



December 2018 CHNewsletter

"I Discover Catholicism"

By K. Albert Little..... 1

Featured Resources 2

"A Baptist Minister's Journey to the Eucharist, Part IV: The Eucharist in the Gospels"

By Kenneth Hensley 3

What is the CHNetwork? 6

THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



I Discover Catholicism

By K. Albert Little

I grew up in the suburbs of Toronto, Canada in a wonderful, loving family: my sister, my Mom and Dad, and a cat we'd adopted from the pound. It was an idyllic, carefree upbringing in a home that I affectionately describe as "Christian without Christ." That is, we were morally Christians, raised with a strong sense of right and wrong, of kindness and generosity, and of doing to each other what we'd have done to us — we just didn't know much about Jesus.

To be fair, we did go to church a few times. It was a tiny United Church which, in Canada, is an amalgamation of several mainline denominations that merged in the 1920s. Their teaching presented a rather watered-down version of Christianity, with Christ largely out of the picture. But I wouldn't have picked up on such nuances in those days. Instead, my memory of attending church was the childhood anxiety that I might accidentally rip off too big a chunk of bread when we went forward for communion, that and the resentment I felt when Dad got to stay home watching *The Three Stooges* in his pajamas while Mom packed my sister and me into the family station wagon.

It was in high school that I finally "met Christ," and it happened in a strange way: by encountering an alleged Wiccan. I met this Wiccan at a campfire get-together with friends. It was the beginning of summer, and we were hanging out, celebrating the end of our first year of high school. The Wiccan kid, a couple of years older than the rest of us and a friend of a friend, stood out immediately with his long hair and earthy wardrobe, and I was instantly drawn to the way he talked, the content of his

speech. At one point that night, he said, "Did you guys know that everything is connected and that there's more to life than just us?"

To the ears of an unchurched, irreligious fifteen-year-old, that sounded like high philosophy, and I was hooked. I hadn't thought those thoughts before. Suddenly faced with the reality that, yes, there was more out there than just us, that there was, probably, a greater power, something holding everything together — I was suddenly taken with the idea. I remember rushing home that night, firing up my computer, and trying desperately to find something, anything, on the Internet about Wiccans. In those days before Google, the search was fruitless. Everything I found contradicted everything else, and nothing seemed straightforward.

But it was then that I considered God. I'd heard of Him, of course, at church, but I didn't have a clue where to begin my search for Him. Still, I knew I wanted to search, so I said a prayer. I prayed, "God if you're there and you can accept me, send me a sign." Incredibly, for reasons I still don't understand, I knew that if God were real, if He were out there, I'd have to

Continued on page 2 ➤

Journeys Home

...Journeys Home Continued...

approach Him in holy fear. Although I knew nothing about sin — the concept was foreign to me at that stage — I knew that I wasn't exactly "worthy" of God and needed a measure of forgiveness. It wasn't long before I received my answer.

Later that week, I was walking home with a friend. We rounded a corner and came face to face with a boy we had teased years earlier. We were nerdy kids, but we had found someone even nerdier to bully — the neighbour of a friend who now was all grown up and much taller than we were. My friend, never the bravest of our crew, took off running and left me alone on the street with this kid who, it was clear, was looking for a fight. I could tell he was on drugs; he looked angry, and I was quaking in my shoes. When he cocked back a fist and said, "Where do you think you're going?" I panicked and shouted, "There!" pointing to a house just up the block. At that exact moment, completely by happenstance, a woman pulled back the curtain at one of the windows and peered out at us. The boy knew instantly that he was caught. He panicked and ran away. I went the opposite way and ran home, saved by the woman in the window — and by the grace of God.

Calvinist Confusion

I knew right away that I'd been given a new lease on life. I had been spared a punishment I deserved. We had bullied that kid, and now that he was grown up and bigger than we were, I had deserved to have my lights punched out by him. Instead, God had sent me the sign I'd asked for, a sign which clearly spared me from the punishment I was due. I knew poetic justice — or mercy — when I saw it. I surrendered my life to Christ, even though I hadn't the faintest idea what that meant.

I proceeded, then, to do all the classic things that Christian converts did back in the early 2000s. I bought a T-shirt. I bought a WWJD bracelet and thought it was the coolest secret club ever. And I bought a Bible and began reading at Genesis. By the end of Numbers, I was so bogged down that I gave up, until someone wiser told me that I needed to start with the Gospels. "Beg your pardon?" "With Matthew," he said. Best of all, I got connected to a great youth group at a local Pentecostal church.

Looking back, I can draw a somewhat straight line from my first encounter with Christ to my running, arms agape, into the embrace of the Catholic Church. But in that moment, it wasn't so clear.

One of my early memories as a Christian was when Calvinism crept into our youth group conversations. It began innocently enough — someone had read something somewhere — but quickly became a full-blown scandal, with Bible passages being hotly debated over Quarter Pounders at McDonald's on a Friday night. In retrospect, I'm grateful for how we spent our time — debating theology rather than getting drunk like so many of our high school peers — but the debate nearly tore the youth group apart.

