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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



Growing with God

By Scott Moelker

I was born into a family of faithful Canadian Christians, with my parents and much of my extended family belonging to the Christian Reformed Church. Baptized as an infant and instructed in the Christian Faith from a very young age, I cannot remember a time when Jesus was not my Lord, although I did not always serve Him well. Growing up, I was blessed to live abroad in England for two years, attending secular, Catholic, and Protestant schools. By the time I had graduated from high school, while I was a professing member of the Christian Reformed Church, I had spent significant time in a Methodist Church and also in a Christian Missionary Alliance Church. This wide range of experience gave me a broader perspective of Christianity.

While in school in England, I had been bullied physically and verbally for being a Christian. This served to make me stubbornly committed to my faith and also caused me to develop a thorough understanding and intellectual defense of my faith. I took 1 Peter 3:15 (NRSV) to heart: "Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you" — although I ought to have been gentle and respectful as well (see 1 Peter 3:16). I normally argued to prove someone wrong, not out of love. I also had the same battle that every teenage boy must go through with lust. Nevertheless, I became very independent, constantly researching and reading about the Christian Faith.

Most of my time in high school took place in the government-funded Catholic system in Ontario. This was my first exposure to Catholicism. I spent my time correcting teachers who were "cafeteria

Catholics" and paying little attention to teachers who were faithful Catholics. At first, I saw the failings of Catholics as symptomatic of their false faith and failings of Protestants as aberrations. Then I spent my last year of school in a Protestant school and came to realize that teens in both systems were checking out of faith, and I couldn't see spiritual laxity as a unique feature of Catholicism. I learned a valuable lesson about understanding others and the tendency we all have to magnify the faults of "outsiders."

Maturing in Faith

After high school, I attended Redeemer University College, starting in 2008. There, I quickly became aware that, while my intellectual faith was absolute, my emotional faith was lackluster. I served God and professed a love for Him, but I often felt that He was a rather hard master and

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Journeys Home

...Journeys Home Continued...

that faith was a joyless endeavor, only rewarded in the after-life. I had developed vices of lust and pride, but God worked in me through a Baptist church that I and many of my friends attended while away at school. The contemporary music and their practice of individual communion appealed to me (a general period when people could come forward as they wished for communion). Attending this church helped me to become a joyful, spiritually vibrant person who loved God, and it enabled me to begin dealing with some of my vices. This was also where I met my wife, Bethany.

While there, I finally became acutely aware of my non-conformist attitude. I had not really thought about the fact that my theological views did not correlate with a particular Christian group in my life. I didn't agree with the Calvinism of my childhood, but I didn't agree with Baptist theology, either. Calvin's views seemed to undermine the narrative of Scripture and the character of God in an attempt to protect God's sovereignty; it didn't fit in with "For God so loved the world" (see John 3:16). On the other hand, I supported infant baptism; I loved creeds, and I felt the church institution ought to be more comprehensive than the local church, none of which were Baptist hallmarks.

I wasn't even sure I agreed with my current corner of Protestantism. I would have called myself an evangelical, but by this I meant primarily an allegiance to "historic Christianity." I was working on a double major in theology and history at the university, and this fed into deeper questions about my own faith. "Where is *sola Scriptura* in the Bible?" I asked a professor of mine on a whim. He admitted that he did not know. Still, I had nowhere else to go; I certainly did not agree with the Mormon missionaries or Jehovah's Witnesses who would come knocking at the door.

Seeking Out Catholics

Small Catholic or quasi-Catholic practices had infiltrated my personal life, possibly from my days in Catholic schools. I occasionally made the Sign of the Cross before praying. I began to teach myself Latin in my second year of university, praying John Calvin's motto as a rote prayer every morning: *Cor meum tibi offero, Domine, prompte et sincere*. (My heart I offer, Lord, promptly and sincerely.) I nearly ended up at a Catholic youth outing, declining with genuine disappointment due to a prior engagement.

Underneath these active changes, an intellectual realignment had taken place. I expressed horror when a United Reformed friend told me he felt that all Catholics were damned to hell. How could that be, when they professed faith in Jesus Christ — the sole requirement for salvation in Protestantism? I also argued for the Sacrament of Confession, though mostly on practical grounds. In one theology class, I argued that the medieval Catholic Church had legitimate reasons to restrict Bible translation. I corrected a Pentecostal classmate who thought that Catholics worshipped the dead. Though I was not actively thinking about it, my interest in history deepened my understanding of Catholicism.

