



## April 2019 CHNewsletter

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# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



## A Tale of Three Houses – What the Broker Did Not Disclose About “The House Upon the Rock” ... Until I Asked

By Gayle DiNicola

I spent three days recently with my daughter and son-in-law in a grueling marathon of house and yard work as part of an effort to sell their home in the suburbs of an American city that supposedly has a “seller’s market.” Unfortunately, this has not proven true for them in two years. Houses in that market appear to fall into three categories, the last of which proves to be unappealing to buyers. That is the category into which their home falls.

The first category is the “Older Small House,” which is snatched up quickly by those with limited means. Next is the “Modern Sprawling House,” popular with those of more substantial means. Last is the “Mid-20th Century Solid House,” which sports reasonable square footage on a sizeable lot for comparable great value. It perhaps requires some cosmetic updating for personal taste, but buyers are apparently reluctant to invest sweat equity.

As it happens, my spiritual journey falls into these same three categories of houses.

### Older Small House

My childhood years were spent in a spiritually “Older Small House.” What is now in this category, materially and spiritually, was trendy and ubiquitous in the Baby Boomer era into which I was born. Though spiritual content and formation were minimal in our house, it was sufficient to set my feet on the path for the longer journey ahead.

My father was an abusive alcoholic. He harbored an inner anger against his own alcoholic father. My mother’s upbringing was rather devoid of faith. She was unbaptized until she married my German Lutheran father. As her three children came along, she felt the need to have us baptized. Subsequently, she sought membership in a local Presbyterian church. Her motivation was to do what she thought was proper; it was not indicative of any spiritual awakening. My father had decided he did not believe in God, but attended church with my mother, while my brothers and I attended Sunday school.

Despite the stormy atmosphere in our home, I never projected onto God, my Eternal Father, any ill feelings I harbored toward my earthly father. Rather, I experienced a remarkable grace of God’s abiding presence in my life. My earliest memories are of praying earnestly and of an acute sense of God in nature, into which I escaped as often as possible. I loved singing

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Journeys Home

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

the old hymns and learning Bible stories in Sunday school and was thrilled when my beloved grandma, Dad's mother, gave me a Bible for my tenth birthday. I faithfully read and highlighted that Bible, finding a deep spiritual connection and solace that counteracted my tumultuous family life.

### Modern Sprawling House

As I entered my high school years, the spiritual trajectory in our home took a radical turn. The Charismatic Movement had burst onto the scene in many mainline Protestant denominations, transforming the humdrum spirituality of pew warming and "checking the box" into a vibrant pursuit of embracing life in Christ to the fullest measure. God's "Modern Sprawling House" lay wide open, available to anyone who would give his life to Christ and accept Him as his personal Savior. Isaiah 43:18-19 beckoned: "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth." The banner that flew over this "Modern Sprawling House" was 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come." Our family enthusiastically departed the "Older Small House" for this new leg of the journey.

Two years earlier, my father had quit drinking "cold turkey," without the help of Alcoholics Anonymous or any other support group. That left him very lonely and tormented. My mother became involved in a Bible study group with a co-worker and convinced Dad to join her. They both encountered Christ in a powerful, life-changing way.

Dad found the strength to remain sober and soon felt that God wanted him to resign his seventeen-year teaching career to "train up for the Gospel ministry." Off we went for his three years at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, where he earned his Master of Divinity at age 46.

These same years were my high school years. Our dinner table had always been an arena for discussion, both my parents fostering educated conversation with us children. Dad's seminary years were no different, but the topics were profoundly different. I spent countless hours assisting him with studying, absorbing oceans of theological formation myself. I developed a deep respect for him in these years, his example spurring me on to cultivate my own spiritual journey toward excellence.

Dad was ordained as a Presbyterian minister on June 22, 1975, and I decided to seek a degree in Youth Ministry from a Bible college.

During my college years, I met a young man at work who was a "born again" former Roman Catholic. Having been active in Evangelism Explosion, a ministry birthed by Dr. D. James Kennedy of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Florida, which encouraged me to particularly target Roman Catholics because they usually didn't have adequate understanding about being "saved," I considered his "former" status a positive. My parents liked him and strongly encouraged me to marry him. I wasn't really convinced, but I felt obligated to trust my father's wisdom in picking out the husband for his only daughter. My father married us, and we attended the church he pastored, having him baptize our three children as they were born to us.

During the first ten years of our marriage, I was plagued with the residual effects of being the adult child of an alcoholic, "recovered" though he was. I confided my difficulty to my father. We discussed the challenge of having him as both pastor and father, and he recommended that I seek out another church, where I could be helped in my emotional healing by a neutral pastor. He assured me of his help as my father in any way he could. Over the years, that help proved to be invaluable.

