



## April 2022 CHNewsletter

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# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



## From Contract to Covenant

By Jason Miller

"To bind up the brokenhearted." This verse struck me as a child while reading my Bible on the school bus. It was among the things Jesus said He was going to do in His inaugural speech in Luke 4. My desire was for Jesus to heal my heart of pain and insecurity, and then I envisioned myself sharing with others this experience of the Lord's love and healing. But could He do that? *Would* He do that?

I was born in 1970 in Portland, Oregon, the youngest of four children. My parents did not raise me as a Christian. My running joke was that they loved to drink and party while their children rebelled and became Christians. In my first encounter with Christ, at age eleven, I said the sinner's prayer with my cousin on a rainy day in Newport, Oregon. Later, I spent some years in the Four-square Church, a charismatic denomination that planted within me a sincere love of the Bible.

Yet, I struggled with school and social situations. A conventional diagnosis might be that I had ADHD and anxiety disorder. The negative words of family and peers affected me. They told me to "try harder" and "be on the ball." I was starved for affirmation.

### The "Brad" Years

In 1989, I received this affirmation through an older man, "Brad." He was a Christian visual artist and spoke from a blend of Christian streams like Word of Faith and prophetic charismatic perspectives. Focused on discipleship, Brad highlighted some biblical verses that I had overlooked.

One such verse, from Acts, described the early believers: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). Brad's interpretation emphasized that Constantine came around in the year 325 and brought this "mixture from Babylon." So, through "revelation knowledge" that we believed came to people like us, we took it upon ourselves to discern these scriptural elements, outside of organized churches, in our house groups. The irony is that we affirmed the gist of the Nicene Creed of 325. But that irony was lost on us.

Brad was influential in my life when I married, and we brought my wife into the fold. We had two girls, then a boy.

Over the years, our discipleship grew legalistic. We were told that Brad was an apostle. There was increasing pressure to move to the town where the church was centered and to avoid working in specific industries. They pressured me to attend meetings 60 miles away to be a better disciple. These pressures, along with many

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*Journeys Home*

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

behavioral norms imposed on us, were huge issues for my wife. She left me for another man.

A few months before she left, they gave me “counsel” not to cut myself off from the fellowship in order to keep my marriage. They told me to put the Bible aside because I was too much into the “religious spirit.” They told me to “stop leaning on others in the Body of Christ.” They told me, “Stop praying for your personal needs.”

I prayed according to their counsel over the next two months, and it felt like my prayers were bouncing off the ceiling. So

when my wife was about to leave me, the second-in-command at church told me, “Well, you were warned.” I believed him, thinking I must not have prayed enough. So, in an attempt to “fight off the demons,” I went two days in a row with less than one glass of water each day as my only intake. I felt it was incumbent upon me to “get the victory.”

### The Case for Re-orienting

September 5, 1997, was the day my wife left. I was so distraught that my employer gave me the day off. I went to The Sanctuary of Our Sorrowful Mother, known to locals as The Grotto. It's a Catholic monastery in Portland built on a precipitous hillside. I figured those Catholics were at least good for places of silent prayer. At The Grotto, I looked down from a cliff so high that I briefly considered “the easy way out.” By God's grace, I kept walking. I looked at the exquisite wood carvings depicting the temptations of Christ on The Grotto's wilderness grounds. I perceived weariness on the face of Christ and, in that, a sense of His humanity. I began to get “re-oriented” to basic Christianity. I felt an impression from the Holy Spirit that Christianity and relationships should have a foundation of love, trust, and respect.

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### HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION BY MARCUS GRODI

Marcus Grodi's first novel, *How Firm a Foundation*, tells the fictional story of a Protestant minister striving to serve Jesus under the weight of an escalating crisis: How can he be certain that what he is preaching is eternally true and not just his opinion?

Call 740-450-1175 or go to [chresources.org](http://chresources.org) to order this book and other resources about the Catholic Faith!



### Q & A WITH MARCUS GRODI ABOUT HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION

#### What prompted you to write *How Firm a Foundation*?

*My father was not a practicing Christian, let alone a Catholic. I had tried many ways to explain to him why I would leave the Presbyterian ministry to become Catholic. He was a voracious reader, so I gave him many of the more popular non-fiction books about the Church, including the Catechism, but he rarely read any part of them because he mostly read fiction and history. So I decided to use fiction as the genre to convey to him the reasoning and the circumstances that had led me and so many others to the Church.*

#### What was your father's reaction to the novel?

*He was very kind, gracious, and helpful with questions as he read through the first draft of each chapter. The book didn't immediately bring him to a conversion, but he said it helped him understand more fully my conversion. He eventually said that if he were to become a Christian, he would surely become Catholic. Then, on the day that turned out to be his last*

*day, he passed me a hand-written note asking that his breathing apparatus be removed so he could talk — he wrote that he was ready to see Jesus. He also asked to see a priest, who came to the hospital to talk and pray with him. I have assumed, from what the priest told me, that on that last day my father not only came home to Christ, but to His Church.*

#### How long did it take to write?

*The whole process began in 1999 and took several years. My dad read the first drafts of each chapter as I finished them. CHResources then published the first draft of the book, then entitled Be Thou My Vision, in four parts that we shared with CHNetwork members, for your feedback. Eventually, after a full re-write, the entire book was first published in 2002.*

