



## March 2017 CHNewsletter

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# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



## Of Bullets and Bibles: My Story of God, War, and Coming Home

By Dana Michael Krull

**AMERICAN PROTESTANT MUTT** My journey to the Catholic Church followed a meandering path through the jumbled Protestant landscape of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Born in February, 1980 in Columbus, Ohio, I was baptized as a baby in our local Lutheran church where we attended until, for reasons I do not remember, we moved down the street to a Methodist congregation. Mom and Dad became very active in this loving flock. This is where I first remember learning to love God, the Bible, and church. It was there that I played Little League and helped minister to local homeless people. It was there that we worshipped, prayed, went on camping trips, and hung out with friends. I loved that Methodist church, and I still thank God for the crucial foundation it laid in my childhood.

Unfortunately, our Christ-like pastor had a very human moment in a committee meeting one night and blew up at my Mom in front of everyone. This was the last straw for her in a dissatisfaction with “organized religion” that had apparently been building up for some time. She and Dad stopped going to church altogether, although they allowed me to continue to attend with my cousins at their Fundamental Baptist congregation, where I joined them for worship off and on during my teenage years. Now I was mixing Calvinism and Evangelicalism into my “Protestant mutt” DNA along with my earlier Lutheran and Wesleyan-Arminian roots! Yet by the time I reached college, I was only nominally Christian and I became just another hormone-crazed campus hooligan.

### Combat and Calling

Even though my best childhood friends had been Catholic, we rarely discussed our faith, and my perceptions of Catholicism were instead mostly formed by my high school history classes, where the Roman Church was portrayed as a corrupt, politically-minded, and divisive force for the past two millennia. Nevertheless, my “Catholic friend trend” continued into college, where both my closest comrade in Army ROTC and my girlfriend were Catholic. Once, while visiting my girlfriend in her hometown, I attended Mass with her. Just before the distribution of the Eucharist, she turned to me and asked, “Are you going to receive today?” I was surprised; I thought that I shouldn’t

*Continued on page 2* ➤

Journeys Home

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

commune because Catholics believed it was really the Body and Blood of Jesus, while for me it was just a symbol. I thought I should respect Catholic teaching by not receiving. But here was a confirmed Catholic whom I totally trusted. *She wouldn't invite me if it wasn't okay*, I reasoned, so I went ahead and received. Although I later regretted having done it, God eventually redeemed my grave sin for His greater good.

Brokenhearted when that relationship ended in my junior year, I later met a beautiful freshman named Addie Church on a Habitat for Humanity trip during spring break in March 2001. I could tell that Addie was special, but for the next 15 months, we were just friends who talked occasionally; I was too busy partying to grow up and court this godly woman. The week of my graduation and commissioning ceremony, Addie asked me out on a lunch date, and we had a fantastic time together. It hit me that this incredible lady had a quiet grace and deep love for Jesus that set her apart from the typical college girl. After many phone conversations that summer, we began dating seriously while I was at Fort Benning, Georgia in the fall of 2002. The Iraq invasion loomed, and suddenly I realized that if I truly wanted to be a godly husband and father someday, I needed to really “walk the walk” as a man who wanted to follow God and no longer just “talk the talk” like a poser. So I spent time with a great Army chaplain who helped me reset my course towards God. The following spring, after an arduous few months in Ranger School, I proposed to Addie. She said yes, not fully knowing what a crazy adventure we would have together in the coming years! Just a month later, in June 2003, I was already in Iraq, where I served as a rifle platoon leader in Sinjar and Mosul, including patrols around the ruins of ancient Nineveh, where Jonah had walked.

I returned safely in early 2004, and after Addie graduated from college in June, we married, and she joined me at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. As I trained for another deployment to Iraq, we

found a lovely little “Church of God, Anderson, Indiana” congregation, where we made many dear friends and where families of all ages lavished great love on us as a newlywed couple. Twice on Sundays and again on Wednesday nights, we all happily recited, “The Bible alone is our rule of faith, and Christ alone is Lord!” along with a litany of other well-intentioned Protestant notions. It wasn't all roses, but we truly loved it there.

We felt perfectly at home with the idea that “denominations were not what Jesus intended,” and that instead He wanted us to “reach our hands in fellowship to every blood-washed one” as a classic Church of God hymn goes. By mid-2005, I was leading Bible studies and occasionally even preaching because the church was in-between pastors and our octogenarian patriarch was worn out from being in the pulpit three times per week. Then unexpectedly, I suffered a heat stroke on a morning run in August 2005, which prevented me from deploying to Iraq again that fall. Devastated, I was left home as a Rear Detachment Commander, one of the most inglorious and undesirable positions in a wartime Army. For the next 14 months, I was still an infantry officer, but for all intents and purposes, I was already serving as a chaplain. I tended to the families of my deployed brothers, cared for our wounded, and buried our dead. It was awful to keep putting soldiers on planes to Iraq and not climb aboard with them, but eventually I learned to accept that this was where God wanted me. Simultaneously, I continued preaching frequently at our church, and many, including the new interim pastor, affirmed my calling to ministry. With the support of my commanders, my packet to reclassify as a chaplain candidate was approved, and I entered seminary in January 2007.

### Confetti and Chaplaincy

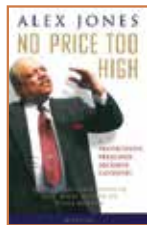
Instead of attending the home seminary for the Church of God in Anderson, Indiana, we felt God call us out of our comfort

## FEATURED RESOURCES

### Deep in Scripture CD



In this classic *Deep in Scripture* program, Marcus Grodi welcomed Deacon Alex Jones (1941 – 2017) to discuss Deacon Jones' background as Pentecostal minister. Marcus and Deacon Jones discussed the deep love of God for each of us, the Pentecostal Holiness Movement, salvation and justification, and the freedom God gives us.



### No Price Too High — By Alex Jones

Alex Jones was an “on-fire” Pentecostal minister who was a completely dedicated shepherd of his flock. In seeking to give his flock the most genuine experience of the early Church prayer and worship services, he carefully read Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, and writings of the early saints. The more he read, the more Alex came to the startling conclusion that the present day Catholic Church — and the Holy Mass — is the same exact “worship service” from the very early Church. This is Alex Jones' incredible story of a black Pentecostal minister's challenging and dramatic spiritual journey into the Catholic Church, and the flock that followed him.

