



## January 2018 CHNewsletter

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# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



## From Long Ago and Far Away to Here and Now in the Catholic Church

By Dean C. Waldt

My parents were children of the Great Depression. They married in 1941 and started a family during the Second World War. Our family was neither rich nor poor; we had what we needed.

I grew up in a small town, the youngest of four sons. Life was comfortable and unexceptional. Dad worked and took good care of the family. Mom ran the house and also worked from time to time. My two older brothers were married and gone by the time I was 10 years old, which left two of us brothers at home. When my third brother entered the military after high school, I got to be an "only child" for a couple of years before heading off to college.

Our home was not affectionate, nor enthusiastic, nor even particularly fun. If I had to pick a phrase to describe it, I would choose "regular and steady." For my parent's generation, this was considered a compliment.

We went to the Presbyterian church every Sunday. Dad was an elder and Mom was in the women's group. Youth group was Sunday night and was 20 percent about Bible study and 80 percent about the girls who attended.

Once my brothers were off to college, career, military, marriage, and so forth, I was left to decide what I would do with my life. My favorite television shows were Saturday morning westerns, anything about flying and the space program, and Perry Mason, "the television lawyer." There are not many cowboys in New Jersey, and my poor eyesight kept me out of the military academies, so that left Perry. I started college

as a pre-law major but then changed my mind. During my freshman year, I felt a call to the ministry and moved to become a philosophy and religion major.

It just seemed like the right thing to do.

My senior year in college I was president of the Presbyterian church youth group. I gave the sermons on Youth Sunday, and everyone said I did a great job. My pastor encouraged me to consider the ministry as a calling. My parents were thrilled by my decision, and I wanted to please them. These were the external influences.

Going away to college at age 17 and being away from home for the first time forced me to examine whether my faith was really my own or just a family tradition. The Christian message made sense to me, but God the Father seemed very far away and Jesus not much closer. I was a natural student, and the Biblical studies, the theology, the philosophy and the history were all very exciting to me. I ate it up. I graduated with high honors, received the prize for being the top senior in religion studies, then went off to seminary in California.

### Marriage and Seminary

During my college summers before I left for seminary, I was a cook at a "Down *Continued on page 2* ➡

Journeys Home

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

the Shore” seafood restaurant just off the boardwalk. That still may be the best job I ever had. Linda was the best and prettiest waitress there. She was a beautiful, smart, no-nonsense, young woman. She knew her mind and spoke it with a smile that would knock you over. I figured that she was way out of my league; I still think so. I proposed, she said yes, and we were married. When summer was over, we packed up Linda’s cat, along with everything we owned, in a 1970 Dodge Colt and headed off to Los Angeles.

Seminary was fun. There were scores of newlywed couples, just like us, starting out in life together. For my language requirements, having taken four years of Greek in college, I just had to handle the Hebrew. I did an internship as a youth leader at a Presbyterian Church, got to preach several sermons there, and worked as a teaching assistant in the Church History Department. Once again, I excelled at the academics and got my Master’s degree a semester early. Then it was back to New Jersey to actually become a Presbyterian minister.

To be honest, I had discovered after one semester in seminary that being a parish minister was not right for me. If I had gone right into doctoral work, I might have persevered a little longer. But I think God did me a favor because I would probably still be hiding from life in the library if I had stayed in academics.

There were some things about being a minister that I loved. I loved the academics, the preaching, and the “life of the mind” that a theological education can become if one allows it to take over his life. But I was never very fond of the people, and Jesus was still a spiritual Luke Skywalker — inspiring, to be sure, but a long time ago and far, far away.

### My Short Career as a Pastor

As the young pastor of a small parish, I spent my first year preaching the world-changing sermons I had thought about in seminary. But the world did not change. Discouraged and doubting that God was listening, I wondered what I was doing wrong. After all, I thought I preached really good sermons. Then the petty bickering

began amongst the parishioners about when to schedule something, or who did not speak to whom, and how I really ought to make a special visit to the hypochondriac lady because she was a big donor. After two years, I was done. I quit the parish and resigned my ordination.

But employment was still necessary; I had to provide for my family. Our son was born during my second year in the ministry. Perry Mason came back to mind. I ended up at Villanova University School of Law. It is a great university and a great law school.

Only in retrospect do I appreciate that it was at Villanova where I first encountered the mysterious “thing” that was Catholicism. Sure, many students and faculty were “nominal” Catholics. But some were serious about their religion, and the integrity they exhibited was attractive. As a Protestant, I had picked up the idea that Catholics had outdated medieval views, from which the Reformation had liberated us. I remember my grandfather, a First World War veteran, being sincerely concerned that President Kennedy would be “taking orders from the Pope.” The cultural bias was subtle but very real.

I excelled again at academics, graduated near the top of the law school class, and was hired by a prestigious downtown law firm. Then I stopped going to church. Linda went alone and prayed for me. I bought a boat to “commune with God in nature” on the weekends. I was on the road to success; I climbed the ladder to the top over the next eight years. I reached the summit and discovered something remarkable: when you finally arrive at the top of your career, you find nothing there.