We settled in a non-denominational charismatic church where conventional structured worship

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## FEATURED RESOURCES



### Deep in Scripture CD

In this classic *Deep in Scripture* episode, Marcus Grodi and Dr. Scott Hahn discuss Scripture and Liturgy.



### The Fourth Cup: Unveiling the Mystery of the Last Supper and the Cross — Scott Hahn

A must read for Lent and Easter! *The Fourth Cup* is an illuminating work on the Catholic Eucharist and its link to the Jewish Passover meal. *The Fourth Cup* tells of the Passover's supreme importance in God's plan of salvation. Along the way, Hahn reveals how the traditional fourth cup of wine used in the concluding celebration of Passover explains in astonishing ways Christ's paschal sacrifice. *The Fourth Cup* delivers a fascinating view of the bridges that span Old and New Covenants and celebrates the importance of the Jewish Faith in understanding more fully Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

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## You Are Home in the Catholic Church ... Now What?

By Jim Anderson | Ministry Member & Pastoral Care Coordinator

For many who have recently been baptized or come into full communion with the Catholic Church, there is a temptation to believe that you have finally arrived. Those who enter the Church as adults often have done so after what may have been a long journey of several years of study, prayer, and discernment. For people who had been in ordained ministry or full time lay ministry as a Protestant, entry into the Catholic Faith has often come with great personal, professional, and financial sacrifice. Added to this could be the disapproval of family and friends and the loss of what is often a close-knit, supportive community. Becoming Catholic can give new meaning to the phrase “leap of faith.” For those with no Catholic background, it may feel something like diving into the deep end of the pool while blindfolded.



After the initial excitement of being a Catholic begins to subside, new realities often begin to become apparent. What are some of the struggles many converts encounter when they become members of this new world called the Catholic Church?

Sometimes a new Catholic will learn that being “user friendly” is not the hallmark of Catholic culture. Protestants, especially from an Evangelical background, are used to church as being friendly and community-oriented. A minor example is that, after becoming Catholic, I was perplexed that my Catholic parish didn’t have coat racks. I didn’t understand why people were willing to worship with their coats on. It looked to me like they were ready to bolt out the door. Protestants come to church on Sunday for fellowship with the Lord and with their friends in a family atmosphere. In Catholic parishes people often do not readily greet one another. Worship at a Catholic Mass can, to one used to Protestant worship, feel cold and impersonal. New converts can fall into the misunderstanding that Catholics don’t care about them because they don’t easily strike up a conversation with them and ask them how they are doing. What the new Catholic needs to keep in mind is that Catholic worship has a different focus than that of Protestants. Catholics view coming to Mass as entering the throne room of God, thus having their focus on the Lord, especially because He is truly present in the Holy Eucharist. Fellowship for Catholics is something to be left for the narthex, the social hall after Mass, or other church activities.

Newly-minted Catholics are often shocked by what they view as a lukewarm attitude displayed by lifelong Catholics. The new

Catholic is excited about their newly discovered faith, while the older Catholic can come off as if they don’t know what all of the fuss is about. Cradle Catholics can also be intimidated by their new brothers and sisters who can quote Scripture and the *Catechism* off the cuff. We at the CHNetwork suggest that new Catholics take it slow. They need to ease into their new faith community. They should take the advice of our Lord Jesus: “When you are invited by any one to a marriage feast, do not sit down in a place of honor ... go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, go up higher’; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you” (Luke 14:8,10). At the same time, don’t be shy about becoming involved in your parish. Begin with small things where you can serve others. Volunteer to serve food at parish functions, become a greeter, and so on. Later you might want to join one of the church’s organizations, such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society or the Knights of Columbus. In time, you may feel called to serve as a lector or sing in the choir. In each of these activities, you will have the opportunity to meet people and form new friendships.

New converts need to take their time to learn how to be a Catholic. For example, it takes time to learn to think like a Catholic. Many people are not even aware that they are still thinking with Protestant presuppositions. For example, most Protestants feel that it’s up to them to decide for themselves what the proper interpretation of Holy Scripture or moral issues might be. Faithful Catholics do not approach the faith in this way. The Church teaches with apostolic authority and

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guides us to the true meaning of moral issues and the doctrines of the Church. It takes time to discern the good things we want to keep from our Protestant background from those things that are contrary to Catholic truth. I've been a Catholic for almost 38 years, and I'm still sometimes surprised to discover that I'm viewing an issue with Protestant eyes.