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## ...Journeys Home Continued...

zones — geographically, culturally, financially, and denominationally — at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. As a non-denominational seminary at a global crossroads in L.A., with many dozens of Christian traditions and nations represented in its student body, Fuller's pedagogical method is not to teach its students what to think, but how to think. This proved to be a great training ground for ministry in the Army, which is a kaleidoscope of Christian denominations and many other world views. During seminary, I was also a part-time associate pastor at a sweet little Church of God congregation in Pasadena. Additionally, I served as a chaplain candidate in the California Army National Guard, so one weekend each month and two weeks each summer, I circulated to the various armories to minister to the troops. We also welcomed our firstborn son, Gavin, during the summer of 2007.

This was, then, an extremely busy and oftentimes frustrating period, especially at Fuller. It seemed that the more I learned, the more questions I had, but the less willing any of my professors were to actually take a firm position on critical issues. Their approach seemed to be more along the lines of, “Well, what do *you* think?” But I could only think, “Isn't that what I came here for — for *you* to tell *me*!?” I liken my seminary education to paying someone \$50,000 for a degree, but having them puree your Bible in an open blender, watching the confetti falling like snow throughout the room, and then being handed a roll of Scotch tape and being told, “Have fun putting that back together!” I found myself clinging for dear life to St. Paul's summary of the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 2:2: “For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (NABRE).

One of the most poignant moments during this phase of our journey came unexpectedly when I was scanning the pages of the Los Angeles Times in late June 2008 and did a double-take as I leafed through the obituary section: Captain Gregory T. Dalessio, an ebullient young officer whom I had befriended during his time as an Army cadet, was dead. *How can this be?* I thought. Greg had just emailed earlier that month to say, “Dana, although my Task Force has a chaplain, you're *my* chaplain.” But a sniper outside of Baghdad had then abruptly ended his life, and now his funeral would be taking place in two days in Cherry Hill, New Jersey.

By another grace of God, our budget and schedule were somehow able to support me flying to the East Coast. As I sat in a pew

at Greg's Catholic parish church, I heard an incredibly beautiful homily about the love of God and drank in the richness of the Mass. The liturgy seemed so much more intentional, reverent and deeply rooted than our Protestant “praise and worship,” which sometimes felt more like a club meeting. I watched through tears as Greg's family and friends came forward to receive the Eucharist after lovingly brushing their hands across the white linen pall adorning his casket. I, too, went forward, out of a sense that I was part of this family. This time, I didn't partake of the Body and Blood of the Lord, but I did receive the priest's blessing, and felt especially loved in the gesture. Nevertheless, for the time being, Catholicism was just another denomination.

In spite of the many challenges of seminary, it was a great season of preparation for what was to come, and even in the hardest of times I had an indelible sense that my calling was sure. When the doubts and difficulties came, I went back to what so many people had affirmed about me becoming a pastor, and I took solace in the impact I seemed to be having in our church and in the National Guard.

### Army Chaplain

After completing the M.Div degree in December 2009, we moved to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, where I attended the Chaplain Officer Basic Course, returning to active duty in April 2010. After another move

back to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, I was deployed immediately to Afghanistan. Over the next 11 months, I ministered to my 400 soldiers at a forward operating base in western Kandahar, a hornet's nest of enemy fighters. Although I was in a logistical support battalion, and therefore spent most of my time safely “inside the wire,” I ministered to many American and Afghan casualties at our hospital. I also had the solemn duty to minister to a sister unit whose chaplain had died in an enormous homemade bomb blast. Overall, it was a very hard year, but it seemed to be a validation of all of my past training and preparation. Our second son, Grant, was born during my mid-tour leave, and shortly after returning stateside in April 2011, I received orders to move yet again, this time to Fort Benning, Georgia.

For the next 17 months, I ministered to students in the first phase of Ranger School, where I had experienced the lowest point of my life as a young officer nearly a decade before. It was a rewarding time of ministry and a welcome change to have hundreds of people attending my worship services! I instituted

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the practice of serving peanut butter and bread after the service. I normally didn't hold communion; I didn't want the starving students to receive the bread and juice only, because I knew the extra rations would add a few calories to their nutrition-deprived bodies. I now find this whole concept fascinating. I was an extremely low-church pastor who had officially affirmed that I didn't believe in "sacraments." Instead, I had duly affirmed the "ordinances" which Jesus had told us to practice and which He Himself had modeled for us: namely baptism, communion, and foot washing. But in the Church of God's Anabaptist viewpoint, these biblical practices didn't actually do anything; they were simply symbols. So, why did it matter to me that anyone ate or drank the bread and juice? I now wonder about that. Yet it bothered me somehow, especially after a hungry student refused my offer for him to consume the leftover bread one night when I had actually included communion. "Huh-uh, sir," he said, holding up his hand, shaking his head and walking away, "I wouldn't dare touch that..." I remember feeling oddly ashamed.

During my time at the Ranger School, I was selected to become the chaplain for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment, also located at Fort Benning. Everything seemed to be coming together at last; from the first time I had floated the idea of becoming a chaplain in 2005, friends and colleagues would say, "Hey, maybe you can be a Ranger Battalion chaplain one day!" By all measures, this seemed to be the culmination of my past decade of experience as an infantry officer and chaplain: it was a prestigious assignment, which would allow me to minister to some of the most elite warriors in the entire Army. So I was thrilled about this incredible opportunity as I joined the battalion in June of 2013. Although our family was already tiring from the ministry and the moves, this excitement brought a second wind.

### My House of Cards

Then, one summer evening before departing for Afghanistan that fall, my cousin Brian dropped a bombshell over the phone: "Our family is becoming Catholic." Brian and I are like David and Jonathan: we were inseparable childhood friends, and even during my extended time away in the Army, our deep connection never faded. Brian was a dyed-in-the-wool Baptist who loved Scripture and Jesus more than anyone else I knew, not to mention being an incredible husband of 15 years and fa-

ther to four godly children. He was my role model. So I was simply blown away by what I thought would be his claim that "man-made" religion, works-based salvation, and many other assumptions I had about Catholicism were now more important to him. Incredulous and curious, I proffered a standard Protestant laundry list of objections to Rome: the Pope, Mary, praying to saints, the celibacy of the priesthood, the Sacraments, the Crusades and Inquisitions, the "extra" books of Scripture ... (insert your objection here, it was probably on my list) ... etc. Frankly, I didn't expect the responses he gave me.

