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# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



## Finding My Prince on the White Horse

By Kristen Anna-Marie Hauck, Obl. OSB

Easter 2018 marked my eleventh year as a Catholic. Since that Vigil eleven years ago, I have been asked many times, particularly by those who knew me previously, what on earth happened to cause such a conversion? I'm still trying to make sense of it myself. I find myself asking not so much how it happened, but rather how on earth did it not happen sooner? Surely I share in the lineage of Jonah, having preferred the storms of life and the stomach of a whale to the will of God.

Each time I consider my experience, I only become more aware of the ever wider circles emanating from a point in my history that, although one point, traces a life only God could draw. But then, isn't this so with every conversion? Are we not all called to be formed in such a manner and likeness, to be Christ-like? So have I been formed through my continual conversion.

### The Epiphany

My first epiphany of Jesus Christ occurred very unexpectedly during a casual sushi lunch with a member of my dissertation committee in the fall of 2005.

Though I was a year and a half into my dissertation, I had only just begun its writing. My dissertation topic was the influence and significance of the Dionysian in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche. Six months into my dissertation, I threw everything out. After my own exegesis and research into both the cult of Dionysus and Nietzsche's work, I found myself struggling with what I argued was Nietzsche's own conclusion: in order to reveal the

wisdom of the Dionysian, which is to say, the wisdom of suffering, one must adopt poetic language. This was problematic since there is nothing more unpoetic than the dry prose of a research dissertation. So I went back to my dissertation committee and presented a new proposal, outlining the production of a tragedy that would demonstrate what I believed Nietzsche had been trying to express about the Dionysian.

Did I have experience in theater? Of course not. Did I know how to format a play? Nope. Did I even have the vaguest idea of what that tragedy would be? Not until that sunny afternoon in the fall, eating lunch with Frederick Turner, poet, professor, and member of my dissertation committee. One might consider it pure luck that I was permitted to depart so radically from traditional scholarship. But I had long grown suspect of such "luck," having already experienced the impossible so many times in my life.

By the time I met with Professor Turner for this lunch, I had done independent studies in theater, researched Greek tragedy, *Continued on page 2* ➡

Journeys Home

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

and turned my attention to a study of the Christian Faith. I reasoned that if I were to produce a tragedy with the same cultural and pedagogical impact of the ancient Greek tragedies (this impact being precisely what Nietzsche was trying to express, I argued), then I would have to use a contemporary “myth,” or set of religious beliefs, within which to work. Living in the United States in 2005, I saw Christianity as the obvious milieu. Constructing the specific story out of the Christian archetypes, however, did not prove such an easy task. It was this lack of a specific story that led to the lunch meeting. I was intending to show what I had produced thus far as well as discuss my difficulties in coming up with anything novel. I told the professor all about the success of the “Greek Festival” I had presented the previous weekend and was stumbling through the number of pithy story ideas I had. There was a very long pause. Then Professor Frederick Turner spoke:

“You know what I think the story is? I think the story is about a God .... a God who became man .... and He loved this girl. And, though this girl loved Him very much, too, she did not know Him. And when He came and knocked at her door, she did not recognize Him....”

Honestly, I do not even remember the rest of the conversation. I only remember wanting to flee the emotion welling up inside me as quickly as possible. Indeed, even now, the same emotion bleeds tears in my eyes. Riding home with a fellow scholar who had joined us, I broke down sobbing. When my friend inquired, I could not hold back my emotion as I cried out, “How did he know? It’s me! I’m that girl!”

The fact was I had lived my whole life searching for truth. It was the reason I had decided at the age of 16 that I would study philosophy. Yet this scholarly pursuit itself became a mask. By the time of my dissertation, it had become a well-rehearsed per-

formance disguising the true reality — the wild imagination of a little girl who clung desperately to a fairy tale. And in this fairy tale, the girl was a princess destined for a soulmate, a Prince who is “faithful and true,” who would come riding upon a white horse to save her (Revelation 19:11). But who was He? Where was He? Was He even real? I had spent the previous 30 years convincing myself it was pure imagination.

Yet, suddenly, over a casual lunch of sushi, the mask was torn off, and the fairy tale I sought desperately to ignore lay open before me. I went home and tried to continue work on my dissertation, at the same time resorting to any means at hand to blot out the truth revealed to me that day.

### The Institution of the Eucharist

I grew up a “Navy brat,” the youngest of six children. (Years later, I discovered that there was another brother whom my destitute mother had given up for adoption. So we were really seven siblings.) My father was from Minnesota. He married my mother after a previous failed marriage, that had produced two daughters. My mother was from Maine and, similarly, had been married twice before, with three children. I was born unexpectedly in 1975. As a result, while most children attended school with their siblings, I attended with my nephews.

My family was not religious. Though I was taught to identify as Christian, I never really knew what that meant. The few experiences I had with Christianity taught me nothing.

The most memorable of these experiences occurred after my father retired from the Navy, around 1984, when we moved back to his home in Minnesota. At this time, my Grandpa Hauck and Mabel (Grandpa’s fourth or fifth wife) insisted I learn “my” Lutheran faith. They decided they would start bringing me along with them to church.

