



## April 2021 CHNewsletter

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# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



## Called to Mission

By Lani Bogart

In June 1990, having been accepted by an independent mission agency, and with the blessing of our pastor and members of our independent charismatic church, we sold our furniture, gave away our pets, packed our few remaining possessions, and moved to Antigua, Guatemala to study Spanish.

We felt God was calling us to serve in a more radical way, and serving as missionaries seemed the best way for our four children, ages seven to twelve, to see Christianity in action.

In language school, we encountered Dick and Mo Herman, the founders of a Catholic apostolate called *Seguidores de la Cruz* (Servants of the Cross). The Hermans had nine children, and with them were four single young adults who were prayerfully discerning whether God was calling them to marriage or to be priests or religious. They invited our family to a Lord's Day celebration, a family ritual meal in which we, as non-Catholics, could fully participate. I was especially moved by the way they honored one another, praising some virtue they had seen in one of their children or another community member.

The Hermans welcomed us as peers. They lived simply, attended daily Mass, and their children seemed to be thriving. We admired them, sensing they had something we lacked. We acknowledged this to each other, saying, "they're *real* missionaries."

Toward the end of our three months in language school, schools and streets in Antigua were closed for a solemn procession. Families solemnly processed, carrying the bones of Blessed Peter Betancourt, a Franciscan friar known locally as Hermano Pedro. His bones rested on red velvet pillows in a glass case

atop a weighty wooden platform carried on the shoulders of about a dozen men. Thick incense wafted through the air, and women sang hymns while men beat drums or blew horns.

The sight of hundreds of Catholics venerating a dead man's bones disturbed me. It seemed that a childlike humility and reverence in the Guatemalan people was being exploited by the Catholic Church. Didn't veneration of saints detract from honoring Jesus? At the time, I didn't know that it was only because Hermano Pedro had lived his life in such close union with Christ that he was honored as a saint. I knew nothing of the painstaking collection of data and verifiable evidence of miracles before the Church canonizes someone.

When I saw the joy evident in the faces of our new friends, the Hermans, I could not make sense of how they, whose love for Jesus was undeniable, could also pray to saints. I asked Dick Herman about it. "I know you're a true Christian, in love with Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit. Why isn't Jesus enough? How can you justify praying to Mary and the saints?"

Dick answered, "I've studied the teachings of my Church, and I'm at peace with what I believe. I'm convinced that honoring Mary and the saints is right and good. I could try to explain all the reasons, but I'm not sure you're ready to hear

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*Journeys Home*

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

it. Mo and I value our friendship with you and Doug. I don't want this difference to become an obstacle in our relationship with you. We have more in common than the things that divide us, so is it alright with you if we just focus on the things we share in common?"

His answer demonstrated his love and respect for us. I set aside my questions because I valued their friendship, too. After language school, we parted ways, keeping in touch via our mission newsletters and promising to pray for one another.

### An Unexpected Gift of Life

In the earliest days of our relationship, Doug and I discussed how many children we'd have. I wanted six; Doug was thinking two. We decided to compromise on four. Five and a half years into our marriage and two weeks before the birth of our fourth child, we took the advice of our friends and family and chose sterilization to limit the size of our family. Doug was twenty-nine and I was twenty-six. Less than two years later I regretted our decision. I buried my regrets for years, along with my desire for another baby, but the aching resurfaced with each monthly cycle, and I privately wept at the loss of our fertility. I knew couples who were infertile, while we had four healthy children. It wasn't a grief I could share.

In November of 1991, our mission agency joined with another small organization from Florida to host a team of doctors and nurses to provide short term medical clinics in and near Nebaj. Our daughter Cana and I would serve as English-to-Spanish translators for the team. We collaborated with Guatemalan volunteers who could translate from Spanish to Mayan Ixil.

At dinner the first evening, someone asked if Cana and I had seen the babies at the malnutrition center. We had seen toddlers playing in the courtyard, but not any infants. Cana, twelve years old, was naturally excited to see them. We left the table and hurried together to a cold, dark room where crude wooden cribs held two baby girls nestled in coarse blankets. One baby was emaciated and passive; the other was chubby, alert, and responsive to our voices. When a caregiver stopped by, we bombarded her with questions.

"What are their names? How old are they? How long have they been here? This one doesn't look malnourished, why is she here?"

The healthy baby girl's name was Juanita. She was about three weeks old, and her mother had died just four days before our arrival. Her father had brought her to the center because he had nothing to feed her. He was supposed to return in about two weeks.

"Oh, Mama, let's take her home ... pleeease!"

Cana's pleading was echoed by the inward yearning I felt. But I tried to be a good example for my daughter by the way I prayed, asking God to take care of Juanita's needs, acknowledging that God knew her future even before she was born, and adding, "If you want us to be a part of her future, we say 'yes.'"

The next morning, the team tried to cram too many volunteers into the available jeep for a trip to the neighboring village of Chajul. There was simply not enough room, so I was assigned by the team leader to make intercessory prayer. Reluctantly, I went to the designated room and began to pray.