Back then, I couldn't figure out how we were all looking at the same passages of Scripture and coming to different conclusions. How did this make sense? And why would God make the Bible so confusing, open to so many interpretations? In the end, it was a vicious debate, and more than one of my friends walked away from church back then, convinced by the Word of God that they weren't amongst the "elect." It was painful to see, and it's painful to think about it now. I made it through, but I'd never forget the confusion caused by all of us trying, on our own, to interpret our Bibles.

I began university by attending a vibrant student church that met on campus at the University of Waterloo. I remember the

Continued on page 5 ➤

FEATURED RESOURCES



Christmas Grab Bag! This month, the Coming Home Network International invites you to make a **Christmas gift** of excellent Catholic books to your family, friends, or even your local parish. We are offering a grab bag of books from our mailroom, selected by CHNetwork staff, to help you effectively build up the Faith. With your donation, you will receive selections from among these and other titles.

Evangelical Exodus: Evangelical Seminarians and Their Paths to Rome by Douglas Beaumont, *Why Do Catholics Genuflect?* by Al Kresta, *Surprised by Life* by Patrick Madrid, *Catholic for a Reason: Scripture & the Mystery of the Family of God* by Scott Hahn, *Classic Catholic Converts* by Fr. Charles Connor, *Happy Are You Poor* by Fr. Thomas Dubay, *Making Sense of Mary* by Gary Michuta, *The Spirit of Catholicism* by Karl Adam, *A History of the Church in 100 Objects* by Mike Aquilina, *Passion for Truth: The Life of John Henry Newman* by Juan Velez

\$50

For a donation of \$50
you may receive **one book**.

\$100

For a donation of \$100
you may receive **three books**.

\$150

For a donation of \$150
you may receive **five books**.

\$250

For a donation of \$250
you may receive **ten books**.

— THESE PREMIUMS ARE AVAILABLE FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY —

2

Obtain premiums by returning the envelope included with your newsletter, calling 740-450-1175, or by going online to chnetwork.org/premiums.

A Baptist Minister's Journey to the Eucharist

PART IV: THE EUCHARIST IN THE GOSPELS

By Kenneth Hensley, Online Resource & Pastoral Care Coordinator

For Christ, our paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us, therefore, celebrate the feast, not with the old leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).



When I think back to how I came to believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, I admit the details have become fuzzy after so many years. I mean I know how it all began...

The Rattling of Baptist Bones

It began when I read the early Church Fathers and was confronted with this simple, undeniable reality: the teaching of the Church in the earliest centuries of its existence was on this point *thoroughly Catholic*.

I remember, for instance, reading the letters of St. Ignatius, bishop of the Church in Antioch and a personal disciple of the Apostle John. (Yes, we're talking *that* early!) Writing to the church at Smyrna a mere decade or two after the death of that great eye-witness to the life and teaching of our Lord, St. Ignatius, on his way to Rome, condemned to die in the arena, described the Eucharist as the "medicine of immortality." He also mentioned some who at the time denied the Church's teaching on Christ's Real Presence.

They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they do not confess the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which was offered for our sins and which the Father, in His goodness, raised up again. They who deny the gift of God are perishing in their disputes (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 6-7).

It was statements like this one — and there were so many more — that rattled me to my Baptist bones. I didn't know *anyone* who believed what St. Ignatius clearly believed, what I discovered the Church formally taught and all Christians believed until the 16th century when the Swiss Reformer Zwingli taught that the bread and wine were, and remained, mere symbols. It was evident that if I could parachute back into the time of that great bishop and martyr, I would have been one of the heretics he was describing.

Anyway, this is how it began for me.

It was this experience that drove me back to the Scriptures. I remember being so eager to reexamine the New Testament in the light of what I had seen in the early Church Fathers.

How could a student of the Apostle John, I wondered, have gotten so far off track, and so quickly? How could the Church have been taught by the Apostles that the Lord's Supper was a simple meal of remembrance and then almost immediately, and universally, begin teaching something so different? Was it possible I might find that the Bible *supported* the Catholic teaching?

From this point on, the exact order of events becomes somewhat unclear to me. After all, it involved a rethinking of a great number of Bible passages and themes as well as the discovery of passages and themes I'd never noticed before.

Supernatural Food and Drink

Like most good Protestants, I began my study with the Apostle Paul.

At this point, to my mind 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 pretty much summed up the essence of what St. Paul had to say about the Lord's Supper.

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.

You see? I would have said the Lord's Supper is about "remembering" and "proclaiming" the Lord's death. That's what it's about. The bread and wine are used as symbols.

When I examined carefully Paul's entire discussion of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11, however, it seemed clear that "remembering" and "proclaiming" weren't *all* the Apostle thought about when he thought about the Eucharist.

Interestingly, he also thought about the supernatural food and drink God provided to sustain Moses and the children of Israel on their journey through the wilderness to the Promised Land (1 Cor 10:1-6).