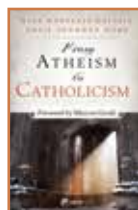
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# A Baptist Minister's Journey to the Eucharist

## PART II: MIRACULOUS MEALS

By Kenneth Hensley, Online Resource & Pastoral Care Coordinator

As we saw in last month's article, the evidence is simply overwhelming that in the earliest centuries of Christian history the Church universally embraced belief in what Catholics refer to as the "Real Presence" of Christ in the Holy Eucharist.



What was I, an ordained Baptist minister, to make of this?

St. Ignatius was a direct disciple of the Apostle John. St. Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp, who was himself a disciple of John. Did these early Church Fathers forget what they had been taught?

Was there no bishop, priest, or theologian in first five centuries of Christian history to raise his hand and complain when Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origin, Cyprian, Cyril of Jerusalem, Hippolytus, Ambrose, and Augustine (among others) were all teaching the "false" notion that in the Eucharist a miracle occurs in which bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ?

Was there no one to say, "Hey, this *isn't* what the Apostles taught"?

This caused me some serious consternation. And then I discovered that the historical evidence was even worse for me as a Baptist. I learned that until a monk bearing the unfortunate name of Ratramnus (what mother and father would do such a thing?) came along in the 9th century, there's no evidence of there *ever having been a debate over the issue within the Church*.

Indeed, it seems to have been the Swiss Reformer Ulrich Zwingli who in the 16th century — fifteen hundred years into Church history! — first taught as Christian doctrine what has since become the traditional position of Baptists and evangelical Bible Christians of all sorts — that the Lord's Supper is nothing more than a simple meal of remembrance and proclamation, the bread and wine serving as mere symbols of the Body and Blood of Christ.

### But What Does the Bible Teach?

At the time I was asking these questions, I had been an evangelical Protestant for about twenty years. In other words, I had lived my entire Christian life assuming the truth of *sola Scriptura*, committed to the idea that when it comes to establishing Christian doctrine, all that really matters is what the Bible teaches.

Scratching my head in the light of what I'd discovered in Church history, I was eager to look again at the Scriptures.

Despite the weight of historical testimony in favor of the Catholic view of the Eucharist, if I found that the teaching of Scripture *clearly contradicted* the doctrine of the Real Presence, I thought this would be enough for me to contradict it as well.

But what if the biblical material didn't "clearly contradict" the doctrine of the Real Presence? What if I couldn't establish with moral certainty that the Catholic position was wrong? How much weight would I then be willing to give to the historical testimony of the Church during those first fifteen centuries?

Even worse, what if the biblical material actually supported the Catholic teaching? What then?

### Miraculous Meals

One thing I had never really noticed before was that "miraculous meals" are a recurring theme in Scripture. There are a number of instances in the Old and New Testaments in which God's people are fed through some sort of miraculous means.

We think immediately of the events surrounding the Exodus and wilderness wanderings of the children of Israel. There's the "manna" God sent each morning to feed His people (Exodus 16). There's the water the Lord caused to spring forth from a rock to quench their thirst (Exodus 17). There's the quail He sent until it was coming out of the nostrils of the Israelites (Numbers 11).

But there are other instances as well in which a small amount of food is miraculously multiplied to feed a number of people.

For instance, in 1 Kings 17 the prophet Elijah visits the home of a poor widow and her son. He says to her, "Make me something to eat!" She responds, "As the Lord lives, all I have is a little meal in my jar and a little oil in my vessel. I'm gathering some sticks right now to make something for me and my son before we die!"

Elijah says to her:

Fear not! Go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord the God of Israel, "The jar of meal shall not be spent, and the vessel of oil shall not fail, until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth."

And it happened!

In 2 Kings 4 we have a similar account. This time it's Elisha the prophet. A woman tells him that her husband has died, she's in tremendous debt, and that her two children are about to be taken away as slaves to pay the debt.

She informs Elisha that all she has to her name is "one little jar of oil." Elisha says to her, "Go and borrow empty vessels from all your neighbors. Find as many as you can and bring them here!" He instructs her to fill the vessels. She begins to fill them from her "one little jar." She fills one to the top, then another, then another. The oil doesn't stop flowing until she has run out of vessels to fill.

Later on, in the same chapter of 2 Kings, guess what happens? Another miraculous multiplication of food takes place.

In this case Elisha is sitting with one hundred of his disciples, and they're hungry. One of his servants has twenty loaves of barley and a few ears of grain. Elisha says, "Give it to the men, that



they may eat ... for thus says the Lord, "They shall eat and have some left!"

In the final verse of 2 Kings 4 we read: "So he set it before them. And they ate, and had some left, according to the word of the Lord."

## Miracle Meals in the Gospels

When we read the account of the woman who borrowed all the vessels and filled them to overflowing from her "one little jar," we're reminded of another miracle that would take place centuries later at a particular wedding in Cana of Galilee involving six massive stone water jars, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.

In this case, water will be changed into wine.

