



## May 2018 CHNewsletter

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# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



## Longing for the Truth Led Me Home

By Michael Davis

**From Baptist to Rebel** My wife, Angela, and I were raised in Fundamental Baptist churches in the Midwest, she in Ohio and I in Indiana. We met at a Fundamental Baptist college in Florida. I was pursuing a degree in Theology and she in Early Childhood Education. While my wife followed the Fundamental Baptist creed and lifestyle, I was a born questioner. I did not go along with the strict rules of my parents and often landed in trouble.

After being sexually abused by a pastor and otherwise abused by my father, who was a leader in the church, I moved toward a non-religious lifestyle. I still attended church and a Christian high school to make my parents happy, but the overall experience left me with a hatred for authority and a desire to live as far from Christianity as possible. The strange thing was that, even as I rejected them, I still paid attention to the sermons and Sunday school lessons. Nevertheless, I got into the practice of Satan worship, as an act of rebellion more than any deep-held belief. I became violent toward others, suicidal (attempting suicide twice), and my mind became very dark. However, there came a historic day in my life.

### Let the Journey Begin

My journey to the Catholic Church began with a friendship with our Protestant pastor's son. Our church had a fairly new pastor who loved me unconditionally and frequently had me over for dinner. So here I was, sitting at a Baptist pastor's table, cussing, smelling of tobacco, half-drunk, and hating God. He would just smile at me and tell me that

God had good things planned for me. His son had a motorcycle, and we would tinker with it while listening to rock music on the radio. This whole scenario confused me.

That was in 1990 when I was a senior in high school. Here was a Baptist pastor in a Fundamental Baptist church who didn't live by the rules. He didn't try to convert me. He just wanted me around. He told me how he, too, had questioned many of the beliefs of the church and that it was OK for me to question things.

Then it happened. One Sunday night, after the evening church service, the pastor's son, with tears in his eyes, confronted me about my relationship with God. He told me that he loved me and could not let me go to hell without saying something. I cussed him out and told him that God was stupid, and I didn't want anything to do with a brain-dead religion. To my surprise, he dropped to his knees, and for the next 20 minutes tearfully prayed for me. I finally told him that he had to go, that I was OK with going to hell. He went to find his parents for a ride home, but

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Journeys Home

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

everyone had left the church parking lot. I myself had to take him home — how awkward!

But God was orchestrating my journey. That night, I spent hours yelling, crying, and baring my pain, my hatred, and my emptiness with the pastor and his son. Around midnight, I collapsed and gave my life to Christ — with one condition. I wanted nothing to do with the church.

### Off to College

I had a few go-arounds with my parents over where to attend college. Ultimately, they made it clear: I attend the college in Florida that they had chosen, and they pay for it, or I go elsewhere and pay for it myself. Considering the alternatives, I chose Florida.

My college years were difficult. The college held to a King-James-Version-only view of the Scriptures, was ultra-conservative in its rules, and felt more like a prison than a college. Still, I stuck to my questioning ways, challenging my professors and engaging in lively debates with other students. I am a quick learner, so in first-year Greek, while the other students were learning basic Greek grammar, I was reading the New Testament in the original language and challenging my professors on their views. I really loved church history as well, and I challenged my church history professor on the “facts” he was presenting. I gained a small cheering section on campus but mostly met with outrage, and some of my well-written papers received a failing grade due to my conclusions. Somehow, though, I graduated with honors.

My freshman year, I met my future wife. Angela was intrigued by my wonderings and questioning of various things. For her birthday, I bought her a New International Version (NIV) Bible and asked her to read it. She did and excitedly told me how she was growing spiritually because now she could understand the Bible. From that point on, she trusted me and my questioning. I remember how, in the spring semester of my freshman year, I nervously told her that I thought God wanted me to be a pas-

tor and that I needed to get a theology degree. She was excited, while I was confused. It seems that God has a way of calling us out of our comfort zone into places that force a decision to completely die to ourselves. This was the first of many such decisions to which God would call me. Still wondering how a man who rejected the church could be called to be a pastor, I accepted the challenge. Classes went well, and I graduated. Angela and I were married in the summer of 1994 and moved to my hometown of Marion, Indiana. We were there for three years, during which time I pastored a small church.

### Oregon Bound

As a child, I had fostered a desire to live in the western United States. I thought a lot about Colorado, but God revealed to us in 1996 His desire for us to live in Portland, Oregon. In September of 1997, we loaded the moving van and drove to Portland, where we had no job or housing. We had left that in God’s hands. The next day we had an apartment, and the following week I had a job. For the first four years in Oregon I worked in construction, giving me a chance to absorb the culture. During that time, we served in a Southern Baptist church in Oregon City.

After this, a Southern Baptist church in north Portland (the gang-infested, homeless-overrun, and poverty-ridden part of Portland) called me to be their pastor. For the next seven years, I served a poor congregation, and my wife and I took in homeless teens to live with us. We had our daughter by this time, and we eventually “adopted” one of the homeless teen girls we encountered. During our time at that church, two important aspects of the journey took shape for us. One, I was appointed to a committee with the Regional Convention, where I challenged many of the goals and policies of the Convention because they gave preferential treatment to the wealthier churches. That landed me in hot water. But the second aspect of the journey was where God turned up the speed on my journey home to the Catholic Church.

