



October 2022 CHNewsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



Peace Be With My Soul, Too

By Nora Jensen

I grew up in the beautiful mountains of Colorado with loving parents. We were not religious at all; in fact, our family had an anti-Christian attitude. I believed in an impersonal God and had a deep devotion to angels, though I am not sure where those beliefs originated. My parents worked hard to provide for my brother and me, and they instilled in us a strong sense of right and wrong. We were a tight-knit family.

Wicca, a Family Affair

When I was 11 years old, my brother and I were playing in our yard. We stumbled upon a stone circle we had never noticed before; the stones and the circle were clearly placed by human hands, in a pattern that pointed to their ritualistic purpose. Thinking satanists must have snuck into our yard and built this thing, we proceeded to destroy it by kicking as many of the heavy stones out of place as we could. (Why satanists? I wonder to this day why we would have thought that.) Afterwards, we ran to the house to tell our mother what a great thing we had done.

I still remember the look on my mother's face when we told her about the circle, and her odd response was not lost on me. She didn't seem surprised when we told her about the circle, nor did she say anything when we told her we destroyed it.

Later that evening, both our parents talked to us about it. My father's eyes had a magnetic sparkle to them as he asked, "What if I were to tell you that witches and wizards were real?" My brother and I glanced at each other and rolled our eyes. We

didn't believe it. My father continued to explain, in a very excited manner that completely drew me in, how witches and wizards were real, they could perform magic, and he and our mother were Wiccans. The stone circle had been built by them.

I had many questions. By the end of our talk, I wanted to be Wiccan, too. My brother seemed indifferent. We apologized for ruining the circle and tried to replace the stones, though my parents told us not to worry about fixing it. My parents bought me a book on Wicca, and that book became my bible. It taught that the devil doesn't exist. The basic morality of Wicca is that, whatever you send out into the universe, you get back times three. I was taught to do no harm, or it would result in bad things for me.

There was a section in this book that warned Christians would try to convert me. As a family, we mocked Christians both at home and anonymously in online chat rooms. We would go into a Christian chat room and say blasphemous things to try to get a reaction out of the other people in the room.

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Journeys Home

...Journeys Home Continued...

In those days, my mother also introduced me to Tarot cards, and we frequented a New Age store with bumper stickers on the wall. One sticker there caught my attention. It said: “Too Many Christians, Not Enough Lions.” I asked my mom what it meant, and she told me about the persecution of early Christians and how they were thrown into pits with hungry lions. I bought the sticker and hung it on my bedroom wall. I dabbled in spells, and I believed they worked at times, but at other times, they didn’t.

I had other experiences with Wicca that unsettled me and thus kept me from delving deeper into the occult. One was with a Ouija board that my parents had bought. I won’t go into the details of that experience, but I was totally freaked out and refused to do it anymore.

A Suffocating Fog

One day, my mother came to me with an exercise that would enable us to visit a different plane of existence that we could explore. I was excited to try it. My mother warned me that once I

was done, I must “come back through the door” before opening my eyes, otherwise a part of me could be left behind. We tried repeatedly, but every time we closed our eyes, nothing happened. Finally, about 30 minutes later, I closed my eyes and envisioned myself going through the door. Suddenly, I was in a different place. I was in a void surrounded by what I can only describe as a red and black, billowing fog. I couldn’t see through it, but I could walk through it, so I started walking forward. As I walked, the strange fog began to close in on me and harden around me. I felt like I was suffocating. I tried to go back, but the fog was like giant red and black boulders, closing around me, and I couldn’t move.

Terrified, I tried not to open my eyes, thinking of my mother’s warning, but my eyes flew open, and I lurched forward in a panic. My mother was leaning over me, panicked. She said I had started breathing heavily and flailing in the chair. I told her of my experience and explained how impossible it was to move in any direction, and I decided not to do any more of that exercise. (Thinking back on it now, I believe my Guardian Angel was protecting me by preventing me from moving through the fog.)

I continued with Wicca throughout my high school years, practicing it but not growing in it. I had Christian friends who seemed to ignore my faith, and other friends converted to Wicca because of me. One friend started to become interested in Wicca, but when her Catholic father found out, he forbade us from hanging out. That was my first encounter with Catholicism, and it made me think that all Catholics were closed-minded and mean.

A Crack in the Wiccan Wall

I was also friends with some children whose family was Mormon. One day, they asked me to accompany them to church on Sunday. I was curious, so my parents let me go. Prior to the service, I was not told anything about it. I wasn’t told to do or not do anything. During the service, when the time for communion came, I saw the little crackers and tiny cups of water that were being passed out on trays. Instinctively, I knew I shouldn’t take the bread or the water. Once the tray got to me, I passed it and received some puzzled looks. In my mind, I felt it would be wrong to receive communion since I did not believe in it; I didn’t even know what it meant. But communion seemed important enough that I was not to take it without understanding it.

After high school, I attended the University of Colorado. I tried a *jiu-jitsu* class and instantly fell in love with it. I quickly made multiple friends, and my faith took a back seat in my life. My friends were like-minded, had no faith, and held anti-Christian views as well. We got along great, and it wasn’t long before we all joked that *jiu-jitsu* was our religion.

