



## May 2023 CHNewsletter

### “From the ‘Middle Way’ to All the Way”

by Fr. Bill McNeeley.....1

### “Ripple Effect”

by Monica Anyango and Raven Yohannon.....6

EWTN's *The Journey Home* schedule.....7

Prayer List.....8

Partners in Mission.....9

# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

## From the “Middle Way” to All the Way

By Fr. Bill McNeeley

“Men are men, and women are women.” In 1982, when I started my studies for the priesthood at the Episcopalian General Seminary in New York City, who among us would have thought it would become a controversial, much less even a debatable statement? During my first seminary semester, I encountered the political correctness we deal with today. It was not fully developed — to the extent that nonsense can be said to develop — but that was when I first witnessed the attack on the traditional ecclesiastical and cultural teachings that have reduced the Episcopal Church and other “mainline” Protestant churches to a mere shadow of their former selves. I was the proverbial fly in the ointment at seminary when I said things like, “It’s the Bible; were stuck with it. You can’t take all the male pronouns out just because someone says his feelings are hurt.”



### No Room in the Inn

Classmates wanting to overthrow the established order would declare themselves “prophetic witnesses” and claim that “your truth is not my truth.” My response: “Anytime anyone wants to circumvent authority around here, he declares himself to be a ‘prophetic witness.’”

Their lies were manifested when those same “prophetic witnesses” were fast-tracked into positions of authority. Now, they had no tolerance for prophetic witnesses with whom they disagreed. A few years later, in 1986, I was blackballed from interviewing in any parish in the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta. So for 15 years, I was the proverbial square peg trying to fit into a round church. I thought the church would eventually moderate itself,

that the pendulum would eventually swing back to the conservative side, especially when anyone could see, by demographics alone, that something wasn’t working. I believed that within the Episcopal Church, there was enough common sense that it would moderate the extremes and bring the church back to the center. Unfortunately, I was wrong.

### Dancing With the Culture

The first thing that drew me to the Catholic Church was my curiosity about what the early Church was really like. One thing I got from my father was a deep love for history. I yearned to understand the trends and continuity of thought and events that brought us to where we are today. I had studied enough history to recognize that my education at General Seminary barely touched on the early and medieval church. The entire

Continued on page 2 ➡

Journeys Home

second year covered only the 16th century, that of the Reformation.

During my 15 years as an Episcopal priest, I watched the church's moral and theological decline to the extent that, by the year 2000, I could no longer recognize it. The Episcopal Church always presented itself as the "bridge church" between staunch Catholicism and unbridled Protestantism extremes. It took four centuries for the Episcopal Church to find a fence it couldn't straddle. To "moderate" Anglicans, not every church teaching had to have a Biblical precedent, as many Protestant churches claimed. Those same "moderate" Anglicans would avoid the Catholic "extreme" of requiring belief in such things as Purgatory and the Immaculate Conception of Mary. In other words, the church cannot require its members to believe such things as an article of faith if they can show that it is inconsistent with Scripture. Accordingly, the ordination of women was only passed by General Convention in 1976 by giving Anglo-Catholic bishops, dioceses, and parishes a "freedom of conscience clause" that said they could not be compelled to ordain women as priests. I had accepted the ordination of women because I thought of it as a civil rights issue. If they can do the job, then let them; it was that simple.

However, in my 15 years as an Episcopal priest, I learned that if you have women priests, you get feminist theology. Feminist theology, which is one manifestation of liberation theology, is based on the false notion that Jesus was some proto-revolutionary. The problem

with women priests came in 1998, when the freedom of conscience clause was revoked. From then on, every bishop was compelled to ordain women for every diocese in the United States. That was the beginning of the end for me in the Episcopal Church, because I believed in the freedom of conscience for more conservative people than me. Parish vestry members were prevented from publicly objecting to women priests. They could no longer appeal to the 39 Articles that it was inconsistent with God's word in Scripture. But whether one likes it or not, St. Paul clearly indicated that women should not be a pastor of parishes or become clergy. Then it was evident to me that liberals in the Episcopal Church were making things up as they went along and that they would not hesitate to say one thing and do another to achieve their ends.