Very quickly, to my chagrin, Brian served up a logically consistent, intellectually honest, historically accurate, and even scripturally based response for each concern. Even when I didn't like his answers, I grudgingly admitted that he didn't contradict himself and that the Catholic perspective was at least a theoretically valid interpretation and application of Scripture. As our conversations continued through the summer, Brian also launched an effective cross-examination with pointed questions like: "Which came first, the Scriptures or the Church?" — "Where does the Bible say that it is the *only* authority?" — and the real doozy (which only someone very close to a pastor's heart could ever ask), "How do you know your ordination is valid?"

I tried to hear him out, but it was hard. His patient answers were surprisingly powerful parries to my elementary gambits. He pointed out verses that, it seemed, I had never noticed before in spite of reading the Bible my whole life — verses like 1 Timothy 3:15, where God's Church is described as "the pillar and foundation of truth" (NABRE). I had no doubt read that passage before, but I was flummoxed because I didn't remember it, and I had no way to answer it as a Protestant except to "spiritualize" it, just like I did everything else. The Church, after all, was an invisible, "spiritual" body of believers. My salvation was spiritual. The sacraments were actually just spiritual ordinances. There was no way any of those could be *physical* ... or, could they?

As I began to consider these questions, I grew frustrated at how my apologetics were quickly unraveling. I realized that my arguments had been haphazardly assembled, and the inconsistencies of my logic and assumptions began to haunt me. I was increasingly faced with the extent of my exegetical gymnastics, or even outright ignoring of certain passages like James 2:24, and especially the Bread of Life discourse *Continued on page 7* ▶

“...I didn't believe in “sacraments.” Instead, I had duly affirmed the “ordinances” which Jesus had told us to practice and which He Himself had modeled for us: namely baptism, communion, and foot washing. But in the Church of God's Anabaptist viewpoint, these biblical practices didn't actually do anything; they were simply symbols.”

# Why Did the Reformation Happen?

## PART 2: THE RISE OF HUMANISM

By Kenneth Hensley, Pastoral Care & Resources Consultant

In this one and only Church of God from its very beginnings there arose certain rifts, which the Apostle strongly censures as damnable. But in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions appeared and large communities became separated from full communion with the Catholic Church — for which, often enough, men on both sides were to blame (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 817)



Some of us don't think much about this issue of division in the visible Body of Christ. I didn't used to think much about it. Truthfully, I was so accustomed to the idea that

Christianity existed in a fragmented state, that it didn't bother me. Like kids growing up in a broken home, at first it may seem impossible that Dad doesn't live with us any more, but after a while it seems perfectly natural.

Oh, I knew Christianity had been divided into Catholic and Eastern Orthodox, and then later into all the Protestant denominations and sects and independent Christian fellowships. I knew these contradicted one another on many points of doctrine — even in their moral teachings. I viewed this as unfortunate, but as something for which there really was no answer. After all, these churches simply *don't agree with one another* on what the true teachings of Christianity are. And since (in my view as an evangelical Protestant) there was no spiritual authority on earth to decide these issues and unite all Christians in one Church, what could be done?

It was just the way things were.

It wasn't until many years later that the prayer of Jesus recorded in the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of John's Gospel caught my eye:

I do not pray for these only [referring to his disciples] but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one ... I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (John 17:20-23).

And it struck me. Here's Jesus in the Upper Room with His Apostles. In a few moments He will leave that room to enter Gethsemane and face His arrest. These are close to being our Lord's last recorded words before His passion. And what does He have on His mind? "Father, that they may become *perfectly one*." Another translation reads, "that they may be brought to complete unity." And why? "*So that the world may know* that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

Jesus tells us that one of the strongest arguments for the truth of the Christian message will be the unity of His Church.

Another passage that caught my eye was 1 Cor 1:10, where St. Paul wrote to the believers in the Greek city of Corinth specifically about division in the Church:

I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

I began to see things in a new way.

As Christ the head has but one Body, Christ the bridegroom has but one bride; as the Church has but one soul, the Holy Spirit; as our Lord gave to His Apostles only one teaching, isn't it kind of obvious that He wouldn't want His Church divided and splintered into a vast number of conflicting denominations, sects and independent churches, each with its own vision (and version) of Christianity?

I thought of where St. Paul wrote in 1 Cor 14:8, "If the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?" and I wondered (and still wonder) how many have turned away from Christ because they looked at Christianity and instead of seeing a unified Church, they saw many denominations, competing with one another for members, contradicting one another in teaching, unable to present one clear message.

So why did the Reformation happen? Why did so many in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century revolt against the idea that there existed on earth a united spiritual authority? Why did so many reject the belief that Christ had established on earth a Church with the Spirit-given ability to preserve and pass down the truth of the apostolic teaching, and the authority to decide in matters of dispute?



Why did so many at that time in history reject the authority of the Catholic Church to stand on the authority of Scripture alone?

In our last article we began looking at the historical and cultural forces at work at the time — forces that were (and I'm not exaggerating) literally driving the world in the direction of what was to occur. We learned that nothing short of a cultural revolution was taking place at the time of the Reformation.

As the Internet is changing our world, so the invention of the printing press was changing the world at that time. With the invention of printing came the mass production of books and tracts on religious matters as well as a dramatic rise in literacy. There was a veritable explosion of new ideas being debated in colleges and universities that were springing up throughout Catholic Europe.

### The Rise of Renaissance Humanism

At the same time a certain educational philosophy, gaining a strong foothold in the universities, was having its effect as well.

When we use the word “humanism” today, we think of secular humanism, even atheism. We think of that philosophy that emphasizes the dignity of “man” apart from God, man’s ability to decide all things for himself without reference to God, man as “the measure of all things.”

I’m referring to humanism as an educational philosophy that arose from the Italian Renaissance and that was critical of the kind of theology of the great Doctors of the late Medieval Church, the Scholastic Theologians, men like Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus.

To put it bluntly, the humanists despised the “scholastic theology” being done by these “schoolmen,” as they were called. In their minds it was too philosophical, too abstract, too complicated, too dry, too boring. They referred to Duns Scotus as the “dunce” and portrayed the scholastics as spending their lives speculating on pointless trivia and debating useless questions about how many angels might be able to dance on the head of a pin, and other such nonsense.



This was the impression the humanists had of the official doctors of the Church — which they delighted to spread abroad!

Now, there is truth in what the humanists said about the complexity of scholastic theology. I love Aquinas. Reading Aquinas is like listening to a Bach fugue or looking at a Gothic Cathedral. It’s absolutely beautiful in its intricacy and depth and balance. On the other hand, if you’ve ever read the *Summa Theologiae*, especially some of the more philosophical sections, you

may find yourself sympathizing with the humanists, at least a little bit.

