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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



This Tremendous, Patient Lover

By Barbara Golder

God made me a scientist before He made me anything else. As long as I can remember I have had the urge to understand even the inexplicable. But He also gifted me with an understanding that whatever I could explain was necessarily insufficient.

I understand all manner of things about chemistry. I can explain the chemical reaction that produces water. I can regurgitate the formulas that explain chemical bonding and draw diagrams that make it visible. But I also know instinctively that understanding the material concepts of how water comes to be doesn't explain water. It doesn't explain rain, or soft Irish mist, or ponds, or the ocean, or the relief a cold, wet cloth or a cold drink on a hot day brings. God gifted me with an innate understanding of the difference between substance and accidents, and He gifted me with a sense of mystery. It is that sense of mystery that led me home to the Catholic Church. My journey is not one of the intellect but of the heart, not a giving in to argument but a wooing by a Beloved on a journey that took more than half a lifetime.

My birth is a metaphor for that journey. I was born under the shadow of a crucifix, of a Methodist mother, delivered by a Jewish doctor in a Catholic hospital: Protestant to Catholic by way of Judaism, always with Holy Mother Church in the background, surrounding me, waiting, watching, guiding me. The good Sisters at Holy Name of Jesus Hospital sent the crucifix that hung over my crib home with my mother. It hung over my bed

throughout my childhood, and I managed to hold onto it even during the turbulent years of college. It now hangs at the apex of the family oratory, a reminder that, even when I didn't see where I was going, God did.

Starting with the Heart

My parents were sporadic in church attendance, but they taught me something perhaps more valuable: that religion starts in the home and informs one's very life. Religion, to them, was a way of living, not a Sunday exercise. It is telling that all three of us children have remained strong in faith, though we are vastly different in our expression of it; A Methodist-turned-Lutheran, now Pentecostal, a Methodist-turned-Episcopalian, now Baptist; and a Methodist who converted to Judaism, then entered the Episcopal Church, but now Catholic.

My parents and I would show up in our little church for the first day of Sunday school, for Easter, and promotion day, and only a few days in between. Even so, I learned vast quantities of Scripture (though in a foreshadowing of my Catholic destiny, I never managed to learn citations along with it). But it wasn't Sunday school or Bible studies that shaped my Methodist years. I was instead formed by music and *Continued on page 2* ➤

Journeys Home

...Journeys Home Continued...

mystery; now that I think of it, perhaps those influences amount to the same thing.

My two brothers would take me to hymn sings on Sunday evenings, and since we did not usually go to church on Sunday morning, I would watch Gospel music programs on television with my dad. There is a lot of theology in music, and I internalized it largely in silence because, in my family, the more important something was, the less likely we were to talk about it. While that approach can sometimes cause problems, it also provided me the gift of interiority that has served me well as a Catholic. I learned without ever talking about it that God was present and unseen in even the most mundane things I did. If I did not learn to worship Him every week in church, I came to know that He exists, is real, and is not some distant figure but part of the very fabric of my own personal life. Not random, not generic, not life-in-general: my own life.

Occasionally, we would come to church on communion Sunday. We would kneel at the altar rail, into which was carved “Do This in Remembrance of Me.” We would pass a tray filled with little cups of grape juice and cubes of Wonder Bread. We would take and we would eat. It was entirely symbolic. But there was something inexplicably special about kneeling there with my family on either side of me, doing something that I knew had been done from the very first days of the very first Christians.

An Early Taste

When I was in high school, out of curiosity, I once wandered into a Catholic church for a daily Mass. I was surprised by the fact that even though the Mass was in Latin — it was in the last days before the vernacular Mass would be introduced in our area — I knew the rhythms, and when I looked at the translation in

the Missal, I knew the words, both from the Bible and from our own communion services. Because I didn’t know any different, I followed along with the crowd, knelt at the altar, tipped back my head and opened my mouth and received our eucharistic Lord for the first time. This was as different from the communion service in my church as night was from day, even though I was not sure how. But that is where it ended, at least for the time being.

My next-door neighbors were Catholic, and their second son, who was a few years older than me, was my best friend. Catholics were somehow exotic. Ray got to wear a uniform, and he rode the city bus to and from the school he attended. That school was so much better than mine, and besides, he got days off that I didn’t. In his family, like mine, religion was something you lived, not just something you thought. I saw it in the way they went to church, in the way they did not eat meat on Friday, in the religious sisters and priests who dressed and lived differently than everyone else.