### Ending the Dance

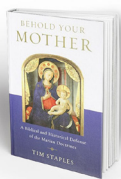
My first real exposure to Catholic worship came about by making retreats at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Bardstown, Kentucky, beginning in the mid-1990s. At the time, I served as Rector at St. Mary Magdalene Episcopal Church in Fayetteville, Tennessee, south of Nashville. It was a small, rural parish, and I soon learned that, while a small parish will give you continuing education time, what they cannot provide is funding. My solution was to take week-long retreats at Gethsemani, the late Thomas Merton's monastery. There, I could attend the Liturgies of the Hours, proceed with my silent retreat, and nurture my spiritual growth. I remembered sitting on the balcony overlooking the choir with 40 or 50 monks chanting

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER

BY TIM STAPLES

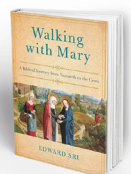
In *Behold Your Mother*, Tim Staples takes you through the Church's teachings about the Blessed Virgin Mary, showing their firm Scriptural and historical roots and dismantling the objections of those who mistakenly believe that Mary competes for the attention due to Christ alone. #3205 • \$24.95



### WALKING WITH MARY

BY DR. EDWARD SRI

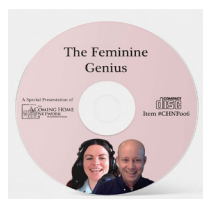
In *Walking with Mary*, Edward Sri looks at the crucial passages in the Bible concerning Mary and offers insight about the Blessed Mother's faith and devotion that we can apply in our daily lives. We follow her step-by-step through the New Testament account of her life, reflecting on what the Scriptures tell us about how she responded to the dramatic events unfolding around her. #3235 • \$14.00



### THE FEMININE GENIUS

WITH DR. ABIGAIL FAVALE

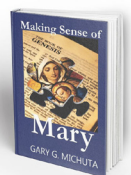
An oft-heard criticism of the Catholic Church is its all-male ordained priesthood. Dr. Abigail Favale grew up fundamentalist Protestant, and later did academic work on Christian feminism. During both of these eras of her life and study, she saw Catholicism as one of the worst offenders when it came to its teachings about women on a range of moral and theological issues. She shares how coming to understand Mary as the icon of Christian experience, the Church's feminine character, and the sacramental meaning of the body were stepping stones that eventually led her to embrace the Catholic Faith. #CHNPC006 • \$7.00



### MAKING SENSE OF MARY

BY GARY MICHUTA

The world is full of nonsense when it comes to the Blessed Virgin Mary, from simple confusion and ignorance to disrespect and blasphemy. Michuta has done us a great service by blowing away the fog and shining the light of clarity on a matter so important to the story of God's salvation. Drawing from Scripture, Sacred Tradition, Councils and the Fathers of the Church, Gary helps scholars and beginners alike to understand the ABC's of the person and role of Mary. #3160 • \$14.00



the liturgies and saying to myself, "This is the Church." I had always identified more with the Catholic tradition within the Episcopal Church. After all, Jesus said, "Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:11).

Every year, I eagerly looked forward to my time at Gethsemani. By this time, I had more misgivings about the Episcopal Church and its direction. Until then, the Anglican Church could at least have claimed that it split because of problems and abuses that had been manifested in the medieval Church. (Don't mention Henry VIII, our weakest position.) Now, the church was splitting into liberal and conservative factions. I decided that if the church split along those lines, I wanted no part of it. During this time, conservatives were rallying around the 1928 Prayer Book Society or Anglican Churches with episcopal oversight from outside the Episcopal Church of the United States (ECUSA) structure. The Episcopal Church was becoming another splinter Protestant church. I may not fully understand the mystery of what Jesus meant about Church unity, but tens of thousands of Protestant Churches were clearly not it.

In 1999 I attended a clergy meeting near Nashville, where one priest asked, "Have you seen the latest revision of the upcoming *Book of Common Prayer*?" The draft I had read was along the lines of the *New Zealand Prayer Book*, a favorite of feminists who wanted to de-emphasize the male qualities of God's nature as Father and Son. By then, I knew that some were pushing a change from "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" to "Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier." Indeed, I had to search diligently in the prayer book draft to find any reference to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To the original question posed by the priest, I said plainly to all: "I've read it, and I'm not using it." One of the feminists sitting next to me then declared, "You must use it. If you are a priest in the Episcopal Church, you must use the approved version of the *Book of Common Prayer*." I thought, "Yep, and the operative word there is 'if.'"