When we read the account of Elisha multiplying the twenty loaves to feed his hungry disciples, what are we reminded of?

You see, when Our Lord changed the water into wine, when He took the five loaves and two fishes and multiplied them to feed the five thousand, when He took the seven loaves and a few fishes and multiplied them to feed the four thousand, these weren't just random miracles Jesus was performing. Not at all. Rather, Jesus was purposely reenacting the miracles of Elijah and Elisha, and the message He was communicating was clear: "I am another Elijah! I am another Elisha! I am like these great prophets of old!"

In fact, just as Elijah had compassion for the poor widow in 1 Kings 17, just as Elisha had compassion for the poor widow as well as on his famished disciples in 2 Kings 4, so we read in Matthew 14:14 that when Jesus saw the crowds who were following Him and had come to hear Him teach, He had "compassion" for them and said to His disciples, "Give them something to eat!"

In the account of Elisha, his servant objects, "But how am I to set this before a hundred men?" To which Elisha responds, "Give them to the men, that they may eat." In the Gospel account, the disciples object, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." In other words, "What? There are five thousand here — not counting women and children. Lord, have you lost your mind?"

To which Jesus responds, "Bring them here to me."

Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass; and taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children (Matthew 14:18-21).

## What Was Happening at the Last Supper?

When we think of the Last Supper, we correctly think of it as the fulfillment of the Passover at the time of the Exodus, when the lamb was slain and the children of Israel were delivered from bondage in Egypt. We correctly understand that at the Last Supper Jesus is presenting Himself as the ultimate Passover Lamb whose death will set His people free from their sins.

We also correctly think of the Last Supper as that moment when Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant in His Body and Blood.

When the Old Covenant was inaugurated at Mt. Sinai, we read in Exodus 24 how Moses sprinkled blood on the altar and said,

"This is the blood of the covenant!" There is no doubt but that when Jesus raised the chalice in the Upper Room that night and said, "This is my blood of the covenant," He was deliberately echoing the words of Moses. Our Lord was saying, "As Moses inaugurated the Old Covenant with blood, so tonight I am inaugurating the New Covenant with blood. With my own blood!"

I had always understood the Last Supper in terms of the Passover and the New Covenant. What I had not seen before — something that struck me powerfully once I did see it — was that in the Last Supper another miraculous meal was taking place.

How so? Well, listen carefully to Matthew's description of what Jesus did at the Last Supper. Notice especially the verbs that are used to describe Jesus' actions.

Now, as they were eating, Jesus **took** bread, and **blessed** it, and **broke** it, and **gave** it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:26-28, emphasis added).

Matthew tells us that Jesus "took" bread, "blessed" it, "broke" it, and "gave" it to his disciples to eat.

What I had never noticed before is that these are exactly the same four verbs that Matthew uses to describe the actions of Jesus when He fed the five thousand. Again, reading Matthew 14:19-20 (emphasis added):

Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass; and **taking** the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and **blessed**, and **broke** and **gave** the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied.

There's no doubt that Matthew is consciously describing the Last Supper in terms of the feeding of the five thousand. Matthew is using exactly the same pattern of four verbs. Matthew wants us to connect the Last Supper to the miraculous feeding of the five thousand.

## Conclusion

As I've said, I had always understood the Last Supper in sacrificial terms. It was the fulfillment of the Passover. It was the inauguration of the New Covenant in Christ's Body and Blood.

Now I was wondering: is there more to it than this?

Was Jesus, at the Last Supper, doing something like what He did when He fed the five thousand or when He changed water into wine? When Jesus took the bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to His disciples and said, "Take and eat, this is my body," was some kind of miracle taking place?

Is the Last Supper another example of a miraculous meal, like those we see throughout the Bible? And if it is, what about the Eucharist? Is the Eucharist the fulfillment of the miracles of the manna and the water from the rock and those of Elijah and Elisha? And the multiplication of the loaves and the fish?

In other words, was the early Church correct in teaching that in the Eucharist a miracle is taking place?

(Stay tuned for Part III!) ■

### Will You Also Go Away?

By Marcus Grodi

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*After this, many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him. Jesus said to the twelve, "Will you also go away?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was to betray him (John 6:66-71).*



How does one adequately address the growing scandal in the Church? Specifically, as I consider this in relation to our work in the Coming Home Network, how do we explain to non-Catholics why they should still consider coming home to the fullness of the Church — and why must Catholics remain?

It's important to remember that the scandal in the Church did not begin with ex-Cardinal McCarrick. Nor did it begin with the bishops who have sheltered and fostered a network of immorality among some segment of the hierarchy. Nor did it begin with the priest scandal or any of the multitude of scandals among the hierarchy that have sadly plagued the Church since her inception. As we see in the above Scripture, it was present in the beginning: one among the Twelve betrayed his calling, his loyalty, betrayed Jesus and sent Him to the cross — one whom Jesus Himself had called into ministry!