#### What inspired the plot?

*Almost all the events in the plot were inspired by the actual experiences of the converts that CHNetwork and I have been working with since 1993. The book is not an autobiography of me or, especially, my wife, Marilyn. But the thinking and emotional struggles of the*

*main characters were based upon what I and other clergy converts have experienced in our journeys toward the Church.*

#### What was the hardest part about writing the novel?

*Realizing in the process how much I didn't know and needed to learn about writing fiction! It was a very humbling, yet rewarding, experience. It was then a joy to write the sequel, *Pillar and Bulwark*, and I still hope, maybe someday, to complete the Trilogy.*

#### What did you enjoy about the process?

*It was a great joy to have a good friend that I had met through EWTN, Kevin O'Brien, record the audio versions of both *How Firm a Foundation* and *Pillar and Bulwark*. I have received many affirmations from these recordings — but I have, as yet, not listened to them! Since I still hope to maybe write the last sequel, I don't want Kevin's interpretations of the characters to influence my mental images of them. ■*

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

I knew that I needed to mend my life by following these principles – with Christ’s help. On my first day back in an organized church setting with a healthy, well-balanced congregation, they sang the hymn, “On Christ the Solid Rock I Stand.” They didn’t sing it again until more than a year later, the Sunday after the court finalized my unwanted divorce. It was a great comfort to me and, no doubt, not a “coincidence.” That season of my life had a recurring theme of the unlimited love of God (*agape*).

I renewed myself by reading about Christian apologetics and spiritual abuse. I chose to use a Bible with as little commentary as possible — like avoiding too many chefs in the kitchen.

### My Crisis Years

Crisis colored the next several years. I had custody modifications, was injured on the job, and then was injured again in car accidents. My pastors sided against me after several private meetings with my ex-wife. One used the toxic “house church” period against me even though it had occurred four years prior.

Although I was involved in healthy church settings now, there was a root of bitterness. I nurtured a resentment inside of me that was founded on a false contract. This carried me away from the basics that God had spoken to me that day at The Grotto.

Sometimes there is sinful thinking in the Christian life. There can be presumptions, such as “name it and claim it.” These presumptions became my own, and I considered God obligated to honor His end of the contract and reward me for my holy choices by blessing me and preventing harm. So, I questioned how He could allow harm to come to me, harm like divorce, depression, spiked-up anxiety, injuries, and vast loneliness.

In hindsight, I can say where this contract existed: only in my head. Nowadays, I could tell my younger self that I had forged the name of Jesus and had pretended it was a binding contract. I was saying to God, “I do for You; You do for me.” There were periods when I thought stupidly and selfishly, acting out my search for romantic affirmation. It always left me empty.

After years of this, I tore up my “contract” and learned the basics all over again. I went to a tremendous Protestant church in Portland called Imago Dei Community. They valued worship and beauty, truth, and authentic community. Those values soaked through my hard heart like rain in the soft Oregon soil. Little did I know that God was planting seeds there for what He was about to do.

### Marital Contentment

During this time, I went to a coffee shop concert to support a musician friend who was sharing sets with a beautiful young woman who sang and played guitar. Her name was Summer, and we had a great chat between sets.

Though God meant her to be my wife, the Lord still had work to do in both of us. For me, it included dealing with my codependency. Now, later in my life as a therapist, I describe this as having a fuzzy boundary on where one’s self ends and the other person begins. So, as a single man becoming more grounded in faith, healing meant not seeing a wife as another savior.

A year later, the time was right for me and Summer to date, and we decided to attend the same church. She hit it off well with my three children, and we were married on October 14, 2006. She suffered a miscarriage, and then we had a son and a daughter. She supported me in getting a bachelor’s degree in social work. We led a home group for our church for several years. I started a modest business supporting the needs of adults with developmental disabilities and was getting more defined in addressing the needs of humanity as a social worker, informed by my Christian faith. Life was good — or was it? Was it enough?

### Is This All There Is?

In the last two years of my undergraduate studies, I started asking myself several questions. I wondered what Communion was all about. I figured that, if it was instituted so close to the cross, it should have more meaning than we assigned to it. I also questioned whether or not it accomplished something tangible. Finally, I considered that, in Communion, something ought to transcend this meal if it was actually connected to the cross.

I even wondered about things connected to the doctrine of Christ Himself. In particular, I considered how Jesus could be born without sin if He came from a sinful woman. My logic was that, as an inheritor of original sin, Mary would necessarily have to be unholy and unfit to contain the Holy One. Without an explanation for that dilemma, it all seemed strange and left me hanging.

Furthermore, having witnessed and experienced so much division in the Body of Christ, I considered how there should be a design for the unity of this Kingdom (John 17:21). I suspected that part of the solution lay in the Ten Commandments.

### An Odd Development

In the spring of 2012, I heard something strange from my eldest daughter, who was 19 at the time. When I asked her if she could watch our younger kids one night, she said she had to do something, but she mumbled the details.

“What?” I asked.

“RCIA,” she responded. “It’s for those who may be interested in becoming Catholic.”