For one of my final classes, I chose to write a paper about interdenominational conversion stories. I wondered why I had trouble finding good Catholic to Protestant stories, while the reverse were a dime a dozen. "Catholic to Protestant stories all seem to involve Catholics who go through a 'spiritual, not religious' or 'atheist' phase and then get rescued by an evangelical," I complained. "I can't find a good conversion story involving a well-catechized Catholic." My professor opined that new Protest-

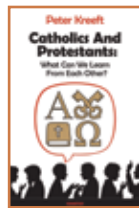
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Deep in Scripture CD

Former American Baptist pastor and Catholic convert Ken Hensley joins Marcus Grodi to look at the issue of Christian unity and what the New Testament has to say about unity in the letters of St. Paul and the words of Jesus Himself.



Catholics and Protestants: What Can We Learn From Each Other? — By Peter Kreeft

The widely read author and philosopher Peter Kreeft presents a unique book about the important beliefs that Catholics and Protestants share. Inspired by Christ's prayer for unity in the Gospel of John and Saint John Paul II's encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, Kreeft demonstrates that Christian reunification is possible. While he acknowledges that there are still significant differences between Catholics and Protestants, he emphasizes ways to help foster unity and springboards for dialog to help have fruitful conversations between Catholics and Protestants.

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A Baptist Minister's Journey to the Eucharist

PART III: THE TEACHING OF ST. PAUL

By Kenneth Hensley, Online Resource & Pastoral Care Coordinator

If I had wanted to remain an evangelical Protestant minister, I never should have read John Henry Newman.



It was this brilliant Oxford scholar and Anglican divine of the 19th century who famously insisted in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* that to be “deep in history is to cease to be Protestant.” He said it was “easy” to show that the early Church was not Protestant. He went so far as to assert that if the system of doctrine I held as a Protestant minister had ever existed in the earliest centuries of Christian history, it has been swept from the historical record as if by a flood. There is simply no evidence of it.

I certainly found this to be the case when it came to the teaching of the early Church on the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

A single quotation from St. Justin Martyr, writing around AD 150, sums up what I found to be the consistent teaching of the Church from the beginning and pretty much all the way up to the time of the Protestant revolt in the 16th century.

For not as common bread or common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food that has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nurtured, is both the flesh and blood of that incarnated Jesus (*First Apology*, 66).

The more convinced I became that this was indeed the belief and teaching of the early Christians, the more eager I became to put the writings of the early Church Fathers back on the bookshelf, return to the New Testament, and read it once again in the light of what I had seen in those early Church writings. Given what seemed to be the unanimous faith of Christians in the earliest centuries of Christian history, was it possible that there was more support for this view in the New Testament than I had noticed before?

If the Apostles did not teach the Real Presence, how would the Church have so quickly — and so universally — come to believe and teach it? It just didn't make sense to me. But then, if the Apostles really had taught the doctrine of the Real Presence, wouldn't there be some evidence of this in their writings?

For instance, what about St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, where we find the most sustained discussion of the Lord's Supper in all of the New Testament writings?

I took another look, and the results were surprising.

1 To begin where Catholics and Protestants agree, it was plain to me that what I believed about the Lord's Supper as a

Baptist was true, so far as it went. For St. Paul the Lord's Supper was about remembering and proclaiming the Lord's death.

He states this clearly in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26:

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given the thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

So far, so good. When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we remember our Lord's death on our behalf and proclaim it to the world.

As a Baptist, I was right about this. And if this was everything St. Paul had to say about the Lord's Supper, I suppose I might have been able to ignore the testimony of Ignatius and Justin and Tertullian and Cyril and Hippolytus and Cyprian and Ambrose and Augustine and so many others and continue on my merry Baptist way.

But this wasn't all that the Apostle had to say on the matter.

2 St. Paul also seems to have thought of the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, as some kind of miraculous meal.

In my article last month, I traced the pattern of miraculous meals we see occurring throughout the Old Testament and pointed out that when the Gospel writers describe Our Lord's actions at the Last Supper, they describe them in exactly the same terms they use to describe His feeding of the five thousand.

The implication is that at the Last Supper, Jesus was seen as doing something *similar* to what He did when He multiplied the loaves and fishes that day. Some sort of miracle was taking place.

Well, St. Paul does the same kind of thing in 1 Corinthians 10:1-7:

I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same supernatural food and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things are warnings for us.

If you're wondering how I got from this passage to the Lord's Supper being some kind of miraculous meal, let me explain.

To begin, what's Paul doing in this passage? He's using old covenant Israel as an illustration of what can happen to those who fall into serious sin and fail to persevere in the obedience of faith.

And what does he say about old covenant Israel? He says that even though the Israelites had been baptized into Moses; even though they were given supernatural food and drink to sustain them through the wilderness — water from the rock, the manna from heaven, and so forth; many of them never made it to the Promised Land.

In other words, the blessings of Baptism and supernatural sustenance provided no guarantee of success in the journey.