Scripture also reminds us, however, that it didn't begin with Judas, either. There have always been bad shepherds, as attested to throughout the Old Testament. From the very beginning, all the way back to Adam, God's Chosen People have been plagued with bad shepherds — though not all of them were bad, of course — and too often they were the ones who had the biggest influence on the history of God's People.

From the days of the earliest Christian writers, theologians have divided the history of God's People into ages. For example, the Patristic writers divided salvation history into five consecutive ages: the Ages of Innocence, Nature, the Promise, the Law, and the Church. But there is another way to see the ages of salvation history. First, from Adam to Herod is the long age of God's Chosen People falling away from God, starting with the Fall and leading over centuries to a time of such utter ignorance and rebellion from God that He saw, out of His love for the world, that the time was right to send His Son. All the Old Testament prophets warned of this rebellion of God's People and pointed ahead to the coming of the Messiah.

This long Old Testament Age was subdivided into periods of rise and fall leading to subsequent periods of renewal under new leadership: from Adam to the Flood, from Noah to Babel, from Abraham to Egypt, from Moses to Saul, from David to the Exile, from Ezra to Herod. Each of these periods started with an opportunity for renewal, with new leadership — a new shepherd — but, as a result of the constant downward pull of sin, each period descended from hopeful renewal, through bad shepherds and scandals, to chaos and separation from God.

Then, since the Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ, we have lived in the Age of the Church. It began with great hope, the appointing of new shepherds and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, a new Creation. The old was gone, and the new had come. Through faith in Christ and the waters of Baptism, any person could become a new child of God, a member of His Body, the Church. Through the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, one could be united with Christ and with other Christians. This also included, however, a call to "put off the old ... put on the new"; to live out our baptismal graces; to seek holiness and perfection; to resist sin and the devil; to seek things of heaven, not of this world; to love one another; and to look forward to His return in glory.

The New Testament warned, however, that from the very beginning the devil would fight against the Church, "[prowling] around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet 5:8). Jesus even told Simon Peter, whom He had chosen to be the Chief Shepherd of the shepherds of the sheep, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren" (Lk 17:31-32).

From the beginning, every person who responds to the call of God to serve Him, and gives his life to Him, immediately becomes a target of Satan — especially those who express their desire to serve the Lord in His

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► "Will You Also Go Away?" continued from page A

Church, including seminarians, religious, deacons, priests, bishops, cardinals, and popes. Sadly, throughout the history of the Church, those who have caused the most egregious scandals and heresies have too often been those who had received the most sacraments.

Bishop Fulton Sheen once pointed out that the Age of the Church can be understood as divided into four, 500-year periods, each, like those Ages of the Old Testament, starting out with great hope and renewal — but ending in crisis and chaos. The first 500 years, which started with the Apostles and the coming of the Holy Spirit, ended in chaos with the Fall of Rome. It seemed like all was over! But God raised up new shepherds and spiritual leaders, such as Sts. Augustine, Patrick, and Gregory the Great. Then again this second 500 years saw decay and division until around the year 1,000 when the Church experienced schism between East and West and Christendom was invaded by the Muslim hordes.

Was this the end, as many apocalyptic writers claimed? No, a third 500 years began with great hope, with renewal movements under Sts. Francis and Dominic, Albert the Great and Aquinas, and many others, but again, in time, this all descended into great corruption, leading to divisions, multiple concurrent claimants to the papacy, and massive defection of priests and nuns, ending in the Great Divorce, called the Protestant Reformation.

So now was it all over? No, a new 500 years began, with the Counter-Reformation, the Council of Trent, and the many great shepherds and renewal movements of these past 500 years. Through it all, however, the devil has been alive and well, drawing down the people of God by a constant, underlying thread of sin and corruption, leading to division, nominalism, indifferentism, and relativism. Saint Pope John XXIII saw this ever-growing corruption, and inspired by the Holy Spirit, called for a Council, but the devil used the good of the Council to spark further confusion, rebellion, and division.

Certainly not all in the last sixty-plus years has been chaos and confusion, but, yet, as we live at the end of this fourth 500-year period of the Church, is it the end? Since much of the Old Testament served as types or signs of things in the New Testament, one can see how in this Age of the Church the pattern is followed with God's People descending from renewal into corruption and rebellion, until God intervenes with new shepherds to inaugurate a new age of renewal and hope.

It is especially essential to recognize that running like a thread throughout all the ages — from Adam to this pres-

ent Age — has been a Remnant of God's People, always looking to Him, trusting in Him, never giving up, aided by grace and loyal to the faithful shepherds: a Remnant with whom God could always rebuild His Church under new shepherds, giving hope for the future.

Many voices are claiming that the end of this fourth 500 years of the Church is the start of the long-awaited, final Tribulation, leading to the Second Coming of Christ. Is the corruption, violence, and deviant morality of our present Age the opening and pouring forth of the 7 Seals as forewarned in Revelation 6?

Or, will this fourth 500 years transpose into a fifth 500 years, under new shepherds, leading to the new Springtime that Pope Saint John Paul II once foresaw?

My purpose in this reflection is not to side with any particular apocalyptic camp, but to remind us of the important words of St.

