



March 2020 CHNewsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



From LDS Deacon to Catholic Deacon

By Deacon Steve Clifford

The Apostles failed in their mission. They neglected to properly appoint their successors. When the last Apostle died, the keys of the kingdom were lost from the earth. The Church given to them by Jesus lay in ruins, overcome by the forces of hell. The so-called Christian Church was no longer the Lord's Church. A new organization, a "great and abominable church," came into existence. This wicked church, founded by the devil, became known as the "Catholic Church." In her corruption, she took away many plain and precious parts of the gospel from the Bible, rendering it useless for conveying the full gospel plan. It remained an apostate church until the keys of the kingdom were once again restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

As a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormon), I knew that all this was true. I knew the Great Apostasy had happened. I knew Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and that he had been entrusted with the task of bringing to mankind the Book of Mormon, the divinely inspired scriptures that were "Another Testament of Jesus Christ." Most of all, I knew the church that Joseph Smith had restored and organized was true. I knew all of this by the power of the Holy Spirit. After all, we Mormons just knew these things were true, because we had complete and unquestioning trust in all that is Mormon.

I was born and raised in Utah, the older of two children. We were brought up in a nominally religious home, and yet religion played a major part in our lives as we were growing up. My parents were also born and raised in Utah in families with con-

nections going back to the early Mormon pioneers, who had settled the Great Salt Lake Valley in the mid-1800's.

My great-great-great grandfather on my mother's side was probably the first in my family to join the Mormon church on February 14, 1832, less than two years after Joseph Smith founded the church. Grandpa Alva Benson convinced his wife, father, mother, and the rest of his father's family to join the church in the winter of 1832. They moved to Jackson County, Missouri in November of 1832 but were driven out of the county by a mob, because they were Mormons. In 1834, they moved to Clay County to join with the main body of the church. Four years later, they were forced out of Missouri by a combination of militia troops and vigilantes, after Governor Boggs issued his infamous Extermination Order on October 27th, 1838. The order

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Journeys Home

...Journeys Home Continued...

described the Mormons as being in “open and avowed defiance of the laws, and of having made war upon the people of this state.” It stated that “the Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the State, if necessary, for the public peace — their outrages are beyond all description.” My family eventually settled in Utah in 1852, five years after the first Mormon pioneers arrived in the Salt Lake Valley under the leadership of Brigham Young, the successor to Joseph Smith.

My Jewish grandmother on my father’s side was the last of my family to be converted to Mormonism and relocate to Utah from Switzerland. My great grandparents left for Utah to join seven of their children who had already emigrated, but they were forced to leave my grandmother, Marie Kauffman, behind in the “Old Country,” because she was infected with tuberculosis. Grandma eventually made the journey with her sister, but only after her TB symptoms had subsided enough for her to slide past the US Immigration authorities in the New York harbor.

My family was directed by Brigham Young in 1852 to settle in a high mountain area of the Wasatch Range in northern Utah called Cache Valley. According to my great-great-great grandfather’s account, “We met the Apostle Ezra T. Benson at the point of the mountain. We asked him what the privileges were in the valley and he said, ‘Find the best place you can.’” They found a place on the southeast side of the valley called Hyrum (named for Joseph Smith’s brother) and established their 20-acre farm with about 12 or 15 other families. All of my extended family since those early pioneer ancestors were born and raised as

members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was only natural that my sister and I were brought up in the religion as well.

Mormonism in Utah was not just practiced on Sundays; it was a way of life. School, social activities, scouting, dancing, music, theater, sports, and much more revolved around the church. My parents did not go to church regularly, but they were very adamant that my sister and I not miss out on anything the church had to offer. They paid their Fast Offerings and welcomed the visiting Home Teachers in an effort to maintain their ties with the church and thereby remain in good standing. In those days, anyone who was less than an active member of the church was ostracized by the majority. Approximately 77 percent of the population of Utah was Mormon, and my parents did not want me or my sister to become one of those unmentionable, disenfranchised “others.”