After lunch, I received a message from one of the infant caregivers.

"The baby's father is asking for you. He heard that you were asking questions about his baby, and he wants to talk to you."

She led me to a room with a small desk and a few chairs. Waiting for us was Tomás Guzaro, a local pastor, community leader, and our team's main contact in the village. Juan Brito Velasco, the baby's father, was with him. Tomás explained that Juan Brito had been looking for a family member who could care for his daughter, someone who could feed her. He had asked several relatives, thinking perhaps a nursing niece or cousin might be willing to help him, but each barely had enough milk for her own child. Some were supplementing with a mixture of powdered oats and boiled water. None could afford expensive formula.

Because I had shown an interest in his baby, Juan Brito wondered if I would take her to live with our family for a year. Could we care for her temporarily? When she was older, her grandmother or another relative could take over.

I asked Tomás if he thought Juan Brito would allow me to adopt his daughter permanently. Such a question, he scolded, was entirely inappropriate, when the baby's father was still grieving the death of his wife. He wouldn't translate my question.

I breathed a prayer, and the choice before me became clear. I had heard that fifty percent of children born in the area didn't survive past two years. Without a mother, Juanita's odds were even worse. Would I choose to protect my own heart or her life?

The next couple of nights, I lay awake wondering how Doug would respond. I wished I could talk to him, but this was before cell phones, and I could only pray.

### RECOMMENDED RESOURCE



This month, the CHNetwork staff would like to suggest *Journeys Home 2* to our readers. This book gathers together more conversion stories of men and women, clergy and laity, who found themselves drawn to the Catholic Church. These men and women remain eternally grateful to the many faithful teachers, friends, and family who helped them know Christ and grow in the Christian

Faith. Yet in each case and in unique ways, the Holy Spirit opened their hearts to realize that much of what they had been taught about the Catholic Church was never true. They learned to listen to the voice of truth speaking through history, theology, philosophy, Sacred Tradition, Holy Scripture, and personal testimony. In time, their desire to follow Christ faithfully — to remain faithful to the truth He taught and to the Church He established through His Apostles — led them to consider the claims of the Catholic Church. In the end, they were all convinced that, whatever the cost, they must become Catholic.

Go to [www.chresources.com](http://www.chresources.com) to purchase this book and other resources about the Catholic Church.

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## ON THE JOURNEY

# Is *Sola Scriptura* Scriptural? Part III: The Arrogance of Catholicism\*

By Ken Hensley

We've been discussing *sola Scriptura*, which is really the very foundation of Protestantism as a worldview.

As an evangelical Protestant for about twenty years, *sola Scriptura* was something every Christian I knew held to be true. In the churches I attended, in Bible College, at Fuller Theological Seminary, in my ministry as a pastor, *sola Scriptura* was the unquestioned presupposition. When it came to determining the doctrinal and moral teaching of Christianity, we looked to the Bible and *the Bible alone!*

As John Calvin put it, “we hold that the Word of God alone lies beyond the sphere of our judgment ... Fathers and Councils are of authority only in so far as they accord with the rule of the Word.”

And who decides whether something the Fathers or the Councils have determined “accords with the rule of the Word”? Who determines this? Each of us. As Luther said, “In these matters of faith, to be sure, each Christian is for himself pope and church.”

Now, I could see how this “right of private interpretation” had led to a vast number of Protestant denominations and sects and independent churches. But truthfully, I was so *used* to the idea that Christianity existed in this fragmented state, that it didn't bother me.

I knew the Church over time had fractured; the Coptic church splintering off in the 6th century AD, the Orthodox churches in the 11th, and since the 16th century an ever-increasing number of Protestant denominations: Lutheran, Baptist, Presbyterian, Anglican, Methodist, Brethren, Congregationalist, Nazarene, Church of Christ, and a great number of independent churches.

I knew that these churches contradicted each other on many points of doctrine — even on issues as fundamental as how we are saved and whether salvation, once had, can be lost. I viewed this as unfortunate, but as something for which there really was *no answer*.

After all, I would have said at the time, Christians simply *don't agree* with one another on what the New Testament is teaching about these and many other issues. And since there is *no spiritual authority* on earth to decide these issues and unite all Christians in one Church, what could be done? It is just *the way things are!*

It was when I learned that an old friend from my seminary days had become Catholic, that I found myself challenged to ask questions I had never asked before, such as: is *sola Scriptura* true?

Is this how Jesus established His Church to function — everyone looking to the Bible alone? Did He essentially hand us an inspired book and say, “now, study real hard and each of you do your best to figure out what this book is teaching”?

Or did Jesus — as my friend was insisting — along with Scripture, give to His people a Church with the ability, by the Holy Spirit, to preserve in its doctrine and worship the substance of the apostolic teaching and to hand it down through the centuries? These were the questions that were set before me.