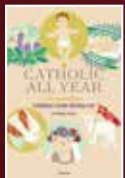
After two years of college and *jiu-jitsu*, I started to feel restless. There was an unsettling feeling inside of me, something nagging and growing that I could not deny or ignore. It was a hole, and I realized very quickly that this was a God-sized hole. I knew this because I had everything that I thought I needed to feel fulfilled, although the things that other people sometimes

CatholicAllYear.com & THE CATHOLIC ALL YEAR COMPENDIUM KENDRA TIERNEY

What would your life look like if you lived out the traditions of the Catholic Faith? *Catholic All Year* teaches families how to easily bring liturgical



seasons and celebrations into their homes. Through her website, author Kendra Tierney shares ideas and a variety of resources that will deepen your faith by deepening your understanding and appreciation of the Church calendar. From prayer cards to sacramentals, and from saintly celebrations to at-home Marian processions, Kendra’s website has everything you need to incorporate the liturgical year into your daily walk in the Faith. Kendra’s writings and videos also explore the call to holiness and its inherent challenges in our modern-day world. *Catholic All Year* reveals, and revels in, the role of our Church as *mater et magistra* (mother and teacher), illustrating how God the Father speaks through Her to guide and comfort us during even the most difficult trials of our daily lives.



The Catholic All Year Compendium is Kendra’s “one-stop shop” for practical liturgical living. With wisdom and humor, her book provides down-to-earth, realistic ways to bring your faith home from Mass.

Kendra’s ideas and activities are easy to follow, whether they are how to make Advent quiet or how to celebrate Easter joyfully and with holiness. Available through EWTN’s religious catalog and other Catholic retailers, this resource will help readers to live the Faith during all the Church seasons of the year.

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...Journeys Home Continued...

used to fill their voids, such as drugs, sex, or alcohol, were not things that I had ever partaken of, and I was not about to start them. I needed to find God, desperately so.

But where was He? I had done some research into Eastern spirituality, and I knew He was not to be found there. I was absolutely convinced that He was not to be found in Christianity, and whoever Jesus was, he had nothing to do with God. This left me with the unsatisfactory answer that my only option was to go back to what I knew. So, I dusted off my teen witch book and started reading. It was so abstract and imprecise in the way it described God that I couldn't believe its take on faith. Scanning the pages I had once studied endlessly, I realized that it stirred nothing within me. I was 21 years old now, and I no longer had the same adolescent concerns. I also now found my parents' books incredibly dull. The one thing I decided was that, if I were to find God, I was not going to be superficial with Him. He had to be the most important thing in my life, and I intended to live in that manner.

Catholic Love

Not long after discovering my need for God, I noticed a handsome guy at work, Dane. Dane also happened to live in my apartment complex. We began talking, and after he asked me out, the topic of religion came up. I found out he was Catholic, and I was appalled. Just my luck, I thought. Not only was he Christian, but he had to be Catholic! When Dane asked me what I was, I proudly proclaimed that I was Wiccan, but internally, I gagged. Even I didn't believe what I said. But I had to be all in, and this was what I knew, so I tried to be confident in my words. To my surprise, Dane didn't end the date or our friendship. He seemed genuinely interested in what I had to say. That was the first moment my heart softened a tiny bit.

As time went by, we hung out more and started dating. One night, the topic of religion came up again. Instead of telling him about Wicca, I started voicing all the things I had been contemplating about who I thought God might be. I talked about how I thought He would not be an impersonal God, but a personal one, one who cares about us and knows us. I talked about our souls and our journey on earth and what it might mean when we die. For every idea I shared, Dane would say, "That's what the Catholic Church teaches." I was floored. After about the sixth time that he said this, I figured I ought to investigate this Catholic Church. I pulled up a Wikipedia page on Catholicism and barely got past the first paragraph. It was like reading a different language.

Our relationship soon became serious, so we decided to fly to Arizona so I could meet his family. I knew his parents were Catholic, and Dane had told them I was Wiccan. I was very nervous. But once we got there, I saw a beauty in his family that I knew came from their faith. We didn't discuss religion at all while I was there, but I witnessed a joy and a peace that I had not seen before. More and more, my heart kept softening.

Sometime after we returned to Colorado, Dane's mom suggested he take me to Mass. I agreed, and to make sure the experience would be all it could be, Dane decided to take me to the

cathedral in downtown Colorado Springs. I had no idea what to expect, but he told me to just follow along – stand when he stood, kneel when he knelt, sit when he sat.

Dane also told me it was imperative that I not take the Eucharist. Perplexed and feeling a little defiant, I asked why I could not receive the Eucharist. He told me it was because I wasn't Catholic and didn't believe what the Catholic Church taught. Considering that had been my thought process at the Mormon service, it seemed a reasonable explanation. When we arrived, the ushers smiled at me with such warmth. I hadn't expected such a genuine, joyful greeting. When we got into the Church, we sat near the front so it would be easier to follow along.

Supernatural Peace

The most significant moment in that Mass, for me, was the sign of peace. When the priest said, "Let us offer each other the sign of peace," I quizzically looked at Dane. He sheepishly smiled at me and said, "Peace be with you," giving me a big hug. I watched him turn to those around him and shake their hands and offer them peace, so I did the same. Those around me were already turned toward me, and one by one they smiled and offered me peace. Me – the girl who had mocked them and their God her entire life. Me – who had blasphemed, cursed, and treated them with such callous disregard. Me!