So what's the message Paul is sending to his readers, if not something like this: "Brothers and sisters, you may have received Baptism into Christ. You may have your own supernatural food and drink — the Eucharist. But don't forget that our fathers in the wilderness had their own versions of the same, and most of them fell dead in the desert."

In this passage St. Paul is clearly drawing a parallel between the Eucharist and the miraculous food and drink with which the Lord fed the Israelites in the Old Testament. By implication, he's referring to the Eucharist as "supernatural food and drink."

In other words, as I mulled over St. Paul's words here, it seemed clear to me that when he thought about the Lord's Supper, he not only thought about remembering our Lord's death and proclaiming it. He also thought about water springing from rocks and manna falling from heaven. He thought about supernatural food and drink given to sustain God's people on their journey through the wilderness of this world to the Promised Land of God's presence.

But there was more.

3 In chapters 10 and 11 of this letter, St. Paul says two more things that I could see supported the early Church's belief that in the Lord's Supper Christ's Body and Blood are actually received.

First, he says that when we receive the bread and the cup, we are sharing, we are participating, in the Body and Blood of Christ.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1 Cor 10:16-17).

Of course it's possible that Paul is merely speaking figuratively here, which is what I had always assumed. It's possible that he just means that when we receive the bread and the wine, we symbolize our share in the Lord's redeeming death or that we share symbols of our Lord's Body and Blood. But this isn't what he *says*.

The Greek word translated as "participation" here is *koinonia*, which simply means "to share in" or "to participate in." When we celebrate the Eucharist, Paul says we *share* in the Body and Blood of the risen Christ. That's what he's saying here.

And then, in the very next chapter of 1 Corinthians, he says something that seemed to me very strange. He speaks of believ-



ers who are sick and even some who have died. Why? Because they had dared to receive the Eucharist unworthily, thus profaning the Body and Blood of the Lord.

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we should not be judged (1 Cor 11:27-31).

Of course it is *possible* to read 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 in such a way as to escape the conclusion that St. Paul is teaching the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. In interpreting these passages, it's *possible* to say, "Well, I think he *just means* ..."

But when I thought about what the Apostle actually *says* in these two chapters, I had to admit that it was entirely consistent with the teaching of the early Church. After all, what did the Catholic Church from the beginning believe and teach but that in the Eucharist we remember and proclaim the death of Christ, we receive His Body and Blood as supernatural food, and that it is a sacrilege to receive unworthily and so profane the Body and Blood of Christ?

After reading and reflecting on St. Paul's writings, I was ready to delve into the Gospel passages and see if they also seemed to support the Catholic understanding of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Stay tuned for part IV next month! ■

What We Love About Being Catholic

By CHNetwork staff and members

Given all of the attacks on the Church from without by her detractors and the damage done from within by sinners in her ranks, it can be easy to lose sight of what made many of us want to join the Catholic Church, or return to her, in the first place.

Those of us who entered the Catholic Church from elsewhere did so, often at great cost, because we found a sense of truth and peace there that made all the struggles of the journey worth it. Those who came back after falling away from the practice of their faith knew that there was only one place that they could truly call home, and so they returned, like the Prodigal Son, sowing tears and reaping joy.

Recently, we asked CHNetwork members what they love about the Church that has made them want to sacrifice everything to call themselves a Catholic. We asked them what are some of the things that have drawn them, in spite of everything else — including the terrible scandals rocking the Catholic world — to be a part of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church?

For your edification, we wanted to share some of their beautiful and poignant responses with you. We hope they encourage you as much as they did us!

"I now have a real, current, growing relationship with Jesus through the Eucharist and through the prayers of the Church. I have direction and purpose in my spiritual exercises and words to pray when the forces of darkness and challenges of life make me speechless. I have an undiminished drive to evangelize both inside and outside the Church because I want everyone to have what the Lord is giving me through the Catholic Church. My wife, my children, my grandchildren, and my friends have gotten a better me as a result because I can face reality rather than running away from it."

HOWARD HAMPSON

CHNetwork Community Forum Moderator

"I was raised Protestant and was 'church-hopping,' searching for a church that teaches truth. I found the truth in the teaching of the original Church — the Catholic Church. To my delight, I learned the Church cannot stray from true moral teaching. Despite the sins of those in the Church (and there are sins in all arenas of humanity), I feel safe knowing the dogma is grounded on the rock of Peter, by Jesus' promise to us. What I have recently loved to learn is the early teachings of the early Church — par-

ticularly the Didache. It warns us against all those sins facing us today. How rich and beautiful it is to be Catholic!"