I was okay if that worked for her, but God forbid that I myself go into that area of Christianity! I wanted to be spiritual and relational in my church and not be a part of what I considered “dry” ceremony.

### The Lord’s Prayer

Three months later, my family of four moved to Arizona. We lived on my in-law’s property while I established residency and applied for a Master’s in Social Work at Arizona State University. Although we found an excellent non-denominational church, my earlier, gnawing questions caused more discontent. My heart pivoted toward God, opening up my blind spots.

He answered my prayer by priming the pump of my heart with a greater desire to pray the Lord’s Prayer (the Our Father).

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# Stepping Back, But Pressing On...

By Marcus Grodi, Founder and President

*“So Moses [said to all Israel], ‘I am a hundred and twenty years old this day; I am no longer able to go out and come in. The LORD has said to me, “You shall not go over this Jordan.” The LORD your God himself will go over before you. He will destroy these nations before you, so that you shall dispossess them; and Joshua will go over at your head, as the LORD has spoken” (Deuteronomy 31:1-3).*



This important Old Testament passage describes a transition in leadership — from Moses, who had brought Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness, to Joshua, who will now lead Israel forward into the Promised Land. Moses, by the command of God, was stepping back and passing the baton of leadership to Joshua.

One of my favorite New Testament passages comes from St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians. Paul is in chains for proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus. Nonetheless, this Epistle conveys a joyful, optimistic tone as Paul confesses, “I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content” (Phil. 4:11b). This isn't the verse to which I want to draw your attention, however, because, frankly, I can't say that I've learned yet to be content — I'm still very much in the process! But it does draw me to a third, relevant verse: “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but ***I press on*** to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, ***forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on*** toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12-14, *emphasis mine*).

You may wonder how this last passage connects with the opening one — Moses is done, while Joshua is left to “press on.” But, in fact, both Moses and Joshua are “straining forward to what lies ahead,” yet now along different paths. I certainly would never imagine comparing myself to Moses, Joshua, or St. Paul — nor even comparing the many ministries in which I've been involved to the great missions of these three saints! But still, I'd like to use these passages to announce that, as of March 2, 2022, I have stepped back from my active responsibilities as President of the Coming Home Network International and have passed the baton of leadership to my oldest son, JonMarc. He has been with the apostolate for over fifteen years, serving faithfully as my Chief Operating Officer for the past six.

I am certainly far from “a hundred and twenty years old,” and at least as far as our home, our old barn, our fields, and my Jeep, I am still “able to go out and come in.” Yet, for several years, it has become increasingly clear that God has been calling me to step back and let my enthusiastic, gifted, and faithful son carry the mission forward. This decision has been partially based on my recognition of the expanding mission of the CHNetwork over the years.

The CHNetwork was founded to respond to non-Catholic Christian clergy and laity who were coming to us for assistance in becoming Catholic. However, for the first fifteen-plus years, we had no active outreach — we were not actively evangelizing non-Catholic Christians into the Catholic Church. Rather, we existed to “pick

up the pieces” after other apostolates, like EWTN, had opened the hearts of our separated brethren — we existed, specifically, to help married, inquiring Protestant clergy figure out what they would now do with their lives after they had become Catholic. Our only outreach involved helping converts tell their stories — through our newsletter, our CHResources, our website, and also through my privilege of hosting EWTN's *The Journey Home Program*.

Over the past thirteen-plus years, however, it has become disturbingly apparent that the number of non-Catholic Christians who come to us with an interest in the Church is still only a very small percentage of the total number of Christians who remain separated from full communion and the sacraments. All the while, more and more Catholics have been leaving the Church, many becoming what are called “nones.” At the same time, the Internet has grown to become the primary mega-voice of our culture and world. Some might argue that the expanding cacophony of voices over the Internet has fed the disinterest in our Church — making far more visible her flaws; yet, in the same manner, the digital, social Internet also offers the greatest opportunity to combat this disinformation, to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to tell everyone who will listen about the beauty and necessity of our Catholic Faith and Church.

This is one of the reasons why I believe it is time for me to pass the baton of leadership to others whose gifts and youthful enthusiasm — whose very hearts — are “straining forward” to use every means available, including online, digital media, to reach out to our separated brethren. There was once a time when I had this enthusiasm and energy, but like the aging Moses, there are times now when I feel my presence is holding them back from doing all that God is now calling them to do. Today ***fewer than one out of every ten Americans attends Mass on Sundays*** — which suggests that nine out of every ten Americans may die apart from the Catholic sacraments, apart from the fullness of the Gospel. We have lots and lots to do!!

I will remain on as Founder/President as well as President of the Board of Directors. It's not that I'm completely done with serving Our Lord — I'll just be “pressing on” in different areas and tasks than before, including: working on special projects for the CHNetwork (which I'll share with you in the future) and maybe praying more often and maybe writing a bit on my blog, [marcusgrodi.com](http://marcusgrodi.com), and, certainly, giving more time to Marilyn and our boys and grandkids, while also trying to keep ahead of the prolific weeds on our cottage farm.

But most importantly, I'll be trying by grace to live out all those things I've been preaching and writing about for over forty-five years from pulpits and podiums, over the television and radio,

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and, as of late, over the Internet — something about holiness and humility, simplicity and detachment, love and forgiveness.