Well, the humanists were bored with medieval scholasticism. They wanted to abandon what they viewed as the “intellectual stagnation” of the Middle Ages and return to something “more pure.”

For them this meant a return to the original sources. The humanists wanted to drink at the fresh springs of the Old and New Testaments and writings of the Church Fathers. Their cry was *ad fontes* — “to the sources” (literally “to the fountains”). This is how they wanted to learn their theology — not by listening to the Doctors of the Church.

## Questions and Answers

Let’s tie this all together. As Luther studied for his doctorate in theology at the University of Wittenberg and Calvin pursued his education at the University of Paris, the world was dramatically changing. Literacy was rapidly expanding. New ideas were everywhere and, for the first time in history, it was possible for them to be widely disseminated in the form of inexpensive tracts and treatises, pamphlets and books. And then, we find that at the same time there was a growing culture and attitude in the universities that said, in essence, “The official theologians of the Church are impractical and boring. Let’s bypass them and get back to the pure study of Scripture and the Fathers!”

Someone might ask: “Are you saying that increased literacy was a bad thing? Are you implying that the availability of books was a bad thing or that wanting to interact directly with the Old and New Testaments and the Church Fathers is a mistake?”

Of course not. These are good things. What I’m saying is simply that these were *ingredients* in the creation of a general atmosphere in which a reaction against centralized spiritual authority could take place. And when you mix in an increasingly arrogant mockery of the “official” doctors of the Church, it wouldn’t have taken a genius to see the direction in which things were headed.

But this not is the end of the story. There’s more. To be continued... ■

## 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  
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I remember the call. The voice on the other end of the line said, “Are you Steve Ray?” I said, “Yes, why?” The voice said, “Of all the men in all the world I need to talk with you.”

In response I said, “Who are you and why do you need to speak with me?” I ended up meeting Alex Jones by phone that night. We had lunch together on the following Wednesday. As a Pentecostal preacher in Detroit, Michigan he was studying the worship patterns of the early Church and was struck by the Church Fathers.

He had heard that I had converted from Evangelical Protestantism to the Catholic Church. He said he didn’t know anyone else who had done that and wanted to talk with me. That started a monthly meeting at a Big Boy Restaurant in Southfield, Michigan, where he peppered me with questions for over a year of meetings. Every meeting was a delight. His sense of adventure, honesty and inquiry was a joy to me. He reminded me of a little kid at Christmas (a good thing said with all respect). He was so excited. He had a love for the truth and a dedication to follow the truth no matter what. That is why his book is entitled *No Price Too High*, and he did pay a big price to become Catholic.

He brought his wife Donna to our house and she confronted my wife Janet who graciously and calmly answered her questions. I remember her saying she was so frustrated that Janet didn’t “fight back” but just loved Donna and calmly responded. Donna is a very precious soul and a genuine lady through and



through. Her conversion brought us all great joy when she finally “Ah ha!” She saw it!

We became very good friends. My wife was Donna’s sponsor into the Catholic Church and I wrote the Preface to his book. My only regret is that our lives were both so busy that we had not seen much of them over the last few years. He was ministering to several parishes in Detroit and traveling the world speaking.

He died in the grace of God as a deacon in the Catholic Church and I could not be prouder to have been his friend and brother in Christ. I look forward to spending time together in eternity. May God grant grace to his wife Donna and his three sons and their families (<http://catholicconvert.com/blog/2017/01/15/dear-friend-dcn-alex-jones-rip/>).

As I think of the few times I had with Alex — on *The Journey Home* program and at our Deep in History conference — I mostly remember him for his patience and courage in conversion. Once he had mercifully by grace come to know the truth of the Church, he did not immediately resign from his ministry and convert. Instead, he bravely informed his Pentecostal congregation of what he had come to believe, and then spent the next six months catechizing them. When he and Donna entered the Church, fifty-six of his congregation also came with them!

Please join me in praying for God’s mercy on the souls of these our friends, and for their families and friends. And may we also pray for their intercession: that we might grow in our relationship with the Lord, and have the courage to be His witnesses wherever He calls us to serve. ■

## FROM THE HERMITAGE: The Costly Journey Home

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



Dear friends, may the Lord give you peace. Lent has begun. Lent marks the last forty days of the journey for many women and men — and even children — making their way toward the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. Through these Sacraments God will fully incorporate them into the Church, the Mystical Body of His Son.

For many of the catechumens and candidates entering the Church the journey has been costly. There are those who will be entering the Church who have given up their positions, sometimes powerful and prestigious positions as non-Catholic clergy, in pastoral ministries that in some cases have spanned decades.

Some people have lost academic appointments in non-Catholic educational settings due to their conversion. Courageous men and women have endured hurtful accusations of “heretic” or “Christ-hater” from friends and loved one as they have made known their journey into the Catholic Church. Other kinds of marital or familial discord have occurred because someone has chosen to heed the promptings of the Holy Spirit to enter into full communion with the Church.

At the very least, these soon-to-be-Catholic Christians have spent many months in preparation, sacrificing time and energy to deepen their knowledge and understanding of Jesus and His Church.

Many of you reading this newsletter are converts and have been in the situations of the people I have just described. Many others readers can scarcely imagine the intellectual,



emotional and spiritual journey these women and men have made. In any case, I ask you to remember these pilgrims in a very particular way as they journey onward toward the Easter Vigil and the Sacraments of Initiation.

I'll leave you with a poem by Cecil Frances Alexander, which I think sums up the journeys of the men, women and children who will enter the Catholic Church during this year's Easter Vigil.

### Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult\*

*Jesus calls us over the tumult  
Of our life's wild, restless, sea;  
Day by day His sweet voice soundeth,  
Saying, "Christian, follow Me!"*

*As of old Saint Andrew heard it  
By the Galilean lake,  
Turned from home and toil and kindred,  
Leaving all for Jesus' sake.*

*Jesus calls us from the worship  
Of the vain world's golden store,  
From each idol that would keep us,  
Saying, "Christian, love Me more!"*

*In our joys and in our sorrows,  
Days of toil and hours of ease,  
Still He calls, in cares and pleasures,  
"Christian, love Me more than these!"*

*Jesus calls us! By Thy mercies,  
Savior may we hear Thy call,  
Give our hearts to Thine obedience,  
Serve and love Thee best of all. ■*

\*Available online at <http://www.utmostchristianwriters.com/pd-poetry/pd-poetry-135.php>.