## Is *Sola Scriptura* Scriptural?

As I began the work of thinking this through, the first question for me was: is *sola Scriptura* scriptural? Does the New Testament teach us that, to quote Protestant scholars Norman Geisler and Ralph MacKenzie, “the Bible, nothing more, nothing less — and nothing else — is all that is needed for faith and practice”?

It was easy to see that the “practice” of the earliest Christians living during the time of the Apostles was not that of *sola Scriptura*. The inspired writings were certainly binding and authoritative for them. But so was the oral teaching of the Apostles. And so was the decision of the elders and Apostles as they met in Council (Acts 15).

But what about *after* the time of the Apostles? Everyone knows that when the Apostles were walking the earth, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and teaching with the authority of Christ — everyone knows Christians weren't practicing *sola Scriptura*. What Protestants insist, however, and what I believed, is that once the Apostles were no more, *from then on* binding authority would lie in their inspired writings and nowhere else!

The problem is, when I read through the New Testament looking specifically for clues as to what the Apostles thought about this, my

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conclusion was that if the Apostles believed that once they had left this earth what they had written would function as the “sole infallible rule of faith and practice” for Christians, *they sure didn't act like it!*

Most of them don't appear to have written anything.

John wrote a few very short epistles — in which he *twice* informs his readers that if he had his preference he wouldn't write at all! “Though I have much to write to you, I would *rather not use paper and ink*, but I hope to come to see you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete” (2 Jn 12, emphasis added).

And then, the one Apostle in the New Testament who actually addresses the issue of how his teaching is to be preserved after his death — he doesn't say a word about his writings!

Right when you would expect Paul to say, “Timothy, take my letters and make as many copies of them as possible!” as Paul prepares for his departure from this life, he speaks of a “pattern of sound words” that Timothy has “heard” from him and he commands Timothy to “guard” this “pattern of sound words,” this body of teaching by the Holy Spirit that is in him and to “entrust” it to his successors, who he presumes will do the same.

Guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells in you ... and what you have *heard* from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Tim 1:13 and 2:2).

What I found was a “mindset” among the Apostles that didn't reflect at all what one would expect of men preparing their spiritual children for a future in which the Bible, nothing more, nothing less — and nothing else — is all that would be needed for faith and practice!

In fact, Paul speaks as though he believes that the substance of his teaching will be preserved in the Church by the Holy Spirit, through a process that sounds an awful lot like apostolic succession!

## A New Covenant way of thinking

Now, of course I was so used to thinking in terms of the Bible alone that Paul's way of thinking here seemed utterly bizarre to me. But the more I read what Catholic apologists were saying, the more I read the New Testament, the more I could see that Paul's way of thinking was not without context.

When God the Father wanted to speak His most authoritative and eloquent Word, how did He do this? He spoke that Word by sending His Son, endowed with the Spirit, to teach by word and example.

The Letter to the Hebrews begins,

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son ... who is the radiance of his glory and the exact representation of his being (Heb 1:1-3).

He spoke to us by His Son!

Now let's move forward. When Jesus wanted to ensure that His teaching would continue in the world after He had risen from the dead and ascended to the Father, what did He do?

Well, He didn't sit down and write a book! Rather, He did the same thing His Father had done. He chose disciples. He taught them. He endowed them with His Spirit and authority, and He sent them out to do precisely what He had done: to teach by word and example.

And this is exactly what the Apostles did! They went out and preached. They founded churches. They entrusted their teaching

to those who they ordained to succeed them in the ministry and they went to their eternal reward *trusting* that the substance of their teaching would be preserved in the Church by the Holy Spirit.

It's within *this context* that the things Paul says to Timothy as he nears the end of his time on earth make sense!

In fact, this entire pattern reminds me of something Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:2-3 about the difference between the Old Covenant of the letter and the New Covenant of the Spirit.

You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your hearts, to be known and read by all men; and you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tables of human hearts.

**What was becoming clear to me was that the essential difference between the Protestant and Catholic worldviews is sort of analogous to the difference between the Old and New Covenants.**

Protestantism looks to the written record alone to find the teaching of the Apostles. Catholicism takes the writings of the Apostles as inspired and authoritative and as reflecting their teaching. But it also sees that teaching as “incarnated” in the Church the Apostles founded and that continued to speak with His authority.

In the Catholic conception, the Lord Jesus ascends to the Father and pours out His Spirit into His “Mystical Body” and the Church becomes His “letter” to the world.

Now, when we read the Gospels, Jesus surely *seems* to be establishing a Church that will speak in His name and with His divine authority: “He who hears you, hears me.” “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whoever's sins you forgive, they are forgiven; whoever's sins you retain, they are retained.” “I give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatsoever you bind on earth, it shall be bound in heaven; whatsoever you loose on earth, it shall be loosed in heaven” (Lk 10:16, Jn 20:22, Matt 16:19). Surely Jesus appears to be establishing a Church that will speak in His name and with His divine authority!

And when we read everything after the Gospels — the Acts of the Apostles and the New Testament Epistles — there's no way to escape the fact that the Church we see functioning at that time *is a Church* that is speaking with His divine authority!