There is one aspect of Catholic faith and life that can be off-putting, and even overwhelming, to a new Catholic: the topic of Catholic devotions. In our old faith tradition, "doing our devotions" meant having quiet time reading the Bible and praying. Catholics, though, understand devotions in a much different manner. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops defines Catholic devotions as "expressions of love and fidelity that arise from the intersection of one's own faith, culture and the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (USCCB, "Prayers and Devotions"). Catholic devotions come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from the holy Rosary, novenas, to Eucharistic Adoration, not forgetting scapulars, holy cards, icons, the Infant of Prague, etc. A person who is new to the world of popular Catholic devotions can easily find himself bewildered by such an array of possibilities. New Catholics often meet lifelong Catholics who have a strong loyalty to a certain type of devotion. I've known people who were told by Catholics that if they didn't practice a certain devotion that they were not faithful Catholics. A new Catholic needs to understand that popular devotions are meant to be aides to their faith, not an obligation or burden. It is impossible for any

one person to practice each and all devotions. There are just too many of them. Some devotions may be to the liking of one person, others to their friend. The new Catholic needs time to ease into the world of Catholic devotions. If you find that some types of devotions are not helpful to you in drawing closer to the Lord, check out something else. Devotions are not part of the Deposit of Faith. They are not mandatory for any Catholic, though some are much more highly recommended than others, such as Eucharistic Adoration and daily praying of the Rosary. Give yourself time to feel comfortable with these strange customs and with their odd vocabulary. After all of my years as a Catholic, I still "speak Catholic" with a Protestant accent.

So, how does one begin to feel at home in the Catholic Church? First, realize that it will not happen over night. When you move into a new house, it takes time for it to feel like home. Don't despair if you are not immediately comfortable with your Catholic surroundings. You may have thought that your entry into the Church at the Easter Vigil was the end of a long journey. In many ways it was. More importantly, though, is that it was the beginning of a new and even more exciting journey, which will take the rest of your life ... and beyond. ■

*\*Get and stay connected with other converts on this continuing journey! Check out the box below for information on the new CHNetwork Online Community.*



## 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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info@chnetwork.org



The Coming Home  
Network International



**www.chnetwork.org**

## ONLINE COMMUNITY

We have a great new way for converts and journeyers to connect online! Accessible through an internet browser or mobile device via the MightyNetworks IOS/Android app, CHN's new Online Community is now the quickest and easiest way for people on the journey to Catholicism to connect with other converts, as well as CHN staff, for fellowship on the journey home. Members can share their stories, ask or answers questions about the faith, subscribe to new stories and resources, participate in CHNetwork webinars and other online events, and more. We invite you to connect at [community.chnetwork.org](http://community.chnetwork.org).

## LAST CALL FOR OUR SPRING RETREAT!

### CHNetwork Retreat in Columbus, OH

April 29-May 2, 2019

A time of fellowship and prayer for Catholic converts and those on the journey to the Catholic Church. To register, please visit [CHNetwork.org/retreats](http://CHNetwork.org/retreats) or send an email to [retreats@chnetwork.org](mailto:retreats@chnetwork.org).

### A Convert in Rome

By Kenneth Hensley, Online Resource & Pastoral Care Coordinator

"A Convert in Rome"

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Thinking about our first CHN "Deep in History" pilgrimage to Rome this fall brings to mind Hilaire Belloc's delightful little book *A Path to Rome*, in which he describes his own decision to make a solemn pilgrimage to the Eternal City.



Entering a church to pray Belloc wrote:

"I noticed behind the high altar a statue of Our Lady, so extraordinary and so different from all I had seen before, so much the spirit of my valley, that I was quite taken out of myself and vowed a vow there to go to Rome on pilgrimage and see all Europe which the Christian Faith had saved. And I said: I will start from the place where I served in arms for my sins; I will walk all the way and take advantage of no wheeled thing; I will sleep rough and cover thirty miles a day, and I will hear Mass every morning; and I will be present at high Mass in St. Peter's on the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul."

And he did it!

Setting out on foot from the French city of Toul, Belloc crossed the Alps and the Apennines and arrived, 700 miles later, in Rome. It was June 29, the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

Now, I live in Southern California, 6,328 miles and one absolutely enormous ocean from Rome. Because of this, when I decided, 15 years after my conversion to the Catholic Church, to make my own pilgrimage to the heart of the Catholic world, I was not exactly able to imitate Belloc's mode of transportation. I utilized plenty of "wheeled things!"

I'm sure, however, that my pilgrimage was as meaningful as his. In fact, the Lord performed a miracle for me on that trip.

Early on in my life as a Catholic, I had read a biography of the great St. Philip Neri titled *The Fire of Joy*. St. Philip was a leading figure in the Counter Reformation of the 16th century. His holiness — and his happiness — transformed the Rome of his time. Philip used to pray in the catacombs, often all night. One night the Holy Spirit filled him with such a profound sense of God's love that he fell

to the ground and believed he would die. He began to walk the streets of Rome, making friends with the youth, telling them funny stories and playing practical jokes on them while teaching them about God's love for them and helping them to improve their lives. "Be as good as you can be!" he would tell them.

