



May 2022 CHNewsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



Suffer the Little Children

By Megan Rogers

St. Thérèse of Lisieux once said that *everything* is grace. That has certainly been the theme of my life. From my twin sister Madison's and my entrance into the world 14 weeks early, to her entrance into eternal life 23 hours later and my diagnosis of cerebral palsy, God has surrounded us with His love.

God ultimately used my difficult birth to call me to Himself in the Catholic Church. I can confidently say, sitting here today, that everything is, indeed, grace.

I had several surgeries as an infant and toddler, followed by years of physical and occupational therapy several times a week. Originally, I was told I would need a walker for the rest of my life, but at two years old, I pushed the walker back to the doctor and told him I didn't want it anymore. I wore leg braces throughout those years of therapy, and I always felt like I stuck out like a sore thumb. People would often stare at me in public, and I remember one instance when a man in a department store could not stop looking from my feet to my face, as if the world owed me some grandiose amount of pity. So, I looked back at him, then at my feet, and I said, "Oh, where did these come from? I didn't have these when I came in here!" His face was priceless. Making light of my disability was the way I buried the pain of feeling that I didn't quite measure up. My cerebral palsy still affects my left side, causing me to limp, and I don't have the same dexterity in my left hand as I do my right. Because I don't have a normal gait, my limp causes some weight-bearing issues, and I am in constant pain.

When the world was on the brink of the new millennium, I was on the brink of preschool. I walked in the door of an unknown place, clinging to my mom for dear life. The old cliché would become true of me: it was the first day of the rest of my life. Because of my physical struggles, it was important to my parents to send me to a place where they knew I would be well cared for. That place "just happened to be" St. Michael's School, a Catholic institution.

Raised in the School's Embrace

It's funny... almost every teacher I had at St. Michael's still remembers certain instances when my failure to keep my balance gave them heart failure. For instance, in fourth grade, I was rushed to the hospital after suffering a concussion. By the time we reached the hospital, I was unresponsive and placed on life support. That incident planted within me the root for understanding the love of Christ through the Catholic Church. While I don't remember anything from that day, I know from my parents that the hospital waiting room was filled into the night with family, friends, and faculty and staff from the school. I had no idea that one per-

Continued on page 2 ➤

Journeys Home

...Journeys Home Continued...

son in that room, Msgr. Victor Ciaramitaro, would have a great impact on my spiritual journey.

One of the first things that Msgr. did to that end was assign Fr. James Clark to teach our fifth-grade religion class. I learned a great deal from Fr. Clark. As a matter of fact, so many things I hold dear to my heart today, I first learned from him. It was as if Msgr. Ciaramitaro had handed Fr. Clark the Truth of the Catholic Church in a gift box, and he slowly unwrapped it for us each day. Two things from that year stand out in my mind as the biggest seeds that God planted in my soul. In one class, Fr. Clark drew a timeline of Church history, including the dates of each religion's inception. At that time, I attended a non-denominational church, and not seeing it anywhere on the timeline, I asked, "Where do I fit in?" Of course, it never occurred to me then that years later, at 20 years old, I would ask that same question of myself. The other thing that strongly resonated with me was how obvious Fr. Clark's love of and devotion to the Blessed Mother were. I didn't know where he had gotten that, but I knew it was something I didn't have, and it was something that, later, I would begin to ache to experience and to know.

Loved from a Monstrance

While at St. Michael's, teachers would take us to Adoration, and we would sit there for what seemed like forever (so probably about 15 minutes), but the more we did it, the more I liked it. Though I wouldn't have defended the True Presence then, I wouldn't have denied it, either. I had sat attentively through enough Masses to know better. At that time, I couldn't outright say that the Host was Jesus, but like Mary, I really began to ponder these things in my heart. Several years before, when all my friends went to Reconciliation and received their First Communion, I was so jealous. I wanted to go to Reconciliation, too, and I wanted to receive the Eucharist. What may have started out as wanting to do it because my friends were doing it eventually became an agony, a hunger. Slowly but surely, although I didn't realize it, God began to remove the veil from my eyes.

Eventually, my grade-school years ended, and it was time to move on. It was excruciatingly difficult to leave my elementary school, which was like another home. I started high school at Immaculate Conception in much the same way that I had started preschool. But there, too, I gained a support group for the revelations to come. One thing that I constantly struggled with was the vast difference between what I *knew* to be true about Catholics and what I had *heard* from others about Catholics. Though I was still very respectful of Church teaching, because I knew I couldn't deny it, I was more and more involved with my own non-denominational church and youth group. One of my English teachers, Adrien Alsobrook, had us journal every week, and I almost always wrote about my faith. I had started to become more settled in Protestantism — or so I thought — yet I knew that the faith of the people that I looked up to the most at Immaculate Conception was different, and I wanted what they had in that faith. Peggy Steffan, the chair of the theology department, and Principal Sally Hermsdorfer were also big influences in that area. I denied Peggy's requests to be a part of campus ministry because I knew it required a commitment that I wasn't ready to give. She never pressured me, but always left the door open. She was convinced, though, that one day, I would walk through a much larger door: the door to our Holy Mother Church.