One wintry Saturday morning, I had a “Jonah” moment. I just could not run away any more. I knelt down in our living room and told God that I was exhausted and accepted the fact that I could not escape Him. I told Him that I no longer wished to flee; He had won, and I had lost. I surrendered. I asked for forgiveness and for a fresh start. Surprisingly, I got both.

It took a year or so for me to get back into “going to church.” But this time it was different. Jesus was much closer now, and I really believed that He was listening and

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## FEATURED RESOURCES



### Deep in Scripture CD

In this Deep in Scripture CD, Dr. Thomas Howard, a former Evangelical, shares how becoming “deep in history” helped him on his way to the Catholic Church. Marcus Grodi and Dr. Howard discuss friendships and the all-important friendship with Christ. They also reflect on the love of Christ in the face of suffering and loss, growing in His love, and dealing with worldly anxiety.



### Lead, Kindly Light — By Dr. Thomas Howard

Through his prolific and highly-regarded writing, Thomas Howard’s name is familiar to Protestants and Catholics alike, but many have never heard the story of his conversion to Catholicism. With grace, charm, and wit, Dr. Howard describes his journey from Evangelicalism to Anglicanism and, finally, to the Catholic Church. In a world saturated with fashionable unbelief, Howard’s testimony inspires and informs.

\$35

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Receive a *Deep in Scripture* CD and *Lead, Kindly Light* for a donation of \$75.

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# Luther: The Rest of the Story

## PART IV: NOT BY “FAITH ALONE”

By Kenneth Hensley, Online Resource & Pastoral Care Coordinator

In 1980, I was a young seminary student for whom nothing was more exciting than thinking about the truths of the Christian Faith.

At the time I was a firm believer in Luther’s doctrine of justification by faith alone: *sola fide*. The instant one looks to Christ in faith, I believed, “justification” takes place and is completed. Christ’s own perfect righteousness is legally credited to the account of the one who only believes, and then one is *saved* — past tense!

After this I believed, along with Luther, Calvin, and classical Protestantism, that one who has been justified will want to obey the commandments of Jesus. He will want to obey *not* because obedience is a part of what is required in order to receive eternal life but out of gratitude for having *been saved*.

But I was also a committed advocate of *sola Scriptura*, wide-open to any and all arguments that could be made from the Bible.

And, having something of the mindset of a theological detective, I was continually measuring exegetical footprints in the sands of Scripture, powdering the pages of St. Paul’s writings for doctrinal fingerprints, examining the shapes of ideas and arguments, on the lookout for patterns of textual evidence.

### A Peculiar Biblical Pattern

But then something happened.

One of my professors at Fuller Theological Seminary — who was extremely bright and had a PhD in Old Testament and a second PhD in New Testament — was talking one day about Luther, Calvin, and justification by “faith alone.”

All of a sudden a puzzled look came over him and he said, “You know, it’s a curious thing, but when you think of it, the Bible is essentially one story after another of men and women and their relationships with God, one illustration after another of how God relates to His people. And never in these stories do we find God telling people that they will receive His blessing by ‘faith alone.’

Rather, the pattern is *always* ‘trust me (faith); do what I tell you to do (obedience), and I will bless you.’ The basic pattern in Scripture is *always* faith, leading to obedience, *resulting* in blessing.”

He went on to offer some illustrations from the Bible: “Noah had to trust God,” he said, “*and* build the ark *in order to* be saved through the flood. Certainly faith was at the heart of Noah’s response; he never would have built the ark if he hadn’t first believed God’s warning to him. But it wasn’t ‘faith alone’ because if he hadn’t built the ark, he wouldn’t have been saved. Clearly, the pattern we see is faith, leading to obedience, resulting in deliverance.”

He went on: “Abraham had to trust God *and* leave his home and family in Mesopotamia and follow, *in order to* receive the blessings God had promised him. It wasn’t faith alone. It was faith, leading to obedience, *resulting* in blessing.

Moses and the children of Israel had to trust God *and* sacrifice the Passover lamb *and* leave Egypt *and* cross the Red Sea *and* follow the pillar of cloud by day *and* fire by night *and* eat the manna each day *and* bring their sacrifices to the priest when they sinned *and* cross the Jordan *and* take the cities one by one — *in order to* inherit the Promised Land. No ‘faith alone,’ here!

Naaman the Syrian had to trust God, *and* dip himself seven times in the Jordan River, *in order to* be cleaned of his leprosy.

The man blind from birth had to trust Jesus *and* wash in the Pool of Siloam, *in order to* receive his sight.”

I remember being struck by how simple it was to find illustrations of this basic pattern of “faith, leading to obedience, resulting in blessing.” It was on every page of the Bible.

It seemed clear to me that my professor was correct.

### The Protestant Pattern

Now, what troubled my professor was that the pattern we see in the Protestant doctrine of *sola fide* does not fit the pattern we see illustrated in Scripture. In the Protestant view of how God deals with people, the pattern is entirely different.

- We believe in Christ (faith).
- We are immediately justified (blessing).
- And *then* we proceed to live out our faith (obedience) as an act of gratitude to God for having *saved* us (past tense).