I could see that in St. Paul's thinking, just as Jesus was the New Covenant fulfillment of the Passover Lamb, the Eucharist was the New Covenant fulfillment of the manna that fell from heaven and the water that sprang from the rock to feed Old Covenant Israel as they made their way through the desert from Egypt.

It struck me that Paul viewed the Eucharist as supernatural food and drink! He believed that when we share in the bread and the cup we "share" in the Body and Blood of Christ (1 Cor 10:16-17). Yes, the Lord's Supper was a time to remember and to proclaim, but also to receive the Body and Blood of Christ as nourishment for the journey.

Miracle Meals and the Last Supper

1 Corinthians 10 and 11 opened for me an entirely new line of thought. I began to notice that the Bible was actually *filled* with the stories of miraculous meals.

Besides the manna and the water God provided in the desert (Exodus 16 and 17), there was the time Elijah fixed it so that a poor widow's jar of meal and vessel of oil continued to miraculously fill themselves throughout a time of drought in Israel (1 Kings 17). There was the time Elisha multiplied a few loaves to feed a hundred men, and from another widow's "one little jar of oil," filled to overflowing as many large vessels as she could find (2 Kings 4).

And then, of course, there was the time Our Lord “took” a few loaves and fishes, “blessed” them, “broke” them, and “gave” them to His disciples, miraculously multiplying them to feed five thousand men, plus women and children (Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9, John 6).

When I discovered that at the Last Supper Jesus’s actions are described using *the exact same series of verbs*, it seemed evident that the Last Supper was being described as another of these miracle meals, that something supernatural was happening, something akin to what happened in the feeding of the five thousand.

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” (Matt 26:26-28).

And Then There Was John 6

One of the most mysterious passages in the Gospel of St. John just happens to follow his account of the feeding of the five thousand. It’s the next morning. Crowds are following Jesus, hungry and hoping that whatever He did the day before, He will do it again.

Jesus admonishes them to labor for the food that will endure to eternal life, which He says He, the Son of Man, will give them. They remind Him that when their forefathers were starving in the wilderness, God was kind enough to give them bread from heaven, and Jesus responds (my paraphrase): “You just wait! My Father is going to give you bread that will make the miracle of the manna look like nothing!”

At this point Jesus speaks the words no other religious figure in the history of the world has ever spoken: “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst” (John 6:35).

Now, as a Baptist, here is how I would have answered a Catholic who wanted to say that in this passage Jesus is looking forward to the Eucharist. “Yes, Jesus is the bread of life. But notice what Jesus says here: ‘He who *comes* to me shall not hunger, and he who *believes* in me shall never thirst.’ All that Jesus means when He goes on to say that we must eat His Flesh and drink His Blood is that we must *come* to Him and *believe* in Him. He’s speaking figuratively here.”

That’s what I would have said. And if verse 35 was the end of Our Lord’s discourse in John 6, this interpretation might seem to work. The problem is that verse 35 is *not* the end. The problem that Catholic apologists were insisting that I think more deeply about is precisely that the figurative interpretation doesn’t take seriously what Jesus *goes on both to say and to do in this passage*.

First, the Jews are confused and offended by His claim to be the bread God has sent down from heaven. But then we discover that His disciples are also confused and offended. Worse, we read that *many* of Jesus’ disciples actually walked away and followed Him no more.

And instead of explaining that all He means by referring to Himself as the bread of life is that they must “come to Him” and

“believe in Him,” Jesus continues to repeat Himself, insisting in the most literalistic of terms that unless those listening are willing “eat His flesh” and “drink His blood” they will not have life. He even uses a particular Greek word that means “to chew” or “to gnaw” (John 6:52-55).

It’s clear that even the Twelve are wondering if they can continue with Jesus. “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’” (John 67-69).

Here’s the question that came to me: Would Jesus allow “many” of His disciples to leave Him if all that He meant when He spoke of the need to eat His Flesh and drink His Blood was that they must come to Him and believe in Him? They had already come to Him. *They already believed in Him*. And here He asks Peter, “Will you also go away?” If He was not speaking literally, none of this makes sense.

Coming to Faith

As a Baptist committed to *sola Scriptura*, there was this voice in me saying, *Ok, sure there are passages and biblical themes that might seem to lend support to the Catholic view, but none of these passages proves the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence. And Scripture is our only authority for deciding. So you don’t have to believe in the Real Presence.*

But then, there was another voice, and it was saying to me something very different. *But can you so easily exclude from your thinking the witness of the Church? The early Church Fathers were much closer to the Apostles than you are. Some of them knew the Apostles and were their disciples. And what they teach about the Eucharist is certainly consistent with what you’ve seen in the Bible. Belief in the Real Presence doesn’t contradict anything in the Bible, and it seems to be supported by a number of biblical passages and themes. So upon what basis will you reject their early and unanimous witness? On what basis?*

That was about twenty-four years ago. I’ve been a Catholic now for twenty-two years, and you know what? I’ve never found a good answer to these questions. Never.