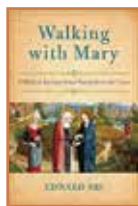
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## FEATURED RESOURCES



### Deep in Scripture CD

Marcus welcomes philosopher and former Lutheran Dr. Robert Koons to discuss Mary’s role in Scripture and whether or not honoring Mary detracts from Christ.



### Walking with Mary — By Edward Sri

In *Walking with Mary*, Edward Sri looks at the crucial passages in the Bible concerning Mary and offers insight about the Blessed Mother’s faith and devotion that we can apply in our daily lives. We follow her step-by-step through the New Testament accounts of her life, reflecting on what the Scriptures tell us about how she responded to the dramatic events unfolding around her. This is a wonderful book for those seeking a deeper understanding of Mary and her role in salvation history and how she is an inspirational example for all Christians.

\$35

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

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# Honoring Our Lady: A Stumbling Block For Conversions

By Thomas Storck

Reading the *Coming Home Network Newsletter*, one can see that, for many converts and those on the journey toward the Catholic Church, Catholic devotion to the Mother of God represents a major stumbling point. To many Protestant Christians it does appear as if Catholics offer divine worship to Our Lady, to a mere creature. The reply, of course, that we usually give is that we do not *worship* Our Lady; we simply ask her intercession, much as we would ask for the prayers of some saintly person living on this earth, a practice that Protestants, of course, engage in as well.

While it is true that our prayers to Mary are founded on the idea of obtaining *her* prayers for us, there is a further dimension to our devotion to the Mother of God that I think we often fail to mention, or even notice. Without meaning to, we perhaps come across as a bit disingenuous when we say we are merely asking for the prayers of the Blessed Virgin, when often we are clearly doing something more.

On the feast of the Assumption there is a popular pilgrimage an hour or so from where I live that attracts thousands of pilgrims every year. On the evening of the feast there is a procession in which the image of Our Lady is solemnly carried out of the church, and placed in the back of a truck with the bishop of the diocese kneeling in the truck bed before Mary's image and leading the accompanying crowd of pilgrims in reciting the Rosary. I can easily imagine a Protestant who witnessed that exclaiming, "You say you're simply asking for Mary's prayers? That sure looks like something more! When I ask a brother or sister for prayers, I don't kneel before them or wave incense at them."

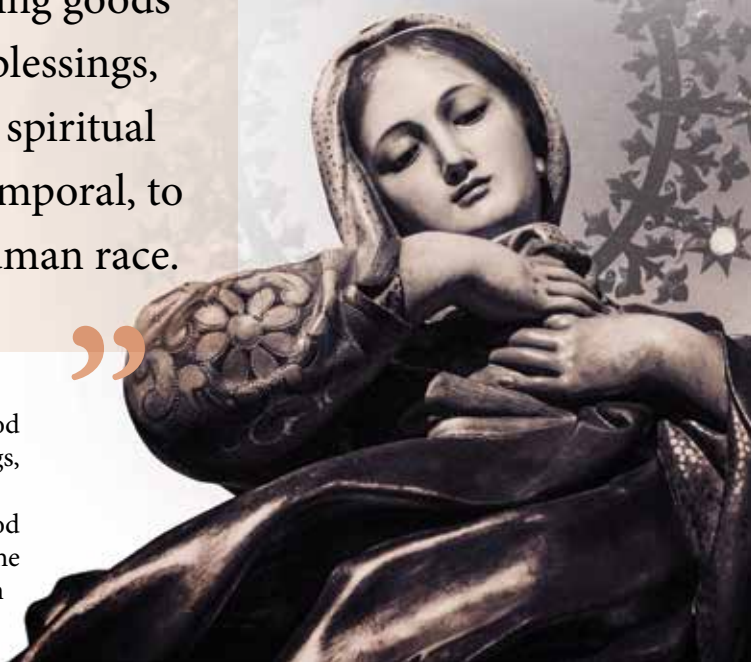
Some of the strangeness of this, of the solemn incensing of images of Our Lady, of carrying them in procession or kneeling before them, comes from the fact that many Catholic practices developed in a monarchical and hierarchical age, when kings, popes, or other high personages received external marks of honor that are rare in the modern world, especially in democratic America. But I think there is more than this; there is a crucial point that we need to explain to Protestants to show why our practice of asking for Mary's prayers goes beyond a simple, "Please pray for us." This is the Catholic recognition that God uses created physical things in bringing goods and blessings, both spiritual and temporal, to the human race.