According to the pattern we see in Scripture, obedience is *always* a part of what was required *in order to* receive God’s promised blessing. To be saved through the flood, Noah *had* to actually build the boat. To become the father of a multitude, Abraham *had* to actually leave Ur of the Chaldees. To be delivered from slavery in Egypt, Moses and the Israelites *had* to actually do what God gave them to do. To be cleansed of his leprosy, Naaman *had* to actually go and dip himself in the Jordan seven times. To receive his sight, the man born blind *had* to actually wash himself in the Pool of Siloam.

Now, according to Luther, Calvin, and Protestantism, obedience is no longer a part of what is required *in order to* receive the blessing.

This troubled my professor — and it troubled me.

“If God wanted to teach the world that His blessings are to be received by ‘faith alone,’ why,” he wondered, “did God fill the entire Bible with the stories of men and women who *never* receive His blessings by faith alone?”

### One Failed Objection

As a Protestant, here’s the answer I was tempted to give to my professor’s question: “The pattern we see in the lives of these people in the Old Testament doesn’t apply to us. They lived under a system of works; we live under a system of grace.”

Except ... if this were true, why are these Old Testament saints set forth *in the New Testament* as examples for us to emulate?

For instance, in Hebrew 11 the author scans salvation history from the beginning and presents his readers with example after example of men and women *he clearly wants them to imitate*.

And every one of these examples illustrates the pattern of faith, leading to obedience, resulting in blessing.

By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he received approval as righteous (11:4).

By faith Noah, being warned by God of events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household (11:7).



By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out (11:8).

By faith [Moses] left Egypt (11:27).

By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land (11:29).

By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given friendly welcome to the spies (11:31).

In short, the author of Hebrews parades before his readers example after example of men and women who trusted God and did what God told them to do and were blessed because of this.

But, as a Protestant, I would have expected the author to immediately add, “But please ignore all these examples because, after all, these men and women were living under a system of ‘works,’ and we are living under a system of ‘grace.’ They were required to obey God in order to receive His blessings and so their example doesn’t really apply to us.” But what, instead, does the author of Hebrews immediately say?

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us *also* lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.

And then he brings forth the greatest example there is of faith, leading to obedience, resulting in God’s blessing:

Looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1-2).

No. It was perfectly clear to me that the author of Hebrews wanted me to imitate Noah and Abraham and Moses and Jesus. As these all walked in the obedience of faith and received God’s blessing because of it, it was clear to me that God wanted me to do the same.

It was clear that the author of Hebrews sees a continuum between their way and ours. He’s not drawing a *contrast*. Not in the least.

## Calling Good Evil

But here’s the thing that really twisted my head into knots.

Not only does Protestantism insist that the pattern we see illustrated in the lives of these Old Testament saints — and set forth for us to imitate in Hebrews 11! — no longer applies to Christians, it insists that this pattern be rejected as the essence of “legalism.”

As a Protestant seminarian, I believed this to be the case. Announce to any serious Protestant that you believe a Christian must persevere in faith and obedience *in order to* receive eternal life, and you will be informed that you are preaching “legalism” and have embraced a “damning system of works-righteousness.”

This was more than a decade before I ever contemplated the idea that the Catholic view of salvation might be the biblical view. But I knew, even back then, that there must be something wrong with the logic of Protestantism if it could lead to the conclusion that Noah and Abraham and all the Old Testament saints — and Jesus Himself! — are examples of a legalistic way of relating to God the Father.

## The Problem Of Boasting

“But Ken, don’t you realize that if our obedience is in any sense — and to any degree — *required* in order for us to inherit eternal life, then we will to that degree have earned our own salvation? Then

salvation will not be entirely the work of God. Then Christ our Lord will not receive all the glory for the great work of salvation. Then will we not have reason to boast that we saved ourselves?”

This line of reasoning runs as a thread through every classic presentation of the argument for *sola fide*. I had heard this argument all my Christian life. But now, reflecting on the fact that all those Old Testament saints had to obey in order to be blessed, another set of rhetorical questions began to ask themselves:

*So does this mean Noah saved himself from the flood?*

*Does this mean God didn’t get all the glory for Noah’s deliverance through the flood? Are God and Noah splitting the glory on that one?*

*Does this mean that Moses is in heaven boasting for all eternity that he delivered the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt?*

*Is the man born blind bragging forever that he “earned” his eyesight by his “work” of washing in the Pool of Siloam?*

The questions answered themselves.

## Conclusion

It would be another dozen years before I would begin to examine seriously the Catholic teaching on justification. But I knew even then that there was something wrong with the logic of *sola fide*.

In time I was ordained into the Protestant ministry. I spent the next ten years preaching that we are saved by the grace of God as we trust God and do what He says and persevere in this obedience of faith to the end of our lives. Faith, leading to obedience, resulting in blessing.

I must confess it was quite a surprise when I realized that I had been preaching, essentially, the Catholic view of salvation. ■

## 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



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### "Celebrating" the Reformation?

By Marcus Grodi

"Celebrating" the Reformation?

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By now you may have heard more than you wished about the 500th anniversary of the start of the Protestant Reformation. The coming of this event has been on my mind for more than 20 years, and last month in the CHNetwork's Christmas letter I shared some of my thoughts about the barriers to reunion and strategies for helping our separated brethren come home (if you'd like to read it, please go to: [CHNetwork.org/letter](http://CHNetwork.org/letter)).