Peter quoted in the opening paragraph. With all the craziness happening around us, in our culture and in our Church — even among our shepherds — how will we, the Remnant, those who by faith and Baptism seek to follow our Lord faithfully, respond to the question of Christ: "Will you also go away"?

Regardless of what some of our shepherds do or say, we must remember what the Holy Spirit led the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council to proclaim:

Basing itself upon Sacred Scripture and Tradition, it teaches that the Church, now sojourning on earth as an exile, is necessary for salvation. Christ, present to us in His Body, which is the Church, is the one Mediator and the unique way of salvation. In explicit terms He Himself affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism and thereby affirmed also the necessity of the Church, for through baptism as through a door men enter the Church. Whosoever, therefore, knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ, would refuse to enter or to remain in it, could not be saved (*Lumen Gentium*, 14).

Every one of us who recognizes that our faith in Christ and our membership in the Church has been a gift of grace through faith and Baptism needs to be a continuing witness to the need to remain faithful in the Church that Christ established in His Apostles under the leadership of Simon Peter, whose witness must be ours: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." ■

...every person who responds to the call of God to serve Him, and gives his life to Him, immediately becomes a target of Satan...



# Joyful Journey Updates

**We would like to share with you some 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 Debbie, a new convert** "Yes!!!! My husband, Frank, and I were received into the Church at the Easter Vigil. It was the most spiritual moment I have ever experienced ... I don't think I have stopped smiling since. My heart is so full."

**From Kathleen, a former Lutheran seminarian** "It was *The Journey Home* as well as YOU who actually called me once by phone ... that was a major catalyst to my returning home ... I wanted to write to you once again to share with you the joy of my heart. My husband, Richard, after so many years of never wanting to be a Catholic ... has entered the holy Catholic Church ... He made his First Confession on December 18th and his First Eucharist on December 24th, joyous Christmas Eve!!! ... All I can say is, 'Crying may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.' And so it has. Hallelujah, He is risen indeed in our hearts!"

**From Ade, on the journey** "While we were in Rome we attended Mass a few times, and during one Mass at the Basilica de Santa Maria in Trastevere, I suddenly found my faith. I have started to read the

Bible and books about the founding fathers etc. and have gained a deeper understanding of the Mass and the Catholic Faith. I now have faith and believe in God and the Trinity, and we both love attending Mass, which brings us closer to God, and we both become very emotional during every Mass. I also fully believe that Catholicism is the one true faith, and our lives have been transformed."

**From Christopher, an Anglican priest on the journey** "I appreciate your faithful emails checking in on me ... They are meaningful and remind me often that the mission of EWTN and the CHN is alive, well, and most importantly, are doing the work of reconciling the world to Jesus Christ through His holy Catholic Church!"

**From Karen, a former Presbyterian** "I find many of the stories on the Coming Home Network to be very encouraging and often remind me that God's hand is so evident in the lives of many. You asked how we are doing in our Catholic faith journey. We LOVE being Catholic! I am forever

grateful for how my evangelical faith taught me to love Jesus, but the fullness of the sacraments and the sacrificial graces within the Church is just something that is not able to be experienced in a Protestant church ... Thank you for all you do to encourage converts to keep trusting and keep walking together with the community of faith." ■

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**CHNetwork** Attention: Ann Moore  
PO Box 8290

Zanesville, OH 43702

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

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# Prayer List



## Clergy

- For a United Church of Christ minister on the East Coast, that the Holy Spirit would grace her with the courage to return to the Catholic Faith of her youth.
- For Jesse, an evangelist, that his faith in the triune God may lead him home to Jesus in the most Holy Eucharist.
- For an Anglican lay minister in Sri Lanka, that he may be granted the grace to return to the Catholic Faith and become a powerful evangelist.
- For Ronald, a former non-denominational minister in California, that the Lord would guide him in his discernment of a monastic vocation.
- For Elizabeth, a former Assemblies of God seminarian, that Our Lord Jesus may bring her to an understanding of His holy Virgin Mother.
- For Jorge, a non-denominational lay minister in Chile, that God may lead him to the fullness of His truth in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Jesus.
- For an Anglican priest in Maine, that our Lord Jesus Christ may guide him and his family home to full communion with the successor of St. Peter.
- For Terry, a former Assemblies of God minister, that the Lord would open the doors that will enable him to be received into the Catholic Church.