Even in the Old Covenant there are numerous examples of God working through physical means, many of them symbolic of the mysteries of the New Covenant. For example, when the children of Israel "spoke against God and against Moses," God "sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so

that many people of Israel died" (Num 21:6). The people appealed to Moses, and he prayed for them. But God did not simply answer Moses' prayer and remove the serpents, rather He told Moses to make a bronze serpent and place it upon a pole "and if a serpent bit any man, he would look at the bronze serpent and live" (Num 21:4-9). Our Lord calls attention to this episode in His conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:14-15), comparing Moses' lifting up of the metal serpent to the Son of man being lifted up so "that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

This use of physical objects to convey not merely temporal goods, such as healing from serpent bites, but grace itself becomes more explicit in the New Covenant. In Acts 19, St. Luke recounts how "God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them." It is in the sacraments, though, that we see the preemi-

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nent use of material things by God; humble created things, such as water or bread or wine or oil, when joined with the sacramental form of words and actions, effect spiritual changes. The sacraments are signs of grace, certainly, but they are more than merely signs, for they both "signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1131). We are regenerated by Baptism with water; we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation by means of the oil of sacred chrism, and so on, for God has graciously associated the ordinary things of His creation with supernatural grace. Many Protestants, of course, reject this understanding of sacraments, and some even reject the term sacrament, calling them ordinances, no longer outward signs that signify grace, but merely practices which one adheres to because of the command of Jesus Christ.

The Catholic view of these matters, however, is rooted in the Incarnation itself, in the taking of human flesh by the Second Person of the Trinity in order to accomplish the salvation of humanity. Our Lord's divine Person has been hypostatically joined to a human nature, and it is by His death as man that we are saved. We are saved by the very blood of Jesus, blood which is as much a physical object as the eggs and toast I had for breakfast, blood which, as part of His humanity, is "of the substance of His Mother," as the Athanasian Creed puts it. So Almighty God, a pure spirit, has graciously willed to effect salvific acts on our behalf by means of matter, simple created stuff. He has done this because of the union in our Lord of His divine and human natures so that these created things are now associated with the very Godhead itself.

Now historically Protestants would admit, at least implicitly, much of what I said here. They, too, believe in the Incarnation and in our salvation by Christ's blood shed on the cross. But Catholic theology and spirituality carry the principle of God's use of material things to its logical conclusion so that in addition to the sacraments, we make use of the sacramentals, such as holy water, blessed candles, blessed medals, and so on, which although they "do not confer the grace of the Holy Spirit in the way that the sacraments do," nonetheless "prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it" (CCC, 1670). And, following this principle, we show honor to the Blessed Virgin Mary, who although a mere creature, by her consent to the Archangel's request, became the means for the salvation of mankind. God has graciously associated her, part of His creation, with His salvific work of redeeming humanity, just as He makes use of so many other created things. But since she is a rational creature, her consent to God's request raises her cooperation to a level that inanimate objects such as water or wine could never exhibit. She is a mere creature, to be sure, but because of her consent and God's gracious desire to associate His creation in our own redemption, she is worthy of honor, worthy of having her statues and images carried about and revered. This is not idolatry; this is a recognition that, because of God's initiative, created things have been raised to new levels of participation in the divine economy of salvation. The Blessed Virgin is surely the apex of this participation, and as such is deserving of the honor which Catholics have always given her.

In his book, *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis writes of the reaction of many Protestants to Marian devotion, that

Protestant beliefs on this subject call forth feelings which go down to the very roots of all Monotheism whatever. To radical Protestants it seems that the distinction between Creator and creature (however holy) is imperilled: that Polytheism is risen again.

But such an understanding of monotheism and of God's dealings with mankind is not found in historic Christianity, including the very Scriptures themselves. Such a radical separation of the divine and human is more akin to the Muslim understanding of a total separation between God and everything that He has created. Through the entire economy of salvation God has associated the material with the spiritual, and Protestants themselves accept this principle, at least implicitly, without, however, extending it to its logical conclusion.

God's creation is not meaningless stuff which we are forced to make use of on our way to eternal life. He has willed it so that created things have eternal meaning. Most especially is this the case with the human nature of our Lord, but also with His most blessed Mother, Mary. So when we incense an icon or statue of the Mother of God, kneel before it, or carry it in procession, we are not worshipping a creature, still less an idol; we are honoring a created being who, by the mercy of God, has assumed the highest role in salvation history that is possible for a human person.

*Thomas Storck has written widely on Catholic social teaching, Catholic culture, and other topics for many years. His most recent book is An Economics of Justice and Charity: Catholic Social Teaching, Its Development and Contemporary Relevance (Angelico Press, 2017). Mr. Storck was received into the Church in February 1978. An archive of his writings can be found at [www.thomasstorck.org](http://www.thomasstorck.org).* ■

## 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  
Network International



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### Just As I Am

By Marcus Grodi

This past February, the world recognized the passing of a life-long faithful witness to Jesus Christ, Dr. Billy Graham. Some of you may already have read the following, but this is what I posted on our website:

*I was very saddened, yet at peace, to hear of the passing of Dr. Billy Graham. I have had tremendous respect and admiration for Dr. Graham my entire life. As a young man, sitting alone in front of a black and white television set, I first gave my life to Christ in response to Billy's televised invitation from the New York Madison Square Garden crusade. In seminary, I had the privilege of meeting him — I preached my first chapel sermon with him sitting in the 3rd pew! — and I had the honor of shaking his hand when I graduated. His life-long response to grace, his integrity, and his single-focused desire to give all to Jesus Christ, have long been a model for my life. "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" That was St. Paul's motto, as it was certainly Dr. Graham's. I read once that when Billy preached his first Boston crusade, Cardinal Cushing ordered the local Catholic newspaper to find the largest font and print the headline, "BRAVO BILLY! Give me ten of him and I'll change the Church!" There is no question in my mind that the rise and increase of Evangelical faith in Christ around the world and across denominational lines, in the late twentieth century and on into today, are due largely to the faithful obedience of this loving servant of God. May the Lord grant him mercy and rest.*

Many times over the past years, I've been asked why Billy never converted to the Catholic Church, or maybe why God didn't call Billy home to the Church? I don't know the answer to this question, in the same way I don't know why C.S. Lewis or hundreds of other faithful non-Catholic Christians didn't come home — or are not coming home to the Church. Our primary task, of course, is not to presume to be able to judge, but to tell and share the grace, truth, and beauty of Jesus Christ and His Church, which we each, by grace, have been given.