And here's the thing: when Paul tells Timothy to guard the teaching by the Holy Spirit and entrust it to faithful men who will do the same, he's assuming that the authoritative Church we see Jesus establishing in the New Testament, the authoritative Church we see functioning in the New Testament, is the authoritative Church that will continue in the world *after* his death.

The difference between Catholicism and Protestantism is that Catholics believe that this authoritative Church *did* continue in the world after the death of the Apostles, and Protestants do not.

And what I was coming to see was that *sola Scriptura* isn't something Luther and Calvin embraced because they had done an inductive study of the New Testament and found that it teaches *sola Scriptura*. They embraced it because they came, at the time of the Reformation, to *no longer believe in the existence of this authoritative Church*.

Protestants see this New Testament Church as having *died* with the Apostles. And if there is no Church on earth possessing the authority, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to settle disputes and define Christian teaching as it did in Acts 15, to preserve the substance of the apostolic doctrine and to faithfully pass it down, what option is there but to stand on the Bible alone?

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## The Arrogance of Catholicism

This is the heart of the difference between Catholicism and Protestantism. And this explains a lot.

It explains, for instance, why the Catholic Church speaks of itself in language that seems *utterly arrogant* to Protestant ears.

I remember the first time I read *Dei Verbum*, the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, from Vatican II. I was struck by how this document speaks of Scripture, Tradition, and the authority of the Church in ways I would *never* have spoken as a Protestant, in a way no Protestant denomination would speak.

I was also struck by how much these words sounded like what I actually saw in the New Testament, where Scripture, Tradition, and the authority of the Church work together as one!

Hence there exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end.

For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.

Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church.

Holding fast to this deposit the entire holy people united with their shepherds remain always steadfast in the teaching of the Apostles, in the common life, in the breaking of the bread and in prayers (see Acts 2, 42, Greek text), so that holding to, practicing and professing the heritage of the faith, it becomes on the part of the bishops and faithful a single common effort.

But the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed.

It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls (*Dei Verbum*, 9-10 from vatican.va).

This sounds like the Church of the New Testament!

It may sound arrogant to Protestant ears, but all that the Church is saying is that the Church Jesus founded, the Church we see functioning in the New Testament, is the Church that continued to exist after the Apostles and continues to exist to this day.

To be continued... ■

\*See the January-March 2021 issues for previous installments in this series, online at [chnetwork.org](http://chnetwork.org).

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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:

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## ONLINE COMMUNITY



you to connect at [community.chnetwork.org](http://community.chnetwork.org).

We have a great way for converts and journeyers to connect online! CHN's Online Community is the quickest and easiest way for people on the journey to Catholicism to connect with converts, as well as CHN staff, for fellowship on the journey home. We invite

## CONTACT THE CHNETWORK



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Our online newsletter archive is new and improved! Visit <http://newsletter.chnetwork.org/bookcase/xdjce> or scan the QR code to view past newsletters. We do ask for a \$35 yearly donation to help cover the production costs of the newsletter.

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



### TELEVISION

Mondays at 8 PM ET — Encores: Tuesdays 1 AM ET, Thursdays 2 PM ET

*The Best of The Journey Home*: Saturday 6 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 5**

Marshall Fightlin\*  
*(convert from Judaism)*  
*(re-air from 6/18/18)*

**April 12**

Dr. Ryan McDermott\*  
*(former Episcopalian)*

**April 19**

Jeremy Tate\*  
*(former Presbyterian Church of America)* *(re-air from 8/6/18)*

**April 26**

Frank Cronin\*  
*(former atheist)*

**May 3**

Dr. Barry Carey\*  
*(former Oneness Pentecostal)*  
*(re-air from 8/13/18)*

\*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 Audrey, a convert** “I want to thank you and everyone involved with this network. Because of your loving, giving hearts, someone replied to my mother-in-law who wrote to this network with questions. That person sent her a handwritten letter and a book, both of which encouraged her and furthered her understanding of the Catholic Church, enabling her to keep seeking. Unbeknownst to me, she prayed and asked Mother Mary, in her questioning if there really was something with Mary, to help my six-month-old baby sleep the night through. Right away ... she slept her first night through! When I called and told her, she informed me that she had asked Mary to pray for us to Jesus. I couldn't believe it!!! ... Mary became my Mother at that moment then, too. Now I knew also there was something with Mary — and something with the Catholic Church. Although I grew up Catholic, I had never known my faith. We moved and my parents quit going to Mass and I was never even confirmed. I strayed from faith in college and my young 20s and eventually became ‘Christian,’ becoming very involved and loving a non-denominational Christian church where I met my husband. Eventually we were more drawn to the theology of a Reformed Baptist church. However, after Mary answered my mother-in-law's prayers and our daughter (and !!!!)