## 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.

## CHNETWORK RETREATS

Would you like fellowship and connection with other converts or those on the journey to the Catholic Church? The CHNetwork is offering retreats in Columbus, Ohio and Lutz, Florida this year. Visit [CHNetwork.org/retreats](http://CHNetwork.org/retreats) for more information.



## TAX LETTER

If you need a record of your 2016 contributions for tax purposes, please contact **Wendy Hart**:  
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**CHNetwork**  
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Zanesville, OH 43702

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# Prayer List



## Clergy

- For a former Disciples of Christ minister, that our Lord Jesus would bless and guide her RCIA experience.
- For an Anglican priest in Asia, that the Holy Spirit would clear all obstacles blocking his return to the Catholic Church of his youth.
- For James, a former Disciples of Christ lay preacher, that God may bring him rejoicing to the Easter Eucharist.
- For Mike, an Anglican deacon, that his curiosity in things Catholic would lead him home.
- For a Presbyterian minister in Virginia, that the Holy Spirit would answer his vocational concerns about becoming Catholic.
- For Paul, a United Church of Christ minister, that he may discover and embrace the fullness of the truth in the Catholic Faith.
- For Ben, a minister in Kansas, that his exploration of the claims of the Catholic Church would lead him to the ancient, apostolic Faith.
- For the wife of an Assembly of God minister in Washington, that the Holy Spirit would dissolve the skepticism in her husband's heart.
- For Jeremy, a former Pentecostal worship pastor, that our Lord Jesus would shower him with grace and love at the Easter Vigil.

- For Chris, an Anglican priest, that Jesus may lead him into full-communion with the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
- For Rich, a Nazarene minister, that God would guide him to a faithful RCIA program.

## Lay

- For Marc, who recently began RCIA classes, that his enthusiasm for the truth may never dim.
- For Tammy who was recently received into the Catholic Church, that her love and devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament continue to grow and flourish.
- For Bryan, that he find good, helpful answers to his continuing questions about the Catholic Faith.
- For Sherry who is going through RCIA and is happy to be "almost Catholic."
- For a convert who is having continuing struggles in her local parish.
- For a Baptist who wants to be received into full communion with the Church but is waiting on account of his wife's reluctance to have their marriage convalidated.
- For a Baptist in Texas who doesn't know how to progress with her desire to be Catholic without alienating her husband who is very much opposed to the Faith.

- For an Anglican who has resolved most of his theological struggles with the Church but is unsure about how to move forward with his conversion on account of his wife's hostility towards Catholicism.

- For Jerry who is very drawn towards the traditional truth and beauty of the Church but is disturbed by the secularism in the Church.
- For Kate that she come to a point in her journey of faith where she is able to be fully Catholic and receive Jesus in the Eucharist.
- For MJ who is considering Catholicism but has struggles with Marian doctrines.
- For Megan who after a number of serious setbacks on her journey is once again moving forward with her interest in the Catholic Faith.
- For Rachel and her husband to be united in their faith walk.
- For Kim who is seriously pursuing Catholicism but still has mixed emotions on account of the years of indoctrination she received from her previous faith background.

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*: Wednesday 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

#### March 6

Shaun McAfee\*  
 Former Southern Baptist & non-denominational

#### March 13

Dana Krull\*  
 Former Church of God (Anderson, IN) & Military Chaplain

#### March 20

Joseph Pearce\*  
 Former Agnostic  
 Re-air from 2/3/2014

#### March 27

Steve Dawson\*  
 Revert

To access the full archive of past Journey Home programs go to [chnetwork.org/journey-home](http://chnetwork.org/journey-home).

\*Schedule is subject to change.

► “Journeys Home” continued from page 4

in John 6:22–59. As I travelled across the barren landscape of Afghanistan visiting my Rangers that fall, I kept a small metal container in the shoulder pocket of my uniform and sometimes I would feel the wafers clinking. *Is that really Jesus in there?* I wondered. Over time, I found myself wanting Him to really be there — really with me, physically.

I read *Evangelical is Not Enough* by Thomas Howard and realized how much I had apparently accepted the many *a priori* assumptions of the post-Reformation world without understanding how massively they had impacted me through the contemporary American Prot-

estant landscape. After all, if we in our “protesting” assert that all we really need is the Bible and the Holy Spirit, then logically, we don’t need the Church at all! Another author I read noted how the Holy Spirit is not simply some talisman that we either have or don’t have. Because if He is, then everyone would correctly and consistently interpret and apply Scripture. But a cursory examination of the cacophonous chaos of western Protestantism instead reveals a collection of wildly disparate movements numbering in the tens of thousands, not to mention the independent congregations and the “spiritual-but-not-religious” hordes of functional agnostics. As I considered this glaring evidence of unbiblical discord that had been under

my nose all along, I was horrified and discouraged to admit that the unity Jesus prayed for in John 17, and which St. Paul admonished early believers to maintain in 1 Corinthians 1:10, seemed to be nonexistent in contemporary Christendom. Like most of my friends and colleagues, I longed for unity but had somehow given up on it with a tacit, somber resignation that the metastasizing of post-Reformation denominationalism was an unavoidable reality.

Brian also methodically unpacked for me that I had a functionally Buddhist worldview: namely that divinity cannot commingle with matter. By extension, he uncovered the predominant Protestant attitude that God, in His infinite holiness, does not work through a broken human (physical) organization like the Church. He showed me how Calvinism’s emphasis on our sinfulness had so obscured the *imago dei* into which we were created that I was instead denying God’s ability to actually

(physically) heal me. Calvinism had tragically taught us that we are really just steaming piles of dung with Jesus’ Blood covering up the stench, and there could be no true assurance of salvation in this life because every time I sinned, it was an indication that I was not actually part of God’s “elect”. As Brian described it, we internalize that we’re Esau, not Jacob. Additionally, when it came to the Sacraments, I realized that I was essentially saying that God doesn’t communicate grace through matter, but there were pesky biblical references that seemed to indicate that the opposite was the case (e.g., Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, 1 Peter 3:21). Combine all of this — strangely — with a Wesleyan focus on

loving people and actually doing things to live out your faith, and what you get is a very well-intentioned but seriously confused young American preacher. I loved Jesus, and I believed I was trying to live for Him. But I was stuck, and I knew by the end of 2013 that I was in serious trouble as a Protestant and as a chaplain. I began to see the house of cards where I was living and sensed its immanent and permanent collapse. I also quickly realized that the only other logical options were to start my own church or follow the increasingly clear path towards a place I never thought I would go: Rome.