## Nowhere to Rest My Head

It had been 17 years since I had started seminary, and I was finally coming to terms with the fact that I could no longer recognize the church in which I was raised. Where was I to go? What was I to do? I didn't know how to do anything but be a priest. After that "come to Jesus" moment at the clergy meeting, I no longer felt comfortable preparing confirmands to enter a church in which I no longer believed. Its *raison d'être*, at least as I understood it, was fatally flawed. By then, I was also aware that it was only a matter of time before I would have two men sitting in my office insisting that I marry them. I was not going to go there. General Seminary is in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan, neighboring Greenwich Village, and has a significant gay contingent. I was more accepting

(read naïve) of the "gay lifestyle" until I saw it first-hand. I learned that the gay community has its own rules. Early in my seminary experience, I was at a meeting of Integrity, a gay activist group within the Episcopal Church. I left when I saw men providing public displays of affection as if they were in a gay bar rather than at a church function.

After the priest's meeting in 1999, the Lord began to put things in my path that started to show me the way forward. One day, I visited a parishioner whose wife was Catholic, though he was not. She home-schooled their children and had a copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on her kitchen table. It is a 900-page volume; I picked it up and thumbed through it for a few minutes. I was surprised by its thoroughness and detail. I held it up and said to her, "Don't you find this oppressive, all these rules?"

She replied, "No, not at all. The Church's teachings are what keep my family safe." That was a new perspective. I was used to the *Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer*, which comprises no more than 17 pages of that book. You know you are a hopeless church nerd when you are willing to sit around and read the entire *Catholic Catechism* just for fun, but that is just what I did over the next several weeks. I checked out a copy from the local library and started reading it that night. My wife, Sherri, and I sat up that evening reading together. I read the *Catechism* to myself for about fifteen minutes, then I looked over at Sherri and said, "Hey, this is what they were supposed to teach us in seminary!"

Over the next two weeks, I read the *Catechism* from cover to cover, and I was hooked. I still had a lot of questions, but I soon learned that if you wanted to know what people thought or how they worshipped in the early Church, the Catholic Church was the place to find it. I finally began to satisfy that question that had nagged me for nearly two decades: "What was it like in the early Church?"

My next book was *Rome Sweet Home*, by Scott and Kimberly Hahn. That started to put things into context in my mind. I also realized that my days in the Episcopal Church were numbered. I didn't know when, and I didn't know how, but I knew that someday I would become Catholic. Once I reached that point, I didn't feel comfortable preparing people to come into the Episcopal Church, when I was planning to leave. Financially, it made more sense to fake it for another seven years, until I was fully vested in my pension, but I couldn't do it. Money was the worst reason I could think of to stay.

## A Path With No Map

Sherri knew about my concerns about the Episcopal Church, but since the evening I started reading the *Catechism*, I had said little to her. Once I brought home my third or fourth Catholic book in a row, she asked, "You aren't going to do anything crazy, are you?"

I responded, "Well, the status quo is not acceptable."

"What do you mean?"

I said, "I think I want to become a Catholic."

She looked somewhat annoyed as she said, "Great, I became an Episcopalian because of you, and now it's not good enough! What

"Throughout the Old Covenant the mission of many holy women prepared for that of Mary....Against all human expectation God chooses those who were considered powerless and weak to show forth his faithfulness to promises....Mary 'stands out among the many poor and humble....'After a long period of waiting the times are fulfilled in her, the exalted Daughter of Sion, and the new plan of Salvation is established." (CCC #489)





## A Note from JonMarc



Dear Friends of the CHNetwork,

Catholics have traditionally dedicated the month of May to celebrating and honoring Our Lady. In keeping with that tradition, this month's CHNewsletter is all about women — the honor that the Catholic faith gives to women, the feminine dignity and genius, and how Mary, who we honor all month, is the Woman *par excellence*.

As a woman invited and prepared by God to be the mother of our savior Jesus Christ — to whose invitation she replied, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" — we have in Mary a powerful image of the Church and of the destiny to which God invites every human being. God chooses to work through the free cooperation of his creatures — He desires to heal, to bring forth life, and communicate His love through the acting human person, through the sacrament of marriage, and through the human family, the domestic church. In Mary we have the essential image of this astounding sacramental reality: the human — body and soul — who bears abundant fruit as a result of God's freely given and freely accepted grace.

A few years ago at a CHNetwork retreat, I was asked by a Protestant pastor about the final two "Glorious Mysteries" of the Rosary: Mary's Assumption into Heaven and her Coronation as Queen of Heaven and Earth. While the rest of the mysteries of the Rosary maintain a rather straightforward meditative focus on the events of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, the two final Glorious Mysteries seem to shift the focus squarely and overtly on Mary. What are we to make of this?