One day, my dad brought home to me a rosary someone had left behind at his workplace. It was made of pink glass beads, and it came in a little box that had “My Rosary” written in gold script on the top of it. Ray took it to his parish and had it blessed and explained to me how to pray it. When he spoke about the Hail Mary, I remember asking him why he called Mary the Mother of God when she was Jesus’ mother. His explanation was simple: “Jesus is God, right? If Jesus is God and Mary is His mother, Mary is the Mother of God.”

Even my still-developing scientific nature got that on the first try. If $A = B$ and $B = C$, then $A = C$. I eventually lost those beads, but when, some forty years later, I got another set, they were familiar, like reconnecting with an old friend. Mary was never an obstacle in my journey.

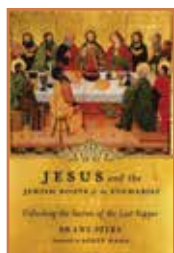
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FEATURED RESOURCES

Deep in Scripture CD



In this classic Deep in Scripture program, Marcus Grodi and guest Matt Swaim discuss the Incarnation of Jesus and the Eucharist.



Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist

— By Brant Pitre

Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist shines fresh light on the Last Supper by looking at it through Jewish eyes. Using his in-depth knowledge of the Bible and ancient Judaism, Dr. Brant Pitre answers questions such as: What was the Passover like at the time of Jesus? What were the Jewish hopes for the Messiah? What was Jesus’ purpose in instituting the Eucharist during the feast of Passover? And, most important of all, what did Jesus mean when He said, “This is my body ... This is my blood”? To answer these questions, Pitre explores ancient Jewish beliefs about the Passover of the Messiah, the miraculous manna from heaven, and the mysterious Bread of the Presence.

\$35

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

\$50

Receive *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* for a donation of \$50.

\$75

Receive a *Deep in Scripture* CD and *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* for a \$75 donation.

— THESE PREMIUMS ARE AVAILABLE FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY —

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



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

“COULD THE TRADITION OF SUNDAY POTLUCK DINNERS WORK IN CATHOLIC PARISHES?”



Feeding the Body & Soul

By Matt Swaim & Mary Clare Pieczynski

In the conversion story this month, Barbara Golder relates her hunger for the Eucharist as she waited to be received into full communion with the Catholic Church. Our Lord Jesus knows of the deep desire in each of our hearts for food to sate our hunger and a longing for the sense of community we find from gathering around a table as well as, more importantly, the need for our souls to be filled with His presence. Thus, it is fitting that He established a Church, a community, in which we can experience both.

In the CHNetwork's ministry, we hear from many people who come into full communion with the Catholic Church that they often miss elements of their previous faith tradition, especially the emphasis on fellowship and community. Sadly, in your average Catholic parish there might not be as many readily accessible opportunities to engage with others and foster a sense of belonging and welcome. As part of our ongoing series where we pose various questions related to the theological and practical implications of converting to Catholicism, we recently asked our members the following question: **“Could the tradition of Sunday potluck dinners work in Catholic parishes?”** (If you'd like to read more responses to this and other CHNetwork Community questions, go to chnetwork.org/blog.)

The responses we received gave us some critical insight into the approaches that our evangelical brothers and sisters take toward community building, and how we as Catholics might be more welcoming to those who visit our parishes out of curiosity toward Catholicism. Here's a sampling:

“Sure it could. It just depends on the local congregation and dynamics. In rural Catholic parishes it might work very well. Our parish in Steubenville does a pancake breakfast after Masses once a month, sponsored by the Knights of Columbus. It's a long tradition and a major element of the parish culture.”

DR JOHN BERGSMA, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
OF THEOLOGY, FRANCISCAN UNIVERSITY

“Catholics usually think of parish meals as fundraisers, usually put on by one of the parish groups. Protestants usually think of church meals as reasons to have fellowship and potluck makes it free. Both are traditional for them and neither are right nor wrong.”

BUCK S., VIA FACEBOOK

“I think church potlucks are fabulous! In the United Methodist tradition I grew up in, it was a great way to get to know the others in the church. Instead of running out to the parking lot after service, it gave a reason for fellowship.”

TOM M., VIA FACEBOOK

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"I love the idea of potlucks after Sunday Church services. I think it would definitely work at smaller parishes. At larger parishes, administrations are always looking for a way to create smaller groups of fellowship within the church. At a parish of 1000 families, not everyone can be meaningful friends, which is why smaller groups of fellowship and support need to emerge. The smaller group of people who inevitably become regulars at the potluck, could create one of those desired smaller groups."