Philip has been described as "the Christian Socrates," for his gentle friendship with the young, and also as the "Apostle of Rome" for his extraordinary ability to draw men and women, and especially the youth, to the love of Christ and the practice of their faith. He is most known today as being the Founder of the Oratory, of which Blessed John Henry Newman later became a member and priest.

"The essential thing to do," St. Philip insisted, "is to give oneself totally to God. He who *wants* something other than Christ, does not know what he wants; he who *seeks* something other than Christ, does not know what he wishes."

I loved St. Philip. And when I made the decision to finally see Rome, I had a strong desire to visit the places where St. Philip had been.

I had booked a room for myself near the train station because it was cheap. On the phone one day with Catholic Apologist Patrick Madrid, I told him about my upcoming trip. Immediately he said, "Unless you want to be rolled and robbed, you do not

want to stay near the train station. You should stay with the Bridgettine Sisters. Their convent and guesthouse is on the beautiful Piazza Farnese within walking distance of St. Peter's. Mass is celebrated every morning in their gorgeous chapel. The singing of these sisters is hauntingly beautiful. Breakfast is served afterward. It's perfect."

I promptly obeyed and booked a room at the convent. I was especially excited to discover, as I did a bit of research, that the Piazza Farnese seemed to be very near the spot

"The essential thing to do," St. Philip insisted, "is to give oneself totally to God. He who wants something other than Christ, does not know what he wants; he who seeks something other than Christ, does not know what he wishes."

► "A Convert in Rome" continued from page A

where St. Philip had first begun to gather young men in what would in time become the Oratory.

It wasn't until I arrived in Rome and was settled into my room on the second floor of the convent guesthouse that I learned that my window looked directly across a narrow cobblestone street to the exact second floor room in which the Oratory of St. Philip Neri was founded.

What were the odds, I wondered, that in a city of millions I would just happen to wind up here? I knelt at that window and prayed the Rosary with the deepest sense of God's care for me.

Before entering the Catholic Church, I was a Protestant for about 20 years and an ordained Baptist minister a little more than half that time. As with so many others whose stories we've heard and who are members of the Coming Home Network, I had read and prayed my way into the Church over the course of several years. My conversion involved a complete rethinking of my Christian worldview from the foundations up, and reading the early Church Fathers played a critical role

in my coming to the conviction that Catholicism was nothing more than historic Christianity.

I had grown to love the Catholic Church. Making my first pilgrimage to Rome was filled with meaning for me. I was able to visit and pray in many of the great historic churches of early Christian history: St. Peter's, St. John Lateran, St. Mary Major, St. Cecilia's, St. Paul Outside the Walls. I was able to explore the very catacombs in which so many Christians had hidden from Roman persecution and in which St. Philip had been set on fire by the Spirit of God. I was able to tour the first century burial ground directly beneath St. Peter's Basilica, where Peter was known to have been martyred and buried and where his bones were actually located when excavations were performed in the 20th century.

I was able to visit the chapel that contains the earthly remains of St. Josemaria Escriva, the Founder of Opus Dei. And then, I was able to sit in the very room where the Oratory was begun and even visit the private rooms of St. Philip Neri and pray in his private chapel.

I wonder what amazing experiences await those of us who are able to make the pilgrimage to Rome this coming fall? We'd love for you to join us. Please contact me at [kenh@chnetwork.org](mailto:kenh@chnetwork.org) if you would like more information on how you can make your own path to Rome this coming fall. ■

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## PILGRIMAGE TO ITALY

Our very first CHNetwork "Deep in History" pilgrimage will take place Sept 23 - Oct 4, 2019. We invite you to travel to Italy with Marcus Grodi, Ken Hensley, and Msgr. Jeffrey Steenson to learn about "The History of the Catholic Church in Rome." Please email Ken Hensley at [kenh@chnetwork.org](mailto:kenh@chnetwork.org) for a full itinerary, pricing, and all other details.

## EWTN'S THE JOURNEY HOME on television & radio, hosted by Marcus Grodi, president of CHNetwork



### TELEVISION

Mondays at 8 PM ET — Encores: Tuesdays 2 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-Friday 1 AM ET

**April 1**  
TL Putnam\* (former Methodist)

**April 8**  
Dr. Lawrence Feingold\* (former Agnostic)

**April 15**  
Denise Bossert\* (former Presbyterian)

**April 22**  
Pierre Ingram\* (former Baptist)  
Re-air from March 7, 2016

**April 29**  
Kevin Symonds\* (former Unitarian)

\*Schedule is subject to change.