## Laity

- For a convert in Europe who has struggled for years with practicing his faith, that he be able to embrace the Catholic Church in all its fullness.
- For Patricia, who is being drawn once again towards full communion with the Catholic Church, that she find a good priest to help her on her journey.
- For a man in Canada who struggles with several theological and emotional issues that prevent him from moving forward with his journey.
- For Jane, who recently returned to the Church after being away for decades, that the sacraments bring her ever closer to her Lord Jesus.
- For a Nazarene in the northeast who is very drawn to the Church but her husband is bitter towards Catholicism on account of his upbringing, that Jesus will bring both of them closer to Himself.
- For Judith, who has been visiting Catholic shrines and reading the *Catechism*, that she know how to proceed with her interest in the Catholic Church.
- For Teresa, a Methodist, that the Holy Spirit will draw her and her family closer to God and calm her doubts about her faith journey.
- For Gretchen, a recent convert, that she will continue to grow in her love of Christ and His Church.
- For Jennifer who is struggling with her current denomination's teaching on morality and is wondering if maybe she should take another look at the Catholic Church.
- For a woman in Arkansas who comes from a Jehovah's Witness background and is having a hard time understanding the Trinity, that she be able to understand this deep and beautiful truth of the Faith.
- For Mary Jo, who is looking for good solid Catholic friends and also has questions about Catholic beliefs, that she not be afraid to continue exploring the Catholic Church.
- For a woman in Europe who is intrigued by the Catholic Church and is beginning to learn more about Catholicism, that the Holy Spirit will continue to work in her life.
- For Sarah who is attending a Protestant church with her family and is still discovering Catholicism but feels caught between the two worlds.
- For Lucia, who is wrestling with misunderstandings about Catholicism, that she come to understand Catholic teaching for what it truly is.

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. 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*: Sunday 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

#### October 1

Dr. Paul Thigpen\* (former Evangelical Pentecostal minister)

#### October 8

Fr. John Lipscomb\* (former Episcopal bishop)

#### October 15

Tyler Blanski\* (former Anglican)

#### October 22

Troy Guy\* (former Baptist)

#### October 29

Charles Hoffman\* (convert from Orthodox Judaism)

\*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...

► “Journeys Home” continued from page 2

The first Sunday came; they picked me up, and we drove over to a Lutheran church in Minneapolis. The service was long, and the minister seemed to talk an awful lot about very boring things. Then, all of a sudden, my grandparents dragged me up to the front of the church with them where everyone was taking a place along a rail and kneeling. I kept looking past Mabel to see what was happening and saw the minister with an assistant. The assistant had a tray with little cups and crackers, and the minister would take one of each and give it to each person kneeling. I was excited about the prospects of a snack — until they came close enough for me to hear what they were saying.

A few people away, I heard the minister as he picked up the host first, then the little cup, saying, “The body of Christ; the blood of Christ.” Then I got scared.

I tugged at Mabel and kept asking, “We’re *eating* somebody!?! Who are we eating?! Grandma Mabel, Grandma Mabel!”

Mabel kept hushing me all the way until the minister came to me, at which point, confused and scared and certainly not interested in cannibalism, I screamed and threw a fit, refusing communion.

We left quickly that day, with my grandpa dragging me, crying hysterically, out of the church while Mabel followed, chastising me for embarrassing them. They never took me to church again.

### The Annunciation

I was a bit of an odd child from a very young age. My parents still tell how I didn’t have just one imaginary friend, but seven — one of which was a doctor! Indeed, I had a vivid imagination, which had the pesky habit of making me too curious. I often wandered on my own, like the time I caused a panic when I did not return home from school. I was simply still riding the school bus because I wanted to see where it went after it dropped me off. I was blunt in my questioning, to the point of rudeness, for I would quickly grow impatient with adults who attempted to pacify me with false answers. I wasn’t just curious; I was seeking after something — *someone*. The truth.

During my early teens, a few years after my family had settled in Maine, this yearning was expressed through an unquenchable thirst for books combined with the impetus to try everything. I remember discovering Mother Teresa. I didn’t understand exactly what she was — that she was a Catholic nun — but I knew I wanted to be like her.

Then there was Malcolm X. I read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, which began two lifelong events for me: 1. the pursuit of learning and of understanding language, which began with my own reading of *The Loom of Language*, a technical linguistic treatise by Frederick Bodmer published in 1944; and 2. the search for the True Religion, which began with my own declaration of being Muslim. In his autobiography, Malcolm X discusses reading *The Loom of Language* and its effect on his own linguistic sensibilities. As for the Muslim declaration, the impetus was primarily Malcolm X’s accounts of his trip to Mecca where he encountered hundreds of people from every walk of life and na-

tionality, brought together in the communion of prayer to God. The moment I read that description, I desired it.

I had a proclivity to dye my hair green or shave it completely. I listened to punk rock and concluded that almost nobody had a clue what was going on in the world. I was disillusioned, desperately seeking after a truth that no one seemed comfortable to admit, let alone discuss. At best I was highly imaginative, and at worst I was crazy. Between the culture of my youth and my own weakness, I concluded in favor of the latter. I tried running away, I did drugs, I attempted suicide.

Then one night, when I was seventeen, I had a dream. I was in a beautiful countryside. The sky was vibrant blue, and the grass was green and soft. In the distance there was a hill, and upon it stood this beautiful lady with a white tunic and a blue veil. It was as if I knew her. I hastened up the hill to the lady, happy to meet her. When I reached her, she smiled and announced, “I have something to tell you; you are going to be a nun.”

“OK!” I answered, “But not a Catholic nun — how about a Buddhist nun? I’ll be a Buddhist nun!” Then I turned and ran back down the hill before the lady could answer me. I have no idea why I was against being a Catholic nun. At that time I knew nothing of Catholicism. Yet somehow, in my ignorance, I was firmly against it.