Mormonism is still thriving in Utah and growing all over the world. The LDS have a very carefully groomed image of family togetherness and steadfast moral values. Mormons believe that strong families make a strong nation, and strong nations make a strong world. They have a program called “Family Home Evening,” in which each participating family sets aside one evening per week to gather and discuss issues concerning the church. The goal of every faithful Mormon is to go to the temple and to be sealed for time and eternity as a family unit. In order to enter the temple, each individual needs a temple recommendation from his Bishop and Stake President.

Continued on page 9 ➡



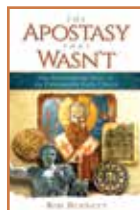
SUPPORT THE CHNETWORK!

Through your donation to the CHNetwork, you become a partner in our ministry of assisting non-Catholic clergy and laity on the journey to the Catholic Church. As a thank you, we are delighted to offer the following resources to help enrich your faith.



Deep in Scripture CD

In this classic *Deep in Scripture* program, Marcus Grodi welcomes Gene Fadness, a former member of the Church of Latter-day Saints, to discuss a Bible verse that challenged his understanding of the Mormon Faith. Marcus and Gene discuss the Mormon understanding of the temple, the priesthood, the Eucharist, and divinity, and how these understandings differ from mainstream Christianity. Gene also gives suggestions on how to talk to LDS missionaries at your door.



The Apostasy That Wasn't:

The Extraordinary Story of the Unbreakable Early Church — By Rod Bennett

The idea of a “Great Apostasy” is one of the cornerstones of many religions, including Mormonism. Many people today profess a faith built on the assumption that the early Church quickly became broken beyond repair, requiring some new prophet or reformer to restore the “pure” teaching of Jesus and the Apostles. Rod Bennett gives a gripping account of the early years of the Church and shows that there could never be a Great Apostasy — because Jesus promised His Church would never be broken.

\$35

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

\$50

Receive *The Apostasy That Wasn't* for a donation of \$50.

\$75

Receive a *Deep in Scripture* CD and *The Apostasy That Wasn't* for a donation of \$75.

— THESE RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY —

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

CHNETWORK EVENT

COLUMBUS, OHIO RETREAT!

Register now for the upcoming
CHNetwork retreat in
Columbus, Ohio April 27-30, 2020.



Coming Home Network retreats are opportunities to meet (or catch up with) the CHNetwork staff and other members of the network for a time of discussion, prayer, and worship. Intended for both converts/reverts and those on the journey to Catholicism, the goal is to promote Christian fellowship among the attendees, assist in discernment for those who are facing tough questions or decisions, and to encourage all in an ever greater walk with Christ.

Space is limited and the deadline to register is April 6, 2020.

To learn more or to register, please go to chnetwork.org/retreats/ or contact Ken Hensley at kenh@chnetwork.org or 740-450-1175.

APRIL 27-30

COLUMBUS, OHIO

Let Us Stir One Another Up!

By Marcus Grodi

Around 250 years ago, Thomas Paine helped spark the American Revolution with the words, “These are the times that try men’s souls.” Around 150 years ago, Charles Dickens began his great historical novel about the French Revolution with the words, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”



Well, the news about the Catholic Church of today can certainly seem to fit both of these descriptions. Surveys suggest that an increasing percentage of

Catholics don’t know their faith very well and are becoming less active at Mass. Because of my travels, I’m often visiting different Catholic parishes. My visits, though, generally center on four parishes, all of which have seen reductions in attendance, as well as charitable giving, over the past few years. And the news about the continuing clerical sex scandal — and the prediction that the litigations will only increase in the coming years — makes many of us particularly sheepish about telling our fallen away relatives or non-Catholic neighbors and friends that “for the sake of their salvation” they really do need to join the Catholic Church.

It’s easy to get discouraged. And it’s easy to wonder, “God, what are You doing?” Or, “Lord, what are we doing wrong?” But, I think the most important question — maybe the biggest reason for all of this — is “Lord, give us the strength and perseverance to remain faithful to You and Your Church, even in the worst of times!” But my point in this short article is not to be a doom-sayer, but to encourage you with a little bit of data: to give you some reasons to be hopeful.