TERESA GRODI, CATHOLIC FAITH JOURNEYS

As you can see, our members have an overall positive view of potlucks as community-building activities. Since one of the things our former evangelical members miss most about their former churches is a sense of fellowship, this could be one among many ways they could bring their gifts of hospitality to their Catholic parishes. Perhaps you might suggest a potluck or other community-building event to your pastor as a way to foster fellowship and welcome those who are new to the parish, especially converts who are looking for connections and faith filled friendships.

Now, we know that God wishes to provide for our every need, and Catholics often say that we espouse a "both/and" approach. Not only can parishes incorporate new ways to welcome newcomers and build fellowship such as potlucks, but we also need to remember that Jesus provides *Himself* as our supersubstantial food in the Eucharist to nourish our spiritual lives.

This approach hearkens all the way back to the pages of Scripture, and we encounter a particularly poignant reflec-

tion in the Book of Acts where the Church in Jerusalem "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers... Day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts" (Acts 2:42, 46).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, that remarkably clear and insightful treasure the Church has given us, makes a beautiful connection too between our earthly sustenance and the heavenly food: "What material food produces in our bodily life, Holy Communion wonderfully achieves in our spiritual life. Communion with the flesh of the risen Christ, a flesh 'given life and giving life through the Holy Spirit,' preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at Baptism. This growth in Christian life needs the nourishment of Eucharistic Communion, the bread for our pilgrimage until the moment of death, when it will be given to us as viaticum" (CCC, 1392).

So let us more deeply appreciate and understand the many ways the Church feeds the "whole person" — through discovering new means by which to foster community at the local level and building up the Body of Christ through fellowship while acknowledging and being grateful for the wondrous gift Jesus has given to us at the altar, that of His own Body and Blood, our food for the journey towards eternal life. ■

WE ESPOUSE A "BOTH/AND" APPROACH

WHAT IS THE CHNETWORK?

The Coming Home Network International was established to help non-Catholic Christians, clergy and laity, discover the beauty and truth of the Catholic Church.

Through the one-on-one outreach of our pastoral staff and volunteers, our monthly CHNewsletter, regional retreats, social media, and through the online community forums and groups at our website CHNetwork.org, we strive to ensure that each person touched by grace has fellowship and resources for their journey of continual conversion to Jesus Christ.



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The Coming Home
Network International



www.chnetwork.org

Prayer List



Clergy

- For Michael, a Methodist missionary, that as he shares the Jesus with unbelievers the Lord would guide him to the fullness of that faith in the Catholic Church.
- For a Church of Christ in Christian Union seminarian, that as he and his wife draw closer to the Catholic Faith the Holy Spirit will give their family an accepting heart.
- For Michael and his wife, who come from a Messianic Jewish background, that they may come to accept the one, true, ancient Church of Yeshua Ha-Mashiach.
- For John, a Pentecostal minister, that God's will be done, in showing him and his wife the truth of the Catholic Church.
- For a non-denominational minister in Colorado, that the Lord would heal his past pain and bring him home to the Catholic Church.
- For a Charismatic lay minister in Florida, that, as she delves ever more deeply into the love of Jesus, He would draw her to His heart in the holy Eucharist.
- For a Presbyterian seminarian in Missouri, that his desire to learn more about the Catholic Church would, by God's grace, draw him home to full communion with the ancient, apostolic Church of Jesus.
- For Bobby, a youth minister in the south, that his desire to learn and dialogue would bring him to the altar of our Lord.

- For the wife of an Assemblies of God minister in Minnesota, that she may obtain her husband's blessing that she desires thus allowing her to enter the Catholic Church.
- For an Anglican priest, that as he, his wife, and son come into full communion with the Catholic Church, his daughter may obtain the grace to follow.
- For Cynthia, a Pentecostal lay minister, that our Lord Jesus will fill her and her family with grace and joy as they begin RCIA this fall.
- For a Missouri Synod Lutheran seminarian in Florida, that the Holy Spirit would clear away his perceived barriers to the Catholic Church and lead him home to the faith of the Apostles.

Layity

- For Caroline who is attending Mass regularly, that her journey proceeds according to His will as she navigates the annulment process.
- For a Methodist in Tennessee, that he go ever deeper in his faith as he participates in RCIA.
- For a man from a non-denominational background who is attending Mass occasionally and is a little discouraged in his journey, that his prayer life, especially as he prays the Rosary, lead him closer to Jesus and the saints.
- For a former Episcopalian in Colorado who recently was received into the Church even though his wife doesn't understand or support his conversion.