I am eternally grateful for all the opportunities of service that God has given me — and also eternally grateful for your support and prayers.

Be assured that the work of the Coming Home Network International is continuing onward in full force. There is a final Scripture passage that I believe truly expresses how I feel about this transition: “So the Lord said to Moses, “Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership, and lay your hand on on him” (Num. 27:18). The Board of Directors and I both believe that my son JonMarc is being called to receive and shoulder the responsibility of leading the CHNetwork into this digital age.

Moreover, I know in a very personal, moving way that every one of our staff members has the heart of St. Paul. I know their love for Christ and His Church, and I know, when I hear them discuss the challenges facing the Church and our lives in this crazy culture, that they, together, share the same conviction: “... for-

getting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” They are committed to doing whatever is necessary to help our separated brethren, as well as our fallen-away friends and family, discover the beauty of the Catholic Faith and, Lord willing, “come home.”

As we make this transition, it is more important than ever that you continue to support them with your prayers and generous gifts. As this world continues to change, in so many disturbing ways, from the world we once knew into a new digital, “meta” world — fundraising will continue to become more and more difficult. The work of the CHNetwork can only continue with your support.

Please pray for me — and for Marilyn, who will, unfortunately, have to put up with more of me! And I will pray for you. And please, please pray for JonMarc and the staff, as well as those hundreds of men and women somewhere along the path toward the fullness of the Catholic Faith. ■

## ... Toward the Goal in Christ Jesus

By JonMarc Grodi, Executive Director



As a child of converts, I have spent my whole life listening to and learning from men and women, like my mother and father, whose devotion to Our Lord Jesus Christ led them to “press on” from their previous theological traditions to embrace full communion with the Catholic Church.

I have been blessed with the opportunity to work with my dad for many years now, but it has been a particular privilege and honor to serve the Coming Home Network as Chief Operating Officer for the past six. Now, as I and my fantastic team receive the proverbial “baton,” let me take a moment to express

our excitement to be pressing on “toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12-14) — to be carrying on this great work and my father's amazing legacy.

As Dad noted, over the past decade our team has continued to stand beside non-Catholic Christians, especially Protestant pastors and ministers, on their journeys to the Catholic Church and to share their powerful stories with others whom the Lord is also calling home. As times change and technology shifts, we have continued to find ways to adapt our means of communicating and connecting, while still adhering to the core of this mission.

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### SUPPORT THE CHNETWORK!

**Could you give \$25 a month or more to support the CHNetwork as we help men and women come home to the Catholic Church?**

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

**CHNetwork** Attention: Ann Moore

PO Box 8290

Zanesville, OH 43702

Please contact Ann at 740-450-1175 or [ann@chnetwork.org](mailto:ann@chnetwork.org) if you have any questions or concerns.

#### 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

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☐ AmericanExpress

Over the past few years, we have expanded the reach of our online videos, podcasts, articles, and conversion stories in order to better share the truth and beauty of the Catholic Faith with more Protestant pastors and laypeople whom the Holy Spirit may be leading home. In addition to the *Signposts* and *Insights* video shorts, *On the Journey with Matt and Ken*, and my *Deep in Christ* program, Matt Swaim is launching *CHN Presents* this month. This new program will include a variety of deep-dive conversations with converts about the pivotal questions that led them to the Catholic Church.

As Dad noted, this expansion of the CHNetwork's mission into digital evangelization is purposeful: there are so many Protestant pastors and laypeople, as well as fallen-away Catholics, who need to hear the conversion stories, who need to encounter the truth and beauty of the Church. But — *and this has always been the unique core of everything we do at CHNetwork* — these men and women *also* need to be personally discipled, counseled, and encouraged as they make the journey home. *Pastoral care is at the heart of the mission of the CHNetwork.*

To this end, we recently welcomed a wonderful addition to our gifted pastoral care team, Denise Bossert (whom you will meet on page 11). Denise joins Ken Hensley, Jim Anderson, and Brother Rex Anthony Norris as the primary staff members responsible for working with men and women on the journey.

In addition to these individual pastoral care efforts, we continue to facilitate various means of fellowship and connection. Our CHNetwork Online Community platform, now with nearly 3000 members, continues to grow and to be a hub of engaging conversation, testimony, and connection among journeyers. We are hosting two retreats this year, and thanks to generous gifts to the Shepherd's Fund (that Kenny Burchard introduced in February), over a dozen Protestant pastors and their spouses will be attending these retreats for free.