### Authority and the Incarnation

During the winter of 2014, I decided to prayerfully continue my investigation and not make any rash decisions without being

fully convinced in my head and my heart. I worried that I was actually just experiencing the culmination of a mid-life crisis, something I had been aware of since my transition to seminary and the birth of our first son in 2007. Considering I had reached an early apex in my career as a chaplain, I assumed that I was making up some sort of problem to worry about — a tendency which I get honestly from my forebears, reinforced by negative life experiences that always seemed to happen when things were going well.

I was also in danger of burning out. I served in one of the fastest-paced units in the Army, so even without the Catholic dilemma, I was doubtful about the wisdom of staying on the bullet train of my Army chaplain career because it was already impacting my family. Yet all personal, pastoral, and professional considerations aside, the more I read and studied about the

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## ...Journeys Home Continued...

Catholic Church, the more I found myself increasingly captivated by her. I liken this season to falling in love with the ugly, unpopular girl at school: instead of joining in the snickering gossip, once I actually talked to her directly, I perceived that, on the inside, she was incredibly beautiful, goodhearted, and wise.

It seemed that I was standing on the tip of an iceberg, and that the deeper I looked, the more I discovered that I wanted to know. The question underlying all the others, however, was really the core issue of authority: if Rome was the only Christian tradition that actually claimed to have ultimate authority over the life of the believer, then figuring out if this is really true would answer all the other questions, from Mary to the Pope to any other belief or practice. In short order, I found that my

interpretation of the classic text on this matter from Matthew 16:13-20 was merely an example of post-Enlightenment, postmodern, western, American, democratic egalitarianism: we are all Peter, so the “keys to the kingdom” represent our faith, because Jesus builds the Church on us, too. But a simple examination of the New Testament revealed that Peter was the leader of the Apostles (train wreck that he was so many times — just like me, bless his heart!). It also reveals that Jesus had given to Peter a special kind of authority to bind and loose things on earth and

in heaven. Jesus then later reinstated Peter in a unique way (see John 21:15-19), and just before that He also breathed on the Apostles and gave them the authority to forgive sins (see John 20:22-23). As a Protestant, I simply had no way to deal with these logical extensions; if I am Peter and the Apostles, then in every way I also have the keys to the kingdom and I should also have the authority to bind and loose and forgive sins — not just to assure my brothers and sisters in Christ that we are forgiven.

There was an additional nagging historical issue: when did God supposedly revoke the authority He had clearly given to the Apostles and their successors? Did He really abandon His Church from roughly AD 100 to 1500, until Martin Luther and crew somehow liberated us from the problems that Rome had so nefariously created?

### The Incarnation and the Eucharist

I was fascinated, too, by the Catholic understanding of the Incarnation. For Protestants, the “Incarnation” is something

that took place 2,000 years ago and lasted about 33 years. For Catholics, it is instead something that is constantly taking place throughout salvation history, including today.

A related logical problem gnawed at me here: if I take John 1:14 as being *literally, physically* true, and I also take John 3:16 as being *literally, physically* true (two non-negotiable tenets of the Christian Faith), then how in the world can I *spiritualize* John 6:22-59, especially when Jesus responds *literally* to the bewildered accusations of the Jews who are offended by what He just said about eating and drinking His Flesh and Blood? It’s almost like they were saying to Jesus, “This is one of those parables, right? Like, you’re the door, or the shepherd, or some other analogy?” But instead of backpedaling, Jesus instead doubled down and told them it is

*literally, physically* true that we have to eat and drink Him (see John 6:56). And so they left Him! How tragic it is that so many people don’t believe Jesus’ plain words in John 6!

Additionally, God revealed Himself physically in the Garden; He also showed up physically in the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and in the Temple at Jerusalem, as well as other various Christophanies in the Old Testament. After He showed up physically in the Person of His Son, Who then physically ascended into heaven in a new Body which has physical marks in it from the cross, then why

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in the world would He now, in our day, choose to remain physically absent from His people? Wouldn’t it make more sense that “from the rising of the sun to its setting ... incense offerings are made to my name everywhere, and a pure offering” (Malachi 1:11, NABRE) until He physically returns on the clouds to culminate salvation history and usher in the wedding feast of the Lamb, where we, in physically resurrected bodies, will be with Him forever? And doesn’t Holy Mass seem to effortlessly (and physically) connect all of this biblical typology from Genesis to Revelation? As I began attending Mass while investigating these issues, I discovered it was utterly saturated with Scripture, and I gradually discerned that it is the nuptial union of God with His people, the intersection of eternity and time, and the mysterious joining of heavenly, spiritual divinity with our worldly, fallen flesh for the purpose of physically redeeming and sanctifying it.

During a training event at Fort Knox, Kentucky on the Sunday after Easter in 2014, the Mass I attended with my Catholic

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

Rangers at 11 a.m. was juxtaposed with my own communion service at 1 p.m., where I instinctively told my Rangers as they came forward to receive, “The Body and Blood of our Lord.” When one of them, a Catholic, made the sign of the Cross before receiving, I was convicted. Not only was I leading him away from the true Table, but I didn’t really believe that what I was giving them was Jesus’ Body and Blood. Otherwise, I would never have touched it myself or offered it to others, thereby leading all of us into the sin of sacrilege.

During my sermon that day about the Road to Emmaus in Luke 24:13-35, I also heard myself saying, “These two followers of Jesus had been with Him for a long time and knew all the Scriptures, but Jesus still had to explain the meaning to them. So apparently,” I continued, holding out my Bible, “this isn’t enough.” After a momentary blush, I clarified that the Bible is still essential, but I went on to explain how Jesus wasn’t seen for Who He really was until He reclined at the table with them and blessed and broke the bread, and that we are invited to continually meet Him and see Him at the Table. I realized that this was essentially a Catholic homily and that I was no longer protesting anything. Back home in Georgia with Addie and our boys the following Sunday, during our contemporary chapel service, the congregation passionately sang, “*Holy Spirit, you are welcome here / come flood this place and fill the atmosphere / your glory, God, is what our hearts long for / to be overcome by your Presence, Lord.*” The word “Presence” was capitalized on the Powerpoint slide, and I couldn’t resist leaning over and saying to Addie, “You know, if we were Catholic, we wouldn’t have to ask Jesus to come, because He would be here physically, too.” As we walked to the car after the service, I told her plainly, “I’m not home here anymore.” The very next day, I began the process of formally telling my superiors that I intended to become Catholic. It turns out that the Church of God was right: denominations are not what Christ intended. But the “one, true Church of God” did not need yet another reformation in Anderson, Indiana. It had been in Rome all along!

