. It's beautiful — her saints, her faith, her liturgy. Everything about her is beautiful, and I had known nothing of this beauty. I'd caught a glimpse of it through reading the history of the saints and the Church, but to actually experience that beauty myself is the most amazing thing I could have never imagined. And to [now] be a deacon, to actually be able to lead liturgies and to preach, it's like I've died and gone to heaven! ■*



READ & WATCH  
[chnetwork.org](http://chnetwork.org)

Be sure to share this and other conversion stories & interviews with your friends! Go to [CHNetwork.org](http://CHNetwork.org) and click "Stories."



# Evangelizing the Digital Continent

By Matt Swaim, Communications Coordinator

For some time, the Coming Home Network International has been looking at ways to expand its social media presence through community forums, social networking websites, and other methods of digital engagement. One of the reasons I was brought on staff this spring was to make sure we had an active presence in those arenas.



Of course, these initiatives are nothing new to our mission; The Coming Home Network has prioritized multimedia from the beginning, starting with Marcus Grodi's hosting of EWTN's *The Journey Home* program. Now, we have new ways of promoting the wonderful stories shared on *The Journey Home* — through live tweets, digital still images featuring quotes from guests, and other easily shareable content. The response has been exciting! We already knew *The Journey Home* had viewers from all over the world, but having a more focused social media presence has allowed us to respond directly to these viewers in real time, and to steer the curious toward deeper conversations in places like our online community forums.

We are also aware that social media is a double-edged sword; while it allows us to connect with more people, it can also make those connections feel impersonal. To make sure that the pastoral character of the CHNetwork doesn't get lost in the digital shuffle, we've enlisted the assistance of a long-time friend of the CHNetwork, Ken Hensley, to monitor our community forums and personally engage inquirers and those at difficult points in their journey in our online forum.

Strengthening our presence on interactive media has shown us, in part, what we already knew — that people look to the CHNetwork not just as a service, but as an opportunity for fellowship. Setting these new efforts in motion brings us closer to a goal of being available to members around the world, 24/7, just a click or two away for people seeking a deeper relationship with Christ through His Church.

We're thrilled at the fruit that these efforts are bearing after only a couple of months of renewed focus — please pray that as we continue our mission on what Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI referred to as the "digital continent," that the Holy Spirit continues to bless our work and connect us more personally with new brothers and sisters in the Lord! ■

## THE CHNETWORK STAFF, ADVISORS, & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- **President/Founder**, Marcus Grodi (*former Presbyterian pastor*)
- **Chief Operating Officer**, JonMarc Grodi
- **Manager of Ministerial & Academic Members**, Jim Anderson (*former Lutheran*)
- **Director of Studio/Media**, Scott Scholten (*former Presbyterian*)
- **Office Manager**, Ann Moore
- **IT/Facilities Coordinator**, Bill Bateson (*former Secularist*)
- **Publications and Laity Coordinator**, Mary Clare Pieczynski
- **Communications Coordinator**, Matt Swaim (*former Methodist*)
- **Financial Assistant**, Wendy Hart (*former United Methodist*)
- **Developer of Web & New Media**, Seth Paine (*former non-denominational*)
- **Financial Advisor**, Kevin Lowry (*former Presbyterian*)
- **Spiritual Advisor**, Brother Rex Anthony Norris (*former Anglican*)
- **Board of Directors**: Marcus Grodi (President), Msgr. Frank Lane (Chaplain), Dr. Robert Geiger (Vice President), Kevin Lowry (Treasurer), Dr. Marian Schuda (Director), Donald Brey (Director)

## CHNETWORK RETREAT

The CHNetwork is offering a retreat October 17-20, 2016 in Biddeford Maine for clergy and laity who are converts/reverts to the Catholic Church or are on the journey and inquiring about the Catholic Faith.