But what I do believe about Billy is that, by the grace of God, he was one of the most successful evangelists of all time, bringing maybe millions to the beginning stage of conversion. As Catholics, we recognize that conversion is not a one-time event of accepting Jesus as our Lord and Savior; this is just the beginning, but yet a very important, necessary beginning! Those of us whose conversion began

as infants through Baptism still must someday surrender to Christ and put our faith in Him; otherwise, we will live apart from Him and maybe not experience eternity with Him! "For apart from Him we can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). "No one can come to the Father except by me" (Jn 14:6). But this beginning must continue. As Jesus said, we must "abide in Him" (Jn 15:4-10); we must continue, remain, and persevere in Him, which is what the entire New Testament is all about.

I am one of those whose conversion did not begin with Baptism, for I wasn't baptized until I was seven years old. My conversion, thankfully by grace, began before that, and for this I am eternally grateful to our Lord and to His servant, Billy Graham.

As I mentioned earlier, one day, as a young child, I was sitting on a stuffed ottoman footstool before our television set. With a plate stacked high with cinnamon toast, I was listening half-heartedly to a preacher by the name of Billy Graham speaking to a large crowd in a football stadium.

Looking back, I'm a bit dumbfounded that I had remained there listening for any length of time instead of switching to something more my usual taste, such as *Felix the Cat*, the *Rocky and Bullwinkle Show*, or *The Lone Ranger*. What is most a sign of inexplicable grace, though, is the fact that when Billy extended the evangelistic call for people to come forward onto the playing field to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, as the familiar hymn *Just As I Am* ran through multiple verses, I was moved to set the precious plate of toast carefully aside, scoot forward off my stool onto my knees, and follow along aloud as he led the crowd in a form of the Sinner's Prayer. I vividly remember getting teary eyed through this. I do not, however, remember ever telling anyone about this or that it had had any immediate personal effect. I merely did what the preacher asked us to do, and then, after drying my eyes, I scooted back up onto the ottoman, reclaimed my toast, and turned the channel over to *The Woody Woodpecker Show*.

Whether or not this childhood memory constitutes the first time I truly surrendered my life to Christ I can't say, only God knows, but I do know that this is the first time I remember hearing John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever would

"Just As I Am"

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believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” I don’t think that the first half of the verse concerning the Incarnation had any meaning to me, but rather the second half and more specifically the call to *believe in him*. This is what I think drove me to my knees: *the need to believe in Jesus*.

But what did this mean? Sometime around age five, my parents and I began attending Zoar Lutheran Church in response to the invitation of our next-door neighbors. I would sit through Sunday worship and Sunday school and eventually be baptized at age seven, but I don’t recall that I ever paid much attention. I’m guessing, as a young, mostly uncatechized child, I thought believing in Jesus merely meant believing in His existence — that there is a God, that He loves me, and, therefore, that I ought to be good.

Around this time, either my mother taught me or I learned the following familiar song in a Lutheran vacation Bible school: “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so; little ones to Him belong, they are weak, but He is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me; yes, Jesus loves me; yes, Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so.”

I still get a bit choked up just reciting these words that left such an indelible mark on my soul. Believing in Him meant believing in His love for me. This was the extent of my childhood faith, but, thanks to His faithful witnesses — my mother, my Sunday School and vacation Bible school teachers, and particularly an evangelist named Billy Graham — and my childhood Baptism, it was a blessed beginning. ■

## CHNetwork Staff Interview

**What is your name and title?** Marcus Grodi, President / Founder

**How long have you worked for the CHNetwork?** I suppose since day one in 1993 when I began the “Network” with our first newsletter to 30 or so clergy converts or clergy inquirers. The idea for the “Network” grew out of our own journey into the Church — my wife, Marilyn, and I knew of few other clergy couples who had left their Protestant ministries to become Catholic. We felt very much isolated on our journey, and we could not talk about it with Protestant friends and we knew few Catholics.

**Before working at the Coming Home Network, what was the most unusual or interesting job you’ve ever had?** Wow, that’s tough because I’ve had lots of unusual jobs (especially this one!). At one time I was the production manager for a small company that made superconducting wire for the fusion industry.

**How would you describe your job to a stranger on an airplane?** My staff and I help non-Catholic Christians, clergy and laity, discover the truth and beauty of the Catholic Faith. It’s about helping them experience a deeper walk with Jesus Christ.