finally slept the night through, I was certainly drawn back to Catholicism, but had so many questions. My husband was not convinced or enthused. Long story short, after my going back to Catholic Church, reading Catholic books, moving twice, and my husband begrudgingly going with me to Mass sometimes, he allowed our five-year-old daughter to get baptized in the Catholic Church ... I was confirmed at the Easter Vigil Mass in 2018. My husband refused to be confirmed at that time. He was angry. He had so many theological questions and kept listening to Catholic Answers on the radio and calling in over and over asking his questions and reading several books on Catholicism until finally, after reading the early Church Fathers, he believed God was calling him to the one, true Church, the Church Jesus began. Gabe was baptized, confirmed, received First Communion, and we had our marriage convalidated all on my birthday, August 19, 2018. It's a beautiful story that all began with the Holy Spirit out of the blue calling my mother-in-law to a Catholic church in the country and, in her wondering why, reaching out to the Coming Home Network. You all lovingly wrote back and sent her a book. The story went on from there and she, her husband, me, their son (my husband) and our daughter all sought out the truth, went to RCIA in our parishes, fell in love with our Catholic

faith, and became Catholic. I want to sincerely thank you for this network and thank you for *The Journey Home* show which I have watched so often because they have helped me feel understood and share my excitement about my reversion and my husband's conversion.”

**From Catherine, a convert** “Well, I am officially a Catholic! What an experience, it was a wonderful day ... Father anointed me and spoke the words, ‘be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit,’ I immediately knew I was home and felt a calm and joy sweep over me. When it came to receiving the Most Blessed Sacrament — the sweet taste of the host was beyond compare! This was the first time receiving Jesus and truly discerning His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity ... It was so sweet and filling, that I just prayed and worshipped in wonder! If I had any last minute doubts about my decision — they were wiped away when my friends in Florida informed me that the Feast Day for yesterday was for Our Lady of La Leche. It is no small coincidence that Mary would have called me home at the Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche in August of 2019 and I would be confirmed over a year later on her feast day! God orchestrated this whole journey. Blessing and assuring me from start to finish on my journey home. It's good to be home, now the work begins in continuing my conversion.” ■

# Prayer List

## Clergy

■ **For Scott, a Pentecostal pastor** who has been drawn to the Church for a long time and has been in and out of RCIA but remains bothered by the scandals in the Church.

■ **For Brian, a Methodist pastor** who is convinced he must become Catholic and struggles with how he will support his family if he does.

■ **For Jon**, who has put his journey to the Catholic Church on hold but continues to be drawn, that the Holy Spirit will continue to lead him home.

■ **For a former pastor in India** who has resigned his pastorate, found a new job, and is excited about moving toward being received into the Church, that the Lord will give him wisdom as he leads his family.

■ **For a Baptist pastor** convinced of the truth of Catholicism but strongly opposed by his entire family, that the Lord will give him wisdom, fortitude, and compassion as he attempts to follow the truth and love his family at the same time.

■ **For Michael, a former Pentecostal pastor and his wife**, who were raised Catholic and have now made the decision to return home.

■ **For Joe**, who is on the road to entering the Catholic Church after decades as a pastor and street evangelist, that he will find a way to bring his wife along with him.

■ **For a prominent Brazilian pastor** who wants to return to the Catholic Church and is struggling with how to deal with everything this will mean for his family and livelihood.

■ **For Paul** who needs to find work so that he can resign his ministry to enter the Church.

■ **For an Episcopal priest** who has wanted to become Catholic for some time and is exploring possibilities that would allow him to support his family and enter the Church.

■ **For a former missionary** and her many misconceptions about the Catholic Faith, that she will be open to honestly learning about what Catholics believe.

■ **For Susan, a Protestant minister** who is open to learning more about the teachings of the Church, that the Holy Spirit will lead her.

■ **For Charles**, who has been a Protestant pastor since he was very young and loves the ministry but knows now that the Lord is calling him into the Catholic Church, that the Lord will help him as he explains this to his wife and eventually his congregation.

## Laity

■ **For a United Pentecostal in Mississippi**, that our Lord Jesus would open his heart to the fullness of the Christian Faith found only in the Catholic Church.

■ **For Sue** who is very drawn towards the Catholic Church and is going to Mass and saying the Rosary, that Jesus will make a way for her to receive the Eucharist soon.

■ **For Gabriel, a non-denominational Evangelical**, that he may discover the right way to worship God in the Holy Eucharist.

■ **For a Presbyterian** who feels like the ground under her feet is crumbling due to her draw back towards the Catholic Church after many years, that the Holy Spirit will guide her journey and give her clarity.

■ **For Kevin, a Southern Baptist**, that the Holy Spirit would clear away the conflicting opinions of some theologians that he has read and give him a clear understanding of the true teaching of the Catholic Faith.

■ **For Lisa** who feels disenchanted with her Protestant church but isn't quite sure what to do next with her faith journey.

■ **For Marco, in Pennsylvania**, that the grace of our Lord Jesus would guide him to the altar of the Lord in the Holy Eucharist.