We are also planning to offer additional events for CHNetwork members in the future. We welcome your feedback regarding what kind of events would be most helpful to you and have created a survey on our website. Please go to [chnetwork.org/events](http://chnetwork.org/events) to sign up or for more information on the Biddeford, ME retreat and other events hosted by the CHNetwork.



### CHNetwork News

By JonMarc Grodi, Chief Operating Officer

Greetings, friends! This month we are delighted to introduce the newest member of our team, Matt Swaim. Please be sure to read his article on page 4 and also visit us on social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to see all Matt's great contributions to our apostolate. We have entered an exciting new phase of our work this past year with the launch of the new CHNetwork website, store, and online community. With all that is going on, I want to take a moment to share a bit of our larger vision for the CHNetwork, which will give greater perspective to some of the changes and new additions.



When the CHNetwork began, it was mainly a word-of-mouth operation started by my dad, with a simple physical newsletter and mailing list. All of the communications were conducted by phone or physical letters. In contrast, over the years, aside from my father's media involvement with *The Journey Home* program and other projects, the internet has become our most important frontier for reaching those who are inquiring about the Catholic Church, people on the journey, and converts who are striving to "be at home" and share their gifts.

In December of last year, carrying over into this, we received a powerful wake up call about the needs of such people, and the importance and uniqueness of our work. **With the launch of the new website, we received a huge influx of new members: more new members in a few months than we had received in all of 2015!**

More people than ever are hungry for the fullness of Christ and His Church, and we want to ensure that every one of them has the fellowship and resources they need for the journey home and beyond.

The core of our care of converts and those on the journey remains strong through the great efforts of our pastoral care team: Jim Anderson, Mary Clare Piccynski, and Brother Rex Anthony Norris. And we've raised the game here with new opportunities in the online community forum and our expanded CHNetwork retreats. The revamp of the website is a powerful showcase of our work and resources as well as an online meeting place for all converts and inquirers into Catholicism. What else can I say? **We are ready to take this show on the road.**

This is where Matt Swaim comes in. As Communications Coordinator, Matt's goal will be to extend the reach and develop the voice of the CHNetwork. Matt will be promoting our mission and great evangelistic content online — written stories, *The Journey Home* program, Deep in Scripture podcasts, Deep in History talks, Signposts, and

much more. Through the CHNetwork blog and social media, he'll be initiating and promoting ever-greater discussion and engagement amongst Catholics and those seekers whom the Holy Spirit is leading home to the Church. Even beyond these areas, he'll be working in a variety of ways to bring in new converts and stories, engage new inquirers and journeyers, and equip new partners to help us build up this great mission.

We've been blessed with a unique and powerful mission — to help more people find their true home in Jesus Christ and His Church — and the CHNetwork is on the move to answer the call. We are so glad to have your partnership in our work. ■

### NEW STAFF MEMBER

Starting in May of this year, Matt Swaim joined the Coming Home Network International as its new Communications Coordinator. Matt has been working in Catholic media for over a decade, perhaps most recognizably as producer and host of EWTN Radio's Son Rise Morning Show. Having grown up in a number of Christian denominational backgrounds, including Nazarene and Free Methodist, Matt is excited about the bridge-building opportunities between people of good will that will be part of his new role at the CHNetwork. His books include *Prayer in the Digital Age* and *Your College Faith: Own It!*, and he and his family will be representing the CHNetwork in the Washington, DC area. Matt will be responsible for increasing outreach and development efforts through social media and continuing to establish the CHNetwork as the go-to resource for all those on the journey towards a deeper relationship with Christ and His Church.