Twenty-six years ago we started the Coming Home Network to help non-Catholic Christians, clergy and laity, “come home” to the Catholic Church. And there were lots of reasons we believed — and continue to believe — that God is calling us to do this. The single most important reason, though, was that we, ourselves, had come to the conviction that Jesus Christ had indeed established the Church as necessary for salvation — that it is through the Church that we can most assuredly come to know Him and to believe in Him, and through Baptism come to abide in Him forever.

Clergy Members By Denominational Tradition

DENOMINATION	CONVERT	JOURNEY	TOTAL
Anglican/Episcopal	393	200	593
Methodist/Wesleyan	135	149	284
Baptist	136	124	260
Lutheran	102	126	228
Evangelical/Non-Denominational	100	101	201
Pentecostal/Charismatic	100	98	198
Presbyterian/Reformed	96	64	160
Disciples of Christ/Church of Christ	33	41	74
Eastern Orthodox	13	46	59
Congregational/UCC	31	18	49
Separated Catholic	11	15	26
Other Christian Traditions	35	42	77
Jehovah's Witness	6	3	9
Mormon (LDS)	8	3	11
New Age	9	5	14
Unitarian	2	3	5
TOTAL CLERGY MEMBERS	1,210	1,038	2,248

Yes, in His mercy and by grace, God can and does reach individuals outside the Church, through the reading of Scripture, the preaching of the Word, the witness of other Christians, and particularly through the many voices proclaiming Christ in the media. Yet — and this you have to hear — there remains a constant, steady stream of these non-Catholic Christians, laity as well as clergy, being drawn to explore the Catholic Faith. Even with all the problems being shouted from every corner of the internet, and even with the many barriers in their own lives trying to dissuade them from anything Catholic, they still keep coming, asking for more information about this Church that, for many of them, they never dreamed they would even consider joining.

Vocation of Clergy Convert Members after Conversion

	DIOCESAN MINISTRY	PARISH MINISTRY	NON-PARISH MINISTRY	MISSIONARY	RELIGIOUS	ACADEMIC
Catholic Bishop	1	-	-	-	-	-
Catholic Deacon (P)	1	10	1	-	-	1
Catholic Deacon (T)	-	-	1	-	-	-
Catholic Priest (C)	1	45	9	1	3	3
Catholic Priest (M)	13	178	27	1	-	6
Laymen	14	50	45	5	-	87
TOTALS	30	283	83	7	3	97

A week doesn't go by without a dozen or more of non-Catholic laity, and between two to five new non-Catholic ministers contacting our Coming Home Network staff, seeking clarification about the teachings of the Church, and often asking how one becomes a Catholic. And for the clergy, as you've heard us say many times, conversion to the Catholic Church poses many, many challenges. But, as the first chart on page 4 indicates, over the past 20+ years, we have been contacted by over 2200 clergy from literally all of the major non-Catholic Christian traditions, with over half actually entering the Church, while the other half still somewhere along the journey. We are committed to doing everything we can to stand beside these seekers, to help those on the journey, as well as those who have come home, to discern what God is calling them to do now, with the gifts and training and experiences God gave them as non-Catholic ministers.

The chart on the bottom of pages 4 and 5 itemizes what former non-Catholic ministers are doing after they enter the Church. As you can see, many find opportunities to serve in the Church as deacons, priests, and even one a bishop! But most clergy converts end up supporting their families and serving the Lord as Catholic lay men and women. And it's important to help them recognize that, though this may mean they are no longer up front in the pulpit as they once were, this is not a "step down." As Pope John Paul II wrote in his important Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, quoting Pius XII, "The Faithful, more precisely the lay faithful, find themselves on the front lines of the Church's life; for them the Church is the animating principle for human society. Therefore, they in particular, ought to have an ever-clearer consciousness *not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church*, that is to say, the community of the faithful on earth under the leadership of

the Pope, the head of all, and of the Bishops in communion with him. These *are the Church*" (para 9).

We continue to believe that though God may be calling these men and women, clergy and lay, home to the Church for the sharing of their gifts for the renewal of the Church, we mostly believe that God is calling them home for the salvation of their souls. Yes, the Church teaches that they can find Christ, they can find salvation, outside the visible walls of the Church, but we must never presume on this — and we must not let *them* pre-

sume on this — for apart from the trustworthy guidance of the Magisterium of the Church, even the divinely inspired words of Scripture can be easily misunderstood and misapplied by even the most sincere of souls.

