



February 2023 CHNewsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



The Last Thing I Will Ever Be

Rev. Mr. Joseph D. (Joe) Calvert, Deacon

I was born in Louisville, Kentucky, to a Baptist family. I had two devout Baptist grandmothers, one Catholic grandfather, and one mostly unchurched grandfather, who late in life told me with a grin, "I belong to the Church of Live and Let Live." I am very grateful that, one month before he died, my grandfather asked to be baptized and incorporated into the Body of Christ.

Stained-Glass and Christmas Mass

In my early years, my mother taught the importance of being a seeker and embracing truth. When our Baptist minister criticized Catholics and Jews in the mid-1960s and rejected equal treatment of African Americans, my mother transferred us to the Methodist Church. Dad didn't resist. He enjoyed singing in a choir, and our Methodist parish had a brilliant choir director and organist. I liked the stained-glass windows and Sunday service was more enjoyable. I didn't miss the Baptist preacher, who seemed angry. While preaching, he became agitated and pounded his Bible; I was afraid he would come down from the pulpit and hit me next.

During those years as a Baptist, I experienced some very good things too. I loved Sunday school and vacation Bible school. My mother taught some lessons and led the singing. I still love those songs, "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know" and "Jesus Loves the Little Children." I didn't know Jesus as a Savior, because I didn't have a concept of sin. I did love Him as the gentle shepherd taking care of His lambs.

I was an avid reader, devouring anything I found about pirates, Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Robin Hood,

Abraham Lincoln, and the heroes/gods of Greek mythology. I also read the Gospel of Mark over and over. I regarded Jesus as the greatest hero. Moreover, I saw him as the only hero who laid down his life for me. I understood that He did not just love me at that moment, but He would love me every day of my life. While I was excited by the heroes of sports, mythology, and history, I grew to love Jesus alone, and that love would resurface at a critical time.

I remember my mother taking us to a Catholic parish for silent prayer on a Christmas Eve when I was seven. The place felt holy, and I somehow instinctively knew that holiness was not just good, but it was very, very good.

Truth Buckets

When I was eight, we moved to New Jersey for my father's career. My mother experienced serious health difficulties that led her to the Christian Science Church, which is known for spiritual healing. My father remained a Methodist, and I split Sundays between the two faiths for several years, though I was baptized Methodist. Eventually, I settled on my mother's church. The name "Christian Science"

Journeys Home

...Journeys Home Continued...

sounds intellectual, and it is. The founder, Mary Baker Eddy, was a remarkable woman from the 1800s. She founded a well-organized church and a highly respected newspaper, *The Christian Science Monitor*, which continues to win journalistic awards. In church and Sunday school, we repeated as a creed the Scientific Statement of Being, which basically states that the spirit is good, true, and eternal, while matter is not good, not real, and not eternal.

By the time I graduated from high school, I just couldn't buy it; I couldn't believe that matter didn't exist or that it was evil. The Bible says, "God saw everything He had made, and indeed, it was good (Genesis 1:31). Common sense and life itself affirmed it. For the first time, I treated the teaching of a religion as a "truth bucket," to see if it contained truth. If it leaked, I moved on. This pouring of a religion into a truth bucket would be something I would do often throughout my life. The bucket of Christian Science contained a lot of good, but it also had a number of holes.

Seeking the Superlative

I tried academia and pursued secular wisdom. I believed the highest position on earth was that of a college professor. This idea had formed during discussions with my father. I remember being seven and posing questions like: "Dad, what's higher, a fireman or a police officer?" We had many "this-or-that" conversations. It seemed like we always ended up with the highest person being someone at the top of an academic discipline. I studied mechanical engineering at the University of Louisville and tested well in math and science. This delighted my parents, who wanted financial security for me. But engineering school was not giving me what I wanted: *wisdom*. I wanted to understand historical events, why they happened and whether they might happen again. I transferred to Eastern Kentucky University to double-major in English and history.

I had a professor who explained 16th century English poetry by bringing in ancient Hebrew, Greek, and Latin texts, which he handled with ease. At times, I took six classes instead of five and managed to earn nearly all A's. I was inducted into Phi Alpha Theta, the National Historical Honor Society.

While all that was good, I was not following the Ten Commandments. Like the average American, I thought there were no consequences to a hedonistic life. In reality, hedonism can have irreparable and even fatal ramifications. At the least, it is impossible to be truly happy when one is not in a state of grace.

At that time, God's will was furthest from my mind. After three successful semesters at Eastern, I felt guilty for being sinful (though I wouldn't have put it that way) and for my selfish pursuits on my parents' dime. I joined the Navy. After eight weeks of boot camp, they discovered that I had a herniated disc in my lower back. The Navy concluded that I had damaged it prior to entering. I had been in denial about the pain; Christian Scientists are good at that. The Navy sent me home with an Honorable Discharge for medical reasons, which meant that they didn't have to pay to fix it, which was just.

I ended up back at U of L, determined to pursue financial security and wisdom. I double-majored in mechanical engineering and English. During those semesters, I walked from one end of campus to the other. I went from Calculus III to History of Judaism to Fluid Body Dynamics to Shakespeare to Mechanics of Vibrations to a graduate level Hemingway course. I took all of the religious philosophy and history classes I could and accrued some 260 credit hours, along with a BS in Mechanical Engineering and a BA in English. I was about a semester away from degrees in philosophy and history.

Did I finally have the wisdom I had sought? Sadly, I did not.

Looking at Literature

I turned to Eastern religions of Hinduism and Buddhism. Why not Catholicism? My years in secular college had made me extremely anti-Catholic. This was not because of my parents, who were very respectful of all religions. The fact is that many college professors and their literary and historical texts were anti-Catholic. For example, I had memorized "The Garden of Love," written by the British poet William Blake:

THE GARDEN OF LOVE

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen:
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.
And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And "Thou shalt not" writ over the door;
So I turn'd to the Garden of Love,
That so many sweet flowers bore,
And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be:
And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars my joys & desires.