As the actual anniversary date approached — October 31, 2017 — I had several options of how to commemorate it. Most of these were Catholic options, which included a Catholic theologian giving a keynote summary of Catholic critiques of the four Protestant "solas" — *Scriptura, Gracia, Christi, and Fide*. Instead, I chose the "road less traveled" — at least for Catholics. I (along with CHNetwork staff member Jim Anderson, my bodyguard) went to my Protestant seminary alma mater for their two-day conference on "Celebrating the Reformation."

Jim and I sat through twenty-seven (!) presentations given by twenty-seven of my seminary's professors. Four of these presenters were my previous professors, and another four were former classmates. My seminary continues to be a highly respected, non-denominational, evangelical Protestant institution, and the conference lectures were live-streamed all around the world to pastors, students, and missionaries. The atmosphere was certainly an unapologetic celebration of the Reformation, and each presenter emphasized the blessings that they believe have come to "the church" (which, by this, they mean the invisible church of true believers).

Let me begin by expressing in every way possible my gratitude and appreciation for the Christ-centered education I received at my seminary. There has never been any doubt in my mind as to my professors' faithfulness and love for Christ and Scripture. In many ways, I am a faithful Catholic today because of what I learned from them. Their devotion to Christ and Scripture was pervasive throughout all the conference presentations.

There were several concerns, however, that Jim and I shared about the conference. Running as a thread throughout was the underlying assumption that we Catholics still believe we are saved by our works. The tone often heard from the presenters was that no one in their right mind would be a Catholic because, sadly, we Catholics still do not understand that a person is only "saved by grace through faith and not by works" (cf. Eph 2:8 — which is precisely what we Catholics have always believed).

It reminded me that the top three "Barriers to Conversion," which we have often discussed in this newsletter, are still very much true: ignorance, prejudice, and "bad Catholics." What this conference represented to me was the ingrained, narrow thought pattern that too often occurs in so many wings of the Christian denominational world: a group of Christians, sharing one common slate of assumptions, builds up over years, even centuries, a stream of convictions, dare I say, a "tradition." And within this tradition, the leaders, pastors, academics, and theologians build upon each other to solidify the foundations of their tradition, which in turn provides the lens through which they see, evaluate, and judge all other "competing" traditions.

Essentially, all the presenters at this conference were united in their evangelical, Reformed, quasi-Calvinist tradition, speaking as if they were expressing the one, obviously, most universal expression of the Reformation. And it was comical to imagine that around the country other Protestant seminaries from different theological traditions — Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Mennonite, Four-Square Gospel, Episcopal, etc., etc. — may have been sponsoring their own "celebrations" of how they understood the blessings of the Reformation, not even considering the possibility that their views were radically contradictory to another Protestant conference being held on the other side of town.

Our separated brethren continue to think that "no one in their right mind would be Catholic" because they rarely take the time to step out of their "tradition" to fully examine what the Catholic Church truly teaches. As a result, they sadly remain ignorant of Catholic teaching, and their understanding of the Catholic Church remains prejudiced because what they think the Church teaches isn't accurate. But they are often not to blame for this ignorance or prejudice because too often the only Catholics they have ever known are poor examples of what it means to be a Catholic Christian. *Mea culpa! Mea maxima culpa!*

Which is why I walked away from the conference eternally grateful, not only for the mercy of God Who by grace awakened my heart to the beauty

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and truth of the Catholic Faith, but also for the privilege of working in this apostolate. At the core of our work is a love and appreciation for the faith and convictions of our evangelical non-Catholic Christian brothers and sisters. We recognize the work of God's grace in their lives, bringing them to faith and calling them to service in His name. I am also grateful for how charitably the conference speakers and attendees received Jim and me, even after they discovered we were both converts from Protestantism to Catholicism! It is our mission to proclaim the fullness of the Catholic Faith — to fill in the gaps of their ignorance and correct any prejudice — while at the same time demonstrating through our lives that faithful Catholics are, indeed, Christians.

After the conference, Jim and I had a supremely joyful visit with Dr. Thomas and Lovelace Howard! They are both well-known and respected converts from Evangelicalism to the Catholic Church. Tom's books, such as *Lead, Kindly Light* (a featured resource this



Marcus with Dr. Thomas & Lovelace Howard

month, see page 2), *Evangelical Is Not Enough*, and *On Being Catholic*, have had a great spiritual influence on thousands of men and women, Catholic and Protestant. Tom was the first guest on *The Journey Home* program twenty years ago, and both he and Lovelace appeared later on the program after she was received into the Catholic Church.

I believe Tom is a truly gifted writer, maybe our living "C.S. Lewis," but I also believe he's far too unappreciated — and I fear taken sadly for granted! May I ask a favor? If you have been touched by any of Tom's writings or his appearances on Catholic television or radio, please send him

a letter or email expressing your gratitude. I'd ask that you send these to our office at the Coming Home Network (PO Box 8290 Zanesville, OH 43702 or e-mail them to [jim@chnetwork.org](mailto:jim@chnetwork.org) with Dr. Thomas and Lovelace Howard in the subject line), and we will forward them on to Tom and Lovelace. Let's make sure they know how much God has used them to touch our lives. ■

## CHNetwork Staff Interview

**What is your name and title?** Ann Moore, Office Manager

**How long have you worked for the CHNetwork?** 14 years

**Before working at the Coming Home Network, what was the most unusual or interesting job you've ever had?** Growing up, my father was disabled. Through the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR) he was trained to operate his own business. He ran the snack bar and vending machines at the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) garage. Every day in the summer, I drove him to work, stocked vending machines, counted inventory, and waited on employees during their lunch break. It was great to be able to spend time with him.