I thought about it for a few minutes. Marian devotion is difficult to explain. It is not a simple matter of apologetic argument or scriptural proof-texting. Once the easy straw-man arguments are cleared away (Catholics don't "worship" Mary nor equate her to God, etc.) we recognize that this is no simple point of doctrinal dispute, but a much broader, subtler difference in worldview. One key element of this Catholic worldview is "sacramentality" as noted earlier; God doesn't have to but *chooses* to impart grace and accomplish His work through created people and things. But another facet is the Catholic view of sanctification. Christ does not merely overlook or cover up our fallen and sinful nature. He redeems and transforms it. By God's merciful grace — not our works or merits — we really do become *holy*, and Mary is the first and greatest example of this astounding reality.

Recall Mary's magnificent Magnificat in the Gospel of Luke:

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior  
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him  
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,  
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.  
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,  
and has lifted up the lowly.

—Luke 1: 46-55

Certainly, Mary's assumption into heaven and her crowning by her Son as Queen of Heaven and Earth are a fulfillment of this prophetic hymn of praise. But I think it is also helpful for us to keep in mind that Mary's glory is the glory to which every Christian is called and destined. "Rooms", "crowns", "treasure", "glory" — these are all words used in the New Testament and by Christ Himself to characterize "what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor 2:9)

Mary was the first Christian — the first recipient of the grace of the cross and the first to surrender her life entirely to Christ as her savior — and thus it is in Mary that God provides us with a vision of our own exalted calling. If we persevere in Christ, we too, like Mary, will be received into the kingdom to share in Christ's glory.

It is with all of this in mind that we reflect this month on Our Lady, on those great women saints and heroines from sacred scripture, and on the many Godly women in our own lives who, like Mary, have been the bearers of Christ to us. We thank God for the unique gifts and charisms that He has given to women, and we pray in a special way for the women in our lives to be strengthened and consoled by the Holy Spirit this month.

As always, I hope that this newsletter finds you well and richly blessed on your own continuing journey deeper into Christ, His Holy Catholic Church, and His beloved Mother Mary. Please know that you are in our team's daily prayers and that we continue to count on and give thanks for your prayers in support of this apostolate.

In Christ,

JonMarc

Will you be received into Mother Church during the Easter Season? We would like to rejoice with and pray for you. Email [Denise@CHNetwork.org](mailto:Denise@CHNetwork.org) to share the good news!

# Overheard

## AROUND THE CHN WATERCOOLER

*The staff weighs in on their favorite quotes about Mary and women of faith:*



### Brother Rex:

Here is a quote about St. Francis' love for Mary, taken from the work of St. Bonaventure, Francis' first

biographer:

"He loved with an unspeakable affection the Mother of the Lord Jesus Christ, forasmuch as that She had made the Lord of glory our Brother, and that through Her we have obtained mercy. For who can make the Lord our Brother, if She not also be our Mother?"



### Denise Bossert

"...(O)nly by drawing from the eternal source of power can woman perform the functions to

which she is called by nature and destiny.... (E)ach woman who lives in the light of eternity can fulfill her vocation, no matter if it is in marriage, in a religious order, or in a worldly profession" (Edith Stein. *Essays on Woman*, "Spirituality of the Christian Woman" 128).



### Melissa Slagle

"Be who God meant you to be, and you will set the world on fire."  
-St. Catherine of Sienna



### Kenny Burchard

"We sure do need the Lord."  
-Mother Angelica

**"Behold your mother."—Jesus from the Cross, The Gospel of St. John 19:27**

"Mary is the most perfect symbol of the Church because she is its prefigurement and origin. She is also a unique organ of the Church, that organ from which the entire Mystical Body, even the Head itself, was formed. She might be called, and happily so, the heart of the Church in order to indicate her central and vital position in it."

EDITH STEIN. *ESSAYS ON WOMAN, "THE CHURCH, WOMAN, AND YOUTH"* 240

## RIPPLEEFFECT

By Matt Swaim

Monica Anyango had Catholic roots in Uganda and Kenya, but when she moved to the United States, she fell away from Mass attendance and drifted from her faith, ultimately finding herself a single mother living in Los Angeles. A series of relationships and experiences eventually led her back to the Sacraments, and having rediscovered the Catholic faith she'd left behind, she had a newfound zeal to share the faith with whomever the Holy Spirit might put in her path.