I knew they didn't know any of this, but I was distinctly aware, in that moment, that Jesus knew everything. For the first time in my life, I felt my soul completely bare and exposed to Him, and He and I were both looking at it. We could see it, all the rot and ugliness and selfishness, and there was nowhere to hide. I felt ashamed, and I didn't understand how I had made it into His house without Him striking me down. Though I felt an unbearable shame coming from inside of me, I also felt the most tender love and mercy coming from outside of me, enveloping me despite all my faults. At that very moment, I knew I had found God; I had found what I needed to fill that hole! I was home.

I don't remember the rest of that Mass. I remember being very quiet on the ride home, trying to process what had happened to me. I knew I wanted to be Catholic, but I didn't tell Dane that right then. We continued going to Mass sporadically, and when we were 24, we got married. Dane wanted a Catholic wedding, and I was all in. I happily signed the papers that I would raise our future children in the Faith, even though I was not yet Catholic. I tried to attend RCIA, but without a sponsor, who needed to be a practicing Catholic, I never made it past the first session.

Four years after our wedding, I became pregnant with our son, and we moved to Arizona so Dane could join the family business. Once there, my father-in-law talked to me about RCIA. I had excuses for why I shouldn't do it, including giving birth right in the middle of it. RCIA would be too much on my plate as a first-time mom who didn't know what to expect with a new baby. He shot down my excuses and told me to just try. Annoyed, I reluctantly agreed.

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St. Odilo of Cluny & Blessed Carlo Acutis

ANSWERING THE CALL TO HOLINESS IN A SECULAR WORLD

One fell asleep in Christ as an elderly monk, the other as a fresh-faced high schooler. One belonged to the medieval age, one to the modern. One wore a tunic, the other a T-shirt. Although separated by a millennium, St. Odilo of Cluny and Blessed Carlo Acutis were united in their love of Christ and their devotion to His Church. And their spiritual lives bear striking similarities: each consecrated his life to the Virgin Mary as a boy; each was devoted to praying for deceased souls; and each endured extreme physical suffering that was patiently offered up for the Church. Even their auras were alike – the visible manifestations of their deep bond with Christ. Both were described as serene and amiable, having “faces beaming with grace, yet full of authority,” “bright, piercing eyes,” dignified mannerisms, and voices with the “greatest of sweetness.”¹ Yet, both also had their feet firmly planted in their earthly lives, using their unique circumstances and talents to bring the light of the Gospel into the world. By finding a way to marry the secular with the divine, they illustrate our own ability to strive for and attain holiness regardless of our age or vocation.

St. Odilo of Cluny (AD 962 – 1049)

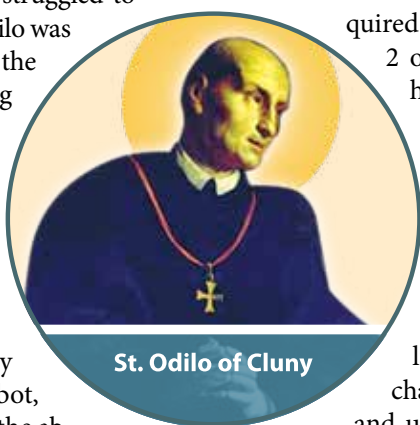
St. Odilo's piety and fervor emerged at a young age, courtesy of a miracle and the Blessed Mother. Born with a condition that rendered his limbs partially paralyzed, Odilo struggled to move and was carried by servants. One day, Odilo was deposited on the steps of a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Compelled by the Spirit, he drug himself, on his belly, into the church toward the altar. With all the strength he could muster, Odilo stretched his arm toward the altar cloth, and immediately upon grasping it, he was healed. Odilo's family later discovered him joyfully running around the sanctuary.

Odilo then consecrated his life to the Holy Virgin and later entered the French monastery at Cluny after a chance encounter with its abbot, St. Mayeul. There, Odilo reluctantly accepted the abbotship himself at the age of 32. As abbot, a position he held for over 50 years, Odilo instituted sweeping monastic reforms, especially a strict adherence to the Rule of St. Benedict. To further combat rampant corrupt behavior, Odilo put all Clunaic monasteries under his authority and doubled the number of monasteries during his tenure.

Odilo was not content to remain cloistered behind church walls, however. With brilliant diplomacy, he brought the Gospel into secular affairs; he cultivated extensive political connections that allowed him to ensure security and autonomy for his monasteries. And with concern for the spiritual and physical welfare of all, he became the beloved advisor of several European emperors. As such, Odilo was able to intercede on behalf of their subjects and enemies alike, procuring clemency and charity for both. His “Truce of God” saved thousands of lives, as it suspended all military fighting in France on holy and consecrated

days. Known for his gentleness and compassion, he even melted down his monastery's sacred vessels and treasures to provide for the poor during the Great Famine of 1066.

Odilo's intercessions were not just for the living – he required frequent prayers for the dead. On November 2 of every year, he commemorated the dead of his order and encouraged alms-giving, prayers, and sacrifices for all the souls in Purgatory. This ancient tradition of the Church was previously celebrated in the spring, but Odilo's commemoration on the second day of November spread throughout the Western Church, eventually becoming the permanent date for the Feast of All Souls. Odilo's earthly life ended where his spiritual one began, in a chapel dedicated to Mary. Suffering great pain and unable to move, his fellow monks laid him in front of the altar, where he died reciting the Divine Office on the Solemnity of Mary, January 1, 1049.