(Blake, William, *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, 1789, p. 21)

This poem, with its negative depiction of Mother Church, was almost an anthem of mine.

British Lord Bertrand Russell was another favorite. He employed both left and right brain, with his excellence in mathematics and philosophy. I was so enamored with Lord Russell that, while making \$3.40 per hour working nights at Taco Bell, I saved up \$100 and bought 20 copies of his book, *Why I Am Not A Christian*, just to give them out to strangers!

Sometime during my later college years, my conscience rebooted. It struck me that I might have done more harm than good. It seemed a real possibility that, if I were to die and give God an accounting, I might go to hell. In addition to this general examination of conscience, I felt restless and unfulfilled.

World Religions and Catholic Saints

I began a "Mind, Body, and Soul" program for self-improvement. Studying became my mental exercise. The YMCA improved my body. I returned to religion to care for my soul. I attended a church

...Journeys Home Continued...

called Unity of Louisville, which had a bookstore with a large selection of books on world religions. I read Eknath Easwaren, a Hindu scholar who made the spiritual path tangible with his method of twice-daily meditation. He suggested going over the same passage some 20–30 minutes at a time. Incredibly, the passage he wanted readers to begin with was the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi which begins: “Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.”

Some of those Eastern pearls were profound and consistent with Catholic teaching, underscoring what the Catechism says about other religions having some truth, although the fullness of truth can only be found in the Catholic Church, given to us by Christ. When I concluded my daily meditations, I found myself making the Sign of the Cross. I had no theological reason for doing this. It just felt good.

Eknath Easwaren also recommended several poems by St. Teresa of Avila. One, I would later learn, is called “The Bookmark Prayer”:

THE BOOKMARK PRAYER

Let nothing upset you,
Let nothing frighten you.
Everything is changing;
God alone is changeless.
Patience attains the goal.
Who has God lacks nothing;
God alone fills all his needs.

(1582)

My education taught me that Catholicism had always been anti-women, especially in Spain, the home of both St. Teresa of Avila and the Spanish Inquisition. I had learned a few things about the Catholic Church from my secular education. It was responsible for the Inquisition, Crusades, corrupt popes, and European conquerors who demanded papal fidelity or death. The only positive image I had of Catholicism was of monks patiently transcribing texts for future generations. Yet, here was a Catholic woman in 16th century Spain writing beautifully, joyfully, reverently. This saint has been responsible for more conversions than any other saint. I credit her with beginning my conversion.

Cradle Catholic Meets Anti-Catholic

I fell in love with my bride-to-be, Berta, a cradle Catholic from Panama. Berta had a very holy mother. Clearly, Berta would not long tolerate the terrible things that I used to say about the Pope and Catholics. Besides, Berta's quiet goodness made me reluctant to speak ill of her Church. Dr. Scott Hahn says that the example of Catholics was both a hindrance and an encouragement to his conversion. The same was true for me. Berta, my grandfather, and Bette, the office manager where I worked, had a humble goodness and selflessness that spoke well of the Church that formed them. Even so, many Catholics could not answer the simplest questions about their faith. In college, I asked a Catholic girl, “Why do Catholics genuflect?” She replied (with eyes rolling), “Well, you always genuflect when you cross the middle.” It sounded superstitious. It

was just one more reason I would snidely tell others that Catholics are people who do not think.

Eventually, I discovered holes in the truth buckets of Buddhism and Hinduism. I could not buy reincarnation and the multiple gods of Hinduism. I couldn't buy Nirvana, the ultimate goal of Buddhism, the state of nothingness where one's self ceases to exist. Nothingness did not seem a worthy goal for a lifetime of virtue. Heaven made more sense as life's ultimate goal. One day, while deep into a mind-emptying meditation, I heard a message, though not an audible sound, which said: “You will never be happy without Jesus Christ!” College academics and Eastern religions could not quench my spiritual thirst in the way Jesus had in my early days of Sunday school. The tiny pebble of my early faith formation was taking down the Goliath-sized doubt of my secular studies.

Having studied Elizabethan poets, I turned to the Church of England. I had come to a line of reasoning, which went like this: either one church really is the true church or none of them is. It seemed reasonable that the true Church

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The Coming Home
Network International

The Coming Home Network was established to help non-Catholic Christians, clergy and laity, to discover the truth and beauty of the Catholic Church and to make the journey home.

A Note from Jon Marc



Greetings Friends,

The well-known 20th century American Catholic bishop and pioneering televangelist, Venerable Fulton J. Sheen famously said:

“There are not one hundred people in the United States who hate the Catholic Church, but there are millions who hate what they wrongly perceive the Catholic Church to be.”

We have seen this borne out in so many testimonies that have been shared over the years in this newsletter, via the CHNetwork website, and on the *Journey Home* program. Working through misconceptions and false caricatures of the Church is the central drama of the intellectual journey of many converts. For pastors and laypeople coming from Protestant denominations, the misconceptions can range from apocalyptic assumptions about the nature of the Catholic Church as a whole (the “Whore of Babylon”) to more straightforward misconceptions about Catholic doctrine (“works righteousness”) or devotional practice (“Catholics worship Mary!”). Old habits of mind die hard, and people need time, prayer, and encouragement as they work through things. This is, of course, why the Coming Home Network and this newsletter are here.

As we look ahead to the season of Lent, I wanted to reflect a bit with you on these questions of perception, belief, and the changing of one’s mind as the result of contact with some new truth — particularly, as these relate not just to non-Catholic inquirers, but to each of us on our continuing journeys of faith.

