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# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



## Obeying God Made Me Catholic

By Michael Faber

I was born into a Baptist family, but we didn't go to church much, except on Christmas, Easter, and a few other times each year. My uncle Vernon, who was more religious, made sure to take me to church summer camp several times while attending junior high. Despite this lack of significant church involvement, my interest in faith often increased around Easter. I remember conducting a "Bible study" for several friends under a table in the 4th grade with my pocket Gideon New Testament. I started a Bible study club in junior high when such activities were no longer allowed in public schools.

I was baptized at our family church at age 14 and had a "born again" experience when I was in the 11th grade. I was also "baptized in the Holy Spirit" at about that same time. During my last two years of high school, I was in church or Bible study about five times a week and was ridiculed for carrying my Bible around on campus. I wanted to be a minister at that time.

Following high school, I entered the Army. While my faith continued through boot camp, it waned considerably afterwards. I became interested in politics, foreign affairs, and, of course, girls. After my tour in the Army and while in college, I never stopped considering myself a Christian, but I neglected the Bible and rarely went to church.

I married my wife, Mai, who was Catholic. She insisted on going to church every week, so I would drop her off there and go hang out with my friends, picking her up after Mass. This pattern continued for a number of years while I was attending law school.

Then my uncle Vernon died. I remember that at his funeral he was referred to as a "man of God," and the thought crossed my mind that no one would call me

that if I were to die. Several times, my skeptic friends had insulted me by professing surprise when I claimed to be a Christian. I was hurt by these remarks. After all, I had said my sinner's prayer and believed all the right things about Jesus. I even *used to* go to church a lot when I was in high school. They said they saw no evidence of my faith. But while I was stung by their remarks, I wasn't yet ready to return to my faith walk.

After my uncle Vernon's death, my wife and I started attending a Protestant church together from time to time. Initially, I would still drop her off at Mass and walk around in the field, praying by myself.

One Sunday, I entered through the church doors and walked into the vestibule, where I saw a brass baptismal font which had turned black with corrosion. With my military background, I knew what to do. I went home, grabbed my Brasso and a cloth, and returned to the church to commence shining up that miserable baptismal font. (The holy water was still in it.) Someone must have seen me and reported the situation to the priest. The young assistant priest came out quickly and said, "May I *Continued on page 2* ►

Journeys Home

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

help you?" I explained that I wasn't Catholic, but my wife attended there, and I couldn't bear to see such a dirty baptismal font. He thanked me for my efforts but told me that people were getting upset, so I should stop. He invited me to come in and listen for myself to the services.

I started attending Mass, made friends with the priest, and even deigned to agree that Catholics were Christians, too, so it wouldn't harm my spiritual life to go to Mass and listen to the homilies and sing the songs. From that point forward, I went to two churches: Catholic and Protestant. This was in my mid to late twenties.

When I was about 30, several things happened to change my faith life. My friend, Dominick, started coming around, preaching to me and challenging me to study the Word of God. Also, as a lawyer, I visited a young Vietnamese man in jail and was struck by the fact that, while he was raised by a good Catholic family and had a bright future due to his academics, he was accused of a violent crime. I went back to my office and began praying for this young man. I cried out to the Lord, "What is wrong with this kid?" I heard an interior voice say, "He needs Jesus and so do you."

Our need for Jesus is not a one-time event, whether that is through a prayer or receipt of a sacrament. It continues on a daily basis through the rest of our lives. If we don't tap into the life-giving power of Jesus, He will do us no good. We need to persist in our walk of faith; we need perseverance. I thought about all the young Asian gang members I was representing at that time and thought, "They need Jesus, too. Maybe I can help." I prayed, "What should I do, Lord?" God answered simply, "Learn my Word." I agreed to obey the Lord and thus began my path into the ministry.

I signed up for a correspondence Bible course through the Assemblies of God (AG). I figured that I would audit all the courses that Assemblies of God pastors had to study to be ordained. I did not want to be an AG pastor (because I disagreed with some of their doctrine), but I wanted to learn what they knew. During this time, I was placed in charge of a high school youth group at a Baptist church I had begun attending. I also led a Friday night praise and

worship group. In our Friday night group, which was charismatic in orientation, we studied Catholic mystics such as Brother Lawrence (a 17th century French Carmelite lay brother) and Jeanne Guyon (a 17th century French mystic and proponent of the heretical doctrine of Quietism) as we learned principles of prayer, in which the Catholic Church had such a rich tradition. As my Bible studies continued, I rose through the ranks at the Baptist church. I was licensed to preach the Gospel in 1995. I would preach sermons when the pastor was sick or on vacation. In 1999, I became the interim senior pastor for four months after the pastor retired. While my time there was fruitful, people did not respect me as a "real pastor" since I did not have a seminary diploma. In 2000, there was trouble with the new leadership, and I quit that congregation. I joined a breakaway group, and we started our own church. (At the same time, I was still going to Catholic Mass on a weekly basis with my wife.) I remember that we set the time of our new church service so that it would not conflict with my ability to attend Mass with my wife.