The next morning I woke up with determination. I had a task before me: I was supposed to be a nun — a Buddhist nun. So I set out to become Buddhist and find out how to be a Buddhist nun.

I went into my high school and sought out my literature teacher, who was a very kind and worldly woman. I proceeded to tell her how I needed to become Buddhist so I could become a nun. Hesitant, she gave me the contact of a meditation space in the next town over. I went, bought several books by Chogyam Trungpa, and enrolled myself in several Buddhist meditation classes.

While becoming Buddhist was easy, becoming a Buddhist nun was not. As it turns out, there really isn’t such a thing. The most I could ever achieve was a regular, humdrum life, punctuated by lots of meditation and retreats. But I didn’t want merely weekends of meditation; I wanted meditation all day, every day. Actually, I didn’t want meditation at all. It quickly became evident to me that Buddhist meditation was really nothing other than a speaking to oneself. I was struck by the absurdity of a self telling itself that it’s not really a self. The very act of telling demonstrates there *is* a self that is doing the telling — for there could be no telling without a subject to tell.

Though I found meditation helpful for calming anxiety and ordering my own thoughts, after a couple of years I abandoned Buddhism altogether and turned instead to paganism. I could not get over the absurdity of self-annihilation, and, more importantly, my imagination rejected wholesale the nonexistence of God. For me, the question was never whether God did or did not exist. Rather, I was trying to determine *who* God is; that is, which god was the God of gods?

### The Wedding at Cana

It was nearly midnight on December 18th, 2005. I lay in bed, unable to sleep. I had researched my tragedy for the previous

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

three months. Attempting to stay as far away as possible from Christianity, I had decided to approach the topic from a different, more scholarly angle. This led me to invest time reading about religious ritual, in general, from an anthropological point of view. I read all about the ancient Greek cults, such as the Dionysian; I read about the tribal religions of Africa and even the Mayans.

There was one topic that kept coming up over and over again that would inevitably lead me back to meditation on the Christian Faith: the ritual of expiation. What struck me was how this ritual occurred in so many varied cultures, in all points of time, in every form of ritual. Despite how varied the rituals or the terms used, the whole world appeared to agree on one point: at some moment in human history, there was an original sin that led to a current imperfect, sinful state, requiring some form of continual expiation. The Dionysian cult's was the sacrifice of a bull. In Mayan culture, there were human sacrifices. And the sacrifice of virgins seemed to happen everywhere, second only to the sacrifice of goats and lambs as found in Ancient Jewish custom. Most required that the sacrifice remain "unblemished." And all had a cycle around which the sacrifices occurred. I could not help but find humor in the fact that, while a bull or goat may be required on a regular basis, human sacrifice often occurred on a more prolonged schedule; it was as if a lamb could only cleanse the soul for a month, but a human sacrifice, well, being the greater sacrifice, purchased a more thorough cleansing. Within this humor I also could not help but draw the conclusion that there is only one sacrifice which could wipe away all sin for all time: a divine one. And there I was again, face to face with my fairy tale Prince on the white horse.

That night many years ago, I thought over my research again and again. I hated it, for it pointed me every time to that very One I had been trying to avoid: Jesus Christ.

What Professor Frederick Turner had commented three months prior simply couldn't be true — could it? It had to be a coincidence that, even in obscure research, I was always drawn back to this God-man.

I could not hide any longer. The fairy tale was real. I had found my Prince; it was Jesus Christ. In that moment of acceptance, instantly, I saw and understood all the wild effects of my imagination. I was indeed going to be a nun, and a Catholic one, for where else does one become a bride of Christ?

Even more profound was my understanding of the Eucharist. Through all my research on expiation ritual, what became evident was that the Eucharist would necessarily have to be the Body and Blood of Christ. If our Lord Jesus is truly divine, which He is, why wouldn't such a complete offering puncture through all space and time, making itself ever present and thus one single offering, complete and sufficient for all history? Of course it would.

At the time, I said nothing. I wasn't sure what to do next. So I waited.

A few months later, in February, I made a trip to Dallas to meet with my dissertation committee. My dear friend, Chris, married to one of my grad school buddies, picked me up at the airport.

Though not Catholic, Chris had always been deeply Christian and devout. She had, in fact, grown up with me in Maine and remained at my side through all the drugs, licentious relationships, and other horrid behavior — even when I would cancel our engagements, fail to call, or show up crying as a result of my latest misbehavior. She never judged me, and though I knew she was deeply Christian, she never spoke a word of it to me.

So it shouldn't have been a surprise when, after a long and quiet car ride to her house, she asked me, "You are different; what's happened to you?"

With that question, it all came out. I began telling how, three months earlier, Frederick Turner had told me my own fate — a fate that was revealed years ago in a dream and truly known even before then. I just kept repeating, "He's real! He's real, Chris! Jesus is *truly real*!"

I told her how I intended to become Catholic so that I might become a bride of Christ. She grabbed me and hugged me, and both of us began crying tears of joy.