Blessed Carlo Acutis (1991 – 2006)

Almost a thousand years later, another small boy would beg his mother to take him into the churches of Milan so that he could blow kisses to Jesus and leave flowers for Mary. Blessed Carlo Acutis's path to sainthood was paved with inner grace and sanctity, yet it also wound its way through ordinary teenage milestones: soccer matches, outings with friends, video games, and social media. Born in 1991, Carlo will more than likely become the first “millennial” saint.

Carlo's journey with Christ took a remarkable turn when, at the age of five, he decided to consecrate his life to Our Lady of the Rosary while visiting her shrine in Pompeii. From that day, Carlo's unique call to holiness manifested itself in every aspect

1 Gori, Nicola. *Carlo Acutis*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2021. & Jotsald. *De vita et virtutibus Sancti Odilonis abbatis*.

of his being as he made a conscious effort to serve others and live the Gospel. He began attending daily Mass, and he recited the Rosary and read Scripture daily after his First Holy Communion. These three activities, along with weekly Reconciliation, Adoration, and acts of charity, formed the foundation of his “steps to holiness kit” that he included on a website he created as a teenager.



Bl. Carlo Acutis, as Spider-Man

Carlo is considered a modern-day herald and apostle of the Eucharist, for he also found ways to infuse his everyday tasks with his passion for the Eucharist and the Gospel. When he played soccer, he invited the marginalized to join. While riding his bike, he stopped to speak with neighborhood workers and the homeless. He shared his own dinners with the homeless and used his allowance to buy them sleeping bags. He bought a special walking stick to collect trash during his hikes. He walked the school halls during breaks to purposely seek out and befriend those who were alone. Yet he always maintained his sense of fun, whether it was by creating videos featuring the antics of his pets or helping his grandmother smuggle a puppy into a museum in her purse. Even his weekly planner reflected the twofold nature of his existence: each daily entry consisted of two pages – on the left side Carlo listed his tasks, and on the right side he always scribbled the same quote, “We have seen His glory!” (Jn 1:14).

Those around Carlo were struck by his liveliness and optimism as well as his sense of duty and humility. He emphatically defended the Church’s teachings, yet his joyful witness to the Faith inspired and evangelized others. Carlo’s own family, “lukewarm” Catholics, found their faith renewed, and Carlo himself catechized their Hindu housekeeper, leading to the latter’s conversion. Carlo was a gifted computer programmer, and his website also featured a list of Eucharistic miracles and Our Lady’s apparitions in order to

draw *all* the “lukewarm” back to Christ in the Eucharist. Carlo’s heart beat for all souls, and he was devoted to praying for non-Catholics, non-Christians, and those in Purgatory.

Lest he give the impression that holiness necessitated perfection, Carlo was open about his internal struggles. Carlo regularly attended Confession to confront his spiritual battles and his self-admitted *peccadillos* of over-eating, gossiping, and being distracted in prayer. He acknowledged how difficult Adoration was for him and that it required practice and progress, not perfection. And he shared that humility was perhaps the most challenging of all the virtues. Yet Carlo insisted that we all strive for holiness, so that we may be one with Christ and share in His eternal glory: “You, too, can be a saint. But you need to want it with your whole heart, and if you do not yet desire it, ask the Lord for it with insistence” (*carloacutis.com*).*

Carlo continued to “work on his salvation, with God working in him” (Phil. 2:12-13) until he fell ill with an acute form of leukemia at the age of 15. Within one week of his diagnosis, he was gone. While Carlo’s passing was quick, his suffering was not. The pain he endured during that time was intense, yet according to his medical team, he bore it willingly and graciously, like Christ, offering it up for the pope and the Church. Per Carlo’s wishes, his body was laid to rest in Assisi (at the site where St. Francis cast off his rich clothes), and his tomb is open for public veneration. ■

**Carlo’s website, carloacutis.com/en/association, is now a Church-approved, international photographic exhibit. The USC-CB was recently presented with a first-class relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis. This relic will soon be available for public veneration as part of a national, multi-year Eucharistic Revival initiative.*

EWTVN’S THE JOURNEY HOME on television & radio, hosted by JonMarc Grodi, CHNetwork Executive Director



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

October 3

Rakhi McCormick*
(former Hindu)

October 10

Dr. Annie Bullock*
(former Baptist & Episcopalian)

October 17

Dr. Jason Reed*
(former Evangelical Protestant)

October 24

Mick Souza*
(Catholic Revert)

October 31

Deacon Joe Allison*
(former Evangelical minister)

*Schedule is subject to change.