With God's grace and the generous gifts of our donors, this incredible mission continues. Christ is still leading souls to His Church, and in many ways, we're now busier than ever helping these men and women come home! As we enter this new phase, please join me in praying for and thanking God for my father,

Marcus, whose vision, leadership, and fidelity to the Gospel brought this innovative apostolate into being. It is an honor to build on the core values he laid out from the beginning and to continue to share stories and walk with men and women on their journeys of faith. ■

## CHNETWORK STAFF, ADVISORS, & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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The Coming Home  
Network International



**www.chnetwork.org**

## EWTVN'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 4**

Elvis Grbac\*  
(Catholic revert)  
(re-air from 5/13/19)

**April 11**

Fr. Gabriel Landis\*  
(former Baptist and Lutheran)

**April 18**

Casey Chalk\*  
(former Presbyterian)  
(re-air from 6/3/19)

**April 25**

Dr. Gavin Ashenden\*  
(former Anglican bishop)

**May 2**

TBD

\*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 Matt and Rachel, on the journey

"We officially resigned our [Salvation Army] officership just over a week ago and will soon be Catholics. We will be having a Zoom call with the Army leaders next week. Wow, what a transition! We are both looking forward to participating fully in the Eucharist. Thank you for the books you referred to us. I have especially appreciated *Crossing the Tiber*. We have also been studying your writings on *sola Scriptura* online and watching the videos – well done! Thanks!"

### From Leah, a recent convert

"I received the Sacraments of Initiation at the St. Thomas parish of the Syriac Catholic Church in East Jerusalem in February. My baptism was at the end of the evening Mass for the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (aka Purification of Mary). My new Christian name is Maryam, in honor of the Virgin Mary (who's my Hebrew-Christian patroness) as well as St. Mariam Bouardy, a modern saint of Eastern Catholic Arabic background (who's now my Arab-Christian patroness).

Born in the former Soviet Union, I grew up as a Modern Orthodox and Zionist Jew in the US and immigrated to Israel in 2011. I married a former ultra-Orthodox Israeli Jew and am still raising my children in the Orthodox Jewish community in Jerusalem. Thus, my entry into the Church is kept secret from my parents, sister, and most Jewish friends and neighbors. Please keep my husband and two children in your prayers as I gently share with them the love of Christ.

My long spiritual path brought me to Our Lord Jesus Christ in stages: the first was when I encountered Him in the Gospel of Matthew during college - which led me to join Evangelical and Messianic circles; having returned to Orthodox Judaism for almost a decade, I encountered Him a second time, in the Eucharist, at a Hebrew-speaking Catholic church in Jerusalem. After exploring the Church, both West and East for four years, I ended up making my home in the Syriac Catholic Church in Jerusalem. This parish drew me [in] because of its warm, intimate environment made up of native Middle Eastern Christians who accepted

me as I am; its beautiful Aramaic Liturgy which resonated with my Semitic ethnicity; and its combination of Eastern and Western cultures and church traditions, which confirmed my faith in the unity and healing of the Christian family.

I identify as an ecumenical Judeo-Christian of Syriac-Catholic rite and am active in Hebrew Catholic, Eastern Catholic, and Jewish-Christian forums. I thank the Coming Home Network for being a truly warm community where I have been encouraged during the last six months of my journey Home."

### From Julie, a recent convert

"Thanks for inquiring about me! I was, indeed, confirmed in November. It was a memorable day, although my husband didn't attend. So, it was just my bishop, my pastor who had agreed to be my sponsor, my two best friends, and I; there was a very moving Mass in the bishop's private oratory. Since then I've become a daily communicant, and I don't think there was [ever] a time in my life before this when I was this deeply happy." ■

# Prayer List

## Clergy

■ **For Barend, an Anglican priest** drawn to the Catholic Church and struggling very much with a family who is strongly opposed.

■ **For Bryan, a Baptist pastor** looking to come back to the Church, that the Lord would show him the way.

■ **For Will, a Lutheran pastor** who has made the decision to resign his ministry later this year and enter the Church and is actively looking for some way to earn a living once he does this.

■ **For Barnabas**, who was preparing for ministry in the Anglican Church but is now convinced that he must become Catholic and struggles with how he will find a place of ministry in the Catholic Church.

■ **For Everett, a former Protestant chaplain** who is making plans with his wife to enter the Catholic Church.

■ **For a Methodist pastor** facing the daunting decision of how and when to announce to his congregation that he is leaving to become Catholic.

■ **For Mark, an Evangelical pastor** and evangelist who finds himself drawn powerfully back to the Catholic Church in which he was born, baptized, and raised.

■ **For Matthew and Rachel, former Salvation Army pastors** who resigned their positions to enter the Catholic Church and who have recently received the sacraments and become Catholic, that the Lord will lead them as they apply for Master's programs in Catholic theology and look forward to their lives as Catholics.

■ **For Jeffrey, an Anglican minister** who has been attracted to the Catholic Church for a long time but has personal issues that make it very difficult for him to become Catholic, that the Lord will show him and his wife the solution.

■ **For Justin, an evangelical pastor** who has been watching shows on CHNetwork every week and is on the road toward the Church but who still has many theological questions to which he needs answers.

■ **For Julie, a Reformed pastor-in-training** who appears to be on a slow path toward the Catholic Church, for the Spirit's leading in her life.

■ **For Robert, a Messianic Jewish Rabbi** who is drawn to the Catholic Church and unsure what to do, that the Holy Spirit will give him comfort during this time.

## Lay

■ **For Percy, a Baptist**, that the Holy Spirit would heal his prejudices and doubts.

■ **For Claire**, who is on the journey and a nursing student and asks for prayers during these difficult times of illness.

■ **For Ben, a Non-denominational Christian**, that he would yield to the call of the Spirit of God to enter the Catholic Church

■ **For Albert, a Methodist**, that the Holy Spirit would guide him back home to the Catholic Church.