"You have no idea how much and how long I have been praying for your conversion!" she whispered. With that, she gave me the courage to act.

A few days later, from her house in Dallas, I spoke with my mom by phone. Having travelled 2500 miles away, I felt I was at a safe distance to share the news with her. I told her plainly how I intended to become Catholic and become a nun. There was a moment of silence on the phone. Finally, she answered:

"That's just incredible! You're never going to believe this. I was clearing out old boxes this morning, putting them out for trash. This one box — the only box I checked — I thought I should stop and just make sure there's nothing important in there — I found your baptismal certificate..."

### 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.



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## ...Journeys Home Continued...

I understood her words as the Lord's confirmation that I was on the right path.

Within three months — between that February and May — my entire life changed. I ended up walking away from my dissertation and abandoning academia altogether. A number of events led to this, one of which was the leaving of my dissertation chair to go to a new job at a new university. I had already sensed that my time in scholarship was done. I had accomplished the end for which I had set out years before when I began my philosophy studies: I had found truth. I had also begun an RCIA program under the guidance of a disciplined Marist priest who determined that if I did have a vocation, then I needed to be well-grounded in the Faith. I left lucrative work in academics for odd jobs and the occasional tutoring session. I was again living with my parents. And I experienced the first of many illnesses that would leave me hospitalized and requiring surgeries.

By the time I entered the Church at Easter 2007, I had nothing but the Lord. And I couldn't have been happier.

### The Transfiguration

Shortly after starting RCIA in Maine, I was introduced to another girl in a very similar position as myself. Elizabeth was raised atheist and, after an "alternative Spring Break" with a Catholic religious community in South America, came to the similar conclusion that the Lord was truly present, and she must give herself completely to Him. After our initial meeting, which turned into an hour conversation, we had plans to depart for Boston that Friday to go convent hopping. Through Elizabeth, I was introduced to the writings of Scott Hahn, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, and many others.

Though Elizabeth believed she had a vocation to active religious life, our priest urged her to visit a small traditional cloistered monastery in upstate Vermont. She made a brief visit of only two days.

"Oh, Kristen! It was like prison!" she described after her visit. Yet, it was also like home, she said. She was torn. She knew she belonged there, yet how could she possibly help the world living such a hidden life?

"I'm going back, and you're going with me!" she determined. And a month later, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, 2006, Elizabeth and I made our trip to the Benedictine Monastery of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The moment I entered, I knew I was home.

A few months later, shortly before my entrance into the Church at Easter Vigil, Sister Elizabeth Rose and I made our last trip. She knocked on the great wooden doors which led to the hidden life, and I bid her farewell.

Though I had no doubt that this was my home, I could not enter as easily as my spiritual sister since I had a growing mountain of student and medical debt. I begged the Lord for a means to overcome the debt, and the Lord answered: join the Army.

This was both fitting and humorous. Even my parents laughed at the thought of such a rebellious — indeed, anarchist — child attempting such a disciplined life. Friends from religious communities joked that, on account of my stubbornness, military life

might be the only way I could learn the discipline necessary for religious life. There were bets on how many weeks I would survive boot camp, especially since I rejected the option to join as an Officer.

But I did survive boot camp. In fact, to everyone's surprise, I enjoyed the military.

Once again, I quickly adapted and began to question if military life were not my call. I began longing for marriage — to a man of flesh and blood, here and now. I longed for children. It led me to question my religious vocation altogether. Yet, the Lord put an abrupt halt to these thoughts along with the worldly lifestyle I began adopting. My military career came to an end upon suffering a foot injury, a hip fracture, and, finally, a spine injury. Like Jonah, it was not enough that I simply be cast out into a storm; I had to be swallowed up whole.

I returned home to Maine, much as I did years earlier during my graduate career — fully intending to avoid God and my vocation by any means necessary. I maintained my Catholic faith, but minimally. Any attempt to work deeper into my spirituality would lead me inevitably to my beloved Jesus. At the time it was too painful. I was still too attached to the world. Yet keeping distance from my beloved caused greater pain. I was conflicted; I wanted God's will but was weakened with worldly desire.

So I prayed, asking the Lord to bring me back into His will by any means necessary. The Lord answered my prayer in the form of intense suffering, taking seriously the "by any means necessary." A worsening spinal injury led to a series of surgeries, followed by a stroke, and other serious illnesses that brought me to death's door.

While some might see these calamities as sure damnation, for me they were a glorious gift from God. *I trusted even when I said, "I am sorely afflicted"* (Psalm 115). They left me with no choice but to return to Him. It was a necessary transfiguration of body and soul that allowed me to return to my home, the cloister nestled in the Vermont wilderness.

On September 14, 2016, the Exaltation of the Cross, I made my full profession as a Benedictine Oblate sister of the Monastery of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Unlike my cloistered sisters, I live out my monastic vocation in the world. Like Jonah, spewed from the mouth of the whale, I still have a mission to fulfill.

All for the praise and glory of God! ■



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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!



## The Coming Home Network International

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