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# The Ministry of Spiritual Direction

By Br. Rex Anthony Norris | [LittlePortionHermitage.org](http://LittlePortionHermitage.org)

“The Holy Spirit gives to certain of the faithful the gifts of wisdom, faith and discernment for the sake of this common good which is prayer (spiritual direction). Men and women so endowed are true servants of the living tradition of prayer. According to St. John of the Cross, the person wishing to advance toward perfection should ‘take care into whose hands he entrusts himself, for as the master is, so will the disciple be, and as the father is so will be the son.’ And further: ‘In addition to being learned and discreet a director should be experienced. . . . If the spiritual director has no experience of the spiritual life, he will be incapable of leading into it the souls whom God is calling to it, and he will not even understand them.’” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2690)



As I have studied the lives of the holy men and women who make up the communion of saints — officially canonized or otherwise — I have noticed three things they share in common. One, they have a deep and abiding relationship with the Person of Jesus Christ. Two, not only have they each submitted their will and their life to the Lordship of Jesus, they have fully embraced the gift of their baptism as active members of the Catholic Church, His Mystical Body on earth. Three, in order to maintain and grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church each of them has sought out spiritual direction.

So, what is spiritual direction? What is a spiritual director?

## What is Spiritual Direction?

Spiritual direction is a discipline through which a person explores and deepens his relationship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the context of confidential ongoing conversation with another disciple of Jesus who, because of his/her personal experience and intellectual knowledge of God and the spiritual life, accompanies others on their way home to God.

Spiritual direction helps us become aware of the ways in which we cooperate with, ignore, or in some cases actively hinder the Holy Spirit's work within us.

Grounded in the truths of the faith once delivered to the saints (cf. Jude 1:3), loyal to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, and drawing upon the spiritual wisdom of those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith, spiritual di-

rection is a ministry in service to the whole Church. Through it we grow in our prayer life, and learn to live more fully into and out of our call to holiness in whatever state of life God calls us.

## What is a Spiritual Director?

A spiritual director is a person whom we have chosen after prayerful consideration to accompany us, to hold us accountable, to encourage us, to challenge us and, when necessary, engage us in fraternal correction along our way of discipleship.

Our spiritual director helps us to notice God's presence and activity in our life. He or she can encourage us to explore our personal reactions and responses to the Holy Trinity's presence and activity within and around us.

A spiritual director will usually have some training in the ministry of direction. Sometimes however a director is simply a woman or man who has a reputation in the community of faith for being able to offer spiritual insight and counsel when asked to do so.

## What to Expect in Spiritual Direction?

A spiritual direction meeting is a one-on-one meeting (though sometimes direction

takes place in a group setting) during which the director and the directee discuss the spiritual life of the directee. *Where have you noticed God in your life since last we met? When have you experienced God as absent from your life since we last met? In what ways has God comforted you in your afflictions or afflicted you in your comfort since we last met?* These are typical questions that might be asked and discussed in a spiritual direction session.

*Where have you noticed God in your life since last we met?*

*When have you experienced God as absent from your life since we last met?*

*In what ways has God comforted you in your afflictions or afflicted you in your comfort since we last met?*



The frequency of spiritual direction is usually once a month for an hour. Sometimes it is necessary for various reasons to “meet” over the phone. Even video conferencing is becoming more common in this technological age.

The fee for spiritual direction depends upon the director. Some spiritual directors ask a set fee for their services. Some spiritual directors accept a “free will offering” of any amount; some spiritual directors do not expect and will not accept compensation. It is appropriate to discuss this matter with any prospective spiritual director to be sure that you are in agreement regarding a fee.

I would simply remind my reader at this point that if your spiritual director is a person in consecrated life, he or she has taken a vow of evangelical poverty. Monetary gifts or gifts in kind are usually very helpful.

Lest someone be concerned about confidentiality, be assured that meetings with a spiritual director are normally held in the strictest of confidence. (This rule would likely be abrogated should a directee suggest some form of harm to self or others during a session.)

In closing, I would like to encourage my reader to consider finding a spiritual director. Avail yourself of this time-tested discipline for growth in Christ. I will also reiterate what I stated at the beginning of this brief article. All the saints of whom I am aware had at least three things in common. They were all deeply committed to Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior; they were faithful to His Body the Church, and each had a spiritual director.