KRISTEN S. via Facebook

"Knowing I am home at last. I never felt like I belonged anywhere until I met Jesus and entered His house on earth. I will never leave because no good Catholic made me convert, and no bad Catholic will make me leave. I love the Church that Christ established and died for — a Church filled with sinners. It does need cleansing from the top to the bottom; be active in the cleansing, but keep your eyes on Jesus, and trust God in the hours of darkness."

VIOLET F. via Facebook

"I love that as a Catholic, my family extends around the world and across time. I love that in her communion of saints, the Church has kings like Stephen of Hungary and beggars like Francis of Assisi, scholars like Thomas Aquinas and simpletons like Joseph of Cupertino — that she has cloistered monks and nuns, and also globetrotting missionaries. I love that the Church has room for me, a sinner, but isn't content to let me stay that way. I love that Christ offers me mercy through the sacraments and His abiding presence. I love that we're still here despite Satan's strongest attempts to thwart us. And I love it all so much more today than I did, when through the mercy of God, I entered the Church 14 years ago."

MATT SWAIM

Communications Coordinator, The Coming Home Network

"I love knowing that every minute of every day Mass is being said around the world and that we as the Body of Christ are united in this never-ending worship."

BARBARA F. via Facebook

"The way the sacraments are made for us all: Confession to remove our sins, Communion to feed and strengthen us, Anointing of the Sick to heal us, the priesthood to minister to us, marriage to lead us to heaven, Baptism to cleanse us, and Confirmation to enliven our faith."

BRITTANY K. via Facebook

Member's Section

Member's Section Member's Section Member's Section Member's Section

► "What We Love About Being Catholic" continued from page A

"Very simply, because it is the **WHOLE** truth and not just bits and pieces of it. I was looking for that for so many years, 35 to be exact, but in my Protestant traditions nobody could ever agree to what it was, which made me sometimes a bit despondent and apathetic. I love the confidence of reading the Catechism and knowing that it is the real deal and that I can believe 100% of everything within its covers. That is a security I never had in my never-ending search for truth within Protestantism."

JENNIE FRASER

CHNetwork Community Forum Moderator

"I love that I can have a personal, intimate encounter with Jesus, really present in the Eucharist, and receive Him and adore Him. I love that I can rest assured that the Church's teachings will not change tomorrow because they do not depend on the votes of her members, but were given by Christ and His Apostles, and she is only keeping them intact through the centuries. I love that we can count on the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of Jesus, and of our brothers and sisters, the saints, who are also great examples for us. I love that I do not have to invent the wheel, or rely on my own personal limited knowledge, but I have at my disposal the wisdom of hundreds of saintly, wise men and women who wrote so many wonderful texts about every conceivable aspect of the Catholic Faith that a lifetime is not enough to read them all. I love that I can find everything I need to become a saint: the sacraments, the teachings, the examples, the intercession. I love that the Church takes into account that we have physical senses. For example, she offers us incredible beauty for our eyes and ears, the best works of art and sacred music have a Catholic origin. I love the Catechism of the Catholic Church; no other church has such a complete and truthful compendium of doctrine ... I love that it was founded by Jesus and He identifies with her, and He is in her, and the proof of that is that even though many of her members have been and are great sinners like us, she is still standing to this day."

ALE E. via Facebook

"The Eucharist!!!! All the sacraments! Our Blessed Mother and brother and sister saints who have gone before us. Proper authority to know for certain the fullness of truth! Everything."

KELLY G. via Facebook

"So, so, so, so much! In short, I love the richness of Catholicism: the richness of her theology, her sacraments, her treatment of the human person as fully embodied, her spiritual theology and monastic orders, her architecture and art and music and history. Too much!"

KEN HENSLEY

Pastoral Care Coordinator, The Coming Home Network

"I love her history ... the Church Fathers. The more I learn, the more I need to learn. The number one thing that I love is the Eucharist."

LINDA C. via Facebook

"I love the sacraments the most! As a Catholic educator, I feel like I have a special opportunity to touch lives one student at a time. I truly believe I could not do this without the rich graces poured out in the Sacraments."

NATALIE P. via Facebook

"I love the sacraments. I love the grace that comes from the sacraments. I love the ancient tradition of the Church."

MARY O. via Facebook

"Eucharist, the center and summit of our faith."

REGINA G. via Facebook

"I love the Church Fathers, history, and the authority of the Church. I also love the sacraments and that I found how close and truly present Christ is in the Eucharist. I'm glad to be home where I belong!"

ANGELA S. via Facebook

"The Eucharist and the fact that we're the only Church that was started by Jesus, not a man."

LORI L. via Facebook

"I love the Eucharist!!! I love the fact that Jesus is truly present in our Church and I can receive Him at Mass and visit Him in Adoration. I love that Jesus started a Church and that I'm a part of it. I love the Sacraments ... I love the early Church Fathers. I love how I have a big, beautiful family on earth and in heaven, the Communion of Saints! I love our beautiful Catholic prayers and our beautiful churches. I love how Catholicism is TRUE, founded by Jesus and guided by the Holy Spirit."