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

The Catechism on Halloween

Long before Halloween arrives, retailers, schools, and other public places are saturated with spooky images, many of which call to mind death, fictional monsters, and even the demonic. So what does the Church teach about these things? On some topics, such as the question of the existence of ghosts, the Church has no official teaching at all. But when it comes to other topics that often emerge around Halloween, there are actually passages in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that directly address them. For example:

FORTUNE TELLING *All forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead, or other practices falsely supposed to 'unveil' the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone. (CCC 2116)*

EVIL SPIRITS *Man commits idolatry whenever he honors and reveres a creature in place of God, whether this be gods or demons (for example, satanism), power, pleasure, race, ancestors,*

the state, money, etc. Jesus says, 'You cannot serve God and mammon.' Many martyrs died for not adoring 'the Beast,' refusing even to simulate such worship. (CCC 2113)

WITCHCRAFT *All practices of magic or sorcery, by which one attempts to tame occult powers, so as to place them at one's service and have a supernatural power over others... are gravely contrary to the virtue of religion. These practices are even more to be condemned when accompanied by the intention of harming someone, or when they have recourse to the intervention of demons. (CCC 2117)*

SUPERSTITION *The first commandment forbids honoring gods other than the one Lord who has revealed himself to his people. It proscribes superstition and irreligion. Superstition... is the deviation of religious feeling and of the practices this feeling imposes. (CCC 2110-2111)*

GRAVEYARDS *The bodies of the dead must be treated with respect and charity, in faith and hope of the Resurrection. The burial of the dead is a corporal work of mercy; it honors the children of God, who are temples of the Holy Spirit. (CCC 2300) ■*

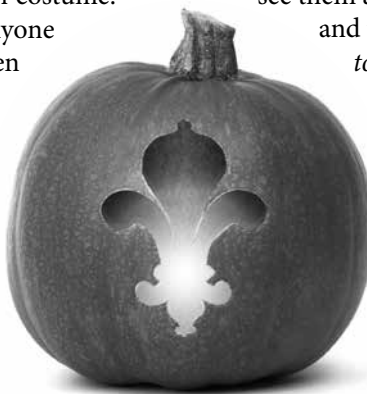


5 Ways to Celebrate a Holy Halloween

1. GO TO MASS! The word "Halloween" comes from "All Hallows' Eve," as it falls the day before the Solemnity of All Saints, a Holy Day of Obligation. The trio of All Hallows' Eve (Oct 31), All Saints' Day (Nov 1), and All Souls' Day (Nov 2) is sometimes known as the "Autumn Triduum," similar to the Paschal Triduum that ushers in the Easter season.

2. PICK A SAINT-THEMED COSTUME There are a lot of creative ways to honor the saints with a Halloween costume. A modified Jedi robe can turn revelers into anyone from St. Francis of Assisi to Padre Pio; a queen costume and a basket of bread make for a simple St. Elizabeth of Hungary, who was known for using her wealth to feed the hungry. A knight costume works well for both St. George and St. Joan of Arc.

3. PUMPKIN EVANGELIZATION Nothing starts a great conversation with neighbors and trick-or-treaters like a creative jack-o-lantern. If you're artistically inclined, you can attempt a more complex Christian symbol like the pelican, or if you're more of a novice, you can go for something simpler like a Chi-Rho or an anchor. You could even carve a Fleur de Lis, which is a medieval symbol of the Virgin Mary and also the logo for the New Orleans Saints!



4. CREATE YOUR OWN LITANY OF SAINTS Since it's the vigil of All Saints, have everyone in your family choose some of their favorites. Turn out the lights, get some candles, and invoke the saints together by reading each name and then saying, "Pray for us." Or, pray a classic Litany of Saints, easily found online.

5. EMBRACE MEMENTO MORI For many Evangelicals, skulls and skeletons are symbols of evil. Catholics, on the other hand, see them as concrete reminders that we all must face death and that we should live our lives ready for it. *Memento Mori*, Latin for "Remember your death," is a constant refrain in Christian history that calls us to always be prepared for when God might call us home. When you see skulls and skeletons this Halloween, think of them as a reminder of your ultimate goal of perfect union with God after your own death. As St. Benedict of Nursia said, "Remember to keep death before your eyes daily." In the same vein, choose a day to visit the gravestones of your loved ones. In many countries, Catholics visit cemeteries during this time to clean and decorate headstones and offer prayers for the dead. Some even have picnics there or hold late-night vigils with candles to remember and pray for all the faithful departed. ■



Joyful Journey Updates

From John, a clergy convert

I converted to Catholicism when I was in middle school, in the 1970s, through the influence of a best friend, an elderly neighbor, and a wonderful Capuchin Franciscan priest. A few years afterward, I was persuaded away from the Catholic Church, being taught it was apostasy. I became a member - and a preacher for more than 35 years! - of another religious group. I preached, taught, defended, and contended for the Bible as "the only authority in religion" with zeal and vigor.

Then last fall, I embarked on a re-evaluation of myself and my spiritual standing and a re-examination of the doctrines I had been upholding. I dug deep - very deep - and saw things I had totally missed regarding the early Church. Christianity in the fullness of its expression didn't end in AD 96; there was much more to the story.

This past February I made the decision to return to the Catholic Church. I simply could not wait any longer! I have found, once again, having lost it for forty years, the fullness of the ancient faith of Christ and His Apostles. Praise God!

From Alina, a recent convert

I cannot fully express the joy I've experienced, since my Confirmation in the Catholic Church. The process leading up to my Confirmation, and especially afterwards, was not an easy journey for me, but it has been worth it. If I try to describe what it's been like to become Catholic, I think of the merchant in Matthew 13:45-46, who was searching for valuable pearls, and "on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it." Finding Christ in the Catholic Church was the most beautiful surprise. Once I found Him there, there was no turning back.