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



# Joyful Journey Updates

**From Gabriele, on the journey** "I want to express great and very hearty thanks for your company with me in this nearly past year! It's a great reliable emotional and thoughtful support that I received from you on my journey so far! It was especially precious to me that I could realize for the first time the essence of the Church as the mystical Body of Christ and with it His supernatural guarantee for it preserving the truth in the first half of the year. I've never recognized its meaning in that deep sense before. With this foundation I was provided with a calm and tranquility in the storm that enfolded in the second half that I had never expected and known before."

**From a Lutheran on the journey** "Thanks for the email ... My wife has been more interested in the Catholic Church lately, and we've just started reading a book together as a way to reignite our passion for a Spirit-directed life while also pointing us toward topics on the CHN website that we have deeper questions about. I can't say how much your emails mean to me. I feel sometimes that I've been forgotten, and simple things like this remind me that it's just not true."

**From Ruth, a convert** "Oh my goodness! You have no idea how often I think of you and always keep you, the Coming Home Network, and EWTN in my daily prayers."

... It's so frustrating for me when I feel I

must shout to my Protestant friends what I've been discovering — but then I just pray that God will arrange for them to come to their own awakening. I can only try to set a good example ... You could live several lifetimes and still not learn all there is to know about Catholicism ... I keep reminding people to watch EWTN ... God is so very, very good!!! Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your kindness — you have no idea what it means to me."

**From Emily, a former Baptist** "Thank you so much for all that you do! I joyfully entered the Church on October 8th of 2017 after years of studying. *The Journey Home* and *Deep in Scripture* played an important role in my conversion!" ■

## NEWSLETTER

The CHNetwork encourages members to make copies of the newsletter and distribute to family and friend. We do ask that copies of the newsletter not be sold. Unless otherwise indicated, the contents of this newsletter are Copyright © 2019 by the Coming Home Network International. All rights reserved.

## 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 THE CHNETWORK!

**Could you give \$25 a month or more to help support the CHNetwork as we help 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/](http://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](mailto:ann@chnetwork.org) if you have any questions or concerns.

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

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# Prayer List

## Clergy

- For an Anglican priest, that the Lord would open a clear path for him to follow into the Catholic Church.
- For William, a minister in Scotland, that the Holy Spirit would guide his every step home to the Church which is ever ancient and ever new.
- For a missionary in the Czech Republic, that the witness of believing Catholics in Central Europe may continue to draw her to the Eucharistic altar of our Lord Jesus.
- For Michael, a minister in California, that his hunger for unity would draw him home to the source of all unity.
- For a Wesleyan missionary in Nepal, that our Lord Jesus would dispel all his fear in stepping out in faith to follow God's call to come into the Catholic Church.
- For Tim, a minister in Florida, that the Holy Spirit would guide him to return to his study of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.
- For a Lutheran minister in Pennsylvania, that he may experience the joy of truly receiving our Lord Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.
- For Chris, a Pentecostal seminarian, that the Holy Spirit would help him to overcome his confusion and temptation to despair concerning his journey to the Catholic Faith.
- For an Evangelical Free lay minister in Nebraska, that, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, he may enter the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of her Son Jesus.
- For James, a former Southern Baptist minister, that all obstacles to his entry into the Church may be cleared away by God's grace.

## Laity

- For Jerry who fears that becoming Catholic might destroy his marriage.
- For Jason who is attending Mass alone, that his wife be more open to the Catholic Church.
- For Zachary who wants to become Catholic but still has some serious questions.
- For Dawn, a recent convert, that her loving witness will help her husband to be more open to the beauty of the Catholic Church.
- For a convert in the Midwest who has stopped going to Mass and doesn't know what to do on account of her struggles with Catholic teaching.
- For an Episcopalian in RCIA who struggles with understanding devotion to Mary and purgatory.
- For Betty who has many questions and concerns about the Catholic Church and is disappointed in the bad witness of Catholics she has witnessed, that Jesus give her clarity and peace.
- For Cindy and her husband who are going through a difficult time discerning how to proceed with their journey.
- For a man in Canada who continues to straddle the fence between the Catholic and Protestant worlds, that he be able to discern which direction to pursue.
- For Lori who isn't sure how to move forward with her desire to become Catholic, that the Holy Spirit will make the path abundantly clear to her.
- For a recent convert in Missouri who is feeling isolated and alone in her new faith as a Catholic, that God will send her fellowship and good Catholic friends.
- For Liz who is struggling to find a good RCIA program, that the Holy Spirit will guide her to a good, welcoming parish.
- For Sam to be able to go forward with his annulment petition so he can be fully Catholic.
- For Cynthia and her husband, that they will be able to mutually support and understand each other's faith journey.
- For a Lutheran and her discernment in her faith journey.
- For Joe, that he find a way to be able to go to Mass and begin receiving the sacraments again.
- For Josh and his wife that they be inspiring witnesses to their new Catholic Faith to their family and friends.
- For Leslie, that she come to understand the beauty of the Catholic Faith, especially devotion to Mary.
- For Brenda and her family as they struggle to settle into Catholic parish life.
- For Lisa's husband to be willing to go through the annulment process and for her to be able to move forward with her desire to be Catholic.
- For a Southern Baptist on the journey who recently told her husband about her interest in the Catholic Church, that he will continue to be open and receptive to learning more.