ROXANNE A. via Facebook

"This is where I find Jesus and His love, peace, hope, and joy."

LINDA K. via Facebook

"The Blessed Eucharist! Jesus Himself is given to us to consume, to be in us, a part of us! The holy saints who intercede for us. Holy Mother Mary who loves us and brings our petitions to her Son on our behalf."

GINA Z. via Facebook

"The wonderful treasure of the Real Presence in the Eucharist, all the sacraments — everything Christ left for our journey to heaven He left in the Catholic Church."

NORA F. via Facebook



**PLEASE CONSIDER
SHARING THIS NEWSLETTER
WITH A FRIEND OR LOVED ONE
WHO MIGHT BE INTERESTED
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH!**

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 RS, a convert "Thank you so much for your email! I am doing very well, still progressing, how lucky we are to be living in the digital age when there are so many good resources at our fingertips. In my home, I am supported by my sweet husband and faithful children. Outside of our house, our church is less than a mile down the road and is, in so many wonderful ways, our second home. And if that were not enough, we are part of a group of other Catholic homeschoolers who meet twice a week. Just typing all of this makes me sit back and say, 'how blessed we are!' Thank you so much for your interest and all the CHNetwork continues to do."

From Karen, a former Presbyterian "I find many of the stories on the Coming Home Network to be very encouraging, and they 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 are . . . 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."

From Stephen, a recent convert "Well, I did it. It was one of those memorable days. My good friend who is recent convert himself stood up with me. My wife couldn't be happier. I feel our marriage took one giant step forward toward what it is supposed to be. I haven't had time yet to let it all sink in. But it is the end of one journey and the beginning of another. I plan to go a lot deeper into the faith. Thanks for helping me out. The material you sent me was a great help in sorting out some critical issues."

From Michael, a former Lutheran "My journey in the Catholic Faith is getting better and stronger day by day! I am very active with my Knights of Columbus council, and they have been very supportive by helping my small parish stay alive. My children continue to grow in their faith as we all grow together. My wife, Melanie, and I have grown to love each other even more since my conversion. With all that said, I am eternally grateful for you and the Coming Home Network for being there for me in my faith

journey. Please continue to keep in touch and pray for my continued faith journey just as I pray daily for CHN and all my 'teachers' in the faith."

From Skip, a former Baptist minister "I am fully involved with my little parish . . . and have celebrated 4 years as a Catholic Christian! . . . The Coming Home Network has been and will continue to be, a source of truth in my daily walk with Our Lord and His Church!" ■

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Prayer List



Clergy

- For Jim, an Assemblies of God minister, that his wife's heart will be softened towards the Catholic Faith.
- For Byron, a minister in England, that he may be able to find a faithful Catholic priest to help him in his journey.
- For a Lutheran minister in Norway, that his love for the Blessed Virgin Mary may guide his path to the fullness of the Catholic Faith.
- For a United Church of Christ minister, that, by the grace of our Lord Jesus, she may embrace the many graces offered to her in the Catholic Church.
- For a Church of Christ minister in Indiana, that his curiosity about the teachings of the Catholic Church lead him to embrace the fullness of the faith.
- For David, a Baptist minister, that his love for the Bible and truth will bring him home to the Catholic Church.
- For a non-denominational minister in Guadeloupe, that his journey in faith would bring him home to the Eucharistic banquet of our Lord Jesus.
- For an Episcopal priest in Maryland, that his love for the Church, ever ancient and ever new, would guide him into the Catholic Church.

■ For the family of a former Presbyterian minister, that they will be open to joining her in the Catholic Church.

Laity

- For Anna who has been struggling with feeling alone in her Catholic Faith since her family doesn't understand her conversion.
- For a young woman from a Fundamentalist background whose parents feel betrayed by her interest in the Catholic Church, that she will know how to move forward with her deep desire to begin RCIA.
- For Dawn who is balancing her return to the Catholic Church with a family who doesn't understand her journey, that she will stay strong in her faith and that her family in time becomes more accepting of Catholicism.
- For Sue who is interested in the Catholic Church and is studying about the Church, that the Holy Spirit guide her journey.
- For Amy who was recently baptized, that her life as a Catholic will bring her abundant blessings and joy.
- For a Methodist in KY who is studying and learning more about the Catholic Church but doesn't know how she could feasibly begin RCIA or attend Mass due to her family situation, that God will make a way for her to move forward with her desire to be Catholic.

■ For Karen as she battles numerous health issues and is having a hard time connecting with a good, helpful parish, that she not be discouraged in her journey.