High school was the place where I began to realize that I had suppressed a lot of feelings: hurt, rejection, longing for a purpose in life, and survivor's guilt; I spent many mornings throughout all my years of high school in Sally's office, crying it all out. She was ever-patient and never hurried me along. She sat with me in my grief and hopelessness. She reminded me of my dignity and never let me think for one second that God didn't love me.

As I grew in my knowledge of Protestant theology, however, I inadvertently internalized the same view of our humanity that Martin Luther had penned: we are nothing but dung with snow on top — the snow being God's righteousness, which is the only reason we're seen by Him as good. For someone with a physical disability, it was especially crushing. I began to doubt God's love for me because I believed there was no good in me; I believed that I was broken. What did I do to make myself this way? Why did I survive childbirth when my sister did not?

Burdened with a Cross and an Emptiness

At the time of my high school graduation in 2014, I was so steeped in Protestantism that I decided to attend college at a Baptist seminary in my town. I honestly can't recall what I wanted to accomplish by going there, other than I loved theology, and I wanted other people to love it, too. Even though I was a Protestant, I was very proud of my Catholic education and grateful for my parents' sacrifices that made it possible. What I quickly learned, however, was that there was deeply-seeded anti-Catholicism in the world. The things I heard about Catholics became a personal cross because these were attacks on people that I loved. What do you mean when you say that Catholics need to be saved? What do you mean they worship Mary?

Continued on page 3 ➡

Converts to Catholicism

by Pat Battaglia, aka Dr. Fun

Draw a path from letter to letter to spell the name of the convert to Catholicism given in capital letters. Move one square at a time, up, down, right, left, and diagonally until all letters are used once. Ignore any blank squares.

B	F	D	Y
B	U	F	O
I	O	C	A
L	L	L	

BUFFALO BILL CODY
converted to Catholicism
the day before he died.

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Dr. Fun's brain games are clever and fun to solve. CleverPuzzles.com

...Journeys Home Continued...

As my college career began, for the first time in my life, I started a new school year in a non-Catholic institution, without the Mass. That left a noticeable void in my life. But whom in this new world could I tell? They would just ask me why I was going to a Baptist school in the first place. I had no answer to that, so I kept my longing to myself.

My college experience was one of hard lessons and growth. For instance, in my sophomore year, I had to take a course on the history of Christianity. I had taken church history in high school, so I wasn't expecting anything earth-shattering. But when the professor got to Martin Luther, after I had sat through the first 1500 years of history, I rather indignantly proclaimed aloud, "Fifteen hundred years, and one man comes along, and we think he's right?" The crickets that followed made me realize that I might have spoken out of turn, but I really didn't care.

Thus began a journey of a different kind. I started venting to Adrienne, my old English teacher. I had so many questions, but she knew it was different one day when I told her, "I don't know how anyone can read John 6 and not believe in the True Presence of Christ in the Eucharist." She knew I was serious. I had reached a point where I couldn't stand before God one day and tell Him I knew the Truth but had rejected it.

Yet what could I do? I still had two years of college left, and there was no way I was going to transfer to another school and start over. I also knew I had to keep my budding Catholicism to myself because I would be anathema in the Baptist world. If that happened, I knew I would have to go to school somewhere else. I didn't want that, and a lot of fear followed. What was I going to do with my life? What if someone found me out? I became more aware of other's disparaging words about Catholics, because what was once personal through my association with Catholics was now personal through my own faith journey and decision. Attacks on the Catholic Faith became harder and harder to hear.

In my junior year, I took a class called Basic Bible Doctrines. In most cases, the professor would start with what the Catholic Church mistakenly believed about x, y, or z. Quite often, though these misconceptions and indifference bothered me, I had to let them go. But there was one topic I couldn't let go: the Eucharist. For whatever reason, it was a joke to the class, and there were some fallen-away Catholics there who agreed with the professor. I knew I couldn't stay in the classroom, so I simply, and without drama, excused myself and used my absences for that week. I couldn't stomach their ignorance because not being able to receive the Eucharist had become simply dreadful for me, and it was something I struggled with until the day I came into the Church.

In the midst of all this "fun," an incident occurred during my senior year with a professor who reinforced my ever-present feelings of brokenness by sharing, ironically, in a counseling class, that "marrying someone with a physical disability is like marrying someone addicted to drugs." I was shocked. He was talking about *me*! I got up and left the class, hysterical. With the advice of my parents, I went back to talk to him before I asked the administration to intervene. I gave him the benefit of

the doubt; after all, we all say things we don't mean. However, like a knife to my naivete, he informed me that he couldn't help that God makes mistakes. He called *me* a mistake, and I was crushed. Though the school handled it appropriately, it did not erase the wound or the resurfacing of old insecurities.

On a lighter note, I took an elective my last semester on the first, second, and third letters of St. John. Part of the class was a discussion about certain verses. When it was my turn, I proceeded to define the hypostatic union (Jesus is fully God *and* fully man), and the professor stopped me and asked where I had learned that. Without thinking of how it might come across, I said, "From Fr. Clark, in fifth grade!"