While Sheen’s quote refers to non-Catholics with misconceptions about the Church, I believe this principle is applicable to every one of us. None of us would say that we hate truth, goodness, or beauty, and yet sinners we remain. Why? Perhaps all of us, in our heart of hearts, still “hate what [we] wrongly perceive [them] to be.”

For all of us, there are pieces of the truth — whether teachings of the Church, truths about our own character or shortcomings, truths about the ways God is (or may be) calling us to keep changing, growing, and stepping out in faith — that we find “hateful”. There are still at times people that we can’t imagine ourselves loving, caring for, or forgiving. Despite our best efforts and conscious intentions, we discover in ourselves hearts that are not fully converted to Christ, and it is only the “pure of heart” who are able to truly see. We are in need “heart transplants” from the divine physician if we are to see as God sees and love as He loves.

During this season of Lent, the Church invites us to draw close to Christ and to seek the healing of our hearts that only He can provide. The *Catechism* states:

1432 The human heart is heavy and hardened. God must give man a new heart.²⁵ Conversion is

first of all a work of the grace of God who makes our hearts return to him: “Restore us to thyself, O LORD, that we may be restored!”²⁶ God gives us the strength to begin anew. It is in discovering the greatness of God’s love that our heart is shaken by the horror and weight of sin and begins to fear offending God by sin and being separated from him. The human heart is converted by looking upon him whom our sins have pierced:²⁷

We must receive from God a new heart and thus a renewed ability to see by turning our gaze — our eyes, our mind, and our hearts — to Jesus. It is only through faith in Jesus that we can begin to see things as they are — other people, events and opportunities in our lives, and God Himself — and thus to love them as we ought.

Lent is a time of penance — of taking concrete steps to recognize the brokenness of our hearts, to express sorrow for our sin, and to work to heal our relationships with God and neighbor. Three traditional and pre-eminent forms of penance that the Church invites us to engage in are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. As you prepare for the Lenten season, take time to discern and choose some additional prayer or devotion, some familiar comfort to abstain from as a sacrifice, and ways to give of yourself (time, treasure, talent) to God and others this season.

I have found it helpful (and necessary in my own journey) to start small and to be concrete. It is better to be radically faithful to what seems a humbler set of disciplines, than halfheartedly (or impurely) committed to extreme ones. Just as our Lenten disciplines are not occasions for external “virtue signaling,” neither should they become internal temptations to lean on our own understanding and strength. Rather, they should be simple acts expressing penitence for our sin, love for our Heavenly Father, and obedience to Christ through the Church. Focusing on fidelity-over-difficulty in choosing Lenten disciplines can help us to further purify our hearts.

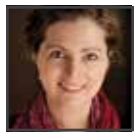
As we embark upon this Lenten journey, may we be convicted of our need for a savior. We are all blind, in one way or another, and we are blind to the ways in which we are blind! It is only by turning our gaze to Jesus and praying with the Psalmist, “Create in me a clean heart, oh God!” that we can hope to see as Jesus sees and love as He loves.

As always, know of my prayers for you and my appreciation for your support. Please pray especially for the many men and women in RCIA preparing to be received into full communion with the Catholic Church this Easter.

In Christ,
JonMarc

The Little Black Skirt

By Denise Bossert, Pastoral Care & Publications Coordinator



In the summer of 2009, my husband and I went to a family reunion. John's aunt told a little story about her mother-in-law. I never met Grandma Bossert. She passed away long before I married into the family. But John's Aunt Lucia said Grandma had a little straight skirt. She'd owned it for as long as Aunt Lucia could remember. Grandma used the skirt as a kind of measuring tape to monitor weight gain. When the side zipper wouldn't zip, she would cut back on what she ate until it fit once again.

I've seen pictures of Grandma Bossert. She looked like a Hollywood star even when she was well into her sixties, thanks to that little skirt and constant vigilance. Our Church calendar is like Grandma's skirt. On Fat Tuesday, we try on our spiritual skirts, and we realize that we have gotten a little out of shape.

Our baptismal vows aren't fitting like they should. And for 40 days, we submit to the process of self-denial and service to others. We ask for the grace to reorder our disordered lives, so that on Easter morning, we are ready to meet the Risen Lord.

“Fasting cleanses the soul, raises the mind, subjects one's flesh to the spirit, renders the heart contrite and humble, scatters the clouds of concupiscence, quenches the fire of lust, and kindles the true light of chastity.”

— ST. AUGUSTINE

We have ways of measuring our progress. We know what to do when things are out of control. At the end of Lent, we know that we could let things fall apart again, or we can ask God for the grace to keep our lives in right order.

We don't have to wait for Lent to monitor our progress in holiness. We can ask for the grace to overcome our weaknesses today – we can read the lives of the saints and get inspired. We can submit to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and lose the baggage we carry. We can end each day with an examination of conscience and begin each day with a simple dedication of our day to God. There are so many ways to keep walking in holiness. Pick one. Eventually your spiritual skirt will fit like a glove. ■

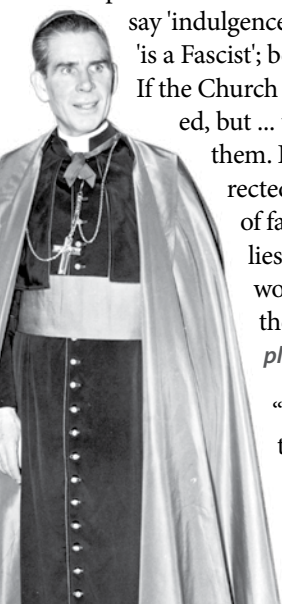
That Was Then; This Is Now:

QUOTES ON OVERCOMING OBJECTIONS TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

“It is impossible to be just to the Catholic Church. The moment a man ceases to pull against it he feels a tug towards it. The moment he ceases to shout it down he begins to listen to it with pleasure. The moment he tries to be fair to it he begins to be fond of it.” — **G.K. Chesterton**, *The Catholic Church and Conversion*, 1926.