**How would you describe your job to a stranger on an airplane?** I recently had this conversation with our head basketball coach, not on an airplane, but during a conference. I told him that I worked for a non-profit that helps Protestant ministers and others come home to the Catholic Church. At first I received a one-word response, "Interesting." After a few minutes he asked, "Does that happen a lot?" I was able to show him our website with all the wonderful stories from a variety of denominations.

**What does a typical day in the office look like to you?** A typical day in my office consists of processing donations, answering emails and phone calls, sending correspondence, paying bills, and making bank deposits (thanks to your generous support!). I also work with our development team to find new ways to thank our current members and acquire new members.

**What is the most rewarding part of your job?** The most rewarding part of my job is being able to talk with members who call to place an order or update their payment information for an automatic donation and hearing why they support our organization, what CHN means to them and/or how CHN helped them or someone they know.

**What is one fact about you that might surprise people to know?** I coach middle school girls basketball at our local school district where I hope to provide a positive impact on young people's lives, helping them achieve their goals and dreams, both on the court and off.

**Who do you nominate to be our next staff interview?** Mary Clare Piecynski ■

## TAX LETTER



If you need a record of your 2017 contributions for tax purposes, please contact **Janna Pitcock**:

[janna@chnetwork.org](mailto:janna@chnetwork.org)  
740-450-1175 ext 102



## Joyful Journey Updates

**We would like to share with you a few encouraging updates and anecdotes from CHNetwork members. Thank you for helping us to assist converts and those on the journey to the Catholic Church!**

**FROM A FORMER PRESBYTERIAN PASTOR:** "[I am] thankful that the Lord led me to you when I was searching and in need. Your ministry greatly helped me. The website and show gave me fresh contact with other searchers who helped me realize that what I was thinking and experiencing was very real and good."

**FROM A FORMER WESLEYAN PASTOR:** "The Lord has blessed me with the task of starting and heading up an intercessory prayer ministry. We pray with people after the Masses on Sunday as well as meet monthly to pray for parish needs. We were also asked to help out trying to bring about a perpetual Eucharistic Adoration and a dedicated Adoration Chapel to our parish. Just recently a local Catholic radio station (an EWTN affiliate) asked me to co-host their annual three-day radio-thon annual fundraiser. What a blessing that was . . . It is hard to believe that all this has happened since our first call to you and all the wonderful help and support you gave us. If it were not for you and "Coming Home" I am not sure we would be where we are now. Once again, thank you and Marcus for all you have done for us and so many others!! You are in our prayers, and may our great Lord continue to use you mightily to build His church, one person at a time."

**FROM ALEIDA, A NEW CONVERT:** "I love being Catholic! I'm continuing to learn so much. Our parish is wonderful. Our priest grew up Baptist and has many family members in the Baptist tradition, so he understands where we are coming from, which really helps our family! My children have jumped right in with the parish youth ministries, and one daughter that goes to college has started teaching religious classes at the parish located at her college. Our entire family's faith has grown in ways I could never have imagined. I 'accepted Jesus' at 5 years old at an altar call at a Baptist church and always felt Jesus with me, but my faith had come alive through the Catholic Church!

We continue to watch *The Journey Home* and read the Coming Home Network's articles and watch the videos and find it so encouraging! Thank you for reaching out."

**FROM TAMMY, A NEW CONVERT:** "I keep walking through every door I come to! I have both you and Mr. Grodi to thank. You've both been a great source of strength and support to me. Your friendship has been invaluable to me, and I don't intend to stop here. I want to take you with me every step of the way."

**FROM MELISSA, A NEW CONVERT:** "I ... was confirmed in June 2017!! The Coming Home Network was pivotal for me in that process . . . I am blessed to be 'home,' and even though this last year was probably the loneliest I have ever felt in my 40 years — it was worth it ... because our Lord Jesus Christ is worth it. I love the newsletters and articles — I read them cover to cover!! Thank you for the work you do!!"

**FROM BRIAN, A NEW CONVERT:** "My family and I entered the Roman Catholic Church at Easter this year. We are incredibly excited about what God is doing in our lives. A lot has happened since we talked back in December. I resigned my position as a Southern Baptist minister, and we moved to Oklahoma to start a new life closer to family. I am now a maintenance technician for [my parish]. God is good! We are excited about getting involved in our new parish. Thanks for being a part of our journey home!"