As unsettling and harsh as these situations were, and as exasperating as they still seem to me now, I really felt that I was living a dark night of the soul. The only people who knew that I was going to become Catholic were a core group of Catholics from my years of Catholic education. It got to the point that I started having to tell people about my troubles because it was too much for me to carry them by myself. What was so odd to me is that no one I spoke to was surprised. Everyone, including Msgr. Ciaramitaro, was expecting it. I was the only one who was surprised! Now, as I reflect on my story, it seems ridiculous that I lived through all of that, yet it never registered with me that I was meant to become Catholic. Now, I can look back and see how all the pieces fit together, even the pieces that I tried to fit into my Protestant worldview that never worked.

I was in the thick of all this searching when a friend, Mary Pat Van Epps, invited me to an annual Forget-Me-Not Mass. This Mass was for anyone who had experienced the loss of a child, especially through miscarriage, stillbirth, or after birth. I had confided in Mary Pat how much I grieved for my sister, and I was so encouraged that she didn't think it was odd for me to attend. Madison and I did share a womb for months, and the only thing that separates our bond now is that she is in eternity. I even talked my mom into going. The Mass was familiar to her because she had worked in Catholic schools for years, and it was the first time we had ever had a bonding moment over our shared loss.

It was beautiful and heartbreaking, but it was special because while reading Scott Hahn's *The Lamb's Supper*, I realized something unexpected: my sister, being in eternity, was present with the angels and saints at every Mass. I could only imagine what it would feel like for me to go to Mass on our birthday for the first time, participating in the Eucharistic sacrifice together. I'd always wondered what it would be like to do "normal" sister things, and I couldn't think of a better way to spend our birthday together than to spend it at the table of the Lord.

In 2018, as my college graduation approached, I was anxious to get out and to become Catholic. I didn't know what to do with myself. I also didn't know what to do during that long summer's wait leading up to the start of RCIA. I had already begun praying that I would never lose sight of what it had been like to be without the Eucharist, so that I wouldn't take Jesus' total giving of Himself

Continued on page 9 ➤

The Merry Mary Month of May

Denise Bossert

About two years after my conversion, the whole Mary-and-the-month-of-May thing hit my radar. “So what’s with Mary and the month of May?” I asked a Catholic friend I had met through the CHNetwork. She explained that the Church has set aside the month of May to honor the Blessed Mother – hence, May Crowning. “It’s a special time to pray the Rosary and present the Blessed Mother with flowers and a crown,” she said.

Try explaining *that* to family or friends who have never felt drawn to the Catholic Church.

You do what?

We pray the Rosary... [You’ve already lost them, and you haven’t even gotten to the part about the crown.]

Have you ever read the children’s book *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* by Laura Joffe Numeroff? It’s kind of like that.

If you mention May and the Blessed Mother, you have to mention the month of May and May Crowning. If you mention May Crowning, you have to explain how Mary is the Queen of Heaven & Earth. If you mention that Mary is the Queen of Heaven & Earth, you have to talk about the Assumption, the Immaculate Conception, the Ark of the Covenant, the New Eve, and why that’s all scriptural. You’ll have to crack open the Bible and look at the Book of Revelations. She is the “woman clothed with the sun.” She is lifted up and seated beside her Son in the celestial realm. Queen Mother and King of kings. She was in the mind of God throughout the Old Testament, all the way back to

Eve and the Protoevangelium. You will now have to explain how Mary was prefigured by Hannah, Ruth, Queen Esther, and Judith.

And if you make it to Judith, you are going to have to explain why Judith is not in their Protestant Bibles – but they don’t know what they are missing because Judith is the most amazing widow in Salvation history.

And if you find yourself back to the Bible, you are going to have to talk about the Rosary again and how those prayers come right out of the Bible because Jesus prayed the Our Father, and the Hail Mary is a combination of the words of the Archangel Gabriel and St. Elizabeth.

And if you manage to explain why Catholics pray memorized prayers, you will have to explain that we pray in many ways, and it all comes together in the Mass, and the Mass fits into the liturgical calendar, and the liturgical calendar takes us from Advent to Christmas to Ordinary Time, to Lent to Easter to Pentecost, and then to...

... to the Blessed Mother and May.

And if you mention the month of May and the Blessed Mother, you’d better put on another pot of coffee because you are about to cover the same ground all over again.

Our Faith is organic. It all fits together. It cannot be reduced to one sound bite. It lives and breathes and has a complexity and beauty that is as mysterious and glorious as the Body of Christ.