Thanks be to God. ■

TAX LETTER

If you need a record of your 2018 contributions for tax purposes, please contact **Janna Pitcock**:

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

SUPPORT US

SUPPORT THE CHNETWORK this year when you purchase Christmas gifts! Go to **smile.amazon.com** and select the Coming Home Network International as your charity when you shop through Amazon Smile.

"The Cross, Baptism, and the Eucharist"	A
By Marcus C. Grodi	
Joyful Journey Updates	C
Prayer Requests	D

The Cross, Baptism, and the Eucharist

By Marcus C. Grodi

A few years ago, Ignatius Press published my book *Life From Our Land: The Search for a Simpler Life in a Complex World*. Of all the reviews of my book, I was most humbled and honored by one given by a kind Amish woman in an Amish farm journal. She affirmed almost everything I tried to say about living the detached, simple Gospel life — but the one thing she took umbrage with was my Catholic view of Baptism and the sacraments.



This reminded me once again that one of the primary things that separate Catholic Christians from nearly all other Christians is our unwavering emphasis on the sacramental economy. As stated in the *Catechism*: "In this age of the Church, Christ now lives and acts in and with his Church, in a new way appropriate to this new age. He acts through the sacraments in what the common Tradition of the East and the West calls 'the sacramental economy'; this is the communication (or 'dispensation') of the fruits of Christ's Paschal mystery in the celebration of the Church's 'sacramental' liturgy" (CCC, 1076). In other words, in this Age of the Church, God has chosen to communicate His grace and, therefore, His salvation, through the mediation of physical objects.

There is certainly much that can be said here (for which I strongly recommend reading the *Catechism*), but it reminds me of how I myself once thought as an Evangelical — that all that was necessary for salvation and life in Christ was a sincere heart-felt faith in Jesus Christ. Certainly Church was necessary to provide fellowship, support, and worship, but membership in any institutional Church was not necessary for salvation, and the partaking of any sacraments or "ordinances" was nothing more than a public sign of the work of faith and grace in someone's life. We essentially believed that God had not chosen physical things as means of grace, but rather this idea was an accretion from ages of Catholic priestly hegemony (Dare I suggest that we were borderline Gnostics?).

But think for a moment: Was it necessary that Christ die on a cross? We may agree that, in the mystery of God's plan, His Son had to die for our salvation, but wouldn't it have been just as sufficient if Jesus had been pushed off that cliff or stoned to death by the angry crowd? Why the wooden "old rugged" cross?

But God, in His wisdom and economy, knowing us as the creatures He created and with whom He has wrestled ever since the rebellion of Adam, chose the physicality of

the cross as the means of our salvation. We cannot have salvation without looking to the cross. Hear this as it is expressed in the words of Scripture:

*For the word of the **cross** is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (1 Cor 1:18).*

*Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a **cross** (Phil 2:5-8).*

*For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his **cross** (Col 1:19-20).*

*And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the **cross** (Col 2:13-14).*

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the **cross**, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb 12:1-2).*

From the beginning, there have been those who have rejected the physicality of the cross. As Saint Paul noted, "For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even

Member's Section

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 Tamra, on the journey "It is clear that the Lord has a plan for reversion to the faith. I am drawing closer to the saints and to our Blessed Mother as well, and finding comfort there. I am clear that I cannot return to the Protestant Faith and will continue practicing my faith in whatever way the Church deems appropriate. I am so grateful for the Coming Home Network and God bless you and the entire staff. I find great strength in watching episodes of *The Journey Home* particularly when I am feeling lonely and confused. There are episodes that I watch over and over again with great joy. Will you please let the staff know how the program has changed yet another life of a revert?"

From Ronald, a recent convert "Thank you so much for reaching out. I was just thinking about you this morning. I am doing a lot of reading. I have a Master's of Divinity from a Baptist seminary, and we NEVER talked about Scripture and Tradition in such a manner. It is both mind blowing and comforting at the same time. The more I read and study, the more connections I make with Scripture, and some of the things that we just glossed over are becoming really rich and deep. I am awed and grateful, and Mass is becoming a feast for the eyes, the heart, the mind, and the body."

From Tammy, a recent convert "Thank you so much for reaching out!!! The CHN has been a huge help. I struggled with some things, and they patiently and lovingly would explain or break it down further for me. Their help was immeasurable! It was wonderful to be received into the Church. We had to wait for our annulments, so we were not received at Easter. I cried. It was just like you said — we came home ... I truly loved Him and felt loved by Him ... He pulled me in under His wing and was the most important thing in the world to me ... We are so happy. We are still working on finding our place in the Church, where to serve, what exactly to do to be a part of the parish and share our faith ... I still have a ton of questions, and things pop up all the time. But it's so reassuring to know I can look it up and the person explaining the answer, whether it be on CHN, or Catholic Answers, or wherever, isn't a person with his own individual opinion. He is sharing what has been officially taught for 2,000 years. I am just so grateful God called us ... Again the folks at CHN were so helpful and supportive."