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.



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was non-binding. Freedom in the Spirit was tantamount. I was skeptical about some of the expressions of that freedom, but as with my misgivings about marrying that young man, I put aside my doubts to "go with the flow." I later discovered that this ecclesiastical freedom actually provided the environment I needed to explore and discover emotional stability, but, simultaneously, it put me on the approach to the last leg of my journey, moving into the "Mid-20th Century Solid House," also known as "The House upon the Rock."

### Mid-20th Century Solid House

The non-denominational church I attended had an association with a retreat center with some very interesting leanings, which I later discovered to be Franciscan. The owner of the center was a former professor at a Bible institute and was very committed to providing a quality environment to help retreatants grow closer to the Lord. Nestled in the wooded hills of central Pennsylvania, it was a haven of tranquility, inviting quiet reflection and a deep encounter with Christ. The occasional time I spent there reminded me of my early years, escaping into nature to be with God. And I did find Him.

Certain books and authors were introduced to me through that retreat center, providing an intriguing spirituality that was like a magnet, wooing me ever deeper. I was greatly encouraged by books like: *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection; *The Way of the Heart* by Henri J. M. Nouwen; *A Life of Prayer* by St. Teresa of Avila; *The Seven Storey Mountain* by Thomas Merton; *God's Fool: The Life and Times of Francis of Assisi* by Julien Green; and *An Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francis De Sales. These authors were Catholics, which astounded me, but the depth of their intimacy with God was like nothing I had ever encountered. Questions began to nag at me: "How could these people be so unquestionably intimate with God while they were steeped in the errors of Catholicism? Didn't God care that they were so off the tracks while being unmistakably on the tracks? Why didn't God correct them? Was He just being merciful in overlooking their blatant ignorance? But how could He turn a blind eye to what I had always been told were grave idolatries?" But I couldn't shake the lure. I was hooked and began reading the life of every saint I could get my hands on, often crying at the end as though a good friend had died. Many of my friends, especially that former Roman Catholic man I had married, were worrying for my soul.

Aware of the "danger" I was courting, I resolved that it would be impossible, even preposterous, to leave the spiritual opulence of the "Modern Sprawling House" to commit spiritual suicide by transferring residence to the "Mid-20th Century Solid House" that was clearly outdated and faulty. I resolved to be a "closet Catholic" and feed my craving for truth in the obscurity of secrecy. That seemed to be a reasonably safe hideout — until I was convicted by John 17:20–23:

I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one;

even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me.

I began to pray for unity, not just an ethereal unity, but a real, substantial unity that did not exclude Catholicism. The "Mid-20th Century Solid House" was beginning to pique my interest. The destination was looming, but the questions were only just beginning.

### What the Broker Did Not Disclose About "The House Upon the Rock" ... Until I Asked

Aside from the personal impact of approaching the "Mid-20th Century Solid House" there was concern for the lives of those with whom my little world intersected. Certainly there was the risk to the marriage I had entered into with that former Roman Catholic, who himself had only grown more stalwart in his resistance as he became more entrenched in the Protestant tradition. There was also the probable loss of most of my friendships. I figured my parents would not abandon me, even if they were disappointed and might become spiritually distant. But there was the question of the impact on the children, who were now in their teenage years. There was also concern over the effect on the wider public, who knew quite well that I was the daughter of a prominent Protestant clergyman. Most striking to me was the impending culture shock. Could I ever effectively make the transition? Additionally, there were many issues regarding doctrine that had to be wrestled with and settled.

When the "Mid-20th Century Solid House" is viewed as just another house on the block, it may elicit either casual admiration or critical disdain. If it is noticed as possibly "The House upon the Rock," full disclosure does not blare out with a trumpet fanfare. Upon questioning the broker for my daughter's house about a visually hard-to-detect issue that needed attention but was not a deal breaker, he replied that he does not draw attention to it unless asked because it is in the full written disclosure. "We are not hiding it, but there is no reason to draw attention to it to frighten buyers." Some may say the devil is in the details, but regarding the Catholic Church, I have found that the devil is in the distortion of the details. In the magnificently thorough *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, full disclosure has been made and is readily available, but it would overwhelm any prospective interested party if he were required to read it cover to cover before proceeding. Asking along the way is far more expedient. "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7).