**What does a typical day in the office look like to you?** It’s amazing how much our work has changed over the years. Initially in the early 1990s we communicated with inquirers and converts by phone or postal mail; we didn’t have a website or access to email. Now most of my time is spent answering emails, writing articles, reading, and working with staff, as well as hosting *The Journey Home* program and an occasional *Deep in Scripture* interview.

**What is the most rewarding part of your job?** Hearing how God, in His mercy and grace, has used our work to help someone grow closer to Christ and His Church.

**What is one fact about you that might surprise people to know?** I am a pathological introvert! I run from crowds! Just give me a peaceful walk in the woods with my wife, Marilyn, and/or our golden retriever mix “Beatrice Buttercups,” and I’m content. ■

## CHNetwork Retreats

*A time of fellowship and prayer with converts and those on the journey to the Catholic Church. Visit [CHNetwork.org/retreats](http://CHNetwork.org/retreats) for more information.*

JUNE  
4-7, 2018  
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

REGISTRATION  
DEADLINE IS  
MAY 18<sup>TH</sup>

OCTOBER  
15-18, 2018  
BIDDEFORD, MAINE

REGISTRATION  
DEADLINE IS  
SEPT 28<sup>TH</sup>

*For more information and/or to register:*  
740-450-1175 | [retreats@chnetwork.org](mailto:retreats@chnetwork.org)

Limited spots available!





## 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 REVERT IN AUSTRALIA :** "You've been a really big help! And I've had NO ONE else to talk to about this stuff who would understand. God bless!"

**FROM SARAH, ON THE JOURNEY:** "The Coming Home Network has already been a blessing to me, and I only learned about it a week or so ago. Thank you for the work you are doing."

**FROM NEIL, A FORMER PENTECOSTAL:** "I am a revert to the Catholic Church. I visited many churches, and I met a lot of good people. My personal experience was that the Eucharist was missing in my life . . . I am glad that you continue to encourage me as I find my way home to Rome and all that goes with it. I have been away from the Catholic Church for decades. I look forward to participating in Mass, and my faith has grown."

**CLYDE, A FORMER PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER:** "I am grateful for Jim at the Coming Home Network as well as the people who have been praying for me behind the scenes in walking with me through this process. I am nearing the completion of RCIA and am at home with the local Catholic church."

**JOSEPH, A FORMER NON-DENOMINATIONAL MINISTER:** "Endlessly haunted by the question 'Is it true?', the Coming Home Network provided me a safe place to examine this question through

the online platform (the testimonies were super helpful), interactive blog, connection with another Catholic chaplain, and a few anxious phone conversations with Jim. Do I fully understand it all? NO! But 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.'"

**FROM JUNE, A FORMER EVANGELICAL:** "I am doing well, thanks. I'm striving to grow in my Catholic Faith every day. I am so happy as a Catholic, and I thank God for the gift of the Catholic Faith. I think after dying for my sins, it is the best gift I have and will ever receive from God."

**FROM TRISH, A RECENT CONVERT:** "I cannot truly express how much your support and care means to me. I feel truly blessed and a sense of belonging I can honestly say I have never felt in my life. I have always said I have never belonged anywhere — always the outsider looking in. I no longer feel that way."

**FROM PHILIP:** "Your kind words are very much appreciated. I am certain that you, Mr. Grodi, and the entire team at Coming Home Network know that your work is extremely valuable, but I cannot resist heaping upon you folks one more testimonial. I was blessed by being a cradle Catholic, and though I have done any number of other ill-considered things, I somehow managed to remain in the Church the entire 61 years since infant Baptism. Still, I draw great spiritual nourishment from your programs and the insights of the guests. I make sure my children watch certain archived episodes that I know will benefit them as well. Your audience is probably more diverse than you can ever know, and your work certainly enriches more lives than you can ever imagine. The Good Lord is certainly inspiring your efforts, and I hope He will sustain you in it for a long while. Sincere thanks to you 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:

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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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Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_

CVV Code \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Visa

☐ MasterCard

☐ Discover

☐ AmericanExpress

# Prayer List



## Clergy

- For a Pentecostal minister and missionary in Brazil, that the Lord Jesus Christ would open his heart to all the gifts and graces of the Catholic Church.
- For Scott, a former youth minister in California, and his wife, that the Lord Jesus would heal them both of their serious health problems and release them from financial distress.
- For an Episcopal transitional deacon in Texas, that he may find gainful employment so that he can support his family when he becomes a Catholic.
- For a Baptist seminarian, that his anti-Catholic family members, especially his wife, would, through the love of Jesus, have a change of heart.
- For Joe, a minister in Canada, that the Holy Spirit may guide his every step as he continues to read and pray his way to the Catholic Church.
- For Charles, an Episcopal priest, that the Father would grant him the grace to enter into full communion with the holy Catholic Church.
- For a Wesleyan minister in Tennessee, that the Holy Spirit will dispel all his misunderstandings of the teachings of the Catholic Faith.
- For Sam, a former Episcopal priest, that his deep studies of the Catholic Faith in Rome would bear much fruit for the Kingdom of God.
- For Dave, a former Lutheran minister who recently was received into the Church, that God would grant his wife a swift recovery from her surgery.