From Everett, a clergy convert

I was received into the Church in June on the Feast of Corpus Christi. . . . I truly appreciate your support more than I can express. I would say that my foremost feeling since has been one of peace; I do feel as though I have come home. Thanks so much for your support and that of the Coming Home Network. I cannot describe to you how God has used both your testimony as well as those of your colleagues and the ministry of the network to help me in

my journey. From your podcasts to your calls where you heard my story, it all meant, and still means, so much. I do want to stay in touch, and I am praying/seeking to discern how God wants to use me as I grow into the Catholic Faith.

Kristina, a convert After I was baptized and confirmed, [I] kind of [felt] alone. You are meeting every week in a group of people with your teacher, and then after you're baptized and confirmed, you're . . . left on your own. There is no further instruction other than going to Mass and signing up for any classes that are offered. Most of my learning of my new, beautiful faith has been through YouTube and podcasts of other devout Catholic people. Every day, I listen to podcasts and Catholic radio. Truly I don't know what I would do without these resources. . . . They have been instrumental in helping me grow. . . . I can't believe it's been 3 years already! I am so blessed to be Catholic — I love my Catholic Faith so, so, so much. ■

Prayer List



Clergy

■ **For Nicolas, a Lutheran pastor** who is convinced of the truth of the Catholic Faith but is struggling with how he will be able to support his family if he leaves the only work he's ever known.

■ **For Jonathan, a Wesleyan pastor** who has been intently reading the case for Catholicism and is strongly attracted but has questions about the status of the Orthodox Church.

■ **For Scott, a Pentecostal pastor** who has been on the journey a long time (going in and out of RCIA) and has struggled with the scandals in the Church, so he cannot decide.

■ **For William, who works for a Protestant ministry** and is in a doctoral program at a Protestant seminary and yet has become convinced that he must become Catholic, that the Lord will show him how to move forward.

■ **For Celso, a former Presbyterian pastor and leader in the Vineyard movement** who left the ministry to enter the Church and is struggling with how to earn a living for his family.

■ **For Darshak, who resigned his Protestant ministry and is now Catholic**, that the Lord will give him wisdom as he deals with a strongly anti-Catholic extended family and with difficulty finding work to support his family.

■ **For Kent, a Protestant seminary student** who became Catholic two years ago and is now discerning a vocation to the priesthood or religious life in the Church.

■ **For Chris, an Anglican priest** attempting to navigate his way into the Church and dealing with the practical and personal issues that attend such a move in a very anti-Catholic country.

■ **For Denis, a minister in the Salvation Army** who has been reading deeply into Catholic teaching and history and would like to do doctoral work in Catholic theology.

■ **For Ben, a Presbyterian pastor on the journey** who still wrestles with doctrinal issues, that the Holy Spirit will lead him to the answers he seeks.

■ **For Jon, an Anglican** who has put his journey toward the Church on hold, that the Holy Spirit will continue to lead him home.

Laity

■ **For Frances, a Jewish woman on the journey**, that the love she felt for Christ in Adoration will continue to guide her as she begins RCIA and prepares to enter the Church next year.

■ **For Phillip, a Southern Baptist on the journey**, that his annulment process will go quickly and that grace would allow for open communication with his parents about matters of faith.

■ **For Jeremy in California**, that the Holy Spirit would guide his interest in the monastic life.

■ **For Adam, a former Methodist**, that he will break free from his lingering fears and self-doubts about converting after five years of study and discernment.

■ **For Kevin, an Anglican**, that he will have the right words to share with his church family and his wife regarding his desire to become Catholic, that he will join RCIA, and that his family will be open to joining him on the journey.

■ **For R.M., a convert** who asks for prayers for her father, a military chaplain, that he might convert, which would likely lead to many family members converting as well.

■ **For G.P., a Charismatic on the journey**, and for his family, that grace will win, that questions by those who do not understand will yield good fruit, and that one faithful response will grow into many more conversions.

■ **For Cole, a member of the Latter-Day Saints**, that the Holy Spirit would guide him to the fullness of Christ's truth.

■ **For Jeannie & Paul in Illinois**, that, as they begin RCIA, our Lord would bless and guide their journey to the Easter sacraments.

■ **For Scott in Oklahoma**, that the grace of our loving Lord would guide him and his wife to the Eucharistic altar.

■ **For Burt, a Presbyterian**, that the Holy Spirit would motivate him to take some more definite steps toward the Catholic Church.

■ **For Alister and his wife**, as he journeys through RCIA this year, and she (a fallen-away Catholic) considers returning to the Faith, that Catholic beauty and logic will usher in many graces in their lives.

■ **For Phillip, a Methodist in Nevada**, that our Lord Jesus would grant him the grace to overcome his struggles in believing in God's existence.

■ **For R.S., a Methodist** who plans to go through RCIA this year, that she would have grace-filled conversations with her parish priest and director of religion.

■ **For Kelle, a Baptist**, that he may overcome his concern of causing scandal among his family and friends by his becoming a Catholic Christian.

■ **For Gabriela, a fallen-away Catholic**, that the Holy Spirit would open her mind and heart to belief in God the Father and His Son so that our Lord may heal her wounded heart and lead her back to the Faith.

■ **For Kenneth, a member of the United Church of Canada**, that his journey to full communion would be filled with fulfillment and joy.

■ **For Andrew in Oregon**, that his wife would come to accept all of the doctrines revealed by God in the Catholic Church.