Things didn't work out so well for me at the new church because, as in the old congregation, they didn't consider me a "real pastor." So in 2006, I enrolled in Fuller Seminary to obtain a Master's degree in Bible and Theology. I learned Greek and Hebrew, textual criticism, lots of the Bible, and lots of Church history, as well as various theologies that had been developed over the centuries. I graduated in 2012, and now people started calling me "pastor."

During this time, several Vietnamese Presbyterian Churches in Stockton and Sacramento, California asked me to preach for them at a retirement home and at their services. I was preaching two to three times per month at these churches and also began to write and self-publish spiritual books based on sermons that I had preached. I wrote *Meditations on the Lord's Prayer*, *Keys to a Happy Life: The Beatitudes According to Jesus*, and *Seven Words of Jesus from the Cross*. I had these books translated and then distributed them in India and Vietnam as well as the United States. I supported home churches in India by providing them free copies of my books and sometimes by making cash contributions. All the while, I continued attend-

*Continued on page 5* ➤

## FEATURED RESOURCES



### **The Catholic Paul? CD** — By Scott Hahn

In this insightful talk, Dr. Scott Hahn discusses whether St. Paul was Catholic in his theology.



### **Proving the Catholic Faith is Biblical** — By Dave Armstrong

If you want quick, substantive answers to the most common (and even several uncommon) claims that Catholic beliefs and practices aren't biblical, then *Proving the Catholic Faith is Biblical* is the book for you. In these pages, veteran apologist Dave Armstrong carefully walks you through the key teachings of the Church, such as Tradition, why priests are called "father," salvation, and purgatory, revealing how each is rooted in Scripture. There are 80 powerful essays that make sense of so many Catholic beliefs and practices that puzzle non-Catholics and cradle Catholics alike. Read this book, and you'll come to see that not only is the Catholic Faith thoroughly biblical, it is the only Christian religion in full conformity with Scripture.

**\$35**

Receive *The Catholic Paul?* for a donation of \$35.

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Receive *Proving the Catholic Faith is Biblical* for a donation of \$50.

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# Luther: The Rest of the Story

## PART VI: APPLICATION

By Kenneth Hensley, Online Resource & Pastoral Care Coordinator

I was a pastor for more than 11 years.

Looking back, I can see that I also had to deal with the *same tension* Luther and Calvin and the other Reformers had to deal with.

As a child of the Reformation, I taught my congregation that when it came to Christian doctrine, the Bible alone was authoritative in their lives. I emphasized that I was a mere fallible interpreter, that I could be wrong in anything I taught. I reminded them that it was their “right” and in fact their “duty” to search the Scriptures and decide for themselves whether what I was saying was, to borrow Calvin’s words, “in accord with the rule of the Word.”

Pastors of evangelical Bible churches say this sort of thing all the time: “Search the Scriptures!” This is standard Protestant boilerplate.

But what do these pastors *do* when someone in their church accepts their “right” and “duty” to search the Scriptures and decides that what the pastor is teaching is not “in accord with the Word”?

And what if that person wants the freedom to teach his “point of view” in the church, even as the pastor has the freedom to teach his “point of view”? What do these pastors do?

What would I have done?

### The Pastor’s Conundrum

Imagine the teacher of the adult Sunday School class in my congregation coming to me and saying, “Pastor, you’re always reminding us that you could be wrong in what you’re teaching, that only the Bible is ultimately authoritative, and that it’s our responsibility to search the Scriptures and decide for ourselves. Right?”

Naturally, I would respond, “Yes, that’s exactly right!”

But now, imagine he continues: “Well, pastor, after a careful examination of the Bible over a number of months, I’ve come to the conclusion that you are teaching false doctrines and leading our church astray on some critical doctrinal and moral issues. I thought that, out of respect for you as our pastor, I should let you know that starting this coming Sunday morning, I’m going to be teaching a series in the adult Sunday School that focuses on the errors I believe you are teaching.”

How would I have responded?

Does anyone think I would have responded: “Great! I’m so happy to see that you understand the implications of *sola Scriptura* and the right of private judgment and have taken your responsibility seriously! Tell me how it goes!” Anyone? Anyone?

Obviously, not. Here’s what I would have done — what I would have *had* to do to maintain unity in the church.

First, I would have asked to meet privately with him to discuss the issues he had with my teaching before he began his little “course” in Sunday School. Assuming he wasn’t able to convince me to change my views, during these meetings I would have tried to convince

him that he was wrong and that I was right. And then, if this failed, I would have explained to him that he would either have to quit teaching his point of view in the church or take his private interpretation down the road to a church that agrees with him.