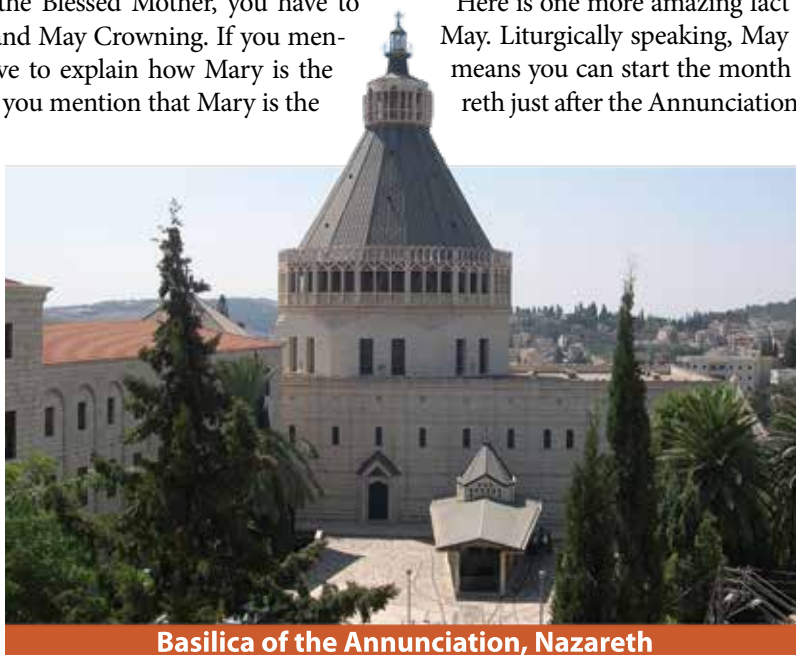
Here is one more amazing fact about Mary and the month of May. Liturgically speaking, May ends with the Visitation. That means you can start the month contemplating Mary in Nazareth just after the Annunciation, and you can travel with Mary through the month as she covers the eighty miles between Nazareth and Elizabeth’s home. (Yes, it is that far from Galilee to the hills of Judea.) You can close out the month celebrating with the two greatest mothers of all time — Mary and Elizabeth.

One can barely grasp the profound mystery that knit these two women together.

As May comes to an end, we glance at the feast days on the liturgical calendar, and we see the Visitation

(May 31). Elizabeth embraces Mary, and the Old Covenant embraces the New Covenant. How is Elizabeth connected to the Old Testament? Her son is the prophet foretold in the final verses of the last chapter of Malachi (3:23-24) — he leaps in his mother’s womb, and we encounter the first person in all of human history to recognize God-in-Mary’s-womb. Elizabeth. It is the first time the Gospel message is shared between two people, it is the first act of evangelization, and it is the culmination of the women of Salvation history. The woman of the Protoevangelium has been recognized for the first time by someone other than an archangel.

The God who parted waters for Israel, the God who swept away kingdoms and established Israel in their place, the God who made a donkey speak and a fish to spit a man upon dry land, the God who gave them food in the desert and water from a rock, the God who made the sun reverse its course and floods to cover the land, the God who saved men from lions and a fiery furnace, the God who wrote prophecy on a wall with His own hand—this God was

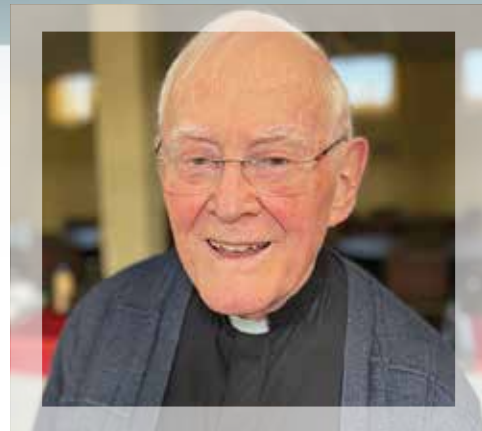


Basilica of the Annunciation, Nazareth



DONOR SPOTLIGHT

FR. THOMAS HEIER, CMM — 24 YEARS



I was raised a Catholic from birth. I always believed in the truth of the Catholic Church's teachings, and I was happy to belong to the Church. Nevertheless, I instinctively admired converts like the ones who share their stories with the CHNetwork for their bravery and their commitment to learn about and live the Catholic faith. Many of them have to leave everything to follow Jesus Christ into the Church that I have been a part of my whole life. I often sit captivated as I listen to conversion stories on *The Journey Home*. I find these journeys fascinating, in part, because of the price that must often be paid by those finding their way into the Church. My constant reflection is that they point out to me the many ways in which I am – and have always been – blessed by God's wonderful graces and how I often take these blessings for granted. Watching *The Journey Home* for nearly two and a half decades and reading others' conversion stories have been a constant source of instruction for me personally. From these stories I have learned – as a life-long Catholic – to understand and appreciate my own faith in Jesus, and its practice, in much greater depth!

By baptism we Catholics, as well as all other Christians, are missionaries; Jesus tells us we must share this grace of membership in the Church with our neighbor (Mt 28; 19-20). We may fulfill this responsibility by evangelizing others ourselves; however, I also believe there is a call and responsibility to

support organizations whose mission and purpose entail a commitment to evangelization. The CHNetwork, with all of its programs and services besides

The Journey Home, is one of these, and they do their work in an excellent and most admirable way. This is the greatest reason I have supported the Coming Home Network with my prayers and financial support for nearly twenty-five years. I can only recommend the same to others.

FR. THOMAS HEIER became both a regular *Journey Home* viewer and an annual contributor to the Coming Home Network when the latter first began in 1997. We honor Fr. Heier as both the earliest and longest-termed donor among all of the Catholic priests who support the CHNetwork through consistent monthly or annual giving.

If you would like to join others like Fr. Thomas Heier who are part of our monthly giving program known as **COMPASS**, visit chnetwork.org/compass ■

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 or complete this form and mail to:

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doing His greatest work right here in Mary's womb, and finally, another human being knows it. Elizabeth knows it!