■ **For S.**, who wants to become Catholic but has experienced trauma prior to beginning her journey into the Catholic Church.

■ **For Kyle, in Ohio**, that the Lord would reveal to him the truth of Mary and the communion of saints.

■ **For David, in Oregon**, that Our Lord Jesus would guide him and bring to completion his 50-year-long journey into the Catholic Faith.

■ **For K., a fallen-away Catholic**, that she will encounter grace to return to the sacraments and also for her small children.

■ **For S., a convert**, who asks for prayers for her adult children who have not followed her into the Catholic Church.



■ **For Kevin, a Reformed Christian**, that the Lord would guide him as he searches for the true teachings on justification and the Holy Eucharist.

■ **For Ricardo, a Presbyterian**, that his wife's heart may be softened toward the Catholic Church.

■ **For L. J.**, who is undergoing chemotherapy, and the doctors have discovered dark spots on her lungs.

■ **For Andrew in California**, that God would light a fire to his curiosity and that this curiosity would bring him home to the Church that is ever ancient and ever new.

■ **For S. D.**, a convert in Wisconsin who asks for prayer for the repose of the soul of her sister.

■ **For Shariiek, a Baptist**, that Our Lord Jesus would remove his relational difficulties which stand in the way of his becoming a Catholic Christian.

■ **For Edward, an Evangelical**, that God would open his heart to the fullness of the Faith found in the Catholic Church.

■ **For K., a member of RCIA** going through an annulment, who is very thankful for CHNetwork and who asks for prayers for all those entering the Catholic Church who are seeking annulments.

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 from page 3

It rattled in my head and heart morning, noon, and night. I was meditating on it backwards and forwards, settling on the line about the Kingdom. I knew in my spirit that His Kingdom should be something I could enter into in some form on earth. I thought I should have perceived it by now given my participation in various denominations and my light theological training. I prayed many times for the Lord to show me this Kingdom.

## The New Kid

In the fall of 2012, something was triggered by what I had been praying. One night, I was flipping through the cable channel guide on the TV and saw a program title and show summary for *Genesis to Jesus*. Well, I had always appreciated how the Old Testament is fulfilled in Christ.

Feeling like I had heard everything, here was this “new kid” named Dr. Scott Hahn. I had never seen a Bible teacher with such insight into how the Bible fits together. I proceeded to read a few of his books, then another book by Pope Benedict XVI. I watched many vigorous debates on YouTube between Catholic and Protestant apologists.

Pope Benedict wrote about beauty drawing us up to heaven and tied it to knowing Christ in His incarnation, with the Church as His Bride:

[It] is not merely the external beauty of the Redeemer’s appearance that is praised: rather, the beauty of truth appears in Him, the beauty of God Himself, who powerfully draws us and inflicts on us the wound of Love, as it were, a holy Eros that enables us to go forth, with and in the Church, His Bride, to meet the Love who calls us (Pope Benedict XVI, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, Ignatius Press, 2002).

Between prayer, the Bible, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, YouTube debates, and some exposure to the early Church Fathers, things clicked into place. I will now summarize how they answered my questions.

## Connecting the Dots

I could now appreciate Communion, seeing what it was really about. Christ instituted the Eucharist under the appearances of bread and wine. He is present in His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

Yes, Communion accomplishes something tangible. It is the objective means through which we, together, can partake of His divine nature. I compare it to what I say to adoptive parents: in raising your adopted baby with pheromones, spit-up, tears, and other bodily fluids, they do, indeed, become your real children. Let naysayers beware.

Communion in the Eucharist is a result of the cross, with Christ offering the unique atonement. The sacrifice of the Mass is an extension or reverberation of His work on the cross. It does not undermine Calvary at all, but rather is an extension of it.

It was fitting that Jesus was borne without sin by a mother who was also without sin. Mary was “full of grace” in the perfect

sense; Greek language scholarship supports this. I learned that she was “full of grace” through the retroactive grace of Jesus on the cross that preserved her from sin. God was Mary’s savior in a privileged way when the Immaculate Conception occurred.

I stood in awe of the call to unity founded in the Church. Christ founded a literal, visible Church (Jn 17:3, 21). As for the Ten Commandments, I learned where they have their place in the New Covenant in Christ. They are covered extensively in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

It got even better. I realized that the actions of the first disciples — “and they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42) — were also found in reading the early Church Fathers, and they connected directly to the modern Mass! The priest carried on sacred tradition, passed on since the time of the Apostles through apostolic succession, by laying on of hands. The fellowship of the brethren stems partly from the fact that the Catholic Church is the most diverse form of Christianity on earth. The Breaking of the Bread was the Eucharist, and there was both a liturgical and personal-prayer spirituality in Catholic tradition like none other. These encouraged my relationship with Jesus even more.

Things came together in such a way that I knew I needed to be Catholic. I knew I needed to tell Summer. My wife laughed with me as I played the Ave Maria scene from *Sister Act*, but as we laughed, my thought was, “Oh boy, I hope she doesn’t freak out when I tell her the news.”