From Brett, on the journey "I wanted to write to give you an update and some good news. In my last email I mentioned

my annulment was granted, and just recently we received word that my wife's annulment was also granted ... I really appreciate everything you and the Coming Home Network did to get me this far on my journey to the Catholic Church. It was *The Journey Home* show along with books by Scott Hahn, Stephen Ray, and Patrick Madrid, that got me started. The Coming Home Network were the first people I contacted concerning the annulment process, and I have to admit I was apprehensive about going through it. The information you provided helped my wife and I decide to pursue our annulments and to take the step of contacting our local parish priest. It wasn't an easy process, but now that it is over, there is closure and hope for a new beginning."

CHNETWORK STAFF, ADVISORS, & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President/Founder
Marcus Grodi
(former Presbyterian pastor)

Chief Operating Officer
JonMarc Grodi

Ministry Membership & Pastoral Care Coordinator
Jim Anderson
(former Lutheran)

Office Manager
Ann Moore

IT/Facilities Coordinator
Bill Bateson
(former Secularist)

Resource Specialist
Janna Pitcock
(Revert)

Publications & Pastoral Care Coordinator
Mary Clare Pieczynski

Outreach Manager
Matt Swaim
(former Methodist)

Developer of Web & New Media
Seth Paine
(former non-denominational)

Online Resource & Pastoral Care Coordinator
Ken Hensley
(former Baptist minister)

Financial Advisor
Kevin Lowry
(former Presbyterian)

Spiritual Advisor
Brother Rex Anthony Norris
(former Anglican)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Marcus Grodi (President)
Msgr. Jeffrey N. Steenson (Vice President)
Kevin Lowry (Treasurer)
Dr. Marian Schuda (Director)
Donald Brey (Director)

SUPPORT 25 YEARS OF THE CHNETWORK!

Could you give \$25 a month to help support the CHNetwork that, for 25 years, has helped men and women come home to the Catholic Church?

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

CHNetwork Attention: Ann Moore
PO Box 8290

Zanesville, OH 43702

Please contact Ann at 740-450-1175 or ann@chnetwork.org if you have any questions or concerns.

Your information

Name

Signature

Address line 1

Address line 2

City/State/Zip

Phone number

Email address

☐ Yes! I wish to make a monthly donation of \$25.00 on auto-payment to help support the CHNetwork's 25 years of ministry.

☐ Yes! I wish to make a monthly donation of \$_____ on auto-payment to help support the CHNetwork's 25 years of ministry.

☐ **Checking account** or ☐ **Savings account**

Bank routing number (9-digit number)

Account number

☐ **Credit card**

Card number

Expiration date CVV Code

☐ Visa

☐ MasterCard

☐ Discover

☐ AmericanExpress

Prayer List



Clergy

- For Frank, a minister in Arizona, that his financial difficulties may be dispelled, clearing a path for him and his family to enter the Church.
- For an Assemblies of God minister in Missouri, that the Lord would bless and guide him as he investigates Catholic teachings.
- For a Salvation Army officer, that all obstacles in his path to the Catholic Faith may be taken away by our Lord Jesus.
- For Ryan, a Baptist seminarian, that he may be able to obtain an annulment from his former marriage and that his wife may become open to the Church.
- For June, an Assemblies of God minister, that her desire for a deeper experience of worship would lead her to Jesus in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.
- For a Seventh-day Adventist minister in Europe, that he may discover and embrace the beauty and truth of the Catholic Church.
- For Michael, a United Pentecostal minister, that all the barriers that he perceives to his journey to the Catholic Church be lifted by the Holy Spirit.
- For the wife of a Lutheran minister in Indiana, that her husband's opposition to her becoming a Catholic would melt away.
- For David, a Baptist minister, that our Lord Jesus may give him such an intense love of the Catholic Faith that he will be happy to let go of his current ministry.

- For David, a United Methodist minister, that the Holy Spirit may guide his journey.
- For a priest of the Church of England who has become convinced that the fullness of truth exists in the Catholic Church but is afraid to move forward with his journey, having no skills to fall back on to earn a living.
- For George, a former Protestant minister who has become Catholic but is now wondering what to do next in terms of employment.

Laity

- For a convert in Ohio who is having a hard time connecting with other Catholic men, that he will find good local support.
- For a Presbyterian in Tennessee who is feeling indecisive about a move towards becoming Catholic, that she will continue seeking God's will and know God's plan for her life.
- For Linda who is considering RCIA but her mother is very opposed to her interest in Catholicism, that she have a clear sign from God as to how to proceed with her journey.
- For a young adult convert who is sharing her faith with other people at her college, that her efforts bring others into a closer relationship with Christ and His Church.
- For Elizabeth who came to a point of understanding and loving Mary's role in our faith life recently, that she will find ways to foster Marian devotion.
- For a man on the journey in Florida who was poorly treated by local Catholics and is wondering if he should continue his journey towards the Church, that he continue to pursue truth.
- For Amanda who is struggling with doctrinal issues and is having a heart-wrenching time in her journey.
- For a non-denominational Christian in the Midwest, that her husband will come to understand and support her desire to be Catholic.
- For a Lutheran in Norway, that her family and friends be supportive of her journey towards becoming Catholic.
- For a woman who is having deep emotional turmoil in her faith journey towards the Church on account of trauma in her background that the recent abuse crisis has brought to the forefront.
- For Christina who likes many things about the Catholic Church but is scandalized by the poor witness of Catholics, that she will continue seeking God's truth.
- For a woman in the southwest who is discouraged and disturbed by the abuse scandal and wonders if there is no true religion.