“There are not over a hundred people in the United States who hate the Catholic Church. There are millions, however, who hate what they wrongly believe to be the Catholic Church — which is, of course, quite a different thing. These millions can hardly be blamed for hating Catholics because Catholics 'adore statues'; because they 'put the Blessed Mother on the same level with God'; because they say 'indulgence is a permission to commit sin'; because the Pope 'is a Fascist'; because the 'Church is the defender of Capitalism.' If the Church taught ... any one of these things it should be hated, but ... the Church does not believe nor teach any one of them. It follows then that the hatred of the millions is directed against error and not against truth. As a matter of fact, if we Catholics believed all of the untruths and lies which were said against the Church, we probably would hate the Church a thousand times more than they do.” — **Archbishop Fulton Sheen**, *Radio Replies*, 1938.

“If I were not a Catholic, and were looking for the true Church in the world today, I would look for the one Church which did not get along well with the world; in other words, I would look for the Church which the world hates.” — **Archbishop Fulton Sheen**, *Radio Replies*, 1938.



FROM THE STAFF

“I never had any strongly-held thoughts or feelings about the Catholic Church one way or another growing up. When I came to faith in Christ as a young adult, if I gave any conscious thought to Catholicism at all, it was the thought that it was simply the largest of all the Christian denominations. Having moved to the Episcopal Church later in my journey, I was taught the "branch theory" of Catholicism. That is to say, the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church spoken of in the ancient creeds is made up of three distinct though interrelated branches: Anglicanism (of which the Episcopal Church, USA is a part); Eastern Orthodoxy; Catholicism. It wasn't until I began studying history ... that the branch theory could not sustain the weight of history.” — **Brother Rex**, *CHN Spiritual Advisor and Pastoral Care Coordinator*

“Our family was proudly descended from French Huguenots, English Protestants, and anti-Catholic northern Ireland Protestants. Our interpretation of Scripture was correct and trumped Catholic exegesis. The *Catechism* was like the *Book of Mormon*. We could belong to any Protestant church, but we could not become Catholic, and we should not marry a Catholic. They didn't have a relationship with Christ, and they worshipped Mary.” — **Denise Bossert**, *CHN Pastoral Care Coordinator*

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FROM THE ONLINE COMMUNITY

In 2005 I swore that I would never be Catholic because Catholics were idolatrous, the Pope was the antichrist, and the Catholic Church was the whore of Babylon. Within 2 years God changed my mind and heart, and I reentered the Church with the help of a local priest ... and Marcus Grodi. I went from anti-Catholic to 100% Catholic, thank God. And now I am a seminarian for the Diocese of Lubbock. In 3 years I will be a Catholic priest, Lord willing! — **Antonio La Barbera**, *Cradle Catholic Revert*

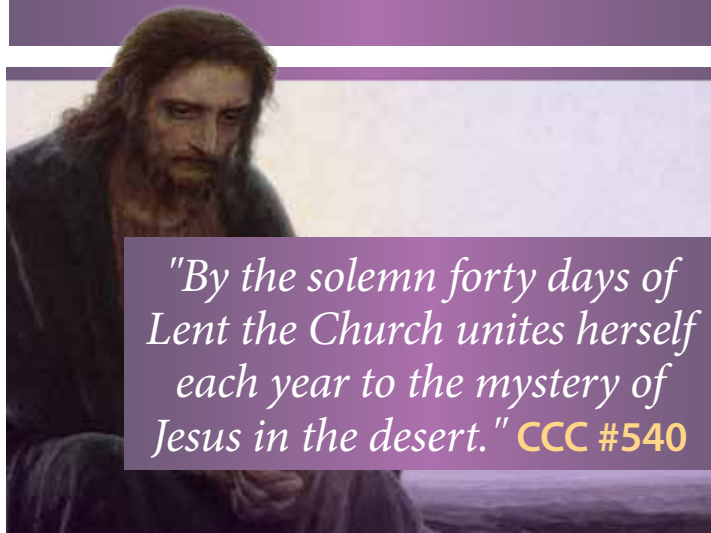
A common phrase in evangelical circles is, "Religion is man's way to get to God. Relationship is God's way to get to man." I saw Catholicism as the former - a rote, stale, lifeless set of rituals that people went through the motions doing in their attempt to work their way to heaven. Boy, was I so wrong. — **Justin Hibbard**, *Reformed Baptist*

Honestly looking back, to me the craziest thing I think I believed was the possibility that the oldest church in existence, with by far the largest membership and more universal, world-round membership, could not only not be THE church, but was not even a valid church at all. The lack of logic and the lack of historical understanding around that astounds me. — **N.M.** ■

TAX LETTERS

Tax letters for 2022 contributions will be e-mailed to donors who have email addresses on file. If you would like your tax letter sent by postal mail, please contact **Ann Moore**:
ann@chnetwork.org | 740.450.1175 x101

*He was despised and rejected
by men; a man of sorrows, and
acquainted with grief; and as one
from whom men hide their faces he
was despised, and we esteemed him
not. All we like sheep have gone
astray; we have turned every one to
his own way. **ISAIAH 53:3,6A***



*"By the solemn forty days of
Lent the Church unites herself
each year to the mystery of
Jesus in the desert." **CCC #540***

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Joyful Journey Updates

Patrick, former Evangelical Non-denominational Christian During the past year I've become a lector at my parish, our Lady of Perpetual Help in Bakersfield, California. I find it such a blessing to be able to proclaim the word of God to my brothers and sisters. I'm finding a great sense of peace and love in the Catholic Church.