- For a recent convert on the West Coast whose husband doesn't share her love for the Church, that the sacrament of marriage bring them closer together and closer to Jesus.
- For a lady on the journey who is disturbed by the abuse scandal and wonders how to know if the hierarchy has taught truth while covering up and participating in terrible, sinful actions.
- For Abby and her family who are going through a tumultuous time with spiritual and health struggles, that the angels protect them from harm.
- For Esther who is drawn to the Catholic Church but is having a hard time understanding the intercession of the saints.
- For a man in Pennsylvania who feels he can no longer move forward with his journey towards the Catholic Church but yet is searching for a way to serve the Lord.
- For Patricia who is having a hard time connecting with a good parish in which to begin RCIA, that her search be fruitful and she be blessed with a welcoming parish.

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

November 5

Dawn Eden Goldstein* (Convert from Judaism)

November 12

Dr. Joshua Hochschild* (Former Episcopalian)

November 19

Fr. Joshua Whitfield* (Former Anglican priest)

November 26

Rose Sweet* (Revert)
 Re-air from January 18, 2016

*Schedule is subject to change.

To access the full archive of past Journey Home programs go to chnetwork.org/journey-home.

...Journeys Home Continued...

► “Journeys Home” continued from page 2

tants were just so happy to find the truth that they didn’t have to write a book about it, but this seemed a rather weak explanation to me. I nearly bought a Scott Hahn book at this time; little did I realize that I would be reading his story and many others only two years later.

I was studying to become a teacher and in my final year ended up with a spare elective slot that needed to be filled with an education class. I noticed that a class on teaching the Catholic faith was available and promptly enrolled. As a non-Catholic, I could not teach in a Catholic school, but I was free to “waste my time on a useless class” (as some of my friends told me). I had a very good time in that class, with wonderful classmates and a great professor named Lina. I even went to Mass once with a Protestant friend, whom I had convinced to join me in the class, along with our significant others. Conversion was not on my mind. I told curious friends that my choice was for “personal edification.”

At the end of the class, Lina gave everyone a rosary. I thought mine rather fetching, with its black beads and silvery chain links, but I didn’t (yet!) have a use for it. I ended up keeping it in my pocket as a physical reminder to be a man of prayer. I soon got used to carrying it everywhere with me.

We Teach Best What We Need to Learn Most

After graduation, Bethany and I were hired to work overseas in a small Christian school. This school operated on a shoe-string budget. The couple who had started it had good hearts and wanted to provide English curriculum to students who would go on to study abroad. Despite the pure intentions of the couple running the school, they had chosen to use a cheap, popular American homeschooling curriculum that was downright horrible.

I was irritated, though somewhat bemused, to see that the program’s textbook on the history of education taught that “from AD 500 to 1500 were the Dark Ages, when there was no light of knowledge or understanding” and that the light of faith actually went out during that time. The book then described Martin Luther as a busy builder of schools who started an economic renaissance in Germany that lifted it over the next two hundred years into a period of economic prosperity — as well as rediscovering the true faith while spending time “withdrawn from society.”

I didn’t give those textbooks much more thought until a number of months into teaching. One of our students asked my wife about the cartoons in her books. These cartoons tried to show an idealized world for the child to imitate. In these cartoons, black and white people generally went to separate schools. The student was upset and said she thought that was mean. Bethany agreed and told me. I was horrified.

I took as many textbooks home as I could and read through the Social Studies collection. As I read, I became outraged. Among other, greater problems unrelated to this story was a special hatred for Catholics. Catholics were often simply written out of history. Sometimes, prominent Catholics, like St. Francis Xavier

or Christopher Columbus, were adopted and simply presented as though they were Protestant Christians. Other times, Catholics were introduced as villains. The section on Spanish activity in the New World basically repeated old, wartime anti-Spanish propaganda. They described Catholicism as an empty, ritualistic religion started in the eighth century, a religion that does not strengthen the economy like Protestantism does.

The true faith was presented as a federation of independent Bible believers who understood God’s will by simply changing the pronouns in the Bible to insert oneself into the passage being read. This was not how I had been taught to understand the Bible, and I knew from my theology classes that we needed history to defend the canon and understand certain problematic Bible passages.

These books prompted a crisis of faith. I could not accept their version of history or faith and wanted to show exactly how it was wrong. On what basis did I judge that program’s particular version of *sola Scriptura* to be wrong? I had to explain and justify my use of history and my use of Scripture to myself.

At the same time, my sympathy for how badly Catholics were maligned by this curriculum caused me to become keenly aware that I was using many Catholic things in my teaching practice. I had a prayer box in my classroom. I talked about fasting for Lent and got the school to celebrate Holy Week. One of my students told me that I spent too much time on history and the Church in Bible class. In a chapel message on prayer, I taught my students the Sign of the Cross and used pictures that included a statue of Mary and a young man clasping a rosary. I even showed them my rosary, telling them that I kept it to remind me to pray but did not use it.