Essentially, I would have shown him the door.

This sounds reasonable. After all, you can’t have someone dividing the church by teaching in contradiction to the pastor.

But now, imagine this gentleman saying to me, “Pastor Ken, I’ve been in this church for 50 years. I was baptized, grew up, and was married in this church. My children were baptized here and are growing up here. All their best friends are here. And besides, I love the people of this church, and I want them to know the truth. You’ve only been here five years! How is it that you get to practice your right of private interpretation and teach the results of your own study of Scripture, but if I practice — on your insistence — that same right

and come to different conclusions ... why is it that I have to shut up or leave? Since only Scripture is authoritative, why don’t you leave?”

What would I say? What *could* I say?

The ironic thing is: I may have just finished a sermon in which I mocked the Catholic Church for not allowing individuals to come to their own views but requiring them to accept the Church’s teaching!

My point is that in the end, there’s nothing a Protestant pastor *can do* but what Luther and Melancthon and Calvin did. There’s nothing a Protestant *denomination* can do but what Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin did. You can’t have the pastor at the 8:00 a.m. service teaching that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist and the pastor at the 10:00 a.m. service teaching that Christ is not.

I think you can see now *why* Protestant churches have to continually split. Truthfully, I think the only reason Protestant churches don’t disintegrate completely is that most Protestants don’t really practice *sola Scriptura* and the right of private interpretation.

For the most part, they simply accept as true whatever their particular denomination or tradition or pastor has taught them. The pastor, then, can teach the absolute right of private interpretation and encourage his people to study and decide for themselves, *knowing* that the vast majority of his flock will not take him up on it.

And if some smart aleck decides to become an amateur Scripture scholar and comes to the conclusion that the pastor has been teaching heresy, he can be kindly shown the door.

### Ecclesiastical Unity Requires Authority

Ephesians 4:11-16 is a passage that knocked me off my chair when I was thinking through these issues and being drawn to the Catholic Church. In this passage St. Paul is discoursing on the oneness of

Protestantism has demonstrated, when each pastor and teacher is free to “decide,” they come to very different views.



the Church. In this context, he says something I had read a million times and yet its significance had escaped me.

He says that God gave to His Church pastors and teachers *specifically* in order to build the Church up in unity.

[He gave] pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the *unity* of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God ... so that we may no longer be children, tossed back and forth and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles.

Clearly, it's God's will that Christians not be "tossed back and forth and carried about with every wind of doctrine," but that the Church be unified as one. That is God's will. And *to that end*, He gave His Church pastors and teachers.

I remember the day I read this passage and the realization came to me: **The arrangement St. Paul is describing here could only work if the pastors and teachers God has given to the Church have some authoritative body of teaching to which they are all bound.**

How can pastors and teachers be instruments of unity in the Church if each of them is free to exercise a right of private judgment and decide for themselves what Scripture is teaching?

As the 500-year history of Protestantism has demonstrated, when each pastor and teacher is free to "decide," they come to very different views. Some say Baptism and the Lord's Supper are merely symbolic rites, others that they are grace-giving sacraments. Some conclude that the Church is to be ruled democratically, others by elders, still others by bishops. Some insist that we are saved by faith alone and that once saved, a Christian cannot lose his salvation. Others insist that salvation involves the believer's cooperation in faithful obedience and that it most certainly *can* be lost ... and so forth with a number of doctrinal and moral teachings.

And because these pastors and teachers do not agree with each other, guess what? They *become* the very ones stirring up the wind and waves of doctrine and tossing the children of God back and forth!

Rather than serving as God-given agents of unity in Christ's Church, pastors and teachers within the framework of *sola Scriptura* and the right of private judgment turn out to be the prime agents of division.

This is precisely what has occurred.

## Application

I remember the day came when I could no longer walk up to the pulpit on Sunday mornings to preach without thinking: "I am preaching *my* view of things, my conclusions based on my study of the Bible and various theologians. And down the road there's a Lutheran pastor preaching *his* view. And up the street there's a

Methodist pastor preaching *his* view, and a Baptist, and a Nazarene, and a Seventh Day Adventist. I'm blowing the people of God one direction, and these pastors are blowing them another direction. And we're all wanting to convince ourselves, and each other, that the Holy Spirit has led us and that our private interpretation is best."

Something is dreadfully wrong!

This was an important realization, one that drove me in the direction of the Catholic Church. I saw the fragmentation in which I was an active participant. I heard the prayer of Our Lord, "Father, bring them to perfect unity so that the world may believe and know that you have sent me" (John 17) and it struck me that this was simply impossible on the basis of *sola Scriptura*.