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.



THE POPE'S MONTHLY INTENTIONS

Each month, the Holy Father asks for our prayers for a specific intention. You are invited to answer the Holy Father's request and to join with people worldwide in praying for these intentions. From time to time, the Holy Father may add a second prayer intention related to current events. These intentions may be found online at: uscbb.org/prayers or popesprayerusa.net

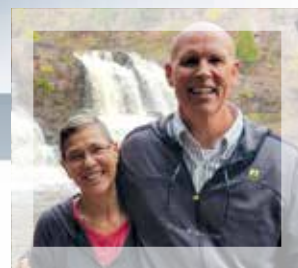
Our Holy Father's intentions for the month of October:

Let us pray for the Church. Ever faithful to, and courageous in preaching the Gospel, may the Church be a community of solidarity, fraternity and welcome, always living in an atmosphere of synodality.



DONOR SPOTLIGHT

BOB & LIZ CONCES — 19 YEARS



We cannot specifically recall the year we discovered *The Journey Home* show, but it immediately became our favorite on EWTN. We would tune in on Mondays to discover which guest was featured and to hear their conversion story. Although we consider ourselves “good Catholics,” the program has been a journey for us as well. Our faith-lives have been ignited, and we have become hungry to know more about the Catholic Church, the Church Fathers, and apologetics. All of this was influenced by the stories, the guests, and the resources guests used to discover the Catholic Faith.

We were especially moved by the sincerity of the show’s guests and the apologetics behind their conversions. For almost all, there are roadblocks, whether theological or interpersonal. Upon hearing their challenges and learning how each guest’s convictions and courage drove them to face these difficulties, we were compelled to support this ministry.

Some *Journey Home* guests speak of a time when, as non-Catholics, they tried to lead Catholics away from the Church and Faith to a different denomination. Because of this, their witness to conversion to the Catholic Faith is even more powerful. This is especially personal for me because my four siblings have left the Catholic Faith, and although we are close, my prayer is that they will revert from non-denominational practices and return to the

Church. For them, their decisions were based upon poor catechesis, anti-Catholic tracts, and influences from well-meaning people trying to “save them.”

Yet there is another big reason why we feel we should support the CHNetwork: my wife is a convert to Catholicism. Unlike many guests, however, she had an easier journey. Liz was raised in the Lutheran faith, but in college she attended Mass with her friends. Her love for our Blessed Mother was strong and was never an issue, as it often is for many converts.

We are dedicated to this ministry. We want to be part of ensuring that these conversion stories continue to be told. The truth resonates, and for those investigating Catholicism, the witness of the guests helps them on their journey. We are so thankful for Marcus and JonMarc Grodi and their staff for their years of service, prayers, and guidance to those “coming home.” It’s an honor to support this apostolate, and we pray that everyone reading our testimonial will find a way to join us.

*Join faithful donors like Bob & Liz with a one-time gift, or join our growing family of monthly donors through **COMPASS**. Use the enclosed envelope, or give online at chnetwork.org/compass*

COMPASS

SUPPORT THE CHNETWORK!

Join COMPASS — an ever-growing community of donors who give a monthly gift of \$10-\$100 (or more) to support the CHNetwork as we help to guide men and women who are coming 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/compass or complete

the “monthly gift” section on the enclosed envelope and mail it to:
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Please contact Ann at 740.450.1175 or ann@chnetwork.org if you have any questions or concerns.

Richness of RCIA

RCIA was such a game changer for me. Both of my in-laws sponsored me while I learned about and discerned the Catholic Faith. When my son was born, there was no way I was going to stop going, and my father-in-law was right, it was easy to bring my baby with me. Those classes were rich in content.

I had subscribed somewhat to moral relativism and was taught by my family that Church teachings were nothing more than forced beliefs. But I could still see that truth had to be objective if truth were to exist at all. One of the topics covered in RCIA that helped me to see this clearly was that of social justice. The secular world was jamming social justice down my throat and telling me how I needed to think about social issues. RCIA taught me it was the Catholic Church that invented social justice, and it provided a lens to look through social issues while still upholding human dignity. I began to see how the Catholic Church was a lighthouse that would constantly point to the truth if we would only follow it. It made sense that a loving God would provide this wonderful gift to guide us throughout our lives.

I also marveled at the richness and beauty of the traditions in the Catholic Church. I cherished my family traditions, but I didn't see the importance of a culture of traditions. Learning about the rich, 2000-year history and traditions of the Catholic Church, their meaning and purpose of bringing us back to God, made me yearn to be a part of Jesus' family, His Church. I also yearned to pass these traditions on to my children, to help form part of the foundation that would help them to lead holy lives.

Learning about the sacraments was beautiful. The sacraments, especially Reconciliation and the Eucharist, are the tangible ways God can touch us and heal us, just like Jesus did when he walked the Earth, though he uses his priests to stand *in persona Christi*. Before RCIA, confession intimidated me, and I felt as though confessing sins was a violation of our privacy and dignity. However, the weight that was lifted after my first Reconciliation, and each one since, was immense and yielded a deep sense of peace that filled me. I am so grateful for this sacrament.