- For John, an Anglican priest, that the Lord may continue to guide him and his family as they continue their journey to full communion with the successor of St. Peter.
- For a Presbyterian pastor who feels strongly called towards the Catholic Church but is concerned about the impact becoming Catholic would have on her family and congregation.

## Laity

- For Sarah, who is trying to navigate issues in her family that complicate her desire to be Catholic, that she find a way to move forward with her journey.
- For John, who found a local Catholic parish and is planning to reach out to them but is nervous about what to expect.
- For a new convert who hadn't been attending Mass on account of concerns she had about misinformation she received from Catholics, that she be able to return to the Eucharistic table of our Lord Jesus.
- For Sarah's husband to be more open to her desire to become Catholic.
- For Becky, who is now reconsidering her interest in the Catholic Church and wonders how she might return to the Church after getting some of her concerns addressed.
- For George, who has been drawn towards the Catholic Church for years but whose wife is adamantly against it, that he know how best to proceed with his journey.
- For Trish who is looking for ways to grow in her faith as a new Catholic.
- For Susan who is struggling knowing what is true or not and doesn't know if the Catholic Church is the right fit for her.
- For Michelle who is on the journey and having a hard time responding to difficult family members who don't understand her desire to be Catholic.
- For Linda to find good local support and be able to connect with faith-filled Catholics in her area as she moves towards the Catholic Church.
- For James who is struggling with arguments he's read challenging the historicity of the Gospels.
- For Kristen who is on the journey and having a difficult time with her father understanding her interest in the Catholic Church.
- For a woman in Europe who feels like the season in her current church is coming to an end but isn't sure yet about moving towards becoming Catholic, that she have clarity and discernment in her journey.
- For Jeff who is on the journey and wants to know more about the early Church Fathers.

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*: 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

|   |  |   |                                   |  |
|---|--|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>May 7</b><br>Dr. Diego Ospina*<br><i>Former Mormon</i> | <b>May 14</b><br>Jeffrey Morrow*<br><i>Convert from Judaism and Evangelical Protestantism, Re-air from 2/29/16</i> | <b>May 21</b><br>Julis Davis*<br><i>Former agnostic</i> | Ryan Dellacross*<br><i>Revert</i> | <b>May 28</b><br>Dr. Holly Ordway*<br><i>Former atheist and Episcopalian, Re-air from 6/1/2015</i> |
|---|--|---|-----------------------------------|--|

\*Schedule is subject to change.

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



► “Journeys Home” continued from page 2

As I studied for my weekly sermons, I saw more and more that there were holes in Protestant theology, pushing me to go deeper into my study of church history. The Catholic Church was not on my radar at this point and wouldn't be for a few years. However, God was gently showing me the way without my even knowing it. As I began to notice gaps in Baptist theology and Scripture passages that were being overlooked, I would point them out to the congregation. I figured that, as a pastor, I had a responsibility to guide people into the truth. I did not care what the denominational leaders or the influential people in the congregation thought — I had to answer to God, so I taught what I was discovering. Each fall, I dedicated October to the study of faithful Christians of the past, some Protestant and some Catholic, for the congregation to learn from the past. I preached church history to the congregation because I believed that we cannot properly understand how to live in the present unless we understand how faithful Christians lived in the past.

One week, as I was sitting in my office at the church, I was noticing big gaps between what I saw in the church and what was presented in Scripture concerning it. I saw too many conflicts in Protestant theology, and one passage in John 17, where Jesus prays for the Church to live in complete unity, really bothered me. I could not figure out how Jesus could pray for unity in the Church, yet there were thousands of denominations and splinter groups, all claiming Scripture as their authority. I felt despair and prayed, asking the Holy Spirit to erase all my biases and help me see what the Bible actually said. In the following weeks, I was shocked as God revealed truth after truth to me. My belief in the end-times Rapture collapsed. I had to be honest and admit that it wasn't in the Bible. My belief in Baptist church leadership structure eroded away as I saw bishops and other, more Catholic-style leaders presented to me. As time went on, some in the congregation saw what I saw, while others formed an eviction committee. I was ousted and banned from pastoring in the Southern Baptist Church.

## Knowing Me Ministries

The months that followed left my family and me, awkwardly, without a church. From what I had learned in my studies, I thought that maybe house churches might be the answer. We started a house church, but it fell apart. We had lost our housing and income, and our son had been born. I prayed for God to show me the way. I started a delivery business to pay the bills, and a friend rented us a house at an affordable price. One Sunday morning, when we were churchless, as a family we walked over to a local community center. As we approached it, we saw two homeless men sitting on a bench. I sat down and asked them their stories. In turn, they asked me why I was there, and I told them that I had no idea: I was a pastor without a church. The next day, after work, I again stopped by that community center to pray for God to show me the way, and a group of homeless people ran up to me to ask if I was the pastor that the two men had told them

about. I admitted that I was the one, and they excitedly invited me to their camp. When we arrived, the people readily welcomed me. I immediately began reaching out to these brothers and sisters who were wandering like sheep without a shepherd. Over time, we observed God delivering and healing people. We baptized some of them and saw God preforming miracles. We defended them against the authorities who were abusing them. Our name spread, and we realized that we needed to give ourselves fully to serving these dear people. We had served the homeless down through the years, beginning in 1991 in Florida. God gave us the name *Knowing Me Ministries*, inspired by the passage in Jeremiah: “Because he dispensed justice to the weak and the poor, he prospered. Is this not to know me? — oracle of the LORD” (Jeremiah 22:16 NABRE). We wanted to serve the homeless in a way that honored their dignity and sought not to work toward housing as an ultimate goal, but rather to work toward inspiring these people to reach their full human potential as unique individuals. Our popularity spread, and donors came on board. However, not everyone was enthusiastic, because we tended to be radical. We sensed that the person in front of us should take precedence over policy. *Knowing Me Ministries* should have a minimal amount of rules to run the organization well yet have the freedom to serve each person according to his needs. The ministry grew and explored various avenues of serving.