No. If Our Lord desired that His Church be one — and it's clear that He did — He had to have established that Church with some principle of divine authority. He had to.

There was only one historic Christian Church even claiming to possess that principle of authority.

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matthew 16).

Becoming Catholic wasn't easy for me and my family. You could say I broke a lot of glass coming into the Church.

And inside ... I found Catholics wishing they were Protestants.

I found Catholics moaning about the authority of the Church, the authority of Rome, speaking wistfully of a future, more democratic, Church where individuals could decide for themselves.

I found Catholics ignoring or disputing or outright rejecting settled teachings of the Church.

And I found myself wanting to shout: "Folks, has this not been tried? Has *sola Scriptura* and the right of private interpretation not been tried? Have we not seen where this system leads?" ■

I am preaching *my* view of things ... a Lutheran pastor preaching *his* view ... a Methodist pastor preaching *his* view, and a Baptist, and a Nazarene, and a Seventh Day Adventist ... Something is dreadfully wrong!

## 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.

# CHNetwork Retreats

*A special invitation to join us for one of our 2018 CHNetwork retreats!*

Three Dates. Three Locations!

APRIL  
16-19, 2018

**COLUMBUS, OHIO**

JUNE  
4-7, 2018

**SEATTLE, WASHINGTON**

OCTOBER  
15-18, 2018

**BIDDEFORD, MAINE**

## **Here's what past CHN Retreat attendees have to say about our retreats:**

*In addition to the great fellowship, prayer, and music, I found that the opportunity to share our joys and struggles on our journey home was so important, to find kindred spirits who really understand. – Susan*

*During my sojourn reverting back to my cradle faith I experienced a lot of loneliness ... Being at the Ohio retreat let me know in a tangible way that I didn't have to walk alone and I will always take with me the love and fellowship I experienced there. Everyone there was at a different part of their journey, but what I saw was no matter where you are, the CHN staff is able to meet you there and take you further along! – Tony*

*I have had an abiding sense of finding my place — a community of travelers who have walked a similar path. I experienced a deep sense of belonging I never have had before. These brothers and sisters have become friends who freely share their questions and answers. These friends give a face to the Coming Home Network; they give a face and voice to those who are like me. A highlight for me was hearing from other people who'd had similar experiences and knowing that God had called me in the same way He had called other people. – Beverly*

Join the CHNetwork staff and other members of the network for a time of discussion, fellowship, and prayer. Intended for both converts and those on the journey to Catholicism, whether lay or clergy, the goal is to promote Christian fellowship among the attendees, assist in discernment for those who are facing tough questions or decisions, and to encourage all in an ever greater walk with Christ.

Besides discussions led by our CHN staff, there is daily Mass, night prayer, an evening social, as well as ample time for prayer, rest, and networking with others on the journey.

Space is limited so why not register today? We'd be thrilled to have you join us to help you on your journey deeper into Christ and His Church.



For more information and/or to register:

**740-450-1175 CHNETWORK.ORG/RETREATS**

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## CHNetwork Staff Interview

### What is your name and title?

Janna Pitcock, Resource Specialist

### How long have you worked for the CHNetwork? Since July 2017

### Before working at the Coming Home Network, what was the most unusual or interesting job you've ever had?

Prior to working here, I had the privilege of being a stay-at-home mother to my four children over a period of 17 years. During those years, I had the usual responsibilities, as well as many unusual ones (due to the idiosyncrasies of my children, not to mention those of my husband), such as: trapping all forms of wildlife that attempted to share our house with us (including a very unhappy opossum), managing our collection of over 1,500 children's books (and trying to console my six-year-old when she couldn't find Junie B. Jones's book #8), and pretending I stayed at a Holiday Inn Express so that I could help my children with all their school work and extra-curricular activities. Helping them grow and watching them try to become the people God meant them to be have been both joyful and harrowing experiences that cannot compare with any other.

### How would you describe your job to a stranger on an airplane? Honestly, my first instinct in answering this question was to write, "I wouldn't." After the struggle I have had endeavoring to explain CHNetwork's purpose to my own family, I thought I would never dare to tread down that path with a stranger.

For instance, my brother-in-law was convinced Marcus Grodi would have me traipsing up and down the streets, knocking on doors, attempting to convert unsuspecting Protestants and atheists alike. My dad and step-mother, both "dyed-in-the-wool" Methodists who believe I converted to the "dark side" in order to land a man (my husband is a lifelong Catholic), are still convinced I work on commission and will get a great bonus if I am ever successful in brainwashing them. My mother won't even discuss my job with me because she left the Church in the wake of a painful divorce (and an even more painful conversation with an unsympathetic priest). Finally, my cradle Catholic husband, only a few weeks ago, stopped shaking his head and asking, "Why would anyone have any doubts about becoming Catholic?"