The fact that God wants to be with me and nourish my body just as much as my soul, giving me his real Body and Blood in the form of humble bread, is a gift that leaves me speechless. RCIA allowed me to receive this amazing gift for the first time, and my astonishment over it has grown ever since. My response must be gratitude to the God who loves me so much. He wants to walk with me throughout my week by being my food, just like the manna that nourished the Israelites in the desert.

In April of 2015, my infant son and I were both baptized at the Easter Vigil, and while I struggle to remember my son's cry when he was born, I remember his cry at his baptism. It was so beautiful. Afterward, I felt so light that I thought if I just looked up to heaven, I might fly up there!

New Age Nightmare

While I no longer subscribed to New Age, I didn't think critically about it even then. After all, I had never considered myself or my family evil. It wasn't until later, right around the time of my entrance into the Catholic Church, that I questioned New Age thinking. I was talking with a family member about the pilot who deliberately crashed a plane into the French Alps, killing all 144 passengers on board. We were deeply saddened and disturbed, but then my loved one said, "But really, all of those people chose to die like that, so we shouldn't be so sad for them." That was a New Age mindset. I was in complete shock and fired back questions like, "If our souls really choose our fate before we're born, doesn't that make us robots? What if we want to change our mind? What about the babies who were carried on the plane and couldn't get off? Why was everyone terrified then? Wouldn't they have been calm, accepting their chosen fate? And if our souls can choose to die like this, doesn't that mean we relegate another soul to committing an evil act?"

There were no satisfactory answers to my questions. The conversation left me very disturbed, and I began to re-think the implications of New Age ideology. I suspected that the New Age was another tool for Satan to separate us from the one true God.

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



740.450.1175



info@chnetwork.org



The Coming Home
Network International

...Journeys Home Continued...

It was the forbidden fruit, but in different packaging. After reading Randall Baer's *Inside the New Age Nightmare*, my suspicions were confirmed, and I changed my mind about the New Age. It wasn't benign, but dangerous, just as the Bible and the Catholic Church taught. I purged my house of all my New Age paraphernalia: books, jewelry, crystals, and cards all went into the trash. I had to throw away some things, like a pentagram necklace and ring I had worn, many times because they kept coming back.

A New Witness

Since coming into the Catholic Church, my hunger to learn about my faith has been insatiable. Luckily, there is no shortage of resources to learn about Catholicism, so I am always reading and learning. I love my faith; I love the Catholic Church, and I love Jesus. I am a better mother, wife, friend, daughter, and person because of Him. While my family was not enthusiastic about my conversion, especially one person who begged me

not to become Catholic, I have a great relationship with them, and we have very interesting discussions about faith, which I cherish. I pray for my family daily, as many of them are still entrenched in the New Age. I pray that my witness and God's grace may help to soften their hearts, and hopefully, one day, they will allow Jesus to open a door to bring them home, too. ■



NORA JENSEN is a stay-at-home, homeschooling mother of three beautiful children. She lives in Phoenix with her husband and children. Nora was raised Wiccan from the time she was 11 years old. In college, she left Wicca and felt a deep desire to find God, leading her to the Catholic Church.

Continue the **JOURNEY**

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

"The Holy Souls in Purgatory are our friends. If everyone had to adopt a holy soul to pray for, Purgatory would be emptied in no time."

—St. Gertrude the Great (AD 1256 - c. 1302)

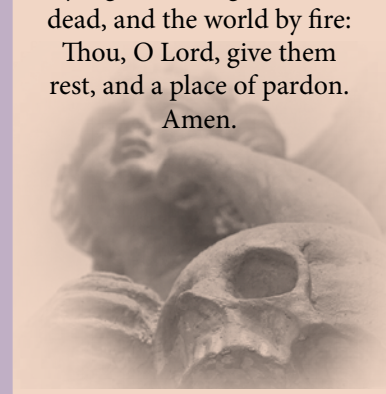
Office of the Dead PRAYERS

✠
Eternal rest grant unto them,
O Lord. And let perpetual
light shine upon them. May
they rest in peace. Amen.



✠
O God, the Creator and
Redeemer of all the faithful
departed, give to the souls
of Thy servants, men and
women, the remission of
all their sins, that by pious
supplications they may
obtain the pardon which
they have always desired.
Who livest and reignest with
God the Father in the unity
of the Holy Spirit, forever
and ever. Amen.

✠
Thou who didst raise
Lazarus from the grave,
Thou who art to come to
judge the living and the
dead, and the world by fire:
Thou, O Lord, give them
rest, and a place of pardon.
Amen.



The Coming Home Network International

PO Box 8290

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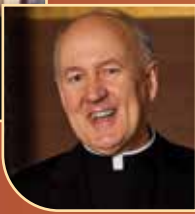


HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE

APRIL 21 – MAY 2, 2023



Ken Hensley



Msgr. Jeffrey Steenson

The Holy Land has often been referred to as the "Fifth Gospel." And it's true. The stories of the Gospels that we have heard all our lives come alive in a new way once you have seen the sites where these stories took place. So, please consider joining us for our 2023 "Deep in History" pilgrimage to the Holy Land! Ken Hensley, CHNetwork Director of Pastoral Care, and Msgr. Jeffrey Steenson, P.A. will be leading a group through the Holy Land's most important sites associated with Our Lord's life, ministry, death, and Resurrection.

FOR MORE INFORMATION please contact Ken Hensley at kenh@chnetwork.org or visit our website: <https://chnetwork.org/pilgrimage>