### “Coming Out Catholic”

One of the first books Addie and I had read in our investigation of all things Catholic was Scott and Kimberly Hahn’s *Rome Sweet Home*, which chronicles their intense marital strife and utter pastoral ostracism in the transition. So during the winter of 2014, the closer I came to being convinced that I was actually Catholic, the more I tried to brace myself and our family for the shock wave we honestly expected. Had it not been for a special dispensation of God’s grace, things could have gone much worse for us when I finally broke the news to my Army supervisors and the Church of God in early May of 2014.

Thankfully, however, nearly everyone offered their support for us following our hearts, even if they flatly disagreed with our theological reasons for doing so. First, our fellow chaplain families were at least polite; the chaplaincy’s professional and pastoral maxim of “collegiality without compromise” apparently helped protect us. Second, all of my superior commanders were Catho-

lic, so their only real concern was that I didn’t leave immediately, because my battalion was set to deploy to Afghanistan again very soon. On the third front, thankfully, my Church of God chaplain endorsers were acquainted with units like mine, and they knew from experience how long it could take to find and duly assign a replacement chaplain in the Ranger Regiment. Therefore they allowed me to remain on active duty for one more year to facilitate the transition. They simply told me, “Do what you can, and don’t do what you can’t; just love people and show them Jesus.” (Their only caveat was that I shouldn’t “go out and try to make everyone become Catholic.”) Since I could still counsel, preach, teach, baptize, and even marry people, I accepted this gracious offer, even though I felt morally awkward about being Catholic in my heart while collecting a paycheck under the auspices of a Protestant church tradition’s endorsement.

Someone during this period quipped about the stigma surrounding our public revelation: “It’s like coming out gay, isn’t it?” While I’m sure that revealing a homosexual lifestyle to the world is a lot harder, it certainly felt like we were risking many relationships, and it definitely meant the end of my chaplain career. It’s hard to imagine what that transitional year would have been like without the incredible outpouring of graces described above.

Little did we know that we were in for the hardest summer of our lives anyway. Addie endured a surgery to remove an ovarian cyst 20 weeks into her pregnancy with our third son, followed by a diagnosis of preeclampsia at 28 weeks, just before I was set to deploy to Afghanistan yet again. Thankfully, my commander let me stay home. My fellow chaplains covered the deployment, so I was able to remain stateside with Addie as she delivered Garrett at 31 weeks, weighing in at just 3 pounds, 9 ounces. After 25 long hard days in NICU, we were on the point of nervous collapse from the most chaotic year of our lives and certainly the most challenging season in our marriage. We thanked God

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## ...Journeys Home Continued...

that my battalion returned home safely that fall, but as a family, we were really struggling. Then the rigors of another intense training cycle, compounded with our stress about what I would do for work after the Army, nursing our preemie into health, and generally feeling awkward about our “in-between” status — we just wanted to be done with it and to complete the transition home to Ohio at last.

It was interesting, though, to see how many conversations I had with Catholics of all ranks and ages during that transitional year without any effort whatsoever on my part. Our family’s story intrigued both cradle Catholics who had remained faithfully in communion and those who had fallen away. At the risk of violating the Church of God’s admonition about converting people, I simply encouraged Catholics to be truly Catholic. I pleaded with them to fly to the Sacraments for help: “You have access to something that I don’t! All you need to do is make a good confession and return to full communion by eating and drinking Jesus!” Meanwhile, each week we attended Mass and dutifully filed forward with our arms across our chests, bowing before the Host and receiving a priestly blessing before returning to our pew. It became agonizing to not be able to receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, but we knew it was necessary that we abstain during this season as God was preparing us to become a holy family through the sacraments. God also showered blessings on us in many forms during that last year on active duty, including a private weekend with noted Catholic authors Rod Bennett and Dave Armstrong and their families, graciously facilitated by the Coming Home Network.

What joy it was to finally be received into full communion! I departed active duty in July 2015, and we had our two youngest sons baptized at our home parish in Columbus, Ohio. We spent the remainder of the summer reorienting ourselves to civilian life. At last, on September 29, 2015, the Feast of St. Michael (my chosen patron), St. Gabriel, and St. Raphael — (the three archangels mentioned in the Bible) — Addie and I were confirmed. Then we joined our firstborn son, Gavin, in receiving our First Communion. Father Stash Dailey, our parish priest, brought the

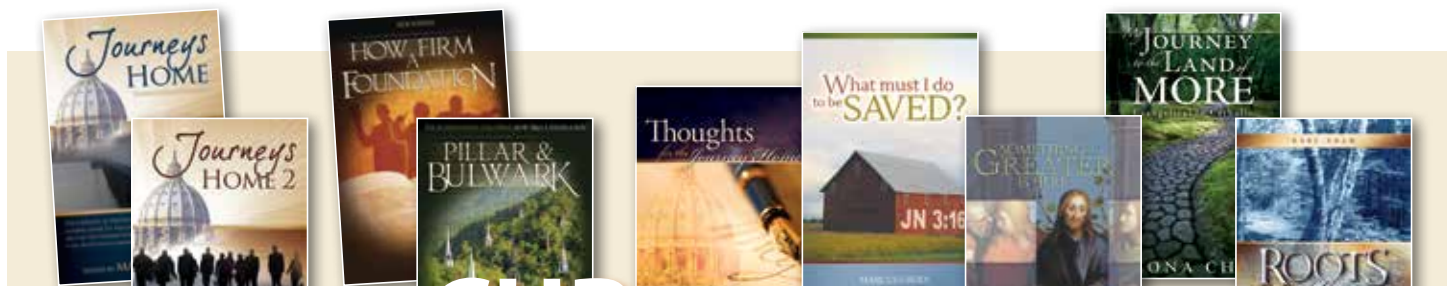
precious Blood of Our Lord to us at the rail. He tilted the chalice forward for me to drink, and I saw the large fragment of Host floating inside — the Body of Christ reunited with His Blood! The burgundy and golden light faded into darkness when the chalice enveloped my face, and as the Blood finally touched my lips, I felt as though I was entering into the tomb with Jesus. Here was the Gospel — no longer simply a spiritual truth or concept, but truth itself physically embodied in the Lord, who willingly died for me, and who still offers His very Flesh and Blood to be united with me! Now, at every Mass, we join with the angels and the rest of the congregation as we joyously sing the words which will echo in eternity: “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts! Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!” ■



DANA MICHAEL KRULL is a former Army Chaplain and pastor of the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana). After leaving the chaplaincy and pastorate to become Catholic in 2015, he returned to his childhood home in Columbus, Ohio with his wife of 12 years, Addie, and their three sons, affectionately known as the “G-Men”: Gavin (9), Grant (6), and Garrett (2). They are members of Holy Family parish and are thrilled to be deepening their journey with Jesus through the Sacraments in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church that He founded through St. Peter and the Apostles. Dana will be a guest on *The Journey Home* on March 13, 2017.