■ **For a non-denominational Evangelical in Ohio**, that he may be guided to the perfect will of the Father in the decisions that he soon needs to make.

■ **For Christopher, a former Catholic**, that he may once again find joy and grace in the Catholic Church.



■ **For Aaron, a Pentecostal**, that our Lord would clear away his confusion and guide him home to the Catholic Church.

■ **For a Southern Baptist** who asks for prayers for her husband to encounter good, holy men who are positive witnesses of Catholicism so his heart will be softened towards her desire to become Catholic.

■ **For Charles in Maine**, that he may be guided to full communion with the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of his Lord Jesus Christ.

■ **For a recent convert in Maryland** who is struggling on account of her husband not sharing her desire to be Catholic and not having opportunities to connect at her parish due to the pandemic.

■ **For a Plymouth Brethren in Switzerland**, that God would clear away the confusion of his philosophy and guide him to the Catholic Faith.

■ **For Chris, an Anglican**, that all doors may open for him as he journeys home to the Catholic Church.

■ **For Barbara, a new convert**, as she finds ways to learn more and grow in her faith even in these challenging times.

■ **For a Jehovah's Witness**, that the Lord would guide his journey back to the Catholic Faith of his youth.

■ **For a woman in the south** who is very drawn to the Catholic Church but her husband has no desire to share her journey, that she will continue seeking the Lord's will in her life and truth.

■ **For Ann**, that will she be able to connect with a local parish about her deep desire to become Catholic and to find a good community of people to support her faith journey.

■ **For a woman who feels led to the Church** but her husband is anti-Catholic and her journey is causing problems in their marriage.

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.



## ...Journeys Home Continued...

► “Journeys Home” continued from page 2

As soon as I reunited with Doug, I put the baby in a friend's arms and ran to tell him what I'd done. He later told me that in the seconds that passed between “I have something to tell you” and “I brought home a baby,” the thought that flashed through his mind was “what, you're pregnant?”

He didn't wait for me to finish the speech I'd rehearsed.

“Well, where is she? I want to see her!”

When he held her and looked into her eyes, I recognized the same look of wonder on his face I'd seen when he first held our children as newborns. That settled it.

Eight months later, a missionary friend called to say that Juan Brito was on his way to our house “to take his baby back to the mountains.”

He and Tomás, who came to serve as translator, were about ten minutes away, we were told. We gathered the children to pray. Prayer and song brought me peace. But then my mind raced with thoughts of what I ought to send on the bus with Juan Brito. Would Juanita's pacifier be a comfort or a health hazard? How much could he carry with him? Who would hold her and sing her lullabies?

To calm my growing panic, I recalled a Bible verse I had memorized: “do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God, and the peace of God which transcends all human understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:6-7 NABRE).

While he was still on our doorstep, I placed Juanita into her birth father's arms. Immediately, a supernatural peace enveloped me. I saw the love in his eyes as he held her, his tears welling up, but not quite spilling over. Was that relief and a hint of pride that she was alert and healthy? Juanita studied her father's face, curious, with no fear. After a little while, she reached for me. Smiling, he let her come back into my arms.

After a quiet meal, Doug asked Tomás to translate for Juan Brito our request for permission to adopt his daughter permanently.

Juan Brito's habit of pondering in silence before speaking produced long pauses after each question and answer.

“Will you buy food for her?”

“Will you buy clothes and shoes for her?”

“Will you send her to school?”

“The same school you send your other children to?”

“Will you teach her about Jesus?”

Tomás served as translator between Juan Brito's Ixil and our limited Spanish. He turned toward me and reported, “Juan Brito wants

me to tell you, ‘I came to take my daughter back to the mountains to live with her grandmother, but I cannot take her from the arms of her mother.’”

We discovered the Ixil name for Juana is Xhiv, so decided to call her Xhiv Catarina.

Caring for a newborn refocused me on the needs of all my children. In retrospect, it's clear that our openness to new life in our family opened the door to new life in the spiritual realm.

### The Grace to Question

My decision to devote more time to our family distanced me from others in our mission agency, but my new neighbor, Kris Franklin, was supportive, and our friendship quickly grew. We talked about everything, including our misgivings about the missionary subculture in Guatemala. Her husband, Marty, taught at the missionary kids' school that our children attended.

She shared, and we discussed, Tom Howard's *Evangelical Is Not Enough*, which opened my mind to the idea that liturgy and ritual meet universal human needs.

A couple of years later, a missionary friend traveled back to the States and asked us to store his small theological library. Doug was interested in how they “did church” in the early days. He was especially intrigued by a volume by J.B. Lightfoot called *The Apostolic Fathers*.

Around this time, I dreamt that I had moved to a house near a desert mountain. In my dream, I was certain that if I rearranged the furniture so as to have a good view of the mountain, it would bring me closer to God. The following morning, I described the dream in a letter to Kris Franklin, who had since moved back to Minnesota. I was sure the dream was connected to my longing for home. I confided to Kris, “I don't even

know what ‘home’ means any more.”