My strong theological formation kicked into high gear in order to search out the truth. I had one quest: to lay aside all that I had ever been taught and believed, start over from the begin-

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

ning, and allow the Spirit to help me discover rock-solid twentieth century truth. "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak" (John 16:13).

I had to realize, however, that I had it backwards. I had set out to find out if the Church's doctrine could be reconciled to my understanding of orthodoxy, but I eventually surrendered to the reality that my doctrine had to conform to what the Church understood as orthodox. I had to let the Church speak for herself and not collect evidence from sources outside the Church to "expose" what she purportedly teaches. I consciously decided to approach everything through the lens of a single question: "Was the Catholic Church just different in practice from what I was used to, or was its doctrine intrinsically wrong?" If the Catholic Church was just different in practice, I felt I had no justification for remaining separated from it. If the Catholic Church held doctrine that was intrinsically wrong, I needed to know that beyond a doubt and remain securely opposed to it.

As with the project at my daughter's "Mid-20th Century Solid House", there were three areas of focus: inside, outside, and foundation. None of us is a professional house stager, but we launched into it with all of our energy, and God blessed our efforts. Likewise, my adventure exploring "The House upon the Rock" had three areas of focus: inside, what pertained to the interior Catholic spirituality; outside, what pertained to the public practice of Catholic worship; and foundation, what pertained to the authority on which the Catholic Church is built. Moreover, I knew of no one who had engaged in such lunacy as to move from Protestantism to Catholicism. So I had to fly by the seat of my pants and hope I didn't land in hell. I was admittedly scared, hoping I would find something to dissuade me. I launched into it with all my energy, and God blessed my efforts. Truth be told, I discovered it was not "The House upon the Rock" that needed sprucing up, but rather myself and my perceptions.

My initial exposure to Catholic interior spirituality through the lives of the saints raised several concerns that would rattle any Protestant: statues, prayers to the saints, crucifixes, Marian devotion and the Rosary, and relics topped my chart of concerns. I searched the Scriptures, times stumbling unsuspectingly onto passages that quelled my uneasiness. I was also graciously given a *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which had just recently been published, and I carefully read it cover to cover.

Reason alone settled my problem with statues and prayers to the saints. In the Protestant churches I had attended, there were crosses, banners depicting various Christian themes, and the Christian flag. At Christmas time, the churches were decorated with appropriate items for the season. They simply drew our minds to the spiritual truths they depicted, with no guilt of idolatry. We were also in the habit of asking one another to pray for our concerns and even encouraged to do so. This did not seem radically different from asking those already perfected before the throne of God to pray for us as well. Logically speaking, it seemed more expedient to ask someone released from a state of sin to pray for us than someone still struggling with concupiscence.

Scripture seemed to easily sanction crucifixes in Numbers 21:9: "So Moses made a bronze serpent, and set it on a pole; and if a serpent bit any man, he would look at the bronze serpent and live" and John 19:37: "And again another scripture says, 'They shall look on him whom they have pierced.'" I discovered that the Rosary was a very beautiful reflection on the life of Christ, the Hail Mary drawing directly from Scripture. I was not struck by lightning, as I begged of God in fear, during my first use of those

beads. Also from Scripture, I accidentally stumbled across justification for the use of relics in Acts 19:11-12: "And God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them"; and 2 Kings 13:21: "And as a man was being buried, lo, a marauding band was seen and the man was cast into the grave of Elisha; and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood on his feet."

By definition, liturgy is the official public prayer of the

Church, and the sacraments are the outward sign of the inward grace they effect. This external expression of worship in the "Mid-20th Century Solid House Upon the Rock" was not problematic. The structure of liturgy seemed to be simply a different flavor compared to the order of worship to which I was accustomed. I was pleasantly surprised at the amount of Scripture in the Liturgy of the Word at Mass, notwithstanding the amount of Scripture which informs all of the components of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The Sacrament of the Eucharist itself, as the Real Presence of Jesus' Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, required a closer look at John 6 and the realization that, if Jesus had not really meant literally what He said, He would have clarified His meaning when many of the disciples left Him, saying it was a hard teaching.

I had it backwards. I had set out to find out if the Church's doctrine could be reconciled to my understanding of orthodoxy, but I eventually surrendered to the reality that my doctrine had to conform to what the Church understood as orthodox. I had to let the Church speak for herself...