**FROM SHIRLEY, WHO IS ON THE JOURNEY:** "I know you must have been praying for me because that dark veil that kept me from truly committing all the way to the Catholic Church has lifted. Astonished — yes! Stunned — to be sure! But I am so grateful that the Lord loves me that much that He has been real patient with me and guiding me. And for me to hear the clarification of the Catholic beliefs through the mouth of the Rabbi I so admire and respect and love — this is absolutely brilliant and amazing! Because God had him say these things last Saturday, I was able to see clearly that the parts of the Catholic Faith that bothered me don't need to bother me at all. ■

## SUPPORT CHNETWORK

For your convenience, CHNetwork is able to automatically deduct monthly donations directly from your credit card, checking, or savings account. If you would like to set up an automatic monthly donation, please go to [chnetwork.org/donate/](http://chnetwork.org/donate/) or complete this form and mail to:

### CHNetwork

Attention: Ann Moore  
PO Box 8290  
Zanesville, OH 43702

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

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# Prayer List



## Clergy

■ For an Assemblies of God minister in New York who is experiencing resistance from family and friends as he prepares to begin the process of entering the Church.

■ For Ryan, a lay minister in Canada, that the Lord Jesus would grant him the courage to return to the Catholic Faith of his youth.

■ For a Church of God, Cleveland, TN lay minister, that RCIA would be helpful to him in coming closer to Jesus in the Catholic Church.

■ For a Baptist minister teaching in China, that he may continue to grow in the understanding of the Catholic Faith and that his parents and relatives may be accepting of his faith journey.

■ For David, a Christian & Missionary Alliance seminarian, that his friends and family not shake his resolve to return to full communion with the Catholic Church.

■ For a former Southern Baptist lay minister in Wisconsin, that she may maintain the spiritual discipline to stay put in the truth and not follow emotions and memories that keep dragging her back to Protestantism.

■ For a former Pentecostal minister in India, that God would guide his every step home to the Catholic Church.

■ For a Methodist minister in Ohio, that the Holy Spirit would enable her to overcome her vocational

fears and enable her to return to her roots in the Catholic Church.

■ For a Southern Baptist minister in Virginia, that our Lord Jesus would strengthen his hunger for Him in the holy Eucharist, thus bringing him home to the altar of the Lord.

■ For Fr. John, a priest of the Church of England, that his interest in the Catholic Faith would grow to an intense desire to be united in full communion with the successor of St. Peter.

■ For Rob, a Baptist Bible translator, that he gain confidence in his growing understanding of the Catholic Faith and courage to act on that faith.

## Laity

■ For Amber, as she goes through RCIA and shares her conversion with her parents, that the Holy Spirit guide her path.

■ For a lady who is struggling to understand the role of Mary in our faith on account of her Baptist upbringing.

■ For an Evangelical in North Carolina who is still drawn to the Catholic Church but doesn't feel like it's the right time to begin RCIA, that she will continue to grow in her love for Jesus.

■ For Kathy who is very interested in the Catholic Church but finds Catholic parishes to be intimidating and hasn't made any connections with local Catholics, that she find good, wholesome support for her journey.

■ For an Evangelical in Canada who is doing research into different interpretations of Scripture and is comparing the Protestant and Catholic view, that the Holy Spirit illuminate his heart and mind.

■ For Roger who is struggling with understanding various Catholic beliefs, that he come to have clarity and peace with his faith walk.

■ For a man who is uncertain as to whether he and his wife should leave their non-denominational church, where they are very involved, in order to move towards the Catholic Church, that the Holy Spirit guide their journey.

■ For Beth who is drawn to the Church but is concerned about finding a good RCIA program since she has had a bad experience in her local parish.

■ For a recent convert's emotional healing after a difficult divorce and also for the Holy Spirit's guidance to know where God wishes her to serve in the Church.

■ For Doug who is drawn to the Church and is convicted that it is the true Church established by Christ but is hesitant to move forward with becoming Catholic on account of anti-Catholic family and friends.

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

#### January 1

Kelly Nieto\*  
 Former New Age (re-air from 1/28/2013)

#### January 8

Kandice Longstreth\*  
 Former Protestant

#### January 15

Matt D'Antuono\*  
 Former Evangelical Protestant

#### January 22

Kevin McDermott\*  
 Revert

#### January 29

Dr. Roger Salstrom\*  
 Former Methodist, Reformed, & Presbyterian

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 2

responding to my prayers. And the people at church were no longer an annoyance. In fact, I often thought I saw Jesus in them. Imagine that!

### Our Phenomenal Bible Ministry

Then one day Linda told me that she had volunteered to lead a start-up Monday evening Bible study for high school students, since some of the kids at church were interested. Linda is a teacher by profession and a natural at this kind of ministry. In fact, if it had not been for her help, I never would have made it through my internship as a youth minister. I told Linda that I would support her decision to do the Monday night program, but I wanted nothing to do with youth work. Those days were over for me.

The first night of the program eight kids showed up. Two years later, we had 150 high school students from several churches in the area involved in two weekly Bible studies. I returned to the Presbyterian Church and reaffirmed my ordination vows. We rented a hall and formed a 503(c)(3) organization. We started running annual retreats, and, as the students graduated from high school, we also started a college program. In addition, Linda began a counseling ministry.

We ran this ministry for ten years, and all the while I was practicing law full time. Frankly, as I look back, I have absolutely no idea how we did it.

### Time for Some Personal Study

My faith continued to grow and deepen as I studied and prepared to teach adult, college, and high school Bible study programs. This was not academics. I was digging deep into the Word of God because I wanted to get as close as I could to the Living Word. As a Protestant, the best means I had to get close to our Lord was a book, and I went as deep as that book could take me. But I was still alone; Jesus was still “back then” or “up there.” He was closer than before but remained just beyond my reach. I saw Him “in a mirror dimly,” and it was a lonely and frustrating experience.