## Enter Sister Margaret

God has some fascinating ways of accomplishing His purposes. As my family and I connected with other house churches, we became ever more frustrated. They still lacked unity; it was the same old theology in a different setting. We finally just quit church altogether and felt the emptiness of the barren land of serving God without a church.

Soon, out of desperation, I began to go to the Grotto. The Grotto is a Catholic shrine in Portland. It is a place of peace, prayer,

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and solitude. The Grotto is surrounded by the noise of 82nd Ave. on its west side (an avenue of five crowded lanes, bordered by prostitution and gangs), by Portland International Airport on its north side, and the ever busy Interstate 205 on its east side. In the middle of this concrete jungle sits the Grotto on beautiful Rocky Butte, an ancient volcano in the middle of the city, now blessed with the tall Douglas fir trees so prevalent in Oregon. The Grotto has a section at the foot of the mountain with a church, a gift shop, the Stations of the Cross, and a number of statues of people I didn't know. Atop the cliff are a monastery, extensive gardens, and other attractions.

I would escape to the Grotto to regain connection with God. One day, I made the "mistake" of googling the names of the various statues: St. Peregrine and St. Francis, for example. I was blown away. "How could this be?" I thought. These people were really holy, really in love with Jesus, yet deeply Catholic. What was going on? I dug further and discovered the Catholic saints more in depth. Now my world went into a tail spin!

One day I encountered the story of St. Therese of Lisieux, "The Little Flower." I was struck by her deep humility and her total abandonment to God. Then I got a phone call. I had been regularly on the local news and in local newspapers whenever homeless issues arose. One newspaper did a two-page article on our work. The person on the other end of the call was Sr. Margaret Bischoff, a Sister of Providence. That didn't tell me much since I knew next to nothing about the Catholic Church. She stated that she had seen the newspaper article and wanted my help. Her parish had homeless people sleeping on the property, and she felt it was her Christian duty to love and help them but wasn't sure what to do.

I went to her house for lunch. I fumbled around for some connection to her and I brought up *The Little Flower*. She was delighted. Then I asked her why she believed in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Her response? "Because Jesus said so." Huh? I was used to a theology that ran circles around the Scriptures to get to some sort of conclusion, and she simply said, "Jesus said, 'This is my body'" (see Luke 22:19). I was left speechless at such a simple, yet totally accurate, answer. I asked her how she knew that what Jesus said was to be taken literally, and she took me to John 6 and to a place that I had never gone before: the Magisterium and the Church Fathers. I sat in silence. She gave me a book to read, *The Protestant's Dilemma*, by Devin Rose, a former Southern Baptist who had become Catholic.

I read it, then began to read other books. I even dared to read books written by Catholic scholars and was dumbfounded at how biblical, how intelligent, and how passionate they were in their love of God and His Church. I even read the Vatican II documents and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. As I continued to work with Sr. Margaret and Our Lady of Sorrows par-

ish, I could not help but see their loving obedience to our Lord's command to serve the poor.

But now I had a dilemma. I sensed that God could be leading me to the Catholic Church, but I had a wife to deal with and donors who would be less than enthusiastic about our trajectory. Besides all this, I had my own internal struggles. I couldn't wrap my mind around Marian doctrine. I read what the Church taught concerning Mary, but it was hard for me to grasp, especially concerning her Immaculate Conception and her sinlessness.

A friend told me that when I struggle with a teaching of the Church, there are three possibilities: 1. The Church is wrong; 2. I am wrong; 3. I just don't yet understand. I did discover that, rather than the harsh institution that I expected the Catholic Church to be, it was quite the opposite. The Catholic Church is a kind mother who gently guides us and allows us to struggle through our own understanding of doctrine and life. Although in the past I had spoken against what I thought was the silliness of the Catholic Church, I now was at a point to understand that the Church being wrong and me being right was not an option. The Church has 2,000 years of holy and very educated saints to back it up.

After much struggling over the doctrine of Mary, I met people at the parish who had a particular devotion to Mary. I observed how deeply committed to Christ and how full of joy they were. One man in particular, Will, who has since become my best friend, began to teach me about our Blessed Mother. As he taught, I realized that the Church's teaching was biblical. However, much of the teaching on Mary was also part of Sacred Tradition, which I had come to accept even as a pastor, for the Scriptures make it clear that the tradition of the Apostles was also a valid source of truth.