My letter to Kris crossed in the mail with one she sent me. She and Marty, along with their two children, had become Catholic. More than once she referred to their experience as “coming home.” She also sent the book *Surprised by Truth: Eleven Converts Give the Biblical and Historical Reasons for Becoming Catholic*.

Doug and I both read the book straight through. Here is part of my response as recorded in a journal entry for September 10, 1995:

*My mind is suddenly open, curious, and alive .... I don't think I've ever thought about this at all before .... I don't know what happened. It's as if my mind has been let out of a cage. And I don't ever want to go back! Teach me your*

I placed Juanita into her birth father's arms. Immediately, a supernatural peace enveloped me. I saw the love in his eyes as he held her ... Juanita studied her father's face, curious, with no fear. After a little while, she reached for me. Smiling, he let her come back into my arms.

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

*ways. I want to walk in your path. Give me an undivided heart that I might fear your name (Psalm 86:11).*

The next day, our Catholic neighbor Rosa Maria, who had heard that I was sick, brought into my bedroom a vase filled with three dozen crimson roses.

The fragrance and beauty of the roses inspired me to meditate on their beauty as a form of prayer — a novel concept to me. What was that prayer, I wondered, that Mary prayed when she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth? I found it in my Bible and whispered the words of the Magnificat from the Gospel of Luke.

When I finished, I added, “Thank you, Mary, for giving us that beautiful prayer.”

A flash of panic followed. Had I offended God? But peace prevailed, and a conviction that I had crossed an invisible line and would not go back.

My hunger for Scripture grew. I read Paul’s admonition in Philip-  
pians to think about what is good, lovely, and pure, and wrote:

*We’re to think of Jesus and His Church and the saints and the hope to which we’ve been called. Paul implies that we’re to dwell on the teaching of the Apostles and practice it. Would that be the teaching of the Church? How different the Bible seems when I read it now! My mind is being changed — transformed without my doing anything. Thank you, Father, for your loving care and guidance. I will trust in you. January 1, 1996.*

This new way of thinking affected everything. For women’s Bible study, I led a course called *Experiencing God*. The driving principle of the study was that Christians should find out where God is already at work and join Him. We had come to a Catholic country as missionaries and never asked what God might already be doing in and through the Catholic Church in Guatemala. Was God at work in the Catholic parishes in Antigua? How many active youth groups, faith communities, and religious orders had we ignored during the past five years?

The “big C” was the term we used for all things Catholic, and the “big C” was never far from my mind, as seen in this journal entry.

*Doug told [a friend] this morning that “probably within a year we will be in the Catholic Church.” I am astonished to hear Doug speak it. I know it’s true, and I also find it scary. We are being drawn to the Catholic Church. There’s no denying it. What draws me most of all is Jesus Christ and His Presence in the Eucharist. I long to experience this sacrament, to receive Jesus in the Eucharist. March 19, 1996.*

### The Journey Home

In late April, we learned that our church in Arizona could no longer afford to support our family, so we planned to finish out the school year and leave Guatemala at the end of May. Vehicle repairs and travel documentation required by Guatemala and Mexico delayed us repeatedly until, on June 12th, our twentieth wedding anniversary, we received permission to travel through Mexico. But hours later we were stalled again.

Word came that guerilla soldiers were blocking all traffic a few miles ahead. We had no choice but to wait it out. The interior of the vehicle was hot and muggy. Xhiv, now four years old, climbed up with me atop the vehicle. Just after sundown, a group wearing colorful masks danced and sang in celebration of a local festival. Xhiv signaled her fear by her tight, immovable grip on my fingers. After the masked dancers passed, she relaxed, and we gazed up at the stars. The sky’s spectacular beauty refreshed me, diminishing the day’s difficulties. God would not

We had come to a Catholic country as missionaries and never asked what God might already be doing in and through the Catholic Church in Guatemala.

abandon us, I knew, no matter what the future held. I sang a version of the eighth Psalm.

When I stopped singing, Xhiv squeezed my hand, “again, mommy.” I sang until she dozed, then traded places with Doug.

Unable to sleep, I wrote:

*It’s about 1:30 am, June 13th. We’ve been sitting here at this Pemex gasoline station for about six hours. The “Zapatas” are still blocking the road ahead, and nobody seems to have any idea when they might allow traffic to pass again. There are hundreds of cars and trucks stopped on this side of the roadblock. We are all so weary ....*

That evening, we stayed at a motel. Never had showers and clean sheets been so welcome!

On our journey’s next leg, a policeman tried to convince Doug that the law required flashing lights on the trailer. Doug called his bluff, and he let us go without a bribe.

We had mechanical problems a hundred miles south of the Reynosa border. Then we faced a two-hour delay involving drug police and more government paperwork.

When I saw the lights of Reynosa where we were headed for the night, hopeful expectation grew in me. Then, Doug groaned as I heard the repetitive thud of a flat tire. We pulled into a *ranchito*. Doug had seen a fire burning and sought permission to park our trailer while we looked for a spare.