So, in these trying times, please know that the Coming Home Network is as committed as ever to helping our separated brethren — fallen away family members, neighbors, friends, co-workers — come home to the Catholic Church. And of course, you are a very important part of this, for without your prayers

You are a very important part of this, for without your prayers and financial support, our staff and volunteers could not be available to answer the many questions and provide the resources to help seekers find the fullness of faith.

and financial support, our staff and volunteers could not be available to answer the many questions and provide the resources to help seekers find the fullness of faith, that frankly far too many of us take for granted — and from which far too many are now falling away!

Please, let's keep each other in prayer; for our families and friends, and especially during these weeks of Lent, let us follow the words of the writer of Hebrews: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Heb 10:23-25). ■

Vocation of Clergy Convert Members after Conversion (continued)

LAY APOSTOLATE	STUDENT	SECULAR EMPLOYMENT	UNEMPLOYED	RETIRED	DISABLED	TOTALS
-	-	-	-	-	-	1
-	-	10	-	-	-	23
-	-	-	-	-	-	1
-	-	-	-	-	-	62
-	-	1	-	-	-	226
84	17	451	10	110	16	889
84	17	462	10	110	16	1,202

CHNETWORK EVENTS

Please consider joining us for one of our upcoming CHNetwork events!

APRIL 27-30, 2020

CHNetwork retreat in Columbus, Ohio

SEPTEMBER 8-18, 2020

Deep in History pilgrimage to Germany

OCTOBER 12-15, 2020

CHNetwork retreat in Houston, Texas

Go to chnetwork.org, call 740-450-1175, or contact Ken Hensley at kenh@chnetwork.org to learn more.

SHARE THE NEWSLETTER!

The CHNetwork encourages members to make copies of the newsletter and distribute them to family and friends to encourage them to join our mailing list. They may also request to receive our mailings by using the response card included with this newsletter. We do ask that copies of the newsletter not be sold. Unless otherwise indicated, the contents of this newsletter are copyright © 2020 by the Coming Home Network International. All rights reserved.



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The Coming Home Network International



www.chnetwork.org



NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE



Our online newsletter archive is new and improved! Visit <http://newsletter.chnetwork.org/bookcase/xdjce> or scan the QR code to view past newsletters.

TAX LETTER



If you need a record of your 2019 contributions for tax purposes, please contact **Janna Pitcock**:

janna@chnetwork.org

740.450.1175 x102

EWTVN'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

March 2

Dr. Jonathan Fuqua
(former Evangelical Protestant)

March 9

Atheism Roundtable with
Sr. Theresa Aletheia Noble, FSP
& Leah Libresco Sergeant

March 16

Fr. Scott Borgman*
(former Pentecostal missionary)

March 23

Sarah Christmyer*
(former Evangelical Protestant)

March 30

Keith Nester*
(former Methodist pastor)

April 6

Bishop Scott McCaig*
(former Presbyterian & Anglican)

*Schedule is subject to change.

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

Joyful Journey Updates

From Margi, on the journey "I have begun RCIA in the parish just one block from my senior citizens apartment. I believe God helped me find a friend who volunteered transportation and sponsorship — two things I had asked our Blessed Mother about ... I'm so grateful for all I've learned from EWTN in the past 3 years, and the Coming Home Network's personal encouragement in the past 6 months ... I can't thank you enough for your kindness and the fantastic encouragement that comes daily through the CHNetwork ... So much knowledge and understanding in our members!"

From Jerry, a recent revert "The radical sanation was approved a few weeks ago! Shortly thereafter I had my first Confession after about 45 years and began, finally, to receive the Eucharist on August 15, the Assumption of Our Holy Mother. I have been going to St Elizabeth's for over a year. It is now starting to feel like I am really a part of it. Thank you for your help and prayers in all this. I really appreciate all you have done. I will be forever in the apostolate's debt for all the encouragement I have received, and

continue to receive, from everyone at the Coming Home Network. And I really hope to meet you someday, notwithstanding a continued email conversation."