- For Tiffany, a new convert, that she find helpful connections and a strong faith community as she moves to a new area.
- For Roberta who is discouraged in her efforts to become Catholic.
- For Paul who wishes to return to the Church but doesn't know how to broach the issue with his wife.
- For Deb who is delighted that she received a decree of nullity and now is just waiting on her husband's petition, that they be able to come into full communion with the Church during this year of mercy.
- For Peg, that she be able to attend Mass again and work through her struggles with Catholic teaching.
- For Dan and his wife who are nearing the end of their instruction in the Faith and are attending Mass as often as they can, that they will be soon able to receive of the Eucharistic banquet.
- For a fallen-away Catholic who is becoming convicted that the Catholic Church is the true Church but still has many questions on account of the years he has spent as a Protestant.

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 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

October 3

Mark Gamble*
 Former Evangelical &
 Episcopalian

October 10

Joseph Copeck*
 Former Lutheran

October 17

David and Neesha Oliver*
 Former Nazarene &
 Episcopalian

October 24

Paige Murray*
 Former Presbyterian & non-
 denominational

October 31

Lori Martinez
 Former Agnostic

To access the full archive of past Journey Home programs go to chnetwork.org/journey-home.

*Schedule is subject to change.

► “Journeys Home” continued from page 2

Science and Culture

In college, at the tail end of the 60’s, I drifted away from my Methodist roots, though I remained surrounded by Holy Mother Church. I went to college in Arizona and started studies in anthropology. The scientist in me chose physical anthropology before the practical side of me switched to chemistry upon realizing that people with doctorate degrees were driving cabs for a living. Anthropology course work required studies in cultures as well as bones and digging. I learned the skill of looking at a culture, at least in part, through its own lens.

And what a culture I was surrounded by! Tucson was steeped in the Catholic way of life, very much in the Hispanic mold.

It is home to one of the most beautiful churches ever established by a missionary in the Southwest: San Xavier del Bac, the White Dove of the Desert. When I became involved in social justice issues in college, they were colored by the presence of the Catholic Church. I worked in *barrios* among the poor, cleaning houses and community buildings and sharing tortillas and beans with those who lived there. I got to know how the Yaqui Indians celebrated Easter and how the Hispanics celebrated Christmas and assorted feast days in wonderful, public ways that stirred up something more than just my intellectual appreciation of them.

I entered medical school in 1974 and there met and married my husband, Steve. Reflective of where we were at the time, it was a secular ceremony, and we wrote our own vows. Later, I would learn what a gift my marriage really was; how through it I learned the meaning of love and sacrifice; how God communicated the mystery of His love through the very real presence of my husband. Marriage: the icon of the interior life of God. Who knew? Intellectually, I did not encounter that notion until after I entered the Church, although once I did, it found an immediate home, for I knew the reality before I had the words to describe it.

Beginning My Search

After graduating from medical school in 1977, I began my training as a pathologist. And for reasons that are lost in the mists of time, I began to have religious stirrings again. Moreover, for reasons that are likewise lost, I was not attracted to the “Me and Jesus” Protestantism of my environment. Instead, I decided to go back to basics, to the beginning, so I studied and entered the Jewish Faith. I’m pretty sure my husband thought I had taken leave of my senses, but he supported me because, I suppose, at some level, he trusted me not to be completely crazy.

I don’t know that I was ever particularly observant, but I entered into Judaism as fully as I could. I read about it, because

that’s what scientists do, but more importantly I tried to live it. I made Shabbos, celebrated Passover, went for the festive reading of the Megillah at Purim, attended *shul* on Yom Kippur — I did it all, or at least all that presented itself to me for my participation. Because Judaism, even as the religion of my youth, is a way of being more than just a way of thinking. In the few years that I practiced it actively, it inserted itself into my very bones. For me, Passover is not a concept, it is a reality. The story of God caring for the Israelites is not some abstract tale, but is family lore. And the idea that God works through the very stuff of this world is as natural as breathing. When I look back, I know that learning what it meant to be Jewish helped to make me a Catholic. As a Catholic, I immediately understood the reality of things I had

previously thought of as symbolic in my Methodist days, because I understood the Jewish roots of them: Passover became Eucharist (our Anglo-Catholic parish believed in the Real Presence). Bathing in the *mikvah* became Baptism, the cleanliness real and eternal. Entry into the faith is entry into a family, and it cannot be undone. Our salvation

is, in some mysterious way, corporate: we are all engaged, if not in the perfection of creation, at least in its redemption by virtue of our being baptized into Christ.