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

December 3
 Ken Craycraft* (Former
 Church of Christ)

December 10
 Fr. Hezekias Carnazzo*
 (Revert)

December 17
 Jason Craig* (Former
 Evangelical Protestant)

December 24
 Special EWTN Christmas
 programming*

December 31
 Ernie Freeman* (former Assemblies of
 God pastor) Re-air from 2/22/2016

*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

first time I went, seeing a lineup of 200 students snaking down the sidewalk outside the campus nightclub. It was Monday night, and the church was to meet at seven o’clock.

Truly, I owe a lot to my years at that student church. Over the course of my university career, I was very involved with the church, from small groups, to setup and decorations, to sound and video production. Through friendships forged at the church, I met a beautiful woman named Maria, who later became my wife. I dug into my faith like never before, faced with a couple of questions I just couldn’t work out.

The first came from reading C.S. Lewis’s *The Great Divorce*. In it, Lewis presents a picture of the afterlife which looks a lot like purgatory. Instead of dying and suddenly being in the glorified presence of Christ and the angels, the souls of the Christian deceased slowly make their way towards God on a bus ride towards the light, through a dark and solemn land. Thinking about what I had read, I realized that Lewis’s picture of heaven, and how we transition there, made a lot more sense than mine. I’d been raised, theologically, to believe that when I died, no matter what I had done in this life, I would instantly be face to face with Christ. My sins, of course, would be wiped away, and I’d be ready to be in His presence immediately.

But that never made sense to me. When I thought about it, I wondered how would I get ready? After all, I wouldn’t suddenly be free of all my bad moods, my hurts, and hangups the minute I died. How could I bring those things with me into heaven? Lewis’s analogy of the long, slow journey by bus made much more sense. I began to understand how Purgatory could be an opportunity to prepare my heart and mind to see God. But it didn’t fit into my Evangelical theology, and that would bother me for quite a while.

I had a similar experience with Confession. It occurred to me, after encountering a passage about it in a Bible study, that we didn’t do Confession. We were told to, right there in black and white in our Bibles, but we didn’t, and I couldn’t understand why. When I asked around — my peers, my pastor, and wise people that I trusted — no one seemed to know. We just didn’t do it, and no one knew why. Like my view of the afterlife, which didn’t jibe with what I’d been taught to believe, the confusion over Confession was something I just couldn’t shake off.

Building the Bible

A few things happened in my last couple of years at university that caused the nagging feeling that I was conscious of to grow into something I simply could no longer ignore.

I was working a tedious warehouse job during the summer between my third and fourth years and had heard about this brand new thing called podcasting. Only a few podcasts were available in those days, and I subscribed to one. It was a podcast about movies, television shows, and video games hosted by, it turns out, a priest. Although I don’t know what I’d imagined priests being like, I had assumed that they wouldn’t be *real people*, interested in hobbies like video games and TV. But through his podcast, the priest exposed

me to the fact that Catholics, even Catholic priests, could be real people — and genuine about their faith, as I learned by listening to stories from his life.

Next, I began an internship. It was at the student church I’d attended for years. One day, the pastor called me into his office with an important question. Sitting me down, he asked, “Which is more important: the Bible or Tradition?” Years later, I learned that my pastor friend was on his own journey into rediscovering his former Catholic Faith as he worked on his Master’s degree, and I was his sounding board. But I didn’t know this then.

“The Bible,” I said instinctively, knowing what every kid knows in Sunday School, that the answer is always either “Jesus” or “The Bible.”

“But then who put together the Bible?” he asked earnestly. I was dumbstruck. It was a question I’d never considered.

He went on to explain that the tradition of the Church put the Bible together — that councils attended by bishops authorized by the Catholic Church — the *Catholic Church*! — lent credibility to the books that appear in our Bibles. It was these councils, led by the Church, that affirmed what would eventually make up our biblical canon. I was incredulous, but he was right. Tradition, he mused out loud, came first. It was responsible for putting the Bible together; therefore, it must be more important. I didn’t argue because I knew he was right. That was where our Bible came from. The original authors didn’t provide a table of contents.

That somewhat banal question, asked by a Protestant pastor, began in earnest a journey I’d been avoiding since my days in the youth group and our predestination scandal. After all, the Bible doesn’t tell us that it’s infallible, that it can be trusted as-is, that it’s the sole rule of faith that we should follow. I knew I believed these things as an Evangelical Protestant and that I’d learned them somewhere. But suddenly they seemed to be premises which were awfully flimsy. Where did the Bible say these things? And how did I know them to be true? To my horror, I didn’t have the answers. I struggled to find them.