Meanwhile, Raven Yohannon, who had grown up in various Protestant denominations, had moved from the Upper Midwest to California to pursue acting, and just so happened to end up living in the same apartment building as Monica. One day, when Raven found herself locked out of her apartment, she decided to knock on Monica's door, knowing little about her beyond the fact that they'd had a few short but friendly interactions.

That brief experience of hospitality would open the door for more conversations, including and especially about faith. Raven had been searching for where she belonged as a Christian, and God put Monica in her life at the perfect time to be able to talk with her, pray with her, and offer her the resources she needed to answer the questions that were weighing most heavily on her heart, until Raven finally came to believe that her true spiritual home was in the Catholic Church.

Often, sharing our faith isn't merely about having the right answers or confronting people and trying to convince them. Sometimes, it's about being open to the opportunities that God is putting in front of us, seeing the person He's asking us to show His love to in that moment, and sharing our story with them. Monica and Raven are wonderful examples of that!

You can hear more about the details of their story at [chnetwork.org/presents](http://chnetwork.org/presents).

# THE MOMENT OF GRACE

AN INTERVIEW WITH MELISSA SLAGLE



**Q: What is your role here at The Coming Home Network?**

**MS:** I am a Pastoral Care Coordinator for lay women. My role is to offer support, guidance and prayers for our members.

**Q: When did you come into the Church and what did God use in your life to lead you home?**

**MS:** I came home in 2006. I had been a very happy Baptist, and then in 2003 my oldest daughter joined a Oneness Pentecostal Church. In trying to understand what she was being taught, I realized how far from my beliefs this Pentecostal Church was. This led to a lot of prayer and study. I soon discovered this was not unique to Baptists and Pentecostals but was pretty wide spread among all Protestant Churches. This created a great desire for truth, authoritative truth. I found myself asking...Where is my Paul? I wanted someone I could write a letter to that could come and clear all this confusion up for us. God showed me that He actually had given me a Paul, in his One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

**Q: May is the month of Mary. Tell me about your relationship with our Blessed Mother. Was that an easy transition for you or did you struggle?**

**MS:** Understanding the dogmas about Mary was actually very easy. It made sense, especially when I saw how each dogma actually points to a truth about Jesus. Where I struggled was in having a relationship with Mary. Why did I need to do that? But God gave me a great grace one day and showed me exactly why I needed Mary. I was having a conversation with my son's fiance, Mandy, one afternoon. We were talking about her favorite topic...my son. I looked at her and said, "do you really want to hear that story again, surely you want to talk about something else." Her answer was a watershed moment of grace for me. She looked at me with those big brown eyes and said, "I can't wait to be Stephen's wife and I love him so much. It's hard for me to imagine that I could love him any more than I do right now. But every time you tell me about him and I see him through your eyes (his mother's eyes) I fall in love with him even more!" And there it was. To see Jesus through His mother's eyes leads us to fall in love with Him in a whole new way, in a way only a mother can. When she shows us her son, we see Him as we never have before. ■

## MARY AND THE MAIDSERVANTS *By Denise Bossert*

As a Wesleyan pastor, my dad had seen women in his parishes and denomination relegated to worker bees, and did they ever work! The women kept the parish life going, but they did not hold leadership roles. They taught Sunday school and Bible school, they cleaned the church, they played the piano, they brought children to worship. Full stop.

When he became a Presbyterian pastor, Dad entered seminary with other seminarians, many of whom were women. Dad saw this as a breath of fresh air. He welcomed women in leadership positions. Dad went so far as to encourage my sister and me to become pastors. I was drawn to our conversations about faith and wisdom, but I did not want to shepherd a congregation.

The passage in Joel, quoted again in the Acts of the Apostles (2:17-18) resonated with me. **"And in the last days it shall be, God declares, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Yes, and on your menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit."**

Something new and different would happen in the life of the Church, beginning with Jesus' own mother.

We see women elevated to lives of heroic witness, holiness, and wisdom. We see women Saints and Doctors of the Church coming out of eras in which no woman could expect any position beyond the home. And yet, the woman who chooses or needs to be in the home is also given a path to holiness conformed to fit her domestic life, and that path is considered just as high and holy as any other. The Church has an elevated place for women because it first recognized the elevated place of Mary, the mother of Jesus. No one has had a more intimate relationship with the Blessed Trinity.

The first one to receive Jesus? Mary. The first one to share the Gospel message that the Messiah is coming? Mary. The first to offer up their suffering to the Suffering Christ while standing at the foot of the Cross? The Women. The first to encounter the Risen Lord? The Women.