As Patrick Coffin has said at the close of nearly every edition of the *Catholic Answers Live* radio program: “Be a Saint. What else is there?” ■

## SHARE YOUR STORY!

The CHNetwork **always welcomes** those of our members who are converts or reverts to share their **written conversion stories** of how they were drawn (or drawn back) to the Catholic Church.

If you feel called to share your story, please feel free to go to [chnetwork.org/converts](http://chnetwork.org/converts) to review our writer's guidelines, see sample stories, and upload your testimony.

## NEWSLETTER DONATION

The CHNewsletter is our primary means of outreach and communication within the CHNetwork. We ask that members consider making a yearly tax-deductible gift in the amount of \$35 or more to continue receiving the newsletter.

## NEWSLETTER COPIES

We encourage members to make copies of the newsletter and distribute to family and friends. We do ask that copies of the newsletter not be sold. Unless otherwise indicated, the contents of this newsletter are copyright © 2016 by the Coming Home Network International. All rights reserved.



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**CHNetwork**

Attention: Ann Moore

PO Box 8290, Zanesville, OH 43702

Please contact Ann at [ann@chnetwork.org](mailto:ann@chnetwork.org) or 740-450-1175 if you have any questions or concerns.

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# Prayer List



## Clergy

- For a former Berean youth minister, that our Lord Jesus would guide him as he ventures on a new path toward the Catholic Church.
- For Katherine, a former United Methodist seminarian, that the Holy Spirit would use her online viewing of Catholic teaching to bring her and her husband home to the Catholic Church.
- For an Antiochian Orthodox priest, that God would open doors to enable him to return to full communion with the successor of St. Peter.
- For a wife of a Lutheran minister, that the Holy Spirit would convert her husband's heart away from his strong opposition to her wish to become a Catholic Christian.
- For Raphael, a former Baptist lay minister, that God would guide him to a wise priest who will help him to have his marriage regularized.
- For a United Church of Canada minister who wishes to become Catholic but cannot bring herself to sever the ties with her parishioners.
- For David, a former Episcopal seminarian, that, as he prays, reads, and discerns about the Catholic Faith, our Lord Jesus would bring him into the Church which is ever ancient and ever new.
- For Bob, a former minister in Florida, that the Holy Spirit would guide his every step as he begins again his journey to the Catholic Church.

■ For a Lutheran minister in Ohio, that God would guide him to the vocation to which He is calling him.

■ For an Anabaptist seminarian, that the fullness of the truth and love of Jesus would successfully draw him and his family home to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

## Lay

■ For Joy who has connected well with a local parish and looking into RCIA, that she be able to move forward with her journey toward the Church.

■ For Lynda who is connected with her parish and is beginning the practice of spiritual communions as she waits on RCIA to begin.

■ For a convert in the West who is struggling with not knowing people in her parish and she misses the fellowship of her Protestant church.

■ For a fallen away Catholic in California who has a deep appreciation for the Blessed Mother, that she bring him back to her Son in the Eucharist.

■ For Greg who is moving forward with his journey but is concerned about his wife who is averse to organized religion.

■ For a Wesleyan in Virginia to be able to receive the necessary annulments so she can live a fully Catholic life.

■ For a woman who comes from the Reformed tradition and is planning to go to Eucharistic Adoration frequently as she waits for next Easter when she hopes to be able to receive Jesus in the Eucharist.

■ For Katie to be able to receive the support on her journey she needs as she moves towards the Church.

■ For a Presbyterian who feels strongly drawn to the Church but doesn't know how to proceed without the support of her family.

■ For a young lady on the journey whose parents are not supportive of her desire to be Catholic.

■ For a new Easter convert who is going back to her Protestant church for fellowship while still attending Mass since she hasn't been able to connect well with any Catholics.

■ For Brett who is reading and studying about the Catholic Faith, that he continue to explore the richness the Holy Spirit desires to give him through a deeper walk with God.