From a former Lutheran pastor "I was warmly welcomed by the Mass community of the monastery. Warmest thanks to everyone who prayed for me! In my testimony which I didn't prepare before, among other aspects I felt like talking about how CHN was the first step to go out at all with my intention to consider the Catholic Church and how my safe and supporting contact encouraged me ... in every little and big step forward since. I am so happy to share my joy with you now and please tell it all who were involved in your team with most heartfelt thanks still telling myself time and again that I am Catholic now."

From Neil, a revert "Sometime ago I went to Confession and said to the priest in the form of a question, 'Father, am I in full communion with the Church now?' Father asked me, 'Are you?' I answered, 'Yes I am!' My relationship with the Church and the Blessed Sacrament is more than an

announcement — It is a deep and quiet faith linked together with the Sacrament of Reconciliation which I look forward to and use on a regular basis. I am Roman Catholic and I serve the Church in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal."

From Heather, a recent convert "I am pleased to say that I celebrated my Confirmation and First Communion ... There were at least 40 people in attendance, many of them Protestant friends who supported my faith journey. It was an emotional event for me. My priest, Father Joe, shared his thoughts and said that he was personally moved by the honor I showed my husband, by waiting. He said that my journey was one that had changed him and that he would never forget it. That was very humbling ... All of the people who had been in my RCIA program, the team of sponsors and fellow candidates, were there. I was in RCIA 5 years ago! That day I felt so much love and support. I've been pondering the way that all the cobblestones came together in the road that led me home to the Catholic Church. All I had to do was be willing to take the journey." ■

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/ 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 ministry.

☐ Yes! I wish to make a monthly donation of \$_____ on auto-payment to help support the CHNetwork's 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 a Vineyard pastor as he contemplates leaving the Protestant ministry to become Catholic, that the questions he has about certain aspects of Catholic teaching will be answered and he will have the confidence to follow where the truth leads.

■ For Eduardo, who recently resigned from his position as pastor of a Presbyterian church and entered the Catholic Church with his wife, that the Lord will lead him as he seeks new employment.

■ For David, who has decided that he is no longer interested in becoming Catholic, that the Lord will continue to draw him to His Church.

■ For a United Methodist minister in North Carolina who is exploring his options about becoming a Catholic, that the Holy Spirit may guide his path.

■ For Kent, a non-denominational seminarian, that his study of the history of the Church may draw him home to the Catholic faith.

■ For Greg, a minister in the midwest, that he may find Catholic friends who will help his journey to the Church.

■ For the wife of a minister in Kansas, that her husband would be understanding and supportive of her interest in the Catholic Faith.

■ For Chris, an Episcopal priest in the south, that the Holy Spirit would grant him guidance and direction as he journeys to the fullness of the Catholic Faith.

■ For Billy, a Southern Baptist minister, that he may find a way to provide for his family and thus open a way for him to enter the Church.

■ For David, an Anglican priest, that he may find good answers to his questions about the papacy and purgatory.

■ For a Berean Fellowship youth minister, that he may find healing and wholeness in the Catholic Church.

■ For John, a Pentecostal minister, that he may be given a hunger for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

■ For Eric, a minister in Pennsylvania, that the Lord would open viable vocational options for him so that he may come home.

■ For a Reformed minister, that she may find fulfillment at the altar of our Lord Jesus.

■ For a Christian & Missionary Alliance seminarian in the south, that he and his wife may find a supportive Catholic parish.

Laity

■ For Ray who is attracted to the Catholic Church but struggles with many questions, that he will find the answers he needs.

■ For Stan who is having a hard time finding opportunities to connect at a local Catholic parish and to learn more about Catholicism.

■ For Wendi who has reached out to a priest who is helping her move forward with her journey, that she will receive the help and encouragement she needs.

■ For Chris to be able to find the time and opportunity to explore the claims of the Catholic Church.

■ For Donna who is having difficulties sorting through Catholic practices and devotions.



■ For an agnostic in Texas who is reading and continuing to learn more about the Catholic Faith, that she will have a clear direction in her journey.

■ For Linda who is interested in the Catholic Church but isn't sure how to move forward with her faith journey.

■ For Jeff to know what direction to pursue with his faith life.

■ For an agnostic who is searching for truth and is interested in learning more about Catholicism.