We had some Catholic kids who came to the programs we ran. I was also invited by some kind priests to speak with them about what we were doing. I liked these priests; they understood what I was doing with the kids, but I did not quite understand what they were doing in their churches. The theological discussions we had were interesting, but they knew something that I did not. What they knew could not be communicated in an intellectual discussion, which was the ground on which I felt comfortable.

Meanwhile, I had always wondered why we Protestants had to ignore certain things to maintain our perspective. Who decided the canon of the New Testament? Why does Justin Martyr describe the Mass in AD 150 when Protestants know that all the “real” Christians must have been having home Bible studies? Why does Augustine speak of the sacraments as a means of grace and consider Baptism as initiation into the Body of Christ? It occurred to me that I should

actually start thinking about these things and not ignore them any longer.

I already had a complete collection of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, plus everything from Augustine, in boxes in the garage from my days as a Church History teaching assistant. I dug them out and started reading on the beach on Sunday afternoons. Then I ordered an English version of Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*. Then I ordered a *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and, after that, the *Documents of the Second Vatican Council*. Linda laughed and said I was the only guy on the beach with a highlighter and a notebook. But she supported my efforts every step of the way because she could

see my desire to get closer to the prize, to Jesus.

### Compelled by History

The first step on my journey home was, quite naturally for me, an intellectual one. Now, theologically-informed, traditional Protestantism is first and foremost the life of the mind. The core concept behind the Protestant experience is that, to know Christ, not only

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must one believe in

Him but also one must believe and think *correctly* on theological matters. Denominations are formed and divided along sometimes esoteric doctrinal differences.

There are historic reasons for this, which is a subject for another day. Suffice it to say that the Protestant movement was a “protest.”

What was the object of the protest in the 16th century when the movement began? In sum, it was the abuses and excesses of the medieval Church that remained unresolved, despite the best efforts of great saints such as Dominic, Francis, Catherine of Genoa, and others, as well as unsuccessful Church counsels that almost got the job done. The efforts at internal reform would not find success until after the tragedy of schism. There are historical reasons for this, but a fair person must acknowledge that the Church was not in the best of shape in 1517 when an Augustinian priest named Martin Luther nailed 95 questions on the cathedral door in Wittenberg. Like other priests, bishops, and Popes before him, Luther wanted to reform the Church. But he ended by being the catalyst to break the Church apart, a tragic divorce which today remains an open and unhealed wound causing continued pain to both parties.

As a Protestant student of Church history, I came to ask myself a basic question: Since it was not 1517 anymore, what exactly was I protesting? I arrived at this question for two reasons. First, I noticed that those of my Catholic friends who were sincere in faith and steadfast in practice hardly resembled the corrupt medieval power structure of the Church in 1517, struggling to come to grips with an emerging modern Western European civilization. I began to wonder if I was protesting a caricature.

Second, to resolve this question, I needed to go to the source, hence all the book orders and the highlighting on the beach. Despite the fact that I looked like the ultimate book nerd with my notebook and pen,

I dis-

covered something essential. It was 2008, and I was the guy still driving around in a VW bus and marching down the street with a “Get Out Of Vietnam” sign. What I was protesting no longer existed. The Church was now reformed and was in much better shape

than I could possibly imagine. I was protesting a ghost. If Luther was alive today, he would still be celebrating Mass.

### Compelled by Example

About the same time I was getting beach sand in my Catechism, I began to consider where I saw the presence of Christ in the world at large. There are thousands of Protestant denominations. There is no realistic authority structure that speaks for, or speaks to, the children of this great ecclesiastical divorce. As the echo of Christendom fades in an increasingly secular Western society, and as the Protestant empire that was the United States drifts away from its Christian-based moral compass, it not only tolerates, but actively

embraces, the evils of secularism, including the death of millions of unborn children and the deconstruction of marriage and family. Where, then, is the voice of the Church?

For me, the answer to that question was not an idea or a concept, it was a person: Pope John Paul II. After him came Benedict XVI. There was no way I could get around it. These men were the real deal; they were the Vicars of Christ. They spoke for Christ and did so with true moral authority based on lives of virtue, humility, justice, and love. I was drawn to them the way people were drawn to, and walked for miles to see, the One who fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes. I read the Popes’ many letters to the Church. I remembered what the temple guards who could not arrest Jesus said: “No one speaks as He does.” These men were the authentic apostles of today. They spoke for the Church and for Christ in a way other Christian leaders could not.

### Compelled by the Presence of Jesus Christ

On countless occasions, as a Protestant minister, I had invited people to reason their way into the kingdom. I would introduce them to Jesus, who was born, died, and rose again so long ago and today is in heaven with the Father. I would tell them about Jesus and ask them to reflect on Him, think about Him, and fall in love with Him. Jesus was alive and real — but His presence was an incorporeal reality, confined to Biblical history and the theological life of the mind which can occasionally be enhanced by inferential experiences.