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 or general descriptions 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

#### August 1

Dr. Petroc Willey\*  
Former Evangelical

#### August 8

Clark Durant\*  
Former Congregational,  
Presbyterian, and Episcopalian

#### August 15

Kathleen Fowle\*  
Former non-denominational

#### August 22

Shane Kapler\*  
Former non-denominational

#### August 29

Bishop John O. Barres\*  
Lifelong Catholic

\*Schedule is subject to change.



## ...Journeys Home Continued...

► “Journeys Home” continued from page 3

tions had all failed to convince me that what I was doing was morally benign. It was through this struggle with sin that I was brought to the realization that I could not continue in it and legitimately call myself a Christian. Through God’s grace, I eventually stopped justifying my actions, became honest with myself about their malignancy in my life, and started the arduous trek toward walking uprightly with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Though I was still far from becoming Catholic, I began to seriously doubt the legitimacy of certain doctrines with which I had been raised. Specifically, I began to no longer believe that, once God “saved” or justified someone, he or she could no longer be found outside of His fold. I realized that this man-made tradition of “once saved always saved” had been the source of all the stress and anxiety that I had endured over the last 10 years of my life. The biblical truth was that I needed to continue following Christ and guarding my relationship with Him, lest I be cut off from His grace (see Romans 11:22).

At the same time that I was coming to an awakening in my faith, I was double majoring in Spanish and religion as an undergraduate student. As I studied religion, with a focus in biblical studies, I began to see the divergence of beliefs between people who called themselves Christian. The professors who made up the religion department were themselves a testament to this fact; I took a class on Judaism with a Lutheran, a class on Augustine with a former Baptist, and advanced Old Testament with an Episcopalian priest. The culture of the college campus also lent itself to a broad range of belief and practice, some not even Christian. As I studied church history and the Bible, I began to discover that my understanding of the Christian religion, as described within the boundaries of conservative Evangelicalism, was somewhat limited, and that it could not be the only legitimate understanding of what Christianity is or should be.

As time progressed and my receptivity of other views increased, I was asked to serve as a teaching assistant under an Episcopalian professor. Noticing my progression away from my Baptist moorings, this professor would casually assert, jestingly, the superiority of the Episcopalian faith. During one specific exchange, he conveyed to me what he thought to be the benefit or advantage of being an Episcopalian. “Look,” he had said, “you don’t want to be Catholic because that is going too far. As an Episcopalian, you can be as Catholic or as Protestant as you want to be.” Though he did not know it at the time, that statement stuck with me until I eventually came home to the Catholic Church. It was not until much later that I found out that this view, known as the *via media*, was one that confronted other, more notable converts like Blessed John Henry Newman. Though my professor was a sincere, faith-filled individual, I could not begin to imagine having it “my way” when it came to eternal truths. Can I lose my salvation or not? Is the Eucharist truly the Body and Blood of Christ or merely a symbol? Must I confess my sins to a priest or not? I wanted the truth on these topics, as well as many others, and I did not wish to be the ar-

biter of divine revelation. Little did I know that the answers to these questions would be found in the Catholic Church.

At the same time that I was discovering the multiplicity of Christian belief, I had a Spanish professor who was one of the most outspoken people I have ever met, and he was unapologetically Catholic. Up until this point of my journey, I had never encountered anyone who was a practicing, sincere Catholic. In fact, when I first found out that this professor was Catholic, I remember being somewhat shocked. You mean Catholicism and Christianity are related somehow? At no point did this professor seek to evangelize or proselytize me during my four years of undergraduate work, but he did live his faith. No power or institution, not even the very institution for which he worked, could stand in the way of his ability to genuinely live his faith in everyday life. It was via his witness, and that of other Catholics that I met during this time, that I began to incorporate Catholicism into the panorama of Christian views that I considered to be legitimate. This move, though I did not recognize it at the time, would be my first step into the River Tiber, on my way to the Eternal City.