Then, for two Sundays in a row at the end of the school year, while I was in church singing, I felt very close to God. I felt very strongly that I ought to become Catholic. I was unsure why I was feeling this way, but I had always been of the opinion that, since Jesus is the truth, we need not fear anything. So I signed up for an account on the Catholic Answers’ forums and pulled out a massive package of printouts that Lina had given me while I was in teacher’s college.

The first thing I read was a set of quotes about the Eucharist. I was floored. Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, the Council of Nicaea, Augustine ... the list of quotes read like a Who’s Who of the early Church and unequivocally taught with one voice that, when we receive Communion, we receive the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. By way of example, Ignatius was taught by the Apostles, and his use of all four Gospels forms part of the Christian argument for the New Testament canon. Yet he wrote: “They [heretics] abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they do not admit that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, the flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in His graciousness, raised from the dead” (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 6).

After I recovered from my shock, I began to question. “Well,” I thought, “it’s quite possible these quotes were taken out of con-

...Journeys Home Continued...

text.” I downloaded the public domain copy of Phillip Schaff’s translations of the Church Fathers. They were not out of context.

“Well,” I thought, “it’s still possible that this has no real Scriptural support.” Poking around on Catholic Answers led me to examine John 6, and I could not escape the clear message that Jesus gave there. “Score one for the Catholics,” I thought — and the truly scary part was it had not even been a contest.

Coming Out Catholic

I began to systematically investigate everything I had against the Catholic Church. I could see a series of developments in my personal faith that I knew could not lead to Protestant answers, but I prayed for God Himself to move me. On Catholic Answers, an individual contacted me out of the blue, offering to buy me any Scott Hahn books that I wanted. I asked for *Hail, Holy Queen* and *Rome Sweet Home*, and he graciously sent them to me without question, an answer to prayer. I was amazed by how cogent *Hail, Holy Queen* was. I had asked for it because I thought the Catholic approach to Mary was perhaps their most indefensible position. Yet here were sensible, scriptural answers!

Bethany and I went through several Ascension Press studies: *Pillar I: The Creed*, *Epic: An Adventure Through Church History*, and *Oremus: A Guide to Catholic Prayer*. They were beautiful and, as far as we could tell, true. At this point, we were certain that we would become Catholic, although we could not go to a Catholic church due to the status of Catholicism in the country where we were working. We also had to consider the potential impact on our young students, many of whom were new Christians. So we agreed that we would delay our final decision until we returned to Canada.

But neither of us could separate conviction from lifestyle. We started with our private life. As a young Protestant couple, we were using a contraceptive pill. Now, based mostly on my wife’s convictions after reading *Rome Sweet Home*, we gave up using it and prayed God would not bless us with children too quickly. She almost immediately began to feel better both physically and spiritually.

Next came disclosing our growing certainty to some good friends. My first experience was very good. An elder at our church was starting a Bible study on the Church. I wanted to join because I wanted another Protestant perspective, but I thought it only fair to disclose my intentions to him before joining. I did not want to derail his group with my presence and questions. He was welcoming, and at the end of the study, I still felt Catholics were absolutely right. This dear brother, rather than trying to dissuade me, started lending me Catholic movies such as *Keys to the Kingdom* and *The Scarlet and the Black*.

My wife and I were members of a small group of young people that met to watch and discuss episodes of *Wayne Grudem’s 20 Christian Basics*. We enjoyed the food and discussions. Telling them that we were becoming Catholic, however, did not go smoothly. The coming-out experience included the whole range of reactions. One individual looked as though she would cry. Another looked horrified. Others were curious. We started hav-

ing very spirited discussions, which made some group members uncomfortable. So for the peace of the group, we decided to stop attending.

Our position really became difficult when it came time to tell our families. When we told my father-in-law on Skype, he got up and walked out. Bethany was in tears. (He has since apologized; we caught him off guard and unprepared.) The same day, we broke it to my family. They took it pretty well, but my sister was very disappointed. Her first response was: “You’re going to go to Catholic churches to evangelize them, right?” and her second, “Well, we’ll see how long that lasts.”

More complications emerged. I needed to find a teaching job back home in Canada. I did not feel called to work in non-religious schools. As an “unconfirmed Catholic,” I was not eligible to work in a Catholic school. As an “informal Catholic,” however, many Protestant schools would not hire me. I wanted to work in an ecumenical Christian environment. At length, I was offered a position at a small Classical Christian school that had started up only the year before.