I can hear them laughing: Mary and Elizabeth — laughing and laughing. And then, I see them sitting quietly together... because words and laughter could never be enough to contain the mystery.

Wow, what a month! If you really want to enter Mary's month, why don't you try journeying with her? Let your journey from Nazareth to Elizabeth's home in the hills near Jerusalem be marked by some activity. Increase your daily Mass attendance. Pick up a book on Mary or the Visitation. For those of you who are into doing workouts, why not walk, run, skip, or hike eighty miles in May and envision yourself covering the distance between Nazareth and a little village near Jerusalem with Our Lady? Spread the distance across the month and imagine finding yourself at the foot of the hill in Judea that leads to Elizabeth's home. Imagine Mary's joy. Imagine Elizabeth's surprise.

You will never wonder about that crazy Catholic notion of Mary's month again. It will feel oh, so right because it is oh, so right. ■



Stained-glass window,
Visitation Academy, St. Louis, MO

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CHNetwork
P.O. Box 8290
Zanesville, OH
43702-8290



740-450-1175



info@chnetwork.org



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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

May 2

Fr. Sebastian White,
O.P.* (former Evangelical and
Anglican) (re-air from 4/30/19)

May 9

Prayer Roundtable*
Fr. Gabriel Landis, O.S.B.
& Fr. Jay Kythe, O.S.B.

May 16

RJ Snell* (former
Evangelical Protestant)
(re-air from 6/25/19)

May 23

Jacob Imam*
(former Muslim)

May 23

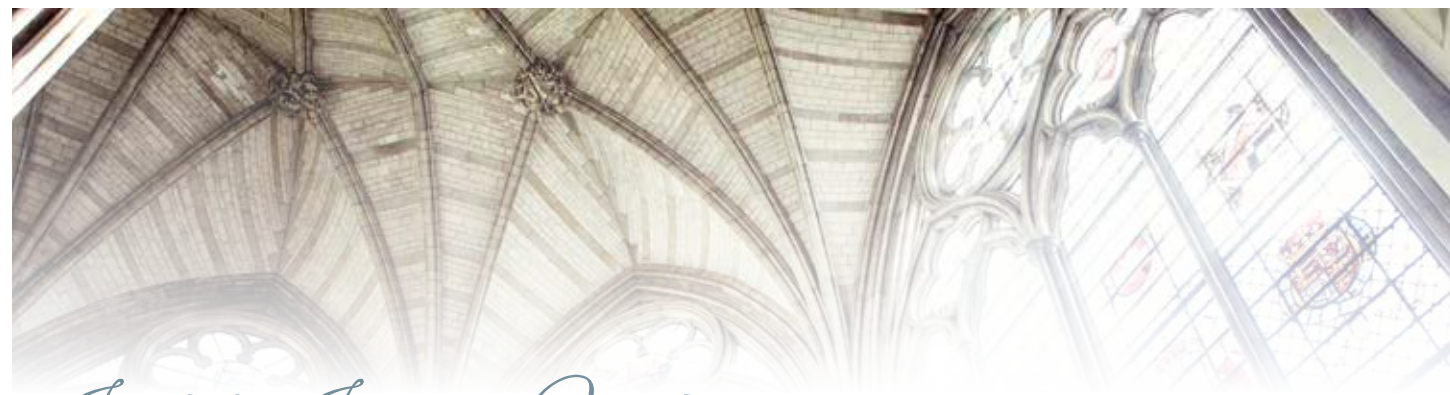
Jessica Ptomey*
(former Evangelical Protestant)
(re-air from 7/8/2019)

June 6

Casey & Erin Phillips*
(former Baptists)

*Schedule is subject to change.

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



Joyful Journey Updates

From Bob, a former atheist and agnostic on the journey “This weekend, I completed the Rites of Sending and Election. I am beginning to truly feel that I am a valued part of something very big and very important, this for the first time in my long life. I have alternating feelings of pure happiness and awareness of new responsibilities, both of which are privileges for which I thank God. [I also thank Him for] the good people He has placed along my path, not a few of whom are the friends I have made [in the online community]. Deo gratias.”

From Emily, on the journey “I was raised Baptist but converted to Presbyterianism in college. I’ve served in Presbyterian ministry (in many capacities) for over ten years. Throughout my life, Catholic theology, liturgy, and history have always intrigued me. Today, I enjoy attending mass at our local parish, learning more about Catholic theology, and getting to know many faithful Catholics. Discernment can be such a challenge, but also an immense blessing.”

From, Darshak, a recent convert and former Protestant pastor in India “Greetings! Let me share a joy with you. I am glad to announce that I became an official Catholic believer

now. [I] was baptized and had my First Holy Communion in a small gathering – feeling blessed. What I am today is just because of your help and guidance. Thank you so much.”

Here is how Darshak’s journey home started, along with some “milestones” along the way:

June 2019 – “I was brought up in a Hindu family. Later, I came to Christ and went to an Assemblies of God church. After that I went for Bible training and completed my B.Th (ATA). Right now I am serving as a church planter/pastor. I left my hometown and was sent to another town far from my home to plant a [Pentecostal] church. To be honest, I am confused. I don’t know if I am on the right track or not. Whenever I think about the Catholic Church, I start to think more and more about it. I got saved in 2010 – that means almost 9 years ago, and I really don’t want to waste my life as a Pentecostal minister. Pray for me that God will lead me to the right track.”