Amidst all of this spiritual awakening, God gifted me with a spouse who would prove vitally important to the direction of my faith journey. On July 28, 2012, the summer before our senior year of college, I exchanged vows with the woman who would become the mother of my children. Our wedding took place in a small country church just outside of Lexington, Kentucky, presided over by a very close friend with whom I had worked previously in a small startup church back in my home town. Marrying Erin was the best decision I had made up to this point

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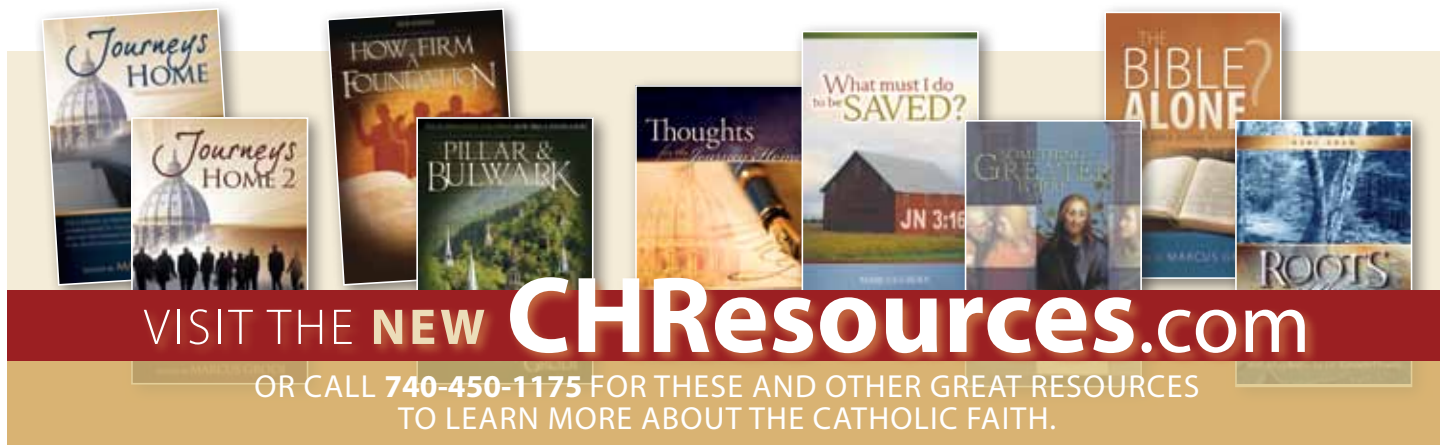
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## *...Journeys Home Continued...*

in my life, outside of following our Lord. Though we would see our ups and downs, she would prove to be the rock I would lean on along the rough road we followed on our journey of faith.

My journey during college can only be described as an awakening. Transitioning from a fundamentalist, Missionary Baptist understanding to one which appreciated the beauty of many different Christian traditions was the first step toward my eventual conversion to the Catholic Church. Through an intense struggle with the Protestant doctrine of “once saved always saved,” I was convinced that I had erred in my understanding of how God redeems and heals His children. I vividly remember, toward the end of my undergraduate work, clutching an application to Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky and feeling unable to complete it. The application asked me to describe my relationship with Christ up to that point in my faith journey. How could I reveal all that I had gone through? Would they accept my application if I was truthful? I wasn’t even sure where I stood on my justified state before God, so undertaking a master’s degree in theology seemed irresponsible. With the help of my wife, I decided to pursue a master’s degree in Spanish rather than undertaking the life of a Protestant seminarian. Though I could not see it at the time, and I often entertained doubts about my decision, the Lord was preparing my heart to receive something that I would have otherwise rejected out of hand. If I had gone to that seminary, who knows if I ever would have become Catholic?