However, after hearing many wonderful conversion stories, I began to realize people can receive the grace of God in even the most mundane, obscure moments. In addition, one never knows how a simple conversation can be a witness to God's love and the beauty of the Catholic Faith to someone who is almost ready to take that first step on the journey. Therefore, I decided I would take a leap of faith in that moment and tell that stranger about our amazing little office and the even more amazing people I talk to every day

— people who are working hard on their journeys of faith toward the Catholic Church and the people who are passionate about helping them do so.

### What does a typical day in the office look like to you?

I am responsible for processing donations, mailing resources, and answering the phone.

**What is the most rewarding part of your job?** I love being a small part of the lives of our donors and members. I am always inspired by the determination and courage of our members who face difficult obstacles in their long journeys. I am also in awe of all our donors who are so passionate about sharing the Faith and helping those on their journeys. Finally, I am always humbled and uplifted by the gratitude and joy of all these people, especially those I speak with on the phone and those who write notes to us. I am lucky enough to see the best in people every day — people whose faith and kindness never waver and people so filled with hope and God's love that they can't help but spread it to everyone around them.

### What is one fact about you that might surprise people to know?

In college, when trying to decide whether I wanted to teach Spanish or biology, I chose Spanish — because I loved the language and because I literally set fire to my organic chemistry lab hood. Since I had the dubious distinction of being the only science major to ever endanger the lives of others (by not properly securing my vial of hazardous chemicals over a Bunsen burner), I took that as a sign that teaching Spanish would probably be a lot more fun, not to mention a lot safer!

### Who do you nominate to be our next staff interview?

Ken Hensley ■

## SUPPORT THE CHNEWSLETTER

The CHNewsletter is one of our primary means of communicating with and encouraging members of CHN. Please consider making a yearly, tax-deductible gift in the amount of \$35 or more to help us continue providing this publication more people who are on the journey to a deeper walk with Christ and His Church.

# 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 JEHOVAH'S WITNESS ON THE JOURNEY:** I will say that my love of the Catholic Faith continues to grow. I feel at home in the Catholic Church. I have never had that feeling before. The more I read, the more I believe what my heart already knows. It is the faith of our Lord and Savior. This is the Church Christ built. I am still learning so much . . . You do so much for so many people through your work with the Coming Home Network. I hope you and Mr. Grodi know all the lives that you touch with all the wonderful work you do on your program. It is truly a blessing . . . The work is so very valuable.

**FROM CHARLOTTE, A REVERT:** I am thriving in Christ's love and admonition in my life these days! It's such a JOY to walk hand in hand with Jesus as a Catholic. I can't get enough of Him in the holy Eucharist.

**FROM ANGELA, A RECENT REVERT:** The journey home was a long 16 months, but my lifetime journey is just beginning. I am thankful for the Coming Home Network. It was a Journey Home episode that I watched four years ago that started my search for the truth.

**FROM AN ANGLICAN ON THE JOURNEY:** Thank you so much for your continued help, support, and personal interest in helping someone on the other side of the world. May God bless you and the work you are doing. If you were never to achieve anything else, I can tell you that you and the CHN have helped to reconcile me with God to the point that I feel closer to Jesus than I ever have in my life. What a wonderful work of ministry that you have been able to achieve! Thank you, I'll keep you in my prayers.

**FROM JAMES, A FORMER SOUTHERN BAPTIST:** Thank you for following up with me; I really appreciate it. I was blessed to be welcomed into the Church on the 2017 Easter Vigil at Saint Patrick's Cathedral in downtown Fort Worth. It's been absolutely the best decision I've made hands down; I'm grateful for God's grace! . . . Please keep me in your prayers, and please pray for guidance and obedience for me to follow God's call. I'm so grateful for the Coming Home Network. The ministry played a huge part in God opening my eyes to the truth and beauty of the Church. Thank you for all you do and everyone at CHN.

**FROM AN EPISCOPALIAN ON THE JOURNEY:** Thank you for the warm welcome. I am excited for the journey . . . at the very least I'll learn more about myself along the way — no matter how uncomfortable it may be. I'll use the resources from the Coming Home Network — I'm amazed at the amount of content there! Thank you. ■

## TAX LETTER



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

janna@chnetwork.org or  
740-450-1175 ext 102

## 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/** 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 if you have any questions or concerns.