January 2020 – “In doing this [church-planting ministry], there is no joy in my heart. When I share the Gospel with others, I feel good, but when it comes to the doctrines, I feel like there is lackness in my heart. I am struggling with financial issues. I was surfing the

Internet and came to know about the Catholic Church, and I like what you are doing for His Kingdom and the way you are doing it.”

August 2020 – “I have to take a step forward. I believe that God will open a door for me. Keep praying for me. It will be very difficult for me to face my wife, too, as she is the daughter of a Pentecostal pastor. It is tough to make her understand, but God will take control over everything.”

November 2020 – “Today I resigned from my denomination. Thank you for your encouragement. Tomorrow is my first day at my new job. Thank you for your prayers and help – because of these I could free myself from doctrines which are not based on the word of God. I have no words to explain my joy.”

October 2021 – “I am so excited for [the] upcoming day when I will be a full member of the Catholic Church. Tomorrow I will buy white clothes, as the priest told me to wear them when I take the Holy Eucharist for the first time. Please continuously pray for me; I am also praying for a way for me to attend Mass every week. Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart once again; without your support and prayers, this wouldn’t have happened for me.” ■

Prayer List

Clergy

■ **For Craig, a Methodist pastor** who was born, baptized, and raised Catholic and has decided to resign his pastorate later this year and come home to the Church.

■ **For Judson, a Methodist pastor** who has been drawn to the Catholic Church for years and has now decided to resign his ministry to enter the Church and work toward a doctorate in Catholic theology.

■ **For Bobby, a former Baptist pastor** who entered the Church a year ago and is now struggling with finances and his health.

■ **For Ben, a Nazarene pastor** with deep ties to the Nazarene Church who sees something of the beauty and truth of the Catholic Church but faces so many obstacles, that the Holy Spirit will give him wisdom and courage.

■ **For Wieslaw, a Protestant pastor** who is drawn toward the Church but struggles with a number of biblical and theological questions, that he will find the answers he needs.

■ **For Jay, a non-denominational Protestant minister** who was baptized and raised Catholic and now finds himself drawn back toward the Church, that the Lord will lead him and give him the courage he needs to make that move.

■ **For Jeremiah, a Baptist pastor** who, having faced tremendous family opposition to his study of Catholicism, has decided not to make the journey, that the Lord will be with him and continue to speak to him.

■ **For Michael, an Episcopal priest** seeking full communion with the Catholic Church and exploring possible ordination as a Catholic priest.

■ **For Brian, a Methodist pastor** who is convinced he must become Catholic yet is struggling with how he will support his family.

■ **For Bret, a former Baptist pastor** who is attracted to the Catholic Church and is examining her teachings and attending Mass, that the Holy Spirit will guide him as he struggles to reconcile his Protestant background and understanding with what he's now learning.

■ **For James, a Baptist pastor** who has become convinced of the truth of the Catholic Faith, that the Holy Spirit might soften his wife's heart and give him the wisdom to know how to lead her toward the Church.

Laity

■ **For Darshak in India**, a recent convert with a Pentecostal background, who asks for prayers.

■ **For Nicole in Canada** who seeks to follow the Lord into His Church but has familial obstacles that seem insurmountable.

■ **For David, an Anglican**, that all the roadblocks on his path to full communion with the Catholic Church may be cleared away.

■ **For Percy, a Baptist in California**, that, as he continues to read about the Catholic Faith, he may be drawn home to the Catholic Church.

■ **For Theo**, as he journeys home from atheism, that the Holy Spirit would fill him with the joy of Christ's presence.

■ **For Amy and her family** who are struggling to find their place spiritually, that the Holy Spirit will give them peaceful confidence, as Amy desires to become Catholic, but her husband is unsure.

■ **For Gregory, a convert in Florida** who asks for prayers for a pillar of his church who needs many things such as basic necessities, housing, and better health.

■ **For Alan, a Pentecostal**, that Our Lord would guide him to the answers he needs for his many questions and concerns about the Catholic Faith.



■ **For Liam** who just attended his first Mass and is in awe of what he experienced there.

■ **For D.G. in Maine, a convert and former missionary** who asks for prayers for the repose of the souls of her grandfather and aunt, both murdered on Epiphany Sunday.

■ **For Ben, a Non-denominational Christian in Ohio**, that Our Lord Jesus would grant him a hunger for His Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist.

■ **For a Jehovah's Witness in Australia**, that the love of God would guide him home to the Church founded by Our Lord Jesus Christ.

■ **For Roman, a fallen-away Catholic**, that he be granted the grace to overcome his fear of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

■ **For Ricardo, a Presbyterian**, that the Holy Spirit would soften his wife's heart concerning the Catholic Church and heal her misunderstandings about the Church.

■ **For Andrew in California**, that his family may become open to and understanding of his interest in the Catholic Faith.

■ **For Edward, an Evangelical**, that God would build upon his general interest in the Catholic Church and draw him Home.