Peter, Former Anglican and Episcopalian I remain clear in my sense of being brought to Catholic Confirmation in October 14, 2018 with my beloved wife, Betty, in no small part through the blessed and timely Coming Home Network International Retreat in Columbus in May 2018. While Holy Trinity revealed "the beautiful holiness and powerful" Presence of God during the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday a few weeks before in Huntington at Saint Joseph's Catholic Church, His presence in St Theresa's Convent Conference Center among us on retreat and through you and each of the retreat staff and leaders convicted and counseled me in body, soul, and spirit...heart, will, and mind: "this is home!"

Deacon Mickey Norman Reeves, former Southern Baptist Minister I often speak of [Ken] and the CHN. [They] were so

instrumental in helping with my return to the Catholic Church, as well as helping with the process of leaving my former ministry in the Protestant Church.

So, I'll catch you up on life happenings in my ministry as a deacon in the Catholic Church. I just got home early this morning from a December vacation to NYC, with my wife & son. . . . I was able to serve Mass and proclaim the Gospel for two masses at St. Patrick's Cathedral, in NYC, on the Holy Day of December 8th. It was such an amazing honor and such a humbling experience to be able to serve in such a beautiful and historic place. My wife, son and myself were also invited to tour the church, as well as the crypt beneath the altar, where so many cardinals, bishops, and others of the church are entombed.

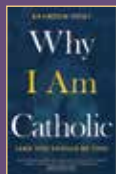
In my ministry at home, here in Oklahoma, I am the Archbishop's chaplain to a very large health network. There are over 8 hospitals in the metro alone. I average seeing between 500-700 patient visits each month. February will make two years in this assignment. I also offer Holy Communion to the patients, family members of patients, doctors, nurses & staff. It is not uncommon for

an employee to see me and ask to receive holy communion, especially when work has prevented them from attending Mass. It is estimated that I will have offered Holy Communion to more than 20,000 Catholics by February, just in this ministry. In fact, my stepmother just converted 10 days ago to Catholic, from Episcopal, on her deathbed. She received Holy Communion for the first time.

In addition, I am also the Archbishop's chaplain to the Oklahoma City Police Department. . . . I am assigned to St. Eugene Catholic Church, where I serve liturgically. Which includes, communion services, baptisms, weddings, funerals, benediction services, and serving the Mass as a deacon. There are other duties not listed, but due to my ministries assigned by the Archbishop it is hard to fit anything else at the parish into my schedule. . . . As you can tell, I am a busy deacon, serving the ministry of the Archdiocese, the Roman Catholic Church, and God!... I am blessed and humbled every day. I'm still amazed at how God would use someone as lowly as me as His servant to His church and His people. ■

Are you a convert or revert? Please send your Joyful Journey update to Denise@CHNetwork.org

WHY I AM CATHOLIC (AND YOU SHOULD BE TOO) \$15.95



With atheism on the rise and millions tossing off religion, why would anyone consider the Catholic Church? Brandon Vogt, a bestselling author, shares his passionate search for truth, a journey that culminated in the realization that Catholicism was right about a lot of things, maybe even everything. His persuasive case for the faith reveals a vision of Catholicism that has answers our world desperately needs and reminds those already in the Church what they love about it. (Item # 3244)

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED \$6.95



This book by Marcus Grodi thoroughly describes, beginning with the Old Testament, how the Church is an essential part of faith formation and salvation of souls. (Item #1778)

HOW GOD HAULED ME KICKING AND SCREAMING INTO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH \$15.95



Kevin Lowry's journey to Catholicism is fascinating, often funny, and demonstrates God's unfailing, patient love for all of us. (Item #3203)

Prayer List



Clergy

■ **For Dustin, a Presbyterian pastor** who finds himself drawn powerfully to the Catholic Church, that the Lord will give him wisdom and grace as he continues to reveal his thoughts to his wife and soon to the leadership of his church.

■ **For Austin, a Baptist pastor** who is on the road into the Catholic Church, that the Holy Spirit will go before him to soften the hearts of his wife and family.

■ **For James, a Lutheran pastor** who resigned his ministry and with his wife entered the Catholic Church, that he would be able to find suitable employment.

■ **For Phil, an Evangelical missionary** working in a foreign country who finds himself drawn back to the Catholic Church in which he was baptized and raised and is concerned that the mission would suffer if he and his wife were to leave it.

■ **For David, a Protestant academic** who has decided to leave his teaching position to enter the Catholic Church and is concerned about how he will make a living.

■ **For Sergio, a Christian Reformed preacher** who is now attending Mass with his wife and working through many issues, doctrinal, personal, and vocational.

■ **For Don, an Episcopal priest** who left his ministry to become Catholic and has struggled a great deal, that he will continue to find his place in the Church.

■ **For Michael, a Protestant seminarian** who began reading the Early Church Fathers, left the seminary and is entering the Catholic Church.

■ **For Keith, a former Pentecostal pastor and church planter** who finds himself on a journey back to the Catholic Church, that the Lord will give him success in bringing his family along with him.

■ **For Angel**, who recently informed his church and denomination that he is leaving the ministry to become Catholic, that the Lord will comfort him and his wife, as well as the congregation they leave behind and who are confused and saddened.

■ **For Jeffrey, an Anglican priest** who wants to become Catholic but has several difficult personal hurdles that would have to be cleared on the way.

■ **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 Brook, a pastor** who recently stepped down from pastoral ministry, that our Lord would walk with him in a way perceptible to him, and may the journey be marked by joy that only comes from God.

■ **For Josef, a former pastor** who now has degrees that seem worthless to him and the struggle to find sure footing in the area of a career has not subsided, that he may grow in courage even as signs of God's plan for him seem obscure or elusive.