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# CHN Community Responds: Fasting

By Matt Swaim, Communications Coordinator



Fasting is one of the core practices of our Lenten observance as Catholics — but for many Christians, this spiritual discipline is either minimized, overlooked, or undefined. We asked members of the Coming Home Network what their understanding of fasting was prior to becoming Catholic. Here's what some of them had to say:

*"I occasionally fasted as a Protestant — and by occasionally I mean maybe a handful of times over 45 years. Most often, it was in response to a serious need for direction from God or an answer to prayer. I read Arthur Wallis's book God's Chosen Fast when I was young but don't recall ever hearing any teaching on fasting from the pulpit. My Protestant background was Calvinist and then Evangelical non-denominational. I never had any concept of fasting as penance or mortification."* **ROBIN, VIA FACEBOOK**

*"I remember the Richard Foster book Celebration of Discipline becoming popular in the 80's. It talked about the value of the 'spiritual disciplines' and had chapters devoted to prayer, meditation, silence, solitude, fasting ... I read it a couple times and began working on trying to incorporate some of these into my life. What struck me the most about the book was that it was almost completely borrowing from Catholic spiritual theology and tradition. Foster quoted constantly from St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, St. This, St. That. The main effect of the book was to move me toward Catholicism."* **KEN HENSLEY, FORMER BAPTIST MINISTER**

*"I come from a Canadian Anglican background. Most Anglicans know something of fasting from the Gospel readings and, if they've read them, from the rubrics of the Prayerbook. Despite their prominence in the Anglican tradition, however, the practices of fasting and abstinence have all but died out. I knew a handful of Anglo-Catholics that observed the eucharistic fast (from midnight) and certain other disciplines, but it was always a personal choice and one that was treated with some measure of secrecy, on account of its*

*seeming rather extreme to the majority of Anglicans."* **JOHN, CHNETWORK COMMUNITY FORUM**

*"I first converted from atheist to Protestant, and it was several years before I realized I had to become Catholic. During that Protestant time, neither fasting nor suffering nor sanctification were mentioned by any of my Protestant friends or any of the Protestant authors I was reading. But I knew I had to try to give up certain lifelong habitual sins. So the 'fasting' that I practiced in those days was the struggle to abstain from sin. Only later, as a Catholic, did I begin to understand that this is 'mortification' and that it's part of the Way of the Cross that includes suffering, fasting and the self-denial that God uses to make us, gradually, more holy."* **KEVIN O'BRIEN, THEATER OF THE WORD, INC.**

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us this about fasting:

FASTING CLEANSSES THE SOUL,  
RAISES THE MIND,  
SUBJECTS ONE'S FLESH TO THE SPIRIT,  
RENDERS THE HEART  
CONTRITE & HUMBLE,  
SCATTERS THE CLOUDS OF CONCUPISCENCE,  
QUENCHES THE FIRE OF LUST, &  
KINDLES THE TRUE LIGHT OF CHASTITY.

"The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways. Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms, *fasting, prayer, and almsgiving*, which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others." (1434)

Fasting is prescribed and practiced throughout the Scriptures: there are instances where individuals fast for repentance and spiritual purification, and even instances where entire nations proclaim a fast together. As Catholics today, we uphold that tradition of mortifying ourselves through fasting as an individual practice, and we also fast together in solidarity with our Christian community on prescribed days such as Fridays and Ash Wednesday. This practice has the added benefit of helping us detach ourselves from things that may be standing between us and a deeper relationship with God.

Above all, fasting is meant to make us better Christians, more in tune with what God wants for us. The great St. Augustine handily summed up why every one of us should be eager to fast:

"Fasting cleanses the soul, raises the mind, subjects one's flesh to the spirit, renders the heart contrite and humble, scatters the clouds of concupiscence, quenches the fire of lust, and kindles the true light of chastity." (*On Prayer and Fasting*)

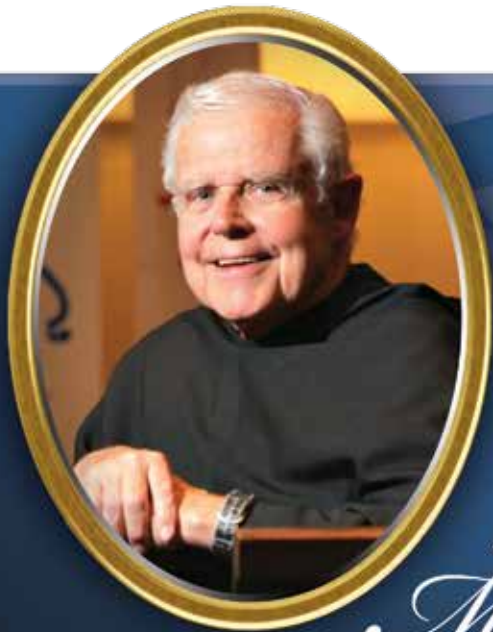
May God make this Lent an especially fruitful one for you as you rediscover this ancient spiritual practice! ■

**The Coming Home Network International**

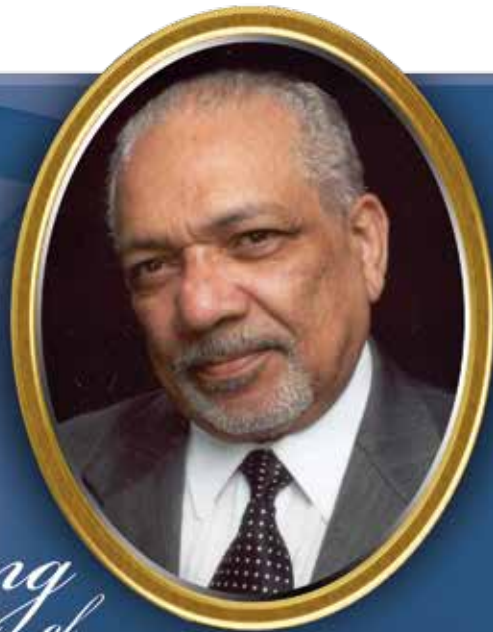
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