My transition into practicing Judaism was not difficult, perhaps because it was the first step I made into making the faith I inherited into one I really possessed. The transition back was more difficult, if only because I was fearful I would not be accepted. However, the words of the Episcopal priest who counseled me were a great comfort: “How can living the faith of our Savior be an obstacle? Your journey will enrich your life, wait and see.” And so it has happened.

Change of Direction

When our son was born in 1983, like so many secular couples, we were faced with an existential crisis: both of us knew that we wanted to raise our children with faith, but which one? Steve had never been able to embrace the practice of Judaism. Protestantism seemed too variable and required too much emotion for our taste. We excluded Catholicism for reasons unknown then and now. In the end, we shook the family tree, and a couple of Episcopalians fell out. An Episcopal church was just around the corner from where we lived, so that’s where we went.

My husband and I spent 20 years as Episcopalians. Our children were both baptized into that faith, a daughter having arrived in 1985. We learned to love the beauty of the liturgy, for there are few things more beautiful than High Anglican worship. We learned the power of prayer and mystery, which entered my life in a new form and quite unexpectedly in something as close

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...Journeys Home Continued...

to a mystical experience as my clay-footed and scientific nature is ever likely to allow.

It happened like this: The Holy Week after we entered the Episcopal Church, I walked through a pouring rain in the middle of the night to the Chapel of Repose to keep vigil on Holy Thursday. I spent an hour there alone, trying to make sense out of this religious commitment I had made in light of the daily life I was living at the time as a medical examiner, hip deep every day in the evil that men do, and — I can testify to this — an evil that really does live on afterwards with great force.

The great paradox to me has always been how to make sense of this very broken world when somehow *I know* a good God exists. The details are irrelevant; suffice it to say that as I walked back home in the rain in the darkest hours of the night, somewhere beyond the edges of my mind, in a space not my intellect, a place where my heart lives, I understood that I would never understand. I also knew that, if I were quiet and open, I would mysteriously come nearer to that good God, even through the awful things I worked with every day.

Because we spent so much time in an Anglo-Catholic parish, we considered ourselves as fully Catholic as anyone. We believed we were already at the destination, which made it hard to continue to journey. In my experience, those who consider themselves Anglo-Catholic are at once the closest relatives and the most distant strangers to Catholicism. I am sure that, had we remained there, we would eventually have swum the Tiber, but a constellation of events in God's good time made it happen sooner.

Whoops! Now What?

In 2003, as we were getting ready to leave our little island of orthodoxy in Florida for parts unknown and parishes untested in Tennessee, the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire elected as bishop Vicky Gene Robinson, a man who had abandoned his marriage and children for an openly homosexual relationship. As the Robinson election unfolded, I remember thinking that the Episcopal Church would never do such an outrageous thing as ratify his election as bishop, given that church's teaching on

homosexual unions was, at the time, so clear. It simply could not happen. Christian teaching was set in granite on the subject of marriage, chastity, and adultery.

But Robinson's election was ratified shortly after we arrived in Tennessee. As a result, we sat in Episcopal church after Episcopal church in the Chattanooga area, listening to the various ministers in each one castigate those of orthodox inclination, those who could not accept the denomination's recent and sudden shift in course. After one particularly memorable confrontation with a priest over just such talk (an incident of which I

am not proud), I turned to my husband and said, "There is a Catholic church down the street. I'm going there. You can come with me if you want."

It was an act born of frustration and anger; in some ways it was a running away from evil more than a running toward good. But much like a child who, at the first sight of lightning and the first peal of thunder, knows instinctively to seek her father's lap and her mother's arms, I took refuge in the Catholic Church. When I think about it, I am reminded of the Apostle Peter's words: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

All I knew at the time was that the sands had shifted beneath me. The Episcopal Church that had nourished me for so many years with liturgy and music and communion had suddenly decided to

put truth up to a vote. If they could do that, so could anyone else. I knew of only one place where doctrine — and therefore truth — was not subject to the whims of human culture: the Catholic Church. And the scientist in me understood that we discover truth; we encounter it. We do not decide it for ourselves.