■ **For Mark, a Seventh-Day Adventist**, that the Holy Spirit would heal his misunderstandings and prejudices toward the Catholic Church.

■ **For Frank, a Wesleyan and fallen-away Catholic**, that the love and grace of Our Lord Jesus would call him Home.

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 3

for granted. But all the things that had been stirring in my heart over the past several years were finally about to happen!

One of the most special tenets of Catholic teaching that I have since held onto for dear life is redemptive suffering. The pieces of my life that didn't fit into my Protestant worldview fit here — because in so many ways redemptive suffering had called me home to Mother Church. It was my clarion call, and I was recognizing and answering that call. There was a purpose for my physical suffering and emotional suffering from the lack of love I received from my Protestant friends and family when I came into the Church. As a Catholic, I finally knew why cerebral palsy was given to me: to give it back to God. As sweet as the gift of suffering is, sweeter still is the gift of receiving the Lord Jesus in the Eucharist, the source, summit, and strength of my life.

Today, my life is still not all sunshine and roses. The constant pain and muscle tightness get annoying, but if having cerebral palsy means my salvation, then thanks be to God. What Mother Teresa said is true: "Suffering is the kiss of Jesus... that you have come so close to Him that He can kiss you." I wouldn't give that up for anything.

When the day arrived in 2019 when I came into the Church, with the Alsobrooks as my sponsors, not only were there pews full of people supporting me, but Mrs. Steffan, who had gone to be with Our Lord in 2018, and my sister, Madison, were also there with me. After the Easter Vigil, Sally took me aside and reminded me how I used to cry at Mass in high school when everyone else went up to receive the Eucharist, and I couldn't. I was floored; I had forgotten. This encounter was further confirmation to me that God does, indeed, choose us before the foundation of the world. My life, if it shows anything, certainly shows that.

Given the Grace to Find My Place

When I was in high school, we would go on a class trip every year. As sophomores, on our way to the Smoky Mountains, we spent the night in Nashville with the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia. I was captivated, and I loved them instantly. The day we arrived, Sr. Mary Angela Highfield, OP sat down and talked to us about how there is a hole in our heart for God, and if we tried to fill it with anything else, we would never be fulfilled. I took it all in; that conversation and the way she looked into our eyes are things I have never forgotten. But one day, not long after I had come into the Church, I remembered that story with a different kind of fondness: the stepping stone that it, too, was along the way for me to never veer far from the true, the good, and the beautiful in the Catholic Church.

With this developing love for the Dominicans, I inquired about applying to the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The bylaws of their order require certain physical criteria that, unfortunately, my cerebral palsy prevents me from meeting. Though I desired so much to wear the Dominican habit, it was imperative I come to understand that their "no" was God's perfect will, His grace, and it was

up to me to accept it or not. At first, I was not willing to do so because it brought back the searing comments from my college professor about people with physical disabilities. I started to believe the lie that there was no place for me in the Church, either. It became such an obstacle to my willingness to trust God that I knew I had to take it to confession.

I had carried the hurt from that professor around with me for so long that it had turned into guilt because I couldn't let it go. As I told all of this to the priest in confession, including the "no" from the Sisters, he asked me if I remembered what God had said to St. Paul when he had his thorn in the flesh. I said, "His grace is sufficient," and the priest replied, "... and His power is made perfect in weakness. His power is made perfect in your weakness." Before, I had only held onto the first part — God's grace being sufficient. Now, for the first time, through the grace of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, I started to believe the part that God truly meant for me to hear. I'll never forget the priest's final words: "It's your *witness* to the Church."

God never slacks in keeping His promises. When I was ten years old, I raised my hand and asked Fr. Clark where I fit in. Ten years later, God said, "I'll show you. You fit right here. Home was always waiting for you." God had shown me the way back, by showing me where it all began. ■



MEGAN ROGERS works for three parishes in the Diocese of Memphis. She came into full communion with the Church at the 2019 Easter Vigil. Megan has a blog, *Resting in His Sufficient Grace*, where she shares the unique story of her heavenly friendship with the late Francis Cardinal George. [Cardinal Francis George: A Friend of Mine -- Resting in His Sufficient Grace(wordpress.com)].

Continue the **JOURNEY**

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



Everything is a grace. Everything is the direct effect of our Father's love - difficulties, contradictions, humiliations, all the soul's miseries, her burdens, her needs — everything, because through them, she [the soul] learns humility, realizes her weakness. Everything is a grace because everything is God's gift... whatever be the character of life or its unexpected events...



— St. Thérèse of Lisieux





Praying WITH OUR MOTHER THIS MAY

We invite you to pray with us during each week of May as we seek to honor the Mother of the Church. Let us imagine her earthly journey and model her perpetual fidelity to and love for her Son.