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

Again, simple logic indicated that if the Almighty King of the Universe could reside in the material substance of a human being, while maintaining His full divinity then it is not a far stretch that He could be present under the appearance of anything He chooses, including bread and wine, while maintaining His full divinity.

As I read through many of the early Church Fathers, I discovered that the Liturgy of the Mass has not changed in its basic structure since at least the mid-second century, as recorded by Justin Martyr. The Fathers spoke clearly of the Eucharist as the actual Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus. They also spoke of the hierarchical structure of the Church and the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, who seemed to be considered by them as the foundation of the Church.

The foundation of this "Mid-20th Century Solid House Upon the Rock" became my tipping point. What exactly is "The Rock"? Is it the Bible? Is it Peter and the Papacy? Is it a teaching Magisterium? What authority does it have?

According to Revelation 21:14, the wall of the New Jerusalem has twelve foundations upon which are the twelve names of the Apostles. My father, as a Presbyterian minister, had always spoken of his conviction that he needed to be a man under authority to protect him from running off too easily into heresy. God worked through human authority all the way through the Old Testament to keep people of faith from wandering. The Church in the first centuries did not have a canon of New Testament Scriptures, so human authority must have prevailed. The canon of the New Testament was decided by a series of Church councils in the late fourth century, so it must be acknowledged that the Bible is itself a product of the authority of the Council Fathers. St. Paul assumes authority of both oral and written tradition in 2 Thessalonians 2:15: "So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter." All this pointed to a reasonable assertion that God has given authority to men to govern His people on earth, throughout the Old Testament and continuing into the centuries of His Church. My job as a disciple is to study well and to submit to Christ through His ordained bishops and priests, who act in His stead.

This bore itself out when the former Roman Catholic I had married decided to divorce me in a civil court of law. Since my Presbyterian father had been the only clergy present at our wedding, it did not satisfy Canon Law and was invalid. For a baptized Catholic, like my erstwhile husband, to be validly married a marriage needs to be witnessed by a member of the Catholic clergy. This was very foreign to me, but by now I had learned to trust the authority and wisdom of the Church. Within two years, I met a remarkable man who was passionate about the Catholic Church. I had asked St. Joseph to bring me a husband like himself to care for me and my children, as he had done for Mary and Jesus. He answered me beyond my wildest imaginings!

### The House Upon the Rock

My tale of three houses, and my journey to "The House Upon The Rock," cannot be better articulated than by G.K. Chesterton's

three-stage explanation in *The Catholic Church and Conversion*: "The moment a man ceases to pull against [the Catholic Church] he feels a tug towards it. The moment he ceases to shout it down he begins to listen to it with pleasure. The moment he begins to be fair to it he begins to be fond of it." I became so fond of it that I was received into full communion with the Catholic Church on June 22, 1997, twenty two years after the date of my father's ordination. Five years later, I was blessed to be joined together with my husband as we celebrated the Sacrament of Matrimony on June 22, 2002. I went on to study and receive my Bachelor of Arts in Theology from Catholic Distance University. I put my training to work to equip Catholics with a deeper understanding of the Bible and the beautiful treasure of the Faith. I have been a sixth grade religious education catechist, focusing solely on the Bible from Genesis through the Acts of the Apostles. I have taught several adult Bible studies at our parish. I had the distinct honor and pleasure to be the RCIA Coordinator at our parish, and I am currently the instructor for the Adult Confirmation Program for the Archdiocese of New York, which is designed to provide formation to adults who did not receive the Sacrament of Confirmation as youths. Strengthening people in their faith was my passion as a Protestant and continues to be even more so as a Catholic.

When considering the "Mid-20th Century Solid House" people often contend that it has some flaws. It would be ludicrous to deny that. Any institution comprised of sinful human beings is going to have flaws. The nature of the flaws must be determined. If the flaws are cosmetic or functional, those can be tended to. If the flaws are intrinsically structural, the house is undeserving of consideration as a safe dwelling. Trusting the stability of "The House upon the Rock" provides spiritual sanctuary for the soul who takes refuge there and a repository of answers for questions to delight any honest seeker. The unfathomable magnitude of life in Christ is found securely within its walls. To anyone who lives in an "Older Small House" or in a "Modern Sprawling House" or in no house at all, I invite you to look down the block at the now "Mid-20th Century Solid House Upon the Rock" and consider Jesus' own invitation regarding where He was staying: "Come and see" (John 1:39). ■



GAYLE DINICOLA currently resides with her husband, Paul, in Kingston, NY. She has three married children and five grandchildren, who are the light of their lives. Gayle is the instructor for the Adult Confirmation Program in the Catechetical Office of the Archdiocese of New York's upper counties.

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