I had learned to depend on communion and could not be without it. I did not know why, but I knew that my very life depended on being at Table. And at Table I was going to be. Like so many other converts, I can attest to the power of the Eucharist to bring about conversion. But unlike many others, I did not experience any great theological difficulties. My neighbor had explained Mary to me many years before. All I needed was to see the chaos of Protestantism — and just then, that of the Episcopal Church — to understand why Jesus would give us a Church



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...Journeys Home Continued...

to guide us and a Pope to lead us. Purgatory made sense to me because I took seriously Jesus' words to be perfect as His Father is perfect. The only stumbling block for me was indulgences. I decided, with what I would later learn was the "assent of faith," that if the Church was right on all these other things, she must be right on that point, too, and that I could trust her. I could trust her because, after all, I can trust Jesus and He gave her to us.

Solid Footing at Last

I would have done quite literally anything Holy Mother Church asked of me in order to be able to receive the Eucharist. That year, when I could no longer in conscience kneel at the Episcopal altar but was not yet received into the Catholic Church, was a period of great dryness and trial. It was made worse by the fact that our college-age daughter was in the midst of a deep depression that found its expression in lashing out at me. I remember telling God that I didn't care whether or not my daughter ever loved me again, I only wanted her whole. God took advantage of the spiritual desert I was in to teach me, in very real terms, what redemptive suffering is all about.

In my very bones, those same bones that even today carry the rhythm of Jewish life (along with the Jewish understanding of suffering as beyond comprehension but not enough to separate us from God), I know that, had the Eucharist not brought me home, the lessons of redemptive suffering would have. And if not that, then the realization that the relationship of Christ to His Church is that of Groom to Bride — in a real and mysterious sense, not just a metaphor — would have been the key. I have found that God hedges His bets.

My husband and I were received in 2005; our son entered the following year. Our daughter did not; she later met and married a wonderful Jewish man and practices the Jewish Faith she inherited from me. Who knew that my foray into Judaism so many years ago would pave the way for my daughter to marry the man she loves? Who knew that my son's bride would follow him into the Church? No one, I suppose, really knows how his own journey will end, nor what turns it will take, nor how it will affect those around him. God is ever at work in our lives and my own story is nowhere near ended.

Total Conversion

In fact, it was only after we had been in the Church for several months that I experienced a complete and total conversion. I was standing in the kitchen, where my best thought and prayer occurs, peeling potatoes for a winter stew. Suddenly it hit me — the incredible, mysterious, consonant, rational, senseless, incomprehensible beauty of the Catholic Faith. The Eucharist, so central to my life: I had thought Jesus to be present in the Eucharist as an Episcopalian, but I *knew* Him to be there as a Catholic. The wonderful complexity and variety of Catholic thought: I am constantly in danger of being buried under a pile of books, from the Desert Fathers to Thomas Merton, as I encounter God through His various servants and their writings, all different, yet all holding to the same center, gathering as family at the same Table. The incredible richness of Catholic devotional life:

One of my friends tells me that I have yet to meet a devotion I don't like. That's not quite true — but I have yet to find one I am unwilling to try! The great joy of celebrating life with the Communion of Saints (*all* of them, not just the ones now living) and the joy of worship with my *whole self*: I found in the great richness of the Church a real relationship, a person-to-person intimacy with God, not just an intellectual exercise, a communion not based on transactions or imputations or exchanges, but on the fullness of love outpoured on the Cross and in the Eucharist. A relationship in which I discovered that God loves me — really does love me — and gives Himself to me, whole and entire in the most intimate of ways.

And just as suddenly, I couldn't stop talking about it. In contrast to my many years in the Episcopal Church, when I never felt moved to share my faith, I will tell anyone who will listen (and some who won't) about what I found when I came home. And of course the scientist in me has to explain what that is, even though I know I can't possibly do so.

That is what this scientist found in the Catholic Church. I found the place where Jesus, really and substantially, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, waits to meet me in and through the sacraments He established, surrounded by my family, the Church. A family that, by its very existence, communicates Him to me in ways real and supernatural. I found Jesus in the way that He intended, in the fullness that I sought, in the great vastness of mystery laid out for me, not to understand, but to encounter and live contented within and sit in awe before. I found Him who has seen me with all my faults. Who has held me in His arms. Who knows me better than I know myself. And yet who, even knowing me, loves me.

God is a tremendous and patient lover. I thank Him for patiently loving me into His Church. ■



BARBARA GOLDER is a physician-attorney who lives in Lookout Mountain, Tennessee, with two dogs, two cats, and her husband of forty-one years and counting. Retired from law and medicine, she now serves as the Director of Adult Faith Formation and Evangelization at the Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul in Chattanooga, Tennessee and is pursuing writing as her apostolate. Her first novel, *Dying for Revenge*, a murder mystery with a Catholic theme, is available at Amazon.com.

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