### **What Is This Thing Called Catholicism?**

After college, my wife and I moved to Lexington, Kentucky, where I completed the master’s degree in teaching Spanish. Resolving not to go to seminary was a difficult move, but I felt it was the only honest one to make. I was still struggling with what

to believe as a Christian. After our move, my wife and I attended the church where she was raised, Southland Christian Church. Southland, the second largest church in the state of Kentucky, holds a very special place in my heart. Though it seemed at least ten times larger than the church I was raised in, Southland’s mission to serve others as the hands and feet of Christ left an impact on me. These people loved Jesus and loved each other in a way that I had not seen before.

For the first few months after our move, we attended Southland regularly, often accompanied by my mother-in-law. All seemed well, and from the outside it must have seemed like the

“But my wife and I still felt as though something was missing. Was worship truly supposed to be about entertaining sermons, loud music, and strobe lights?”

perfect scenario. But my wife and I still felt as though something was missing. Was worship truly supposed to be about entertaining sermons, loud music, and strobe lights? Our hearts longed for something different, but we didn’t know what we were looking for. Though we had not considered it seriously before that point, we decided to go to Mass at the local Catholic cathedral. Both of us were nervous as we entered the cathedral and found a seat. “What if they smell

the Protestant on us, Erin?” I asked semi-jokingly. We had been to Mass a couple of times before, but neither time were we fully engaged or remotely tuned into what was happening there. This time, however, we were very aware of our surroundings. When the people next to us stood, we stood, and when they knelt, we knelt. How very strange this experience was for someone who had grown up in a church where sitting throughout the service was the norm, and the only time the congregation spoke was to sing a hymn or offer an occasional “amen.” These people seemed like robots, chanting after the priest, who led them in these odd rituals. Though the Mass did not make sense to us at the time, it piqued our curiosity and set us on a course to investigate this “Catholic thing.”

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

Our investigation centered at first on the conversion stories of other Protestants turned Catholic. *The Journey Home* program on EWTN (the Eternal Word Television Network) I had long been familiar with. I had begun watching it while I was still in college. Looking back, I cannot remember what my initial motivation was for watching it as a college student, because I was at that time not considering Catholicism, but the episodes took on a new meaning to me once I began considering the Catholic Church seriously. Story after story, I found myself being drawn into the lives of many people, like myself, who had searched for answers and finally had found them in the Church of Rome. “Why couldn’t that be us?” I often pondered. Programs like *The Journey Home* provided my wife and me with a safe way to engage with Catholicism without the threat of being “found out.”

Books, like *Born Fundamentalist, Born Again Catholic* by David Currie, also played a role in breaking down barriers between myself and becoming Catholic. I remember becoming excited and re-reading portions of the book to my wife at night. Also, Bishop Robert Barron’s video series “Catholicism” played a major role in our eventual conversion. Displaying the Church in all her beauty and universality opened my eyes to the incredible breadth of Catholicism. Truth after truth emerged before my eyes. Catholics actually had good reasons for their beliefs! I found out that the Catholic Church has taught about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist since the earliest days of Christianity, that Jesus established a hierarchical order to safeguard the Church, and that Peter was truly the first pope. These revelations, along with many others, swept over me like a tidal wave.

Of these revelations, one of the most exciting to discover, and at the same time the scariest, was the Church’s teaching on justification. I was relieved to find that the Church did not teach the doctrine of “once saved always saved,” but I was also concerned about what that might imply. I quickly found out that the Church taught that a Christian can, after initially being justified by God, sin against Him in such a way as to sever the relationship with his or her Creator. As with all things that the Catholic Church teaches, there is scriptural support for the assertions she makes. I remember looking to verses such as 1 John 5:16 and seeing the differentiation between sin that leads to death and sin that does not lead to death (mortal and venial sin). I also learned that priests were given the authority by Christ to forgive my sins and to restore the life of grace that is lost through my disobedience (John 20:23). As a Baptist, I had been taught that no sin could separate me from my life in Christ, and yet the Bible clearly showed me otherwise. The truth had been hiding in the very book that I carried back and forth to the Baptist church of my youth. Answers were coming, and I welcomed them.