■ For Loretta as she tries to find her place in the Church as a new convert.

■ For a non-denominational Christian in Ohio who is having a hard time with various aspects of RCIA.

■ For Lisa who very much wants to become Catholic but is not able to move forward with her journey, that Jesus will be close to her during this time.

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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► “Journeys Home” continued from page 2

The recommendation is only granted to Mormons in good standing with the church (i.e., those who live the Word of Wisdom, pay 10 percent tithing, attend church regularly, etc.).

In addition to ministering to their own members, there are over 65,000 full-time missionaries and almost 40,000 Church-Service Missionaries around the world who dedicate their lives, at personal expense and great sacrifice, to spread the word about Mormonism to others. The young missionary’s appeal comes from his or her youthful appearance and enthusiasm and from the social programs the church offers, such as dancing, sports, scouts, and genealogy.

Most members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have complete and unquestioning trust in all that is Mormon. They believe with all their hearts that their faith represents the only true church on earth, and it is their goal and responsibility to spread that belief to everyone else.

As I was growing up, I had very little contact with people outside the LDS church. The few non-Mormons I knew were viewed as outsiders and were treated differently than the members. Even Mormons who did not attend church regularly or who did not live according to the teachings of the church were still considered somehow “better” than non-members. I experienced this social exclusion first-hand when I decided not to attend the church-sponsored seminary program during my first year of high school. Almost everyone who was Mormon, however, attended the seminary classes. It was difficult for me to relate to my friends as they exchanged stories about the things they were learning in seminary and the activities in which they were involved. I did not make that mistake again! I participated in the three-year seminary program rather than the normal four years and was once again content to find myself included in conversations with my friends.

Mormons consider the “Standard Works” to be the basis of their doctrine. These four books are the Bible (King James Version), the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. They believe the Bible to be incomplete, because many “plain and precious parts” have been taken away by the “great and abominable church.” The Book of Mormon is regarded as a volume of Holy Scripture. It supposedly contains the fullness of the everlasting gospel. Joseph Smith described the Book of Mormon as “the most correct of any book on earth, and

the keystone of our religion.” The Doctrine and Covenants consists primarily of revelations given to Joseph Smith and is full of instruction for the church regarding Mormon beliefs and practices involving baptism for the dead, celestial marriage, priesthood, and polygamy. The Pearl of Great Price is a collection of smaller writings and contains the 13 Articles of Faith, a summary of the beliefs of the LDS church.

From the Mormon perspective, there are three basic classifications of Christian churches. First is the Catholic Church, which claims it has had an uninterrupted existence since it was originally founded by Jesus Christ. Second are the Protestant churches, founded by Reformers who believe that the original Church fell into apostasy and that the Gospel can be returned

to the teachings and practices of the early Church through an intense study of the Bible. The third classification consists of those who believe that the Church fell into total apostasy and could not be reestablished through reformation, but only through a restoration.

I was taught that the Catholic Church was the “great and abominable church” mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Furthermore, the Catholic Church had intentionally removed the “plain and precious parts” from the Bible that were essential for a full un-

derstanding of the teachings of Christ. As a result, there was a “Great” or “Total Apostasy” from the Gospel, and it became necessary for the church to be restored by Jesus Christ to Joseph Smith. As a Mormon, it was easier to relate to members of the Protestant churches because they had a common disdain for the Catholic Church. I agreed with the Protestants in their recognition of the Catholic Church as an apostate church, but felt that they had only the incomplete Bible as their source for doctrine. It was easy to use the Bible to support the Mormon position where possible and then to claim that it was not translated correctly when it conflicted with what I was taught to believe as a Mormon.

When I left Utah in 1968 to join the military, the Mormon bishop gave me a metal dog tag. Engraved on one side was a picture of the Mormon Temple in Salt Lake City. On the reverse side were the words, “I am a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” When times were hard, I would touch my dog tags with the Mormon medal as a reminder of my roots and my heritage. It gave me comfort to recall that I was at heart just

“Mormons ... believe the Bible to be incomplete, because many 'plain and precious parts' have been taken away by the 'great and abominable church.' The Book of Mormon is regarded as a volume of Holy Scripture.”