Married and Muddled

In the meantime, life took over. Maria and I got married; we bought a house, and she changed careers. The family church we’d been attending, the outgrowth of the student church where we first met, moved in to share a space with an aging Lutheran congregation. Suddenly being in a building meant for worship, as opposed to our old space in a community center, meant we were suddenly much more “traditional.”

There was an altar, although we didn’t use it, and stained glass. There were an organ and pews, and we’d even occasionally see the Lutheran pastor, at the very end of our service. He wore a Roman collar and vestments. Suddenly, my simmering interest in tradition ignited.

Around this time, too, the issue of the meaning and mandate of Christian marriage began to be widely discussed in the Protestant world, with battle lines and hot debates quickly forming. On the topic of marriage, I needed to figure out where I stood, and I wanted to base my beliefs on the Bible. Our little church com-

...Journeys Home Continued...

munity was largely undecided, leaving it up to each individual's own theology. But I didn't know mine; I hadn't given it much thought. When I began to dig into the Bible, into commentaries and literature written by everyone from respected theologians to practicing homosexuals, I realized that no one had a clear answer, and nothing made much sense.

Everyone, as far as I could tell, claimed to base their perspective on the Bible, and no one agreed. It was our youth group debate all over again. We could all use the same proof texts and somehow come to widely differing conclusions. With the youth group, it was something as fundamental as how God saved our souls. Now, it was a different question but just as fundamental. The stakes were high, and the answers were equally murky.

How was it that we could all look at the same Scripture and come up with different ideas? How could this be the system for understanding our faith as God intended it? Why was knowing how to follow Christ so confusing? I didn't get it. There was something flawed in the way we used the Bible and the way we understood our faith.

Once again, I decided to do some digging.

Later on in my journey towards the Catholic Church, I came across a quote by G.K. Chesterton in his book *The Catholic Church and Conversion* that really hit home. I'll paraphrase by saying that once you decide to be "fair" to the Catholic Church, you can't help but convert. In other words, once a person decides to truly dig into the teachings of the Church in a fair, honest, and open way, it inevitably ends in conversion. You can't help but become Catholic. I'd liken this to a mouse trap, but in this case, the "mouse" lives!

So anyway, I decided I needed to be "fair" to the Catholic Church. After all, I'd learned enough about Catholics from skirting around the edges to know that they believed some fundamentally different things from what I believed, and if they were the same Church that put together the Bible, then they must, I reasoned, still have some claim to authority. I decided that I needed to know exactly what Catholics believed, from authentic Catholic sources.

First, I found a list of books tailor-made for non-Catholic Christians. It included works by Scott Hahn, Steven Ray, and Thomas Howard, as well as some introductory theology by Frank Sheed. It was like turning on a faucet full blast!

To begin with, I had no idea what Catholics actually believed, and hearing about Catholic doctrine, tradition, and beliefs from actual practicing Catholics felt like drawing in a great big mouthful of air after realizing I'd been holding my breath. What I was reading was eye-opening.

Quashing Quibbles

I had held preconceived notions about the Catholic Church. However, they were largely unintentional, and they were quickly quashed as I began to read.

Why do Catholics call priests "father," when Jesus said to call no man "father"? Well, if Jesus meant that literally, what do I call

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.



CHNetwork

P.O. Box 8290

Zanesville, OH

43702-8290



740-450-1175



info@chnetwork.org



The Coming Home
Network International



www.chnetwork.org

my Dad? And what about the verse where Jesus Himself calls Abraham our "father"?

Why do Catholics pray to saints? They don't as if the saints are God. But they do believe that after a Christian dies, he is still part of the Body of Christ, and we can continue to pray for each other, to Christ, after we die. It's either this, or Christ hasn't conquered death.

Don't Catholics worship Mary? No. They venerate her, putting her in a place of importance because she's clearly prefigured in the Old Testament. She is the new Ark of the Covenant and the New Eve. As one of His last acts on the cross, Jesus tells us that she is our "mother" (John 19:25-27).

In the light of good Catholic teaching and an actual reading of what Catholics believe, my objections and misconceptions seemed juvenile. And I felt lazy, silly, for never having tried to understand what Catholics believed before. Now, as I began to get a better grasp, I was astounded at what I was learning.

Here was a Church that claimed authority not to only collect the books of the Bible together, but to interpret them as well. A Church which claimed unity under the Pope, the Bishop of Rome. A Church which drew a straight line from the first Apostles to the bishops of today, claiming an authoritative link to the very words of Christ, who said, "Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18).

Suddenly, a Catholic Church came into focus that I had no idea existed — a Church which taught that the elements of Communion actually become the Body and Blood of Christ because, I learned, that's what Jesus says in the Gospel of John (chapter 6). For all our "literal reading" of the Bible, we'd missed one of the most literal parts. Jesus says we have to "eat" His flesh, and when His followers throw up their hands in disgust, He becomes even more graphic, explaining that we have to "gnaw" His flesh! Then, when many of His followers walk away, declaring it a difficult teaching, He does nothing to stop them. Instead of clarifying for

...Journeys Home Continued...