■ **For Celso, a former pastor** who preached to sold-out stadiums and now must scramble to make ends meet as he wonders if God will ever use him again, even as he rejoices that he has found the Sacraments and the Church Jesus founded.

Laity

■ **For Richard, a member of the Church of Christ** in Wisconsin, that our loving Lord Jesus would enable him to overcome his terror of God.

■ **For John, an Evangelical in Iowa**, that our Lord Jesus would answer his many questions about the Catholic faith.

■ **For Christopher, a Baptist in Georgia**, that he would become motivated to go beyond just watching Mass on TV and step out in faith on his journey to the Church.

■ **For Kent, a former Buddhist and Church of Christ in Kentucky**, that the Holy Spirit would effectively call him back to Christ and into the Catholic Church.

■ **For Charles, a non-denominational Evangelical in Colorado**, that our Lord would bring him and his wife back to full communion with the Catholic Church.

■ **For Jerry, a member of Calvary Chapel in California**, that Jesus would heal him of his cancer and guide him to his Eucharistic Altar.

■ **For Kory, a Southern Baptist in Nebraska**, that God would show him the truth of the Catholic teaching on the relationship of faith and works.

■ **For Michael, an agnostic former Lutheran** in Wisconsin, that the Holy Spirit would guide him Home to the Catholic Church.

■ **For Dominik, a Lutheran in Texas**, that he would find someone in his area who is willing to take his hand and guide him to the fullness of the faith in the holy, catholic Church.

■ **For Aaron, a non-denominational Evangelical**, that our Lord Jesus would bless his RCIA experience and bring him rejoicing to the Easter Sacraments.

■ **For Asafe, an Evangelical Presbyterian in Brazil**, that he may be able to humbly communicate with his Protestant friends about his journey to the Catholic Church.

■ **For A.P., former member of the Church of Christ**, that she may be given peace and have her calm restored. May she sense the Lord's presence as He quiets the wind and the waves in her life.

■ **For F.R., in RCIA**, that she and her husband may have a grace-filled conversation with their grown children about their decision to enter the Church.

■ **For Sarah, former Pentecostal**, that her visits to Mass will increase her desire for Holy Communion and for complete unity with the Catholic Church.

■ **For Andrea**, that the journey during 2022 of attending Mass and joining RCIA will yield many graces as she draws ever-closer to the day she will be received into the Church.

■ **For Jason, a catechumen**, that his delight in the Theological Virtues and his desire to draw near to the Sacraments will reach that glorious day of reception into Mother 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.

Overheard AROUND THE CHN WATERCOOLER



After great discussion as a staff surrounding Chapter Ten of *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis, Brother Rex sent the staff this quote which also seems to fit with preparing for Lent.

*"To become a true disciple of Jesus means accepting a spirituality of the cross and renouncing a spirituality of glory. The first is of God, the second of man, of 'flesh and blood'. As I have pointed out earlier, there is no question of it being merely a matter of hard or easy, the spirituality of the cross being full of hard things, and the spirituality of glory full of nice things. The contrary may be true. It has nothing to do with hard or easy in that sense. It has everything to do with seeking God and not self. The spirituality of glory seeks itself under cover of God. It seeks a boost, wants proofs, testimonies from within or without, excitement, feelings, miracles, success - all that flatters human pride. The spirituality of the cross seeks God and accepts having none of those things; if they are there it refuses to overvalue them or attach significance to them. It knows that God cannot be grasped with our ordinary powers and accepts deprivation on that level." (Sr. Ruth Burrows, from *To Believe in Jesus*.) ■*

"If you suffer with Him, you will reign with Him. If you cry with Him, you will have joy with Him. If you die with Him on the Cross of tribulation, you will possess the eternal dwelling place in the splendor of the saints. And your name, written in the Book of Life, will be glorious among men."

— ST. CLARE OF ASSISI



DONOR SPOTLIGHT

KRIS SARVER — 6+ YEARS (SINCE 2016)



As a young woman who had abandoned belief in God, I never understood or appreciated the richness of the Catholic faith into which I was baptized as a baby. I began to awaken spiritually in my early 30s. Along with committing to faithfully studying Scripture and *the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, I began watching EWTN regularly. Once I discovered *The Journey Home*, I never missed an episode. As I grew in my faith, the show increased my concern for people subjected to anti-Catholic animosity when they decide to become Catholic. I was especially struck by how many guests who were non-Catholic clergy described suffering incredible loss and ostracism in response to their decision to convert.

My dramatic reversion triggered an awakening in my parents. My father returned to his Catholic faith prior to his death, as did my Lutheran-born mother, who finally embraced the Catholic faith she only grudgingly consented to shortly after their marriage. The joy of watching my parents come home to Jesus and his Church as the result of my testimony led me to contact the staff of CHNetwork back in 2014. When I shared the impact of my conversion on my parents, they invited me to tell my story on *The Journey Home*, and I appeared on the program 18 months later. While with the CHNetwork staff, I witnessed firsthand

their compassion, care, and attention to the needs and struggles of converts – especially non-Catholic clergy. I also discovered (as many do), that CHNetwork is not financially supported by EWTN, and must raise all of its own support. It was then that we committed to giving a generous gift at least once a year. Later, my husband and I realized that we could optimize the impact of our annual gift by giving regularly every month. This was our motivation to join COMPASS, CHNetwork's monthly giving program, in July 2019.

We want to be part of helping clergy who are attempting to process their calling into full communion while navigating animosity from the people they love and serve. I encourage anyone reading this newsletter to recognize the real difference we can make together. It is easy! We just extend our hand and give whatever we can. CHNetwork fulfills its mission with our help. If we all do our part, there will be enough to help everyone come home to the fullness of truth. ■

Kris Sarver and her husband have been donors to CHNetwork since May 2016, and monthly donors to COMPASS since July 2019. Watch Kris's conversion story at CHNetwork.org/KrisSarver.