...Journeys Home Continued...

a simple Mormon boy from Utah, protected from the evils of the world by my family, friends, and church.

Despite the consolation it provided, I became inactive in the Mormon church. About a year later, I met Anne, a Catholic, and we were married by a Catholic priest in Germany in 1971. Our two daughters were raised Catholic under my wife's instruction. For many years I attended Catholic Mass, often as a musician with the choir. While stationed in San Francisco, I played the guitar at the local Army chapel, along with a Baptist piano player. We often joked that we knew the words of the Mass better than most Catholics in attendance.

I continued to proudly proclaim my Mormon affiliation, even though I did not attend their services. I had no intention of joining any other church, especially not the Catholic Church. I knew how much it meant to my family back in Utah that I remain a member of the Mormon church. I dreaded visits from the Home Teachers, but I always made sure that my church records followed me to my new duty station. I did not let the Mormons get too close to me, afraid that they would talk me into coming back to church again. I made good friends with another Mormon service member, who kept me informed with the latest news from the church. Otherwise, I kept my distance from the Mormons, comfortable to just sit on the fence.

We moved to Virginia in January of 1993 for an assignment at the Pentagon, and I began attending Mass regularly. I joined the contemporary choir because I enjoyed the music, and I thought it was a nice, neutral way to worship God. When asked to do a newsletter for the Schoenstatt Rosary Campaign, I jumped at the opportunity to display my computer talents. Through the preparation of the newsletter, I was first introduced to the Rosary and to Mary's special role in the life, suffering, and death of Jesus. I could not help but be touched by the things I was reading. I began to ask questions. Anne was, of course, excited about my interest and began dropping Catholic literature around the house for me to find.

In the early part of November, I asked Anne if she was trying to convert me. She said she was not and reminded me that she had *never* pressured me to become a Catholic. For over 22 years of married life, I had gladly called myself a Mormon, and I told Anne that I had no intention of becoming a Catholic. "I was born a Mormon, I was raised a Mormon, and I'm going to die a Mormon!" I exclaimed. But something was happening to me. The power of all the prayers that were being said for me by

Anne and by many others was having an effect. The Holy Spirit was working on me.

On November 20th, 1993, I sacrificed a Saturday to attend a seminar given by Scott and Kimberly Hahn. Scott told his story of assuming the role of detective in an attempt to prove once and for all that the Catholic Church was wrong. In the process of his studies, he became a Catholic. I remember thinking to myself that obviously he did not research very well, or he would have become a Mormon instead of a Catholic. I decided to try the detective thing myself, just to prove the Catholics wrong and the Mormons right.

I began reading and researching like there was no tomorrow. I read books on Mormonism, Protestantism, and Catholicism. I listened to audio tapes and watched videos. I grabbed at anything I could get my hands on to confirm beyond a shadow of a doubt that the only true church on earth was the one restored by Jesus Christ via the "Prophet" Joseph Smith and his followers. Much to my chagrin, every direction I turned, and on each point I investigated, I found overwhelming evidence against the Mormon position. The more I researched, the more problems I found with the Mormon doctrines I had been taught.

I discovered that the Mormon teaching of a "Total Apostasy" in the early Church established by Jesus Christ was simply not true. The overwhelming historical evi-

dence supports the Catholic teaching on apostolic succession. It was first demonstrated in the replacement of Judas by Matthias (Acts 1:15–26). The chain has been unbroken from Peter to Pope Francis (Matt 16:18). Without a great and total apostasy, there is no need for a restoration.

Another truth I uncovered through my research is that there is only one God. I could no longer accept basic Mormon principles, such as the plurality of gods made of flesh and bones, God's essential humanity, and man's progression to become an exalted god of his own world. Through the mystery of the Holy Trinity, I began to understand the one divine nature of God in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Lastly, I came to know that God is the "first cause" of everything, and that our souls and bodies are created at the moment of conception. I could no longer accept the Mormon plan of eternal progression, consisting of a pre-mortal existence, where each person is born into this world according to his previous merits in the spirit world. I started to believe that nothing exists that does not owe its existence to God the Creator. The next logical step

Through the mystery of the Holy Trinity, I began to understand the one divine nature of God in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