### Your information

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# Prayer List



## Clergy

- For Aaron, an Anglican priest, that he may find a teaching opportunity enabling him to come home to the Catholic Church.
- For a Baptist missionary in China, that he may continue to pray and read about the Father's will for him in the Catholic Church.
- For Kent, a minister in Arizona, that the Holy Spirit may open his eyes to the truth of the Catholic Church founded by Jesus Christ.
- For Brian, a non-denominational missionary from Washington State, that the Lord Jesus would continue to guide him through his RCIA classes.
- For an Eastern Orthodox priest in Kenya, that God would grant his desire to be in full communion with the successor of St. Peter.
- For a Charismatic Episcopal deacon and his wife in New York, that they may find supportive Catholic friends willing to assist them through their journey to full communion with the Catholic Church.
- For Lynn, a United Methodist minister, that the Holy Spirit may ignite a fire in her heart for Jesus in the Eucharist.
- For a non-denominational minister in New York, that he may be able to overcome the hostility of his relatives, which causes him to hesitate in returning to the Church.
- For a former Anglican priest in New Jersey, that he may soon find gainful employment.

■ For a Baptist missionary in Tunisia, that the grace of our Lord Jesus would enable him to find his true vocation in the Catholic Church.

■ For a Lutheran minister in Indiana, that the Holy Spirit will continue to use his openness to and interest in the Catholic Church to lead him into full communion.

■ For a Methodist clergyman in Indiana, that his exploration of the teachings of the Catholic Church bring him home to the fullness of truth.

## Laity

■ For a Baptist in Arkansas, that he may obtain the answers he needs and that all roadblocks may be cleared away from his path home to the Catholic Church.

■ For Scott's parents to return to the Church.

■ For a member of the Churches of Christ who is encountering opposition from her parents on account of her interest in becoming Catholic.

■ For Heather who is in RCIA and is missing her former church, that she find her place in her Catholic parish.

■ For Lynn who feels that she can't leave her current church right now though she still is very drawn towards becoming Catholic, that she continue seeking the Lord's will in her life.

■ For Alicia that she will meet other young people in the Church and form wholesome friendships as

she prepares to come into full communion with the Catholic Church this Easter.

■ For Meg who is grappling with some questions about the Catholic Church, that she be able to resolve her concerns and be joyfully received into the Church at Easter.

■ For Betsy who is struggling with questions about the Bible and the founding of the Church.

■ For Shirley who is in RCIA, that Jesus bring her ever closer to Himself in these months leading up to the Easter Vigil.

■ For Robin who is very disappointed in a lackluster RCIA program, that she continues to find good, additional Catholic resources to support her journey.

■ For a Baptist in Texas who doesn't see any way to move towards with her desire to be Catholic on account of her husband's opposition.

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, Thursdays 2 PM ET  
*The Best of The Journey Home*: Saturdays 7 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 5**

Sue Neugebauer\*  
 Former Messianic Jew

**March 12**

Laura Richards\*  
 Revert

**March 19**

John Carmichael\*  
 Revert

**March 26**

Troy Guy\*  
 Former Baptist

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...

► “Journeys Home” continued from page 2

ing Mass on a weekly basis with my wife. Sometimes, if Indian pastors were too harsh in their denunciation of the Catholic Church, I would jump to its defense and demand that those statements be retracted.

As early as junior high I had come to the realization that there seemed to be a conflict between what Jesus taught was necessary for salvation and what I was told by my pastor and certain Protestant writings claiming that Paul had laid

out contrary requirements for salvation. Based on my biblical studies, both in seminary and in my preaching, I began to have theological issues with the Protestant position. I realized that “faith alone” wasn’t really backed up by Scripture. Nowhere in Scripture does Paul state that, as long as one has faith, a person can continue to sin and still be assured of salvation. If salvation was by “faith alone,” this would be implied. If what we do meant nothing, then Jesus wouldn’t have preached the parable of the sheep and the

goats (Matthew 25:31–46), nor would He have taught the “Lord, Lord” passages (Matthew 7:21–23; Luke 6:46–49), nor would Paul have explicitly taught, “Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19–21, NABRE). He didn’t add the words, “unless you believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior.” Instead, sin had consequences for believers. This is dealt with in the Catholic concept of mortal sin but is not adequately dealt with in “faith alone” doctrines. Jesus, Paul, James, John, and Peter all required action in addition to faith to secure salvation. In fact, James 2:24 explicitly states, “You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.” I wasn’t aware of a Protestant church that held this position. Not only that, my study of Church history made me reject out of hand the Protestant narrative that the Church was corrupted after Constantine and thus needed to be reformed by Luther. Why would God abandon His Church for 1300 years? My Baptist and Assemblies of God friends didn’t even consider Luther much of a reformer because he was too Catholic. Would God leave the Church in darkness until the 1700s, when the closest thing to the Evangelical Church finally popped into history? This didn’t make sense. Furthermore, the theology of the earliest Christians, before they got “corrupted,” was Catholic all along. My own experience with the Catholic Church showed me that Catholics were devout people who loved God just as much as us Protestants.