Week One

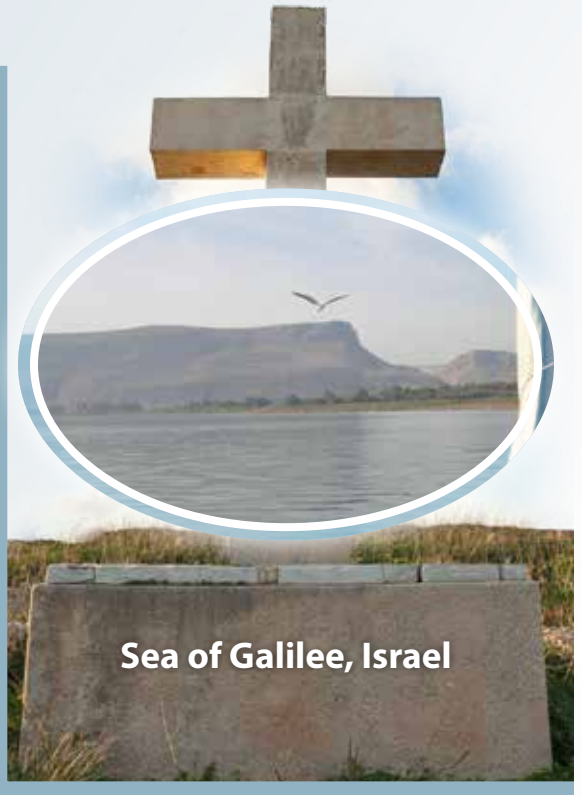
Holy God, who prepared a people after your own heart, who created a mother for yourself, and who sent angels to proclaim the birth of the Son of God by way of a virgin's womb, help us to journey through the land where Christ walked, where He lived and died.

Show us the Sea of Galilee where the first Apostles played as children and learned a trade. Lead the way from the sea to the "backwater" town of a young woman so committed to her God that the eyes of the Lord were drawn to her, and the Holy Spirit overshadowed her. And the Word was made Flesh.

Show us the small city of Christ's childhood. Show us His earthly home, the dusty street where He lived and grew to be a man of full stature, the nearest synagogue where He prayed and read from the Scriptures. May we consider our town, our street, our home as the place to become a little Christ. Mother Mary, teach us, your little children, to be like Jesus. Amen.



Church at Cana, Upper Galilee, Israel



Sea of Galilee, Israel

Week Two

Lord Jesus Christ, you journeyed just a few miles south of your home in Nazareth, with your apostles and with your mother, to attend a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Your Sacred Heart longed to respond to your mother's plea to help friends and relatives and to protect the dignity of a newly-married couple.

Teach us to celebrate and protect our own close relationships that are centered on you and to remember that you waited for your mother's word before leaving her side to begin your public ministry. Show us how to turn our hearts to your mother, to incline our ears to her words, and to respond to her heart's pleas, for we know the Immaculate Heart of Mary beats in rhythm to your own Sacred Heart.

Week Three

Mary, as we journey with you from Nazareth, past Mount Tabor where your Son was transfigured, through the Valley of Jezreel and over the rugged hills of Samaria or beside the peaceful Jordan River Valley, let us make our way south to Jerusalem.

Teach us to count our steps in life's journey as you did, steps sometimes difficult and sometimes easy, and to always carry Our Lord with us. Make us ready to share the good news of your Son's love for each person and to announce the news of your Son's visitation to every corner of the world. Renew each one of us through your Body and Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the Most Holy Eucharist. Help us to go with great haste to someone today and bear witness to those things the Lord has done.



**Jezreel Valley and
Mount Tabor, site of the
Transfiguration**



**Old City Model, Israel
Museum, Jerusalem**

Week Four

Mary, as we approach Jerusalem, the city you knew so well, we pass the Church of St. Anne, which marks the place where you were born. We think of the times you traveled to the gates of this ancient city. You were presented in the Temple, and a few years later you served there as a holy virgin. You passed the city gates to journey farther, to Elizabeth's home. Just months later, you made your way with Joseph to Bethlehem, Our Lord's birthplace.

Help us to stay close to the Church, the New Israel. Help us to keep our eyes on the New Jerusalem that awaits. Make each of us a "little Bethlehem," where Christ may be born in the hearts of those we encounter. Help us to, in all things, work for the glory of your Son and be worthy of that upward call to holiness and the beatific vision.



**Church of the Holy
Sepulchre, spot from
which Mary witnessed
the crucifixion**

Week Five

Mother of Sorrows, you stood at the cross, faithful to the end, even as your Son writhed in pain and succumbed to death. Your eyes remained fixed on the One who made you and called you to bear Him, teach Him, guide Him, and speak the words that began His public ministry.

Somehow, you knew that every part of your life was oriented to His life, to His death, and to His resurrection and ascension. From the first days of your pregnancy you pondered all things in your heart. Did Jesus visit you first after His resurrection? Did you hear His first greeting on that Easter morning? Did you keep even this in the silence of your heart?

Were you prepared to lose Him again at the ascension? What was it like to gather the nascent Church around you and encourage them to find your Son in the Eucharist? To remind them that, truly, He will be with us until the end of the age? Mother Mary, Mother of the Church, remind us even now that Christ is with us, forever and ever. Amen.

The Coming Home Network International

PO Box 8290

Zanesville, OH 43702-8290

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CHECK OUT OUR NEW VIDEO SERIES, **CHNETWORK PRESENTS!**



IN this engaging program, Matt Swaim talks to various converts about some of the major issues they wrestled with on their way into the Church. Thus far, episodes have addressed overcoming anti-Catholicism, what to do with your old Protestant books, and more.

To view the series, visit **chnetwork.org/presents**