...Journeys Home Continued...

would have to begin well. King Henry VIII divorcing and murdering wives to defy the Pope's teaching on the indissolubility of marriage did not seem to be a valid beginning for a true church. In learning how the Protestant denominations jumped ship in the early 20th century over birth control and then later on abortion, it seemed clear that none of them could be Christ's true Church. Truth was unchanging, and yet, they seemed to readily change their minds. Only one Church is as unchanging as truth because it came from the One who is Truth.

After graduation, Berta and I married, and I eventually adopted Berta's daughter, Heather. I desired a place to pray in the evenings, perhaps remembering the holiness I felt on Christmas Eve in the church my mother had taken me to when I was small. I searched for weeks with no success. All of the churches in Louisville were closed. Someone told me that the chapel in the old St. Anthony Hospital was open at night; I began going there to pray. Frequently, there was a strange looking cross on the high altar. It had a sort of off-white colored circle in the middle of it. I noticed that the Catholics would drop to both knees in front of it rather than just genuflecting on one knee. I followed their lead out of respect. I had no idea that the circle in the middle was a consecrated Host, the actual Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. I sensed from the outset that this chapel held holiness, and I could not stop myself from returning often.

Prayer and History

Heather was interested in attending a military academy. During her junior year of high school, I drove her to Colorado Springs for two and a half days at the Air Force Academy. At that time, I was respectful, though dubious, of Berta's preference for Catholicism, and so I asked her if she would like me to record Catholic prayers for her, so she could listen to them while driving to work. (I had bought her a book of Catholic prayers that Christmas.) She said yes. So, while Heather was at the Air Force Academy, I stayed in a hotel room and recorded the prayers. The prayers surprised me,

especially the prayers directed to the Virgin Mary. While praying, my heart swelled with a strong physical warmth until my heart felt hot, which alarmed me. I thought, "Am I having a heart attack?" It lingered for a few minutes and then subsided. The panic dissipated as the heat lingered without death coming, and I thought, "This feels like love." I could not deny that these prayers to Mary warmed my heart in a supernatural, yet physical, way.

Several months later, I went to St. Anthony Chapel on my lunch hour. The stained-glass windows caught my attention. I would eventually learn that they were depictions of the Corporal Works of Mercy. I could see that the scenes were from the first centuries after Christ and into the Middle Ages. I saw pictures of ancient and more recent Saints feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, giving drink to the thirsty, giving shelter to the homeless, visiting the prisoners and the sick, and burying the dead.

Taking care of the homeless? I thought that was an invention of the first Clinton presidential campaign. Caring for the poor? I thought that nobody had really cared about the poor before President Lyndon Johnson, though FDR had given it the old college try.

Why had my education not enlightened me about Catholic philanthropy? This generosity seemed to be of a scale that could not justly be denied inclusion in historical texts. The integrity of my secular education was now called into question. I could see that the Catholic Church had existed for hundreds of years and had accomplished enormous good. I bought a history of Catholicism written by Catholics and shored up my history.

Not long after that, Heather accepted an appointment at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis. We arrived ten days early so that she could collect her thoughts and prepare for the jolt of Induction Day and the tough eight weeks of boot camp, run by the Marines. During this time, the press talked about the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the first universal one in some 400 years. I could read this book and know the official belief of the Catholic Church! I walked a couple of miles to a Catholic book-

Continued on page 11 ➤

EWTN'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

February 6

Srishti Gupta*
Former Hindu and atheist

February 13

Derek Rotty*
Former Evangelical Protestant

February 20

Trey Plummer*
Former Baptist Preacher

February 27

Lori Ann Mancini*
Former Buddhist and New Age

*Schedule is subject to change.

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

store, then over the next seven days, I read it cover to cover. My heart grew troubled as I could find no holes in the truth bucket. I could not help but respect the incredible documentation tying almost every paragraph to the Bible or to historical texts from every century, from the ancient Hebrews, to the time of Christ, to the brightest theologians and Saints of Church history. This Church was not an invention of recent times but a continuum and fulfillment of salvation history. I did not rejoice when I finished the Catechism. If true, I would have to admit that I had been wrong about many things about Catholicism. I would have to admit that I was much deeper into sin than I had thought. I would have to relinquish my personal take on things and submit to the authority of the Catholic Church.

A Priest with a Lifeline

Shortly after that, Pope John Paul II penned *The Gospel of Life*. This book was contrary to my modern beliefs. I had been indoctrinated into the liberal feminism of the 1960s and was firmly pro-choice. But when I read this papal work, I could find no holes in the bucket. As I put the book down, I very clearly remember shaking my head and saying to myself: "I still don't believe all this pope stuff, but if there were a Vicar of Christ, he would write just like that!" I hated this! For over a decade, I had been committed to the idea that the last thing I would ever be is Catholic! I even said these words aloud at times. God would have fun with that phrase, because truly the last thing I will ever be is a Catholic!

Surely, I could find holes in the Catholic theology of the Virgin Mary! I went to a Marian retreat led by a Benedictine priest at the St. Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, Indiana. He taught nothing about her that I could not believe. The walls came crashing down. Suddenly, I could see that a loving Jesus would not have left us on a ship without a captain, nor condemn us to a life of nauseating gray uncertainty. No, He gave us a Church with authority, which could discern truth from fallacy and give clear answers to our questions. I could see that this Church, which secular academia depicted as controlling and oppressing, was actually freeing, protecting, and enriching us spiritually, even physically, through the Sacraments. I went to the Trappist Monastery at Gethsemane, Kentucky, and spoke with a priest. He advised me to find a parish in my home town of Louisville and talk to the priest there. My heart now called me to become Catholic! I knew that the Catholic Church did indeed hold the fullness of truth. Finally, a bucket with no holes.