As our objections to the Catholic Church continued to fall, the ominous realization that we needed to become Catholic became something we could not “shelve” or mentally evade any longer. When Erin and I both concluded that Rome was our destination, we took the next step in our journey and joined adult faith formation classes. Having intellectually grappled

with the Church for months on our own, we decided to stop by our local cathedral parish to pray. Though we were seated several pews away from one another, we both began to sob as we prayed. It was as if the Lord was saying, “Enough waiting, come follow me.” Though our intellectual battle had not completely ended, it was safe to say that our hearts had “caught up.” So we joined RCIA (the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults), formed wonderful relationships with faithful Catholics and aspiring converts, and finally arrived at our confirmation day. On February 23, 2014, filled with joy and anticipation, my wife and I were sealed with sacred chrism and graced by the very Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of the Son of God Himself. The finish line then became the starting gate as we entered fully into the life of the Church — the Church that Jesus Christ Himself had established on St. Peter some 2,000 years ago.

### Proclaiming the Invitation to the Feast

In Luke 14, Jesus tells the story of a master who sends his servants out to gather people for a great feast at his home. After many of society’s prominent figures had rejected the master’s call, in verse 23 the master commands the servants to go out into the highways and byways and bring in anyone who will come to the feast. I definitely feel that I am one of those who has been graced by the master’s call to the peripheries, that I must respond by going out to those in need. I am now the leader of a local chapter of St. Paul Street Evangelization, an apostolate which seeks to take the truth of the Church to the streets, to those who have not heard it before or who had rejected it at some time in the past. The reality is that the Church needs voices to proclaim the good news of Christ and His Church. God can use the most unlikely avenues, as He did in my story, to convert souls.

In the past two years, since being received into the Church, my family has seen the moving of the Holy Spirit in a mighty way. Since our Confirmation, my sister has become Catholic, my mother-in-law was received into the Church on Christ the King Sunday of 2015, and my grandmother was confirmed during the Easter Vigil this year. The Lord truly is good, His love truly does endure forever, and His faithfulness endures through all generations (Psalm 100:5). ■



CASEY PHILLIPS is a Spanish and Religion teacher at Christ the King School in Lexington, Kentucky. He and his wife, Erin, have two young children, John Paul and Siena. Casey’s passionate interest is Catholic apologetics, and his work can be found online at [baptcatholic.wordpress.com](http://baptcatholic.wordpress.com) and on [catholic365.com](http://catholic365.com).

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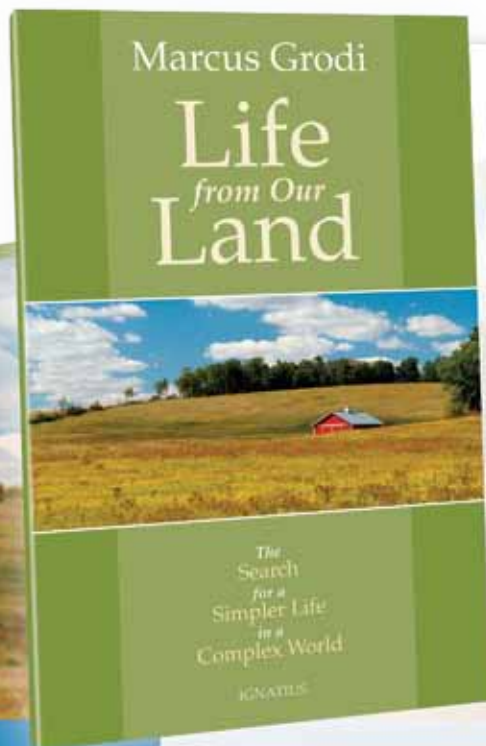


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