His disciples, as He's often pictured doing, He simply asks, "Do you want to leave, too?"

Even more shocking is the evidence from the early Church Fathers. As a relatively well-educated Evangelical, I'd always been taught to treat my Bible as if it had fallen into my hands directly from its writers' pens, as if the years between the texts being written and their arriving on my bookshelf simply didn't exist. But they do exist, and in that time period, lots of important things were being written. Of particular interest are the early Church Fathers. Many of these Church Fathers lived immediately after the Apostles and had important things to say, vital perspectives on the development of the Christian Church.

Shockingly, these early Church Fathers were completely Catholic.

In the Fathers writings, we see ample evidence to believe that they understood Communion as Catholics do today, as the real Body and Blood of Jesus. We find appeals to the Bishop of Rome, lending significant credence to the position of Pope, the successor of Peter, even in the infant Church. We find widespread use of relics, prayers for the dead, and prayers to deceased Christians. We find a particular veneration of Mary, an understanding of infant baptism, and even a version of a worship service which looks shockingly similar to our modern-day Mass.

To my complete surprise, the early Church was Catholic.

Coming to a Conclusion

In hindsight, I can draw a pretty straight line in my journey towards the Catholic Church. It began back at that Evangelical youth group not many years after I first encountered Christ, when I realized that the system as I understood it simply didn't make sense. If we could read our Bibles and interpret them in all sorts of different ways, if we couldn't come to the same conclusion on life-impacting things like salvation or the definition of marriage, then that system was broken. Maybe it was never what God intended, anyway.

It became clear to me through reading the stories of other Catholic converts, from digging into the history of my faith through the early Church Fathers, and through studying the Reformation that I hadn't fully understood my place, the place of the Bible, and the role of the Catholic Church in my Christian faith. Having been fair, having done the research, having studied and prayed and wrung my hands, I realized I had no other option than to become Catholic.

But the journey wasn't all that smooth. I called up the closest Catholic Church and began RCIA, thinking that all Catholic churches were the same. It was the "universal Church" after all, right? The parish we ended up in, however, was rather sleepy. There was nothing for kids, nothing for families, and no real faith formation aspect to parish life. My wife, who had been tangentially along for the journey, made a heartbreaking observation one morning after Mass.

It was the first time she'd attended with me. We were splitting our time between worship services at our non-denominational church and Mass at the local Catholic parish. This particular morning, on

the way home, she turned to me in the car and said, with a sly look on her face, "I saw a miracle happen today at Mass!"

I joked, "Honey, that happens every time; it's called the Real Presence of Christ!" She rolled her eyes and replied, "No, it happened after the priest prayed the Eucharistic prayers. I closed my eyes when he started praying, and when I opened them up again, everyone had their coats on. That way, they could rush out the door as soon as they received the Host!"

I sighed. She was right, and I knew it.

At this particular parish, the culture of Drive-Thru Catholicism was rampant, and it depressed us both. How could I be joining a Church that seemed so apathetic? Didn't they know about the miracle of Christ present in the Mass and how every time the priest celebrates Communion he's mystically linking us to the Last Supper? Didn't they realize that we're singing and praying in the presence of choirs of angels?

I've since met and spoken with many converts, and they have shared the same challenge that we faced. The Evangelical church we had attended was bursting at the seams with programming for kids, missions outreach, small group ministries, Bible studies, discussion groups, worship services, and all kinds of activities and programs to engage the congregation in good works. We built each other up as disciples of Christ. But such vibrancy can be difficult to find in Catholic communities. I've also learned that sometimes we need to build it up ourselves.

My wife and I did find a parish which took its mission of evangelization seriously and drank deeply from that well every week. She entered the Church the year after me.

There's something else I've learned. As converts, we have special gifts to give to the Catholic Church. We have a perspective and zest for the faith that those who were raised in the Church often find difficult to capture. We've also seen what else is out there. With the Eucharist as the focal point, we've seen the fruits of robust children's ministry programming, of youth groups and Bible studies and discussion groups — we've seen, firsthand, how these aspects of parish life can help to build up the whole Body of Christ and equip Catholics for their mission. The Catholic Church, in its individual parishes, certainly has work to do here, but it's work in which converts like us can play a fundamental role. It's one thing, I think, to become Catholic. It's quite another to commit to being renewed, every day, as a disciple of Christ — and then to sharing that fire. God willing, that is what we'll continue to do. ■



KEITH ALBERT LITTLE is a non-denominational Evangelical convert to the Catholic Faith. He writes at *The Cordial Catholic* and lives in Kitchener, Canada with his wife, two young children, a cat, and a dog.

Continue the **JOURNEY**

Please visit CHNetwork.org/converts to comment on and share this or one of hundreds of other powerful testimonies!

The Coming Home Network International

PO Box 8290

Zanesville, OH 43702-8290

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



BRING THE
COMING HOME NETWORK
INTERNATIONAL INTO
YOUR HOME THIS
CHRISTMAS WITH
POWERFUL CATHOLIC
RESOURCES!

SEE PAGE 2 FOR MORE DETAILS!