Very early in my faith walk, I had also come to believe in the Real Presence. I believed that the Bible was true, and in it Jesus said, “This is my body” and “This is my blood.” He didn’t say, “This represents or signifies my body.” Paul also stated, “The cup of blessing which we

bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:16–17). A literal interpretation of the words of Scripture would indicate that the bread and the wine were more than just symbols. Usually, my Protestant churches wanted to interpret the Bible as literally as possible — why not in this case? Furthermore, a simple review of the writings of the earliest Christians showed that they *unanimously* agreed that the Eucharist was

the actual Body and Blood of Christ. If the earliest Christians were taught directly by the Apostles, wouldn’t their understanding of this important issue be much more accurate than an interpretation developed 1500 years later?

In addition to these theological problems, I began to confront problems with authority in the Protestant faith. As I studied various faith traditions, I became uneasy that there were so many doctrines, all seemingly contradictory, all claiming support from the Bible. Was correct theology simply unknowable?

Worse yet, churches began dividing on moral questions. I first confronted this issue a number of years ago when I wrote a Facebook post denouncing the fact that Ashley Madison, a “dating site” geared towards helping married people commit adultery, was shown to have millions of subscribers in the U.S. While I got many “amens” in response to my fiery post, one atheist assured me that there were “Christian” churches out there who would have no problem with adultery. I was confident he was wrong about this *one issue*, but I had become quite uneasy with the fact that there seemed to be no single Christian answer to other moral issues such as divorce, abortion, gay fornication,

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tion, gay marriage, sex changes, etc. It seemed that, in the 21st century, many in the Protestant churches were treating moral issues more on the basis of the popular vote at the church convention and the ever-changing public secular opinions, rather than on sound scriptural studies. Even more damaging, respected Protestant theologians were flipping their positions on gay marriage and using their degrees and knowledge of biblical studies and Greek to make it appear that the Bible did not actually condemn what it clearly did. This, of course, was in regard to the issue of homosexuality and gay marriage. Was morality simply a matter of popular opinion and clever gymnastics in biblical studies, or was there actually a single truth and a Church that had the moral authority to speak with certitude about what Christianity allowed and what it didn't?

There were certain Catholic doctrines, though, that I felt couldn't be supported by the Bible. I was still holding onto *sola Scriptura*, so I didn't want to become a Catholic. Besides that, I was enjoying my ministry with the Vietnamese churches and pretty much had the freedom to preach what I wanted, so I concocted a theology which was half Catholic, half Protestant, based on what I felt I could prove from the Bible. I had great respect for the Pope and the Catholic

bishops and priests and the body of knowledge available from the Church Fathers.

I struggled greatly with the idea that most of theology simply seemed unknowable. The more I studied theology, the more I realized that every denomination and teacher had a different opinion about almost every topic, and each could back it up with Scripture

references and resort to the Greek and the Hebrew. Who was right? Simply picking up the Bible and reading it was not enough. Everyone claimed the Holy Spirit as well as academic authority. Seminary blurred, rather than clarified, many things for me.

I wish I could say, like others, that I studied my way into the Catholic Church and conclusively proved to myself each and every Catholic doctrine before I attended my first Mass. But the truth is, I had been participating in Mass for 30

“Every time I fell asleep, I heard this voice insisting, “You need to stop preaching in the Protestant church and become a Catholic!”

years, and I had come to agree with about half of what the Catholic Church taught, based on my own studies, but I still had problems. These problems were centered on the Marian doctrines, purgatory, indulgences, loss of salvation through mortal sin (though I was beginning to understand this), and several other common Protestant stumbling blocks. I had gone as far towards the Catholic Church as I was able on my own but enjoyed my status as a “half Catholic” Protestant minister. I enjoyed people finally calling me “pastor,” and I loved preaching the Word of God. I was pretty much where I wanted to be: full time lawyer, part time pastor.

But God had other plans. While on vacation in December 2014, we travelled to Mendocino and attended a lovely Saturday evening Mass. I felt really at home. That night, I began having sweaty nightmares, tossing and turning. I would wake up, fall asleep, and wake up again. Every time I fell asleep, I heard this voice insisting, “You need to stop preaching in the Protestant church and become a Catholic!” No! I truthfully thought the voice was demonic. Why would God tell me to stop preaching and become a Catholic, where my ministry would never be as fruitful as it now was? I even told my secretary how Satan was trying to trick me, pretending to be God.

At that time, I was also participating in Eucharistic Adoration for one hour a week. Over the next year, every time I sat in the chapel, I heard, “You need to step down from your position and become a Catholic.” And I would reply, “I don't agree with the Catholics, Lord!”

That year, a man at my parish began challenging me because it was my practice to receive Communion at Mass. His name was Bob. He knew I was a Protestant. He spoke to me and would glare at me every time I took the Eucharist. I truly began to hate Bob and avoid him. Then while in prayer one day, the Lord told me, “Make friends with that man!” While I didn't like Bob much, I knew better than to argue with the Lord, so I went out of my way to make friends with Bob. Immediately he began trying to convert me. I laughed him off. “You are never going to convert me! I know a lot more Scripture than you ever will!” His arguments fell flat with me.