My wife and I began visiting parishes. We looked for weeks. Then we visited an old downtown parish, St. Martin of Tours, through a historical tour given by the University of Louisville. It was a cold, windy, rainy November day in 1994, so dreadful that not even the tour guide showed up. After we stood in the back of the church for about 15 minutes, the priest noticed us. He came up and introduced himself as Father Dennis Cousens and told us that he would give us the tour. He was humble and holy. We returned on Sunday for Mass. The Mass was reverent, so obviously and singularly focused on Christ that we knew that we had found our home.

We made an appointment with Father. I told him I wanted to become Catholic. He said, "What do you believe?"

I said, "I believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, I believe that the Catholic Church is the True Church founded by Jesus Christ, and I believe that the Pope is the true Vicar of Christ on Earth."

He paused and looked at me and said, "Well, that's a pretty good start." He then said that he did not want me to wait another 14 months to come into the Church, since RCIA was just ending. He gave me four books in a home study course. After concluding each book, I would meet with Father Cousens to discuss the book. After four months, Father asked me, "Well, are you ready to come into the Church?" I said no. He asked, "Why not?" I told him I needed confession first.

My first confession was long. I didn't know the full weight of those sins until I was rid of them. It felt like 200 pounds lifted from my shoulders. Joy replaced the weight.

I was confirmed on December 23rd of 1995. I went forward with my sponsor, Jim Stich, and took St. John the Apostle as my Confirmation Saint. This Saint had let Christ down by falling asleep during Christ's Agony in the Garden. Yet, he was there at the foot of the Cross! St. John would give me hope that, despite my weakness, I might persevere until the end. As I stood before the altar, I realized nothing had ever felt so right. When Father raised his hand in prayer above me, I felt pushed back, as by a physical force. A voice inside said, "Don't worry. It is the Holy Spirit. Just lean into Him." So, I leaned in, and it felt like light passing through my body. I received the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist and became a full member of the Catholic Church!

In August of 2008, the Lord blessed me with ordination to the Order of Deacon. Two and a half years later, the Lord would bless me with the grace of baptizing my mother. Minutes later, she was Confirmed. In September of 2019, Archbishop Joseph Kurtz appointed me as Clergy Director of the Marian Committee of the Archdiocese of Louisville — imagine me assigned to increase devotion to Mary, she who had been the last obstacle to fall!

I have come to realize three things: If you keep looking for the truth, you will find it. Catholics who are able to communicate doctrine, history, and practice of the Catholic Faith are essential. Finally, we must never give up on anyone, even those who ridicule the Catholic Church; they may be on the path of conversion. That's how grace sometimes works. ■



DEACON JOE CALVERT is a deacon at St. Christopher Parish in Radcliff, Kentucky, where he and his wife Berta reside. He was confirmed in the Catholic Church in 1995 and ordained to the Order of Deacon in 2008. He is a lover of *Our Lady* and a closet song writer.

Continue the **JOURNEY**

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

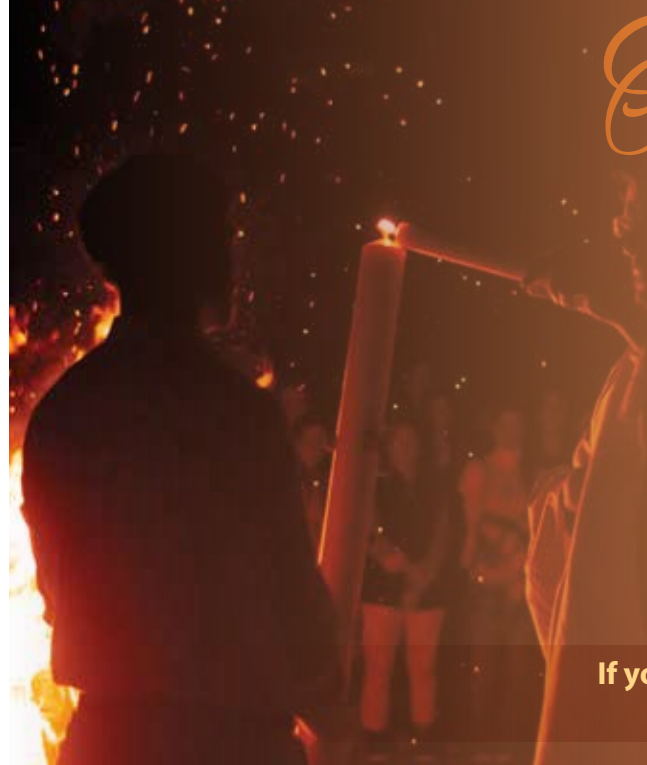
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WELCOMING THEM HOME

A photograph of a person in silhouette lighting a large, thick candle. The scene is dimly lit, with the candle's flame providing the primary light source, creating a warm, orange glow. Sparks or embers are visible in the air around the candle. In the background, other people are faintly visible, suggesting a group gathering.

“Those who are persuaded and believe in the truth of our teachings [didaskomena] and sayings undertake to live accordingly; they are taught to ask, with fasting, the remission of their sins; we also praying and fasting with them. Then they are led by us to a place where there is water, and they are regenerated in the same way as we have been regenerated” — ST. JUSTIN MARTYR, FIRST APOLOGY (C. LXI, P.G., VI, 420)

Let the voice of every Coming Home Network member lift praises to Christ our Lord for those coming into the Church at this Easter Vigil. May their journey through Lent be filled with every grace, and may their resolve to enter the sacramental life of the Church be firm and sure. Amen.

**If you are entering the Catholic Church, please let us know.
Send an email to Denise@CHNetwork.org**