Protestant Problems

After returning to Canada, we settled in Toronto. Teacher training for my school began in late August 2015, where I was faced with an immediate problem. It turned out that this Classical Christian school was better described as a Protestant school. Despite the fact that I had said, “My wife and I are thinking of becoming Catholics and will be attending a Catholic church” and had given them a written list of books I’d read in the past year, including *Hail, Holy Queen*, *Rome Sweet Home*, *Evangelical is not Enough*, *The Protestant’s Dilemma*, and *Where We Got the Bible: Our Debt to the Catholic Church*, my interviewer now said he felt “misled.” My interviewer had believed that I was just trying different churches rather than seriously becoming Catholic. When they discovered I was serious, I was asked many questions

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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about whether I prayed to the Pope and how my relationship with Mary was. I was told that many members of their church did not like Catholics and my interviewer would never have hired me if he had known I was a “confirmed Catholic.” They did, however, agree to honor my contract.

I was asked to meet regularly with a Protestant pastor, wear nothing Catholic, describe my commitment to Catholicism as tenuously as was honest, and avoid all mention of the Church with the kids I was teaching. My parents felt that once the school knew that I loved the Lord, they would no longer care where I went to church. They loyally encouraged me to make the best of it. In January, however, I met with the principal, who confirmed that though I had taught well and he trusted me, they were not willing to have a Catholic teacher in the school. I would need a new job, and they would need a new teacher. When he prayed for new hires during staff devotions in the spring, he prayed against making a hiring mistake using martial imagery, so that they would not have “an enemy in their midst.” This pointed prayer was not directed at me but still hurt.

Every school event seemed fraught with danger. Before I had been warned, one of my coworkers asked where I attended church, and on hearing that I went to a Catholic church and was converting because I had investigated Catholic theology, she was very upset. She told me that she knew many women damaged by Catholicism and that one of them had all sorts of stories about priests coming over and getting drunk on her father’s wine.

It was a difficult start, and had God not provided the strength, we might not have made it.

The Fullness of Truth

In the midst of these difficulties, the great joy of the year was the long, slow joy of realizing that we were becoming Catholic. Bethany had a great consolation those first months of feeling that, when we were at Mass, all was right in the world. I had the consolation of my wife’s unflinching support and accompaniment. Readings from the beautiful Liturgy of the Hours became a treasured part of our daily routine. I prayed the Rosary every day while walking to work, picturing all the angels and saints as walking with me. I expected the Protestant pastor I was asked to meet with to try to change my mind, but he did not. I began to look forward to meeting with him. Midway through the school year, I told some of my other coworkers about my situation, and they seemed shocked that I was being dismissed for my Catholic faith.

Only a stone’s throw away from our house was an excellent Catholic church, Holy Family. Our parish had many priests because it was attached to a seminary, and the first homily we heard there referenced the priest’s background as an evangelical Protestant. We met with Father Michael and related our odd story to him. He gave us some Catholic materials and checked to see that we had a Bible, that we knew we could not receive Communion, and that we were not using birth control. Then he signed us up for RCIA class, which he taught. Later, we met another young Catholic couple because one of the couple had attended my university. Their friendship was a great help.

I had to begin searching for work again. I had many of the same problems as before: I was not yet formally Catholic, however firm my intentions might be. Despite this, a wonderful Catholic school in Dawson Creek, British Columbia offered me a position. This took a great weight off our shoulders, knowing that God had provided well for our future in the Catholic Church.

The most nerve-wracking part of preparing for reception into the Church was certainly First Confession. It was one thing to know that Jesus wanted me to confess my sins. It was quite another thing to actually prepare a list of my sins and confess them in the presence of another human being. Fortunately, Jesus gave me the strength to go through with it. After I completed my penance, my sponsor said, “Now you’re clean.” Amazingly, I did feel thoroughly clean, and I wanted to stay like that forever. I felt like I was floating on a cloud.

At the Easter Vigil itself, I was blessed to have my immediate family and my sister’s fiancé attend to support us. They came and took us out to dinner to celebrate before the Easter Vigil. It was a long Mass, and our traditional church used a good deal of Latin, which was hard for them to understand, but the great number of Scripture readings made an impression on my mother. As for Bethany and me, it was the most beautiful Easter celebration we’d ever seen, full of solemn majesty. With three other members of our RCIA class, we were received into full communion with the Church and partook of Jesus’ Body and Blood for the first time.

Since then, we have been blessed with the birth of our daughter, Jessica. She was baptized only a few months after we were received into the Church. We had the great joy of having both our families attend the baptism. Then, it was time to say goodbye to Toronto and our parish and move across the country to begin our new life.

Although life will contain many more adventures and trials, we are thankful. The Lord has called us to the fullness of truth in His Church. “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9 NRSV). ■



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