After months of struggle over Mary, I went through a 33-day consecration to Mary, based purely on faith — I still did not understand, but I was beginning to see in the Scriptures that she is indeed the Queen of Heaven and our Mother. So, by faith I journeyed with Mary. On the day of consecration, nothing magical happened, but what followed in the days since has been grace upon grace. Mary has led me deeper into Christ and deeper into faith.

As the director of a non-profit organization that serves the homeless, I had to live by faith quite often. My faith, though, had always been mixed with anxiety. What I have noticed since consecrating myself to Mary, however, is an immovable faith. Mary, herself a woman of deep faith, can help us follow Christ in pure faith.

Another issue I grappled with was obedience. As a Protestant, I was used to being independent and free to question everything. Now, however, I needed to bring myself into submission to the

The Church has 2,000 years of holy and very educated saints to back it up.

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

Bride of Christ, the Church. Again, I was given room to wrestle with what I did not understand, yet I was asked to do so in a spirit of humility and obedience. As I struggled, the Holy Spirit reminded me of Hebrews 13:17, where we are commanded to obey our leaders. So, with faith, I made the choice to obey the leaders of the Church and trust their wisdom. The graces of God that have come to me through that act of obedience are amazing. I discovered that my priest, archbishop, and other leaders are men of mercy and love and that they only want the best for me — eternal life in Christ!

After struggling through these doctrines, I finally decided to tell my wife, Angela, the journey that God had me on. I expected shock and anger, but instead, she told me that God had her on the same journey. Relieved, we discussed what we were learning. The one Bible passage that God used more than any other to convince me of the reality that the Catholic Church is the Church that Christ established can be found in John 17. In this chapter, Jesus prays that the Church would have the same unity that the Trinity enjoys. It was a passion for me to see unity in the Church. What I couldn't figure out was why Christ's prayer would go unanswered since there are thousands of denominations. But when I considered the Catholic Church, I realized that Christ's prayer had been answered long ago. Here was a Church that was unified under the Pope, a Church that was agreed in its doctrines and practices. What a joyful realization this was! It convinced me that this truly was Christ's Church. But there was still work that the Holy Spirit needed to do in me.

### The Final Decision

God leads us on a journey, but there are points in that journey where He calls us to a moment of decision. One day, while serving on the streets, the Holy Spirit called me to a decision. I was sweating, breathing fast and cold — that feeling you get when God speaks only too clearly. I couldn't think straight, so I went to the Grotto. It was a warm, sunny day in May. I expected the Grotto to be crowded since it is a tourist hotspot. To my surprise, there was not a single person on the grounds. I figured there must be something going on inside the church. I went in, only to discover that no one was there, either. Since I was alone, I sat up front. I cried; I prayed; I cried some more. Then I asked God to show me there and then what to do. I looked up and gazed at the crucifix. I heard a gentle voice come from the crucifix that said, "Come home." I looked behind me to see who had said that, but no one was there. I looked back at the crucifix and knew Who was speaking. I dropped to my knees and raised my hands to heaven, praising God for showing me the true Church and the way home that I had sought for so long. My wife, my daughter, and I went through RCIA, and at the Easter Vigil 2015, we were received into the Church. Our 9-year-old son was baptized at

that same vigil. One miracle of that night was that our daughter was confirmed. She had been very hurt by the church where I had been pastor and had turned her back on churches in general, but now she was enthusiastically a part of His Church. Oh, the miracle of that night! I will never forget the first time I received Jesus in the Eucharist. Yes, I was home!

### The Rest of the Story

Since that night, God has been forming us spiritually. It has not been easy. Some 80 percent of our Protestant donors dropped us.

Our entire board resigned. We were devastated, yet full of hope, because God is faithful. We now have a great board of directors, amazing volunteers, and a service to the homeless like never before. God is growing the work of *Knowing Me Ministries*, and it is all we can do to keep up. As we come to know Him in the midst of our own financial poverty, God has been faithful to provide our needs every step of the way. We now work with the Archdiocese of Portland. They have tasked us

with identifying and training leaders in each parish, mobilizing parishioners to serve the poor. The parishes are stepping up, and the homeless are being served and welcomed into His Church, finding love and healing. Once a month, I lead men deeper into contemplation and God's love. We also have begun doing weekly podcasts on poverty and homelessness. God is taking us places we had never dreamed of. Who can understand how deep the Father's love is for us? (1 John 3:1). ■



MICHAEL DAVIS and his family reside in Portland, Oregon. Along with directing *Knowing Me Ministries*, they serve with their brothers and sisters at *St. Joseph the Worker Catholic Church* in Portland. Michael can be reached at (503) 310-0966. His website is [www.knowingmeministries.org](http://www.knowingmeministries.org).

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!

## DEFENDING THE FAITH

Join us at the **Defending the Faith** conference at the Franciscan University of Steubenville for **Coffee and Conversations**. It will be held during lunch on Saturday, July 28 and will be a time for networking and fellowship for non-Catholics and converts sponsored by the Coming Home Network. Go to [steubenvilleconferences.com/adult/dfc](http://steubenvilleconferences.com/adult/dfc) for more information about the conference. We hope to see you there!



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**H**ave you been recently received into the Catholic Church? If so, please get in touch with the CHNetwork office so we can update our records and welcome you home!



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