...Journeys Home Continued...

was to realize that Mary was created as the most exalted creature on earth. I began to see her as the daughter of God the Father, the spouse of God the Holy Spirit, and the mother of God the Son. I saw that through a better understanding of the virtues of the Blessed Virgin, we can more nearly follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

By Christmas, I was absolutely convinced that the Mormons were wrong. I was devastated! How could so many good people be deceived? What about all the sacrifices my ancestors had made for the church? How could I turn my back on my heritage, my upbringing, my family, and my childhood friends? I wanted to pretend that I had never started on this journey. I wished I could go back to the way things were, but it was too late. I had found the truth.

Once I had decided that I wanted to become a Catholic, I had a wonderful feeling of peace, because I knew that I was doing the right thing. I was certain that God was prompting me along the way and giving me the grace to open my mind and heart to accept the truth of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

At the same time there was a tremendous battle raging about me that left me wondering what was going to happen next. I was challenged from all directions in what seemed like a concerted effort to prevent me from trusting in God. The spiritual warfare even manifested itself physically. One morning, about two weeks before my baptism, another driver ran into the back of my car on the way to work. I was verbally attacked by members of my family in Utah and some of my co-workers at the Pentagon. On Ash Wednesday, I was heckled by my supervisor for having “dirt” on my forehead. The distractions and obstacles seemed constant and unrelenting. I just kept reminding myself that I must be on the right track since all these bad things were being thrown at me. I accepted my sufferings as the devil’s desperate attempt to steer me away from the Church.

Not to be outdone, God gave me some loving affirmations that He was there with me. One evening at church, I was overcome with joy and drawn almost uncontrollably to an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. I genuflected towards the tabernacle and made the Sign of the Cross for the first time in my life. Also, on Ash Wednesday, just days before my baptism, I had a very moving experience confirming to me the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. During my First Confession the next day, I had another nudge that assured me of the authority of the Pope as the successor to Peter and the Vicar of Christ. By that time, I had no problem discerning which combatant was sending the good messages and which was sending the negative ones.

On February 19th, 1994, I received the holy Sacraments of Baptism (it was a conditional Baptism since at that time the validity of a Mormon baptism was uncertain), Confirmation, First Communion, and convalidation of the Sacrament of Matrimony performed over 22 years earlier. On January 18th, 2014, I was ordained as a Permanent Deacon for the Catholic Diocese of Arlington, Virginia. I jokingly tell people that this was my sec-

ond time to be ordained as a deacon, the first time being in 1962 when I was ordained as a deacon in the LDS Aaronic priesthood.

I am often asked why I left the LDS church for the Catholic Church. My answer: The Catholic Church teaches the *fullness* of truth by the authority of Christ given to the Apostles and handed on to their successors, the bishops. I love being Catholic, because it is the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church established by Jesus Christ two thousand years ago. I love being Catholic because we have the True Presence of Christ — Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity — in the Eucharist. I love being Catholic because the Church recognizes the critical role that the Blessed Virgin Mary has in God’s plan for our salvation. I love being Catholic because the sanctifying graces of the seven sacraments have allowed the Holy Spirit to open my mind and heart to accept the truth of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. The day I became Catholic was a sacred day that I will cherish forever. ■



DEACON STEVE CLIFFORD was born and raised in Utah as a fifth-generation member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He served in the United States Air Force from 1968 to 1972 where he met and married his wife of 48 years while on assignment in West Germany. After receiving his undergraduate degree from Weber State College in Ogden, Utah, Deacon Steve served as a commissioned officer in the United States Army for 19 years, retiring with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He subsequently worked as a systems analyst for a defense contractor for 16 years. Deacon Steve and his wife, Annerose, currently live in the Massanutten Mountains within the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. He is the Permanent Deacon at St. John Bosco Catholic Church in Woodstock, Virginia. They have two married daughters, eight living grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. An earlier version of this conversion story appeared in the May/June 1998 issue of Envoy Magazine, as well as in Surprised by Truth 2, edited by Patrick Madrid and published on December 1st, 2000. Steve has been a guest on The Journey Home twice and his episodes can be viewed online at chnetwork.org.

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