## My Catholic Coming Out

That fateful night, I reached out, held her hand, and fessed up: “I believe the Lord may be calling me to the Catholic Church.” She stiffened immediately and replied, “I’m a Protestant. I married a Protestant. If I were to become a Catholic, I would have to give up every gift that God gave me.” Thus began a year of contention, with many tears on both sides.

That weekend, I went to our regular morning church with her and the kids. After that, I went alone to Mass with eyes wide open for an event that would be, for me, both new and timeless. I attended a Mass in Spanish and found myself feeling at home. Being bilingual in Spanish, I recognized some of their songs like “Alabare.” The parish was humble in size, but I had a sense of an angelic presence. Though I returned home joyfully, it was bittersweet because of the tension that awaited me there. It was as if I had gone on a date with someone else.

When I met with the RCIA director, she noticed that my wife and I had both been married before. I explained that, since my wife’s ex-husband was mentally ill from the beginning and then abandoned the marriage, and since my ex left me for someone else, I considered us biblically free. She then explained Catholic teaching, and I, then, had to explain annulments and the reasoning behind this Catholic teaching to my wife, who was already upset.

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

### God's Timing

In February of 2013, I went to my first Catholic Men's Conference and found that I had not left behind my evangelical fervor but, rather, discovered it replanted in the soil I was meant for. This conference was full of men on fire for Jesus!

Although the tension at home was still present, I found joy when I was received into the Catholic Church at the 2013 Easter Vigil. The pastor heard our marriage stories and convalidated us. (I discovered later that this was not in line with Church teaching. I made sure we initiated annulment processes after attending a Code of Canon Law class.) My eldest daughter was received into the Catholic Church the same night back in Oregon.

My other family and friends scratched their heads, not knowing what to make of my odd life change. I emphasized that I was not disrespecting the spiritual investments of Protestant pastors and loved ones. I was appropriating the godly discernment built into me to follow Christ where He led.

I also did not leave behind the fire of Pentecost. I went from my personal encounters with the Holy Spirit to those present in the community context in the Sacrament of Confirmation. I moved from a context where I had subjective encounters with Christ, which were indeed edifying, to the objective context that Christ founded in the Church. As I learned more about this fullness of truth, I started my own blog.

My wife continued to make snide remarks, but she would also apologize. I had my moments and needed to apologize, too. We would hug and cry and recommit to listening to each other, even when it was hard. We moved to Phoenix, and life got busier as I entered my Master's program.

### Some Softening

Finally, after several months, I saw my wife's heart begin to soften. In Phoenix, we had found Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish. This was the former parish of Catholic musician Matt Maher, who wrote a contemporary music liturgy. My wife joining the music ministry here created an excellent bridge.

In addition, Summer read *Rome Sweet Home* by Dr. Scott and Kimberly Hahn. She was struck by Kimberly's perspective, as the daughter of a Protestant pastor, on the Church's view regarding life issues. I had my three children from before, and together, Summer and I had a son and a daughter. But why stop there? So along came a baby boy, born during my Master's program!

Summer then decided to enter RCIA. She resonated with exploring what the Catholic Church was doing, even if she might never join. The director, Todd Covarrubias, was a godly, lifelong Catholic. He also had an evangelical fire, making him joyful and bold. He called people to be disciples of Jesus Christ *and* Catholics. Imagine — *both/and*, not *either/or*! His passionate manner challenged her assumptions.

Later on in the 2013–2014 RCIA year, I mentioned that she had not made any sarcastic comments about the Catholic Church in two weeks. She said it didn't feel quite right to her any more.

I joked that it could be because I had been asking for Mary's intercession for two weeks — which was true. She gave me a look and a laugh like, "All right, smart guy!"

Soon, Summer shared with me that she had decided to enter the Catholic Church. At the Easter Vigil, the night she was received, they played "The Easter Song," a Keith Green composition that was dear to me. God was making things fall into place.

### Still Learning

For the next three years, we were involved in a Catholic charismatic covenant community. There was growth, adaptation, and suffering, too. I have had many theological questions answered, and getting to know Christ from the heart, through our trials, has been a precious blessing to me.

Thus, the paradox of suffering and blessing, and the ensuing tension of this dichotomy, are realities of the Faith. In my Christian life, I have meditated on St. Peter preaching about the wondrous power and manifestations of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41). While the Holy Spirit can be active in such a miraculous way, through the sharing of its gifts, there are also quiet, difficult times in our walk with Christ when we can learn that grace is still present and active in our faith. This is the tension of the paradox, knowing that while God can (and does) perform miracles, we can still trust Him even when things are hard.

This understanding of the grace behind both blessing and suffering became clearer in the traumas that my wife and I experienced. After our fourth child was born, Summer suffered a miscarriage at seven weeks, then another at ten weeks. We thought yet another pregnancy was "home free," only to find out that our son had passed at 18 weeks. This called for a stillbirth protocol. These three losses in a row occurred within a period of only 18 months. I cried out, "Abba, Father," and He was there. So was the Church. Deacons supported us in burying our children at a Catholic cemetery. One of the deacons even shared his own personal experience with this as he listened and consoled.