To know, love, and obey Jesus is not an easy task when the Person you are to know, love, and obey is long, long ago and far, far away. Yes, Jesus is our “personal Savior” and “lives in our hearts.” But to me, these were ultimately ideas without substance. One might compare it to falling in love with another person online without actually

“What I was protesting no longer existed. The Church was now reformed and was in much better shape than I could possibly imagine. I was protesting a ghost. If Luther was alive today, he would still be celebrating Mass.”

## SHARE YOUR STORY!

The CHNetwork **always welcomes** those of our members who are converts or reverts to share their **written conversion stories** of how they were drawn (or drawn back) to the Catholic Church. If you feel called to share your story, please feel free to go to [chnetwork.org/converts/share-your-story](http://chnetwork.org/converts/share-your-story) to review our writer’s guidelines, see sample stories, and upload your testimony.

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

meeting the other person face to face. It may be a genuine love, but it is not the same as holding your beloved in your arms.

So I went to Mass. I could no longer stay away. I had to know what was going on in the historic, apostolic Church that my mind and my heart had now engaged. On a Sunday morning, before going to teach Sunday School to nearly 100 adults at the Presbyterian church, I walked uncomfortably into St. Augustine's Catholic Church. I sat in the back. I knelt to pray, mostly because that was what others were doing. I really didn't know what to ask God, so I simply asked for an open heart.

We stood; we confessed; we heard words of forgiveness. The Word of God was proclaimed clearly and without commentary. Every word spoken had depth and meaning. It was an unexpected theological banquet. Then we sang together an announcement that I recognized from the Gospels. But we were not reading it as history. We were saying it as if it was happening in the here and now: "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." We knelt as one. Father Michael, a man who in time would become my guide and friend, stood at the altar.

What came next was something for which I was completely and totally unprepared, so far was it beyond my comprehension. Father Michael spoke. Bells rang. Then Jesus showed up — not just an idea or a memory, not just the long-ago or far-away Second Person of the Trinity. Jesus showed up in person.

As I would later come to acknowledge, Jesus showed up in Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. I cannot prove it to the skeptic, nor can I measure it by any scientific method. I did not even intellectually believe it at the time. But this was beyond intellect, and it was more true than any truth I had ever encountered.

I knew that this Jesus, with whom I had been in love all of my adult life, to whom I had spoken on countless occasions, about whom I had read and studied and whom I had tried to follow — this Jesus had just entered the room. He was there in person. I was in awe. I was in love all over again and more; I wept for joy. This was an encounter with my living Lord through the grace of His sacramental economy. It was His gift to me through His Apostles. I was with Jesus, home at last.

After I was done reading and highlighting, I spoke to my friend and neighbor who was a deacon at the local Catholic parish. He started me on the official journey. I set aside my Presbyterian ordination in the fall of 2008 and entered the Catholic Church on Easter Vigil 2009. Now I was truly home.

The reaction among friends and acquaintances to this sermon preaching, Sunday school-teaching, academic award-winning Presbyterian minister "going papal" was mixed. My family was wonderful. Linda, our son, our fantastic daughter-in-law, and my elder brother (having already married my wonderful Irish-Catholic sis-

ter-in-law) also have since come into the Church. Our good friends have been supportive, and some have asked to come to Mass with us. A few even came to my Confirmation and First Communion. Others are confused and think that I am suffering from an unknown mental disorder or have experienced a lapse based on some strange emotional trauma. These folks feel bad for me, and I appreciate their kind, if bewildered, thoughts. Another group views me as a turncoat and have written me off. But this is by far the smallest group.

### Come and See

I pray that my dear Catholic brothers and sisters, my elder siblings in the Church who grew up in the faith, even those who had a mean nun in Catholic school or those who find it hard to love an imperfect Church with imperfect priests, can glimpse for a moment, through the eyes of a former orphan, to see what it means to have a real family, warts and all. This is

a real family where the elder brother, who was always there, and the prodigal son, who returns home after a difficult journey, both find a loving Father waiting for them. At the Father's great feast, Jesus, in person, is our host.

I pray for my Protestant brothers and sisters, separated from their Mother and their true home by old quarrels now more imagined than real. We can all be one family again. We are the children of divorce. It is time to be reconciled. Just come to Mass. Just come. Jesus is here, in person. Come and see. Come and see.

Not a day passes for me without experiencing a profound sense of gratitude and joy that I have been united with our Lord Jesus Christ in His Body, the Church. ■



DEAN C. WALDT holds a B.A. *summa cum laude* in *Philosophy and Religion* from Grove City College, a *Master of Divinity* from Fuller Theological Seminary, and a *Juris Doctor cum laude* from Villanova University School of Law. He is a partner in the Litigation Department of a major national law firm. He and Linda celebrated their 42nd wedding anniversary in May 2017. Dean recently published his first book, *When the Echo Dies / Marriage is Unconstitutional: America At Risk*, addressing the crisis represented by the federal court same-sex marriage decisions. Linda leads the adult Bible study program at their parish. They live in South Florida.

Continue the **JOURNEY**

Please visit [CHNetwork.org/converts](http://CHNetwork.org/converts) to comment on and share this or one of hundreds of other powerful testimonies!



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# SAVE THE DATES!

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Would you like fellowship and connection with other converts or those on the journey to the Catholic Church? Visit **CHNetwork.org/retreats** for more information.



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