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

But Bob continued his campaign. Besides praying for me and keeping the idea of conversion in my head, he gave me a video about the Virgin of Guadalupe. Remember, the Catholic veneration of Mary was a big stumbling block for me. As I watched that video and realized that millions of Mexican Indians had come to Christ because of this Marian apparition, I began to see her not as a false god or competitor to Christ for the admiration of God's people, but as someone on the same team, someone that God could use even now for the salvation of souls. This was a breakthrough.

Every week in the Adoration chapel, the voice telling me to convert was insistent. Finally, in December 2015, we prepared to take a trip to Cabo San Lucas. As is not uncommon, the airline had over-sold their tickets and bumped us off of their flight. We were furious. Instead of being in Cabo on the warm beach, we had to spend a day freezing at the San Francisco airport. It was Saturday, so my wife and I decided to go to Mass. At the church, I was enveloped in a feeling of peace and warmth and joy. I knew I was home. On New Year's Day 2016, we were back in the U.S., and an Indian pastor friend of mine texted me, "What is your decision?" He was referring to my New Year's resolution. I said to myself, "My decision is to obey God and become a Catholic."

I informed the deacon at Mass. He encouraged me to enroll in RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) on the spot. I entered into full communion with the Catholic Church at Easter Vigil 2016. Yes, Bob was my sponsor. The Sunday after Easter Vigil, Bob was serving as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, and I left my normal line to make sure that he would have the privilege of happily and licitly giving me the Body of Christ. He insists that I have blessed his faith walk as much as he has blessed mine.

How did I decide to do it? If I wanted to continue to obey Christ, I had to lay down my ministry. I had to lay down the title that I had coveted for so many years and finally achieved. I had to publicly join the Catholic Church, thus disappointing and maybe even scandalizing the people who used to listen to me preach, as well as my own family. But I had to do it. Once I was convinced that God wanted me to become Catholic, I believed that what the Catholic Church taught was true, and I could no longer remain outside of it; I could no longer be disobedient to God. I had to lay aside my own understanding of several theological issues and simply believe that Jesus had given His Apostles authority to interpret the Bible. If I was to believe Christ, I would have to believe His Church.

This decision clarified my struggle with the unknowability of theology. Each Christian was not simply meant to study the Bible and come up with his own theology as he sees fit, rather we were to trust the Church that Jesus established with the authority to interpret Scripture. There is one truth, and the Church is entrusted with it. I don't need to come up with my own theology. I just need to believe and obey. I am glad I listened to God's voice!

Since becoming a Catholic, my prayer life has increased, my sin life has decreased, and I am walking in friendship with Christ. I am being obedient. I am at peace, and I feel great joy during the Eucharistic liturgy, receiving the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus. Yes, my status has decreased from being pastor to simply being a lay catechist. But as the Psalmist said, "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psalm 84:10). I am not saying that the Protestant churches are wicked. But the splintering of the Church into thousands of denominations after the Reformation was *not* a good thing. Protestants love the Lord as much as any Catholic, but the Catholic Church is the original Church that Christ started. It contains the fullness of truth, the sacraments (including the Eucharist), and the successors to the Apostles. It is the one Body of Christ from which the others devolved and the one Body to which we must all return if we want to enjoy full unity in Christ.

The truth is, I have a pretty good gig in my local parish. One year in, I was appointed as co-coordinator of the RCIA ministry in my

parish. This is a wonderful position in which I can use my previous training and knowledge in theology and the Bible to guide others into a closer walk with Christ by helping them develop a personal relationship with Him, helping them know and learn the Scriptures as well as the teaching of Church Tradition. In addition, I have begun to organize events through RCIA and Cursillo where we can share testimonies, worship, and even preach outside of Sunday Mass. My mission is always to encourage each hearer and

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reader to ignite the fire in his relationship with God and grow closer to Him. I have re-written two of my previous books to comport fully with the teachings of the Church, and one more book on Psalm 23 is on the way. *Meditations on the Lord's Prayer: Catholic Edition* and *Seven Words of Jesus from the Cross* are commercially available.

I don't yet know fully what God wants me to do in the Catholic Church. I am sure He will let me know in His time, and I pray that I will be faithful to say, "Yes, Lord." ■



MICHAEL FABER is a California lawyer, residing in Fair Oaks, CA, attending St. Mel Catholic Church with his wife. He has a Master's degree in Theology and Bible from Fuller Seminary and has authored several devotional books, including *Meditations on the Lord's Prayer: Catholic Edition*. He is currently serving his parish as co-coordinator of RCIA.

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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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