Our headlights shone on a mural of Our Lady of Guadalupe. We had passed Marian images throughout Mexico, but this one captured my attention. The Hermans, our Catholic friends from language school, lived in Reynosa and had invited us to spend the night. Too numb and weary to pray, I asked Mary to pray for us. A

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

few minutes later Doug returned with the best possible news. He had acquired both a 15-inch tire and an air compressor.

At midnight, the Hermans greeted us, providing showers, listening hearts, and a bottle of red wine. We slept soundly, and before we left, our friends gave us sound advice for crossing the border. Stateside at last, we made our way to Arizona.

Though we had promised not to rush into anything, we couldn't settle into a church community leaving the question of Catholicism unanswered.

Kris Franklin had been in touch with the Coming Home Network and with well-known convert Tom Howard, who knew a family that had converted to Catholicism about a year before. Gary and Gayle Somers had recently moved to Arizona from Massachusetts. They suggested we meet with their priest. He welcomed us, asking if we had any questions about the Church's teachings.

I admitted I struggled with some doctrines about Mary, and he said, "I can see that you really love our Lord Jesus. Why not ask Him to introduce you to His Mother?"

His unexpected answer pointed me back to Jesus and helped me see that Jesus was not in competition with His mother.

Doug and I loved the Mass, but parish life was a culture shock. There were no greeters and no pew cards for visitors. How could we get to know people? Parishioners came to Mass and hurried away immediately, as if they had more important things to do.

The first night of Family RCIA, we wandered around campus looking for, according to the parish bulletin, the Activity Center. There was no sign or map to guide us. We finally stumbled upon the class already in progress. After attending for a few weeks, our teens protests increased, and we promised we'd bring their objections to the priest. We did, and our priest agreed to receive into the Church any family members who were ready on Gaudete Sunday (the third Sunday of Advent), December 1996.

I expected to be most stirred by receiving Jesus under the appearance of bread and wine at Communion, instead I was most vividly impacted by this prayer from the Rite of Confirmation:

*Send your Holy Spirit upon her to be her helper and guide. Give her the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. Fill her with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence.*

It seemed I had been waiting to hear these words since the day of my baptism nearly thirty years earlier. Now they washed over me like a strengthening healing balm.

### Fully Alive

That first evening at RCIA, a couple we had never met before invited us and six other couples to their home to celebrate with good food and wine.

Our thirst for learning the Catholic Faith and putting it into practice continued to grow. Within four years, Doug entered diaconate formation and was ordained in 2004. Earning a master's degree in theology, I now serve as Director of Religious Education at an urban, mostly Hispanic parish. On weekends, I accompany my husband as he forms deacons for the Diocese of Phoenix.

Catholic teaching on marriage and family life brought necessary healing to our marriage. In retrospect, we see how our decision to end our fertility negatively impacted our relationship. We had come to accept the way things were between us, but when we understood the gravity of what we had done and how we had robbed each other, we were deeply contrite. It was not a decision that could be reversed, but at the advice of a wise priest, we began to practice abstinence in our relationship for seven days each month, both as a form of penance and in solidarity with other couples who practice natural family planning. Abstinence within marriage has been healing for us, opening new lines of communication and making a path for love to flourish.

I never imagined I would enjoy the Office of Readings, Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Night Prayer from the *Liturgy of the Hours* together with my husband, nor can I explain the mysterious way it draws us together in Christ. Devotional prayers like

the Rosary and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy have strengthened our prayer life, as well.

The way all aspects of Catholic life illuminate and support each other is particularly satisfying. Doctrinal content informs people's real life struggles. Liturgy takes all the matter of the world and sanctifies it. The Church's social work makes the world a better place for all creation. Her rich intellectual history, reverence for the human

person, riches of prayer and music draw me always deeper. And Jesus Christ Himself at the center of each part and at the center of the whole makes me fully alive. ■



*After many years of Christian living, including six years as a full time missionary in Guatemala, Lani Bogart was received into full communion with the Catholic Church on Gaudete Sunday, December 15, 1996. After acquiring a Master of Arts degree in Theology and Christian Ministry, she now works as Director of Religious Education at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church in Glendale, Arizona. Her husband, Deacon Doug Bogart, is the Associate Director of Formation for the Office of the Diaconate in the Diocese of Phoenix. They have five grown children and eight grandchildren.*

Continue the **JOURNEY**

Please visit [CHNetwork.org/converts](http://CHNetwork.org/converts) to comment on and share this or one of hundreds of other powerful testimonies!



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ON THE JOURNEY?

## RECENT CONVERT?

**E**aster is the time that many people officially enter the Catholic Church. If you have been recently received in Church, please let us know so that we can update our records and welcome you home!

Additionally, whatever the status of your spiritual journey, we'd love to hear an update and answer any questions you might have.

Please reach out to our *Pastoral Care Team* at [info@chnetwork.org](mailto:info@chnetwork.org).