And my faith was still standing. I had torn up my contract a long time ago because, as was reinforced by Catholic teaching, we are called to a covenant of unconditional love. Having a conditional expectation of God leads to despair and darkness. To know Christ in covenant love — an interpersonal exchange without conditions or expiration dates — is an end in itself. Encountering Christ is what matters, not assumptions of what we are supposedly entitled to.

### Still Planting

We are all called to be wounded healers. God works in me through my private, informal prayer and in His sacraments. God inspires me in my work as a licensed therapist. Though I work in a secular setting and cannot explicitly evangelize there, I am inspired to draw out, by asking the right questions, a hunger for the beautiful, the true, and the good.

By God's grace, my life has become more clearly faith-based, especially through my helping with RCIA after moving to Min-

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

nesota in 2019-2020. I have also contributed to parish spiritual formation during the pandemic period. Through the workings of the Holy Spirit and my training at the Kino Catechetical Institute in Phoenix, Arizona, I am able to pass on the Faith to those inquiring into God's ways.

By God's further grace, more conversions in my family have happened. A few years after I became Catholic, we visited my older brother and his wife. We planted seeds on the usual suspects: the pope, Mary, the Eucharist, then Mary again. Over time, my brother corresponded frequently with Ken Hensley from the Coming Home Network (thanks, Ken!). As a result, he and his wife are now in full communion with the Catholic Church.

I have found the covenantal love of God beautifully expressed in the Church. I have hope for this life and the life to come,

and I want to share that hope. If I pause to look, I see that "the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23). ■



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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!

## New CHNetwork Staff Member

**Meet Denise Bossert, Pastoral Care and Publications Coordinator** I am a Protestant preacher's kid. My husband, John, and I are members of Holy Redeemer Parish in El Dorado, AR. My family is filled with pastors and missionaries from numerous denominations. Shortly after completing my M.A. in Literature, I stumbled upon the works of St. Augustine, St. John of the Cross, and St. Teresa of Avila. These writing saints were the catalyst for my conversion.

### What role did the Coming Home Network play in your conversion?

In 2004, I entered RCIA. When the instructor explained the Church's teaching on the Immaculate Conception, I said I couldn't accept that Mary was conceived without sin. The instructor opened Sacred Scripture and pointed to passages and prefigurements. I wasn't buying it. He suggested I place a petition before the Blessed Mother and let *her* show me.

I laid it on the line that afternoon: "Mary, if you are immaculately conceived, please answer this petition. I want someone to communicate with me by your inspiration. Then I will know I am right where I'm supposed to be."

In the mailbox *the next day* was a letter from Mary Beth Kremski, a *Journey Home* guest whose episode had aired the previous July. I had stumbled upon her program in July and had decided to write to her then, asking the Coming Home Network to forward my letter to her. Mary Beth had already written to me once before in August. This time, in December, she decided to write to me again. Her second letter was dated December 8. Above the date, she had written "The Immaculate Conception." Immediately, I knew Mary was the Immaculate Conception and the Catholic

Church was the fullness of the Faith. I entered the Church on August 14, 2005.

### What did you do before working at CHNetwork?

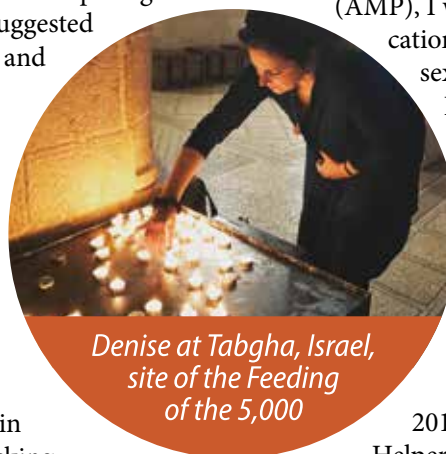
For ten years, I wrote a syndicated column for diocesan newspapers. I was invited to write a book on the Visitation (AMP), I worked as a contract editor (Liguori Publications), and I compiled a book for survivors of sexual trauma (OSV). I also worked for the Israel Ministry of Tourism (IMOT) as their Catholic liaison to the national office and as the PR Director for the Midwest states. I have traveled to the Holy Land numerous times, was a guest speaker on conversion throughout the U.S., and taught religion in the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

### How did you come to join CHNetwork?

I was a *Journey Home* guest in 2011 and 2019 and was one of the early CHNetwork Helpers. JonMarc Grodi recently reached out to me about a possible position, and I was thrilled to say yes.

### What is a Pastoral Care and Publications Coordinator?

I have the great joy of walking alongside those wanting to know more about the Catholic Church. My work in the publishing industry is helpful because I also assist with editing conversion stories and compiling the CHNewsletter. ■



Denise at Tabgha, Israel,  
site of the Feeding  
of the 5,000



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### GERMANY PILGRIMAGE POSTPONED

Our Deep in History pilgrimage to Germany that was planned for this coming fall will be postponed until 2023 due to ongoing COVID restrictions in Germany. Please consider joining us then!



POSTPONED

## PLAN TO **JOIN US** FOR OUR UPCOMING CHNETWORK **RETREAT!**

**May 23-26, 2022**  
Our Lady of the Pines  
Retreat Center  
Fremont, OH



Please go to [chnetwork.org/events](https://chnetwork.org/events) to learn more or to sign up for our exclusive CHNetwork events!