Today, we see women at every level in diocesan life. Indeed, sexist and misogynistic rules persist outside the Catholic Church. Within the Church, women are respected and elevated to any position a man can hold, except the role that Jesus Himself gave to the episcopacy, diaconate, and presbyterate: Bishop, Deacon, Priest.

Mary did not lobby to be one of the Twelve. Why become one of the Twelve when she is the Protoevangelium? Why be an apostle when she was called to be the Queen of Apostles?

Women are smart, creative, quick receivers of grace, intuitive, maternal, wise, unexpected warriors, keenly perceptive, supportive, tenacious in adversity, eager to please the Lord, and quite often the most humble person in the room. Women, according to Pope St. John Paul II, have unique abilities socially, emotionally, and ethically. They triumph over adversity. John Paul II said women humanize the world and strive to make it a civilization of God's love.

The world says, "I am woman, hear me roar," even as it depicts women as barely good for anything beyond sexual objectification and bossy change-agents in society. The Church says women do not compete with men, but work alongside men in a complementarity that God established in the Garden.

In the last days, I will pour out my Spirit on my Maidservant, says the Lord. That Maidservant has a name. The Holy Name of Mary. Come and sing with Mary: He has raised the lowly servant, scattered the proud, and filled us with great things. And holy is His Name. ■





## Joyful Journey Updates

### From Nadia

Three weeks after I was received into the Catholic Church, with significant help from the Coming Home Network, an African priest arrived in town for graduate work at Ohio University. Fr. Rigobert was one of the first priests I ever talked to, and he made a lasting impression on me through his quiet, faithful example of concelebrating morning Mass in all weather, though he had a long walk uphill to the church. After he returned to Tanzania in 2015, I began sponsoring seminarians in his Moshi Diocese through Kilimanjaro Mission of Hope and Outreach. One day, I was struck by reading on the KMHO website: "Almost half of the households in Tanzania don't have access to potable water. Four out of ten households

must travel an hour or more just to collect water. The task of collecting water falls to women and children in 80 percent of households, a chore that keeps children out of school."

I could not get these statistics out of my mind; they were no longer just abstract numbers but a situation impacting the families of students I had come to love. With all our resources and technology available, why are so many people still without safe drinking water easily available? And why in Tanzania is it mostly the task of women to carry 40-lb buckets of water on their heads?

Despite failing to convince experienced well drillers to help Moshi Diocese, I could not forget the need. With zero technical background, and with many misgivings and fears, I flew to Texas for a one-week course in hand-drilling shallow water wells using a tripod, rope, and drill stem, and installing a home-made hand pump. The folks at Water For All International were exceptionally patient and kind, though they may have wondered if they were wasting their time with a 65-year-old woman who had no experience in construction or plumbing and asked endless questions such as, "You mean there are different types of PVC pipes? How can I tell the difference?"

After saving money for what might be a total failure, I arrived in Tanzania in 2021. I kept telling myself that without trying, I would always wonder if God could have somehow used me, in spite of all my weaknesses, to make a difference for those in need of

water. In amazement, I watched the Lord quickly assemble a skillful Tanzanian crew, including a welder, plumber, coordinator, and rope pullers, and off we went to drill a shallow well, which actually was successful! We also began to retrofit open water holes by cementing them over and installing hand pumps and irrigation pipes. Eighteen months and 70 drilled and retrofitted wells later, all I can say is *Tumsifu Yesu Kristo!* ("Praised be Jesus Christ" in Swahili, the common greeting among Catholics). God's grace, and the prayers and support of parishioners in Athens, Ohio, and others around the world have enabled the Maji Mlangoni ("Water at Your Doorstep") project to flourish. Some of these inexpensive hand-pump wells are used by 60 families daily. God willing, we hope to train teams in other Tanzanian dioceses.

In addition to water, we knew that a major challenge for many rural women is foraging for firewood, a task that consumes many hours weekly and results in heavy loads carried on their heads. Deforestation is a serious concern in much of the country. As a result, the Maji Mlangoni team is also teaching women how to make and use simple "rocket" stoves made of 24 bricks, and cardboard-and-foil solar cookers, which have a beneficial impact on the lung health of cooks and reduce the need for firewood. Nine parish-based women's microfinance groups have also been formed and receive ongoing training in entrepreneurship.

Ten years ago, as a former Protestant missionary, I lost my job and social circle upon entering the Catholic Church. Thanks be to God, He has brought me tremendous fulfillment and joy through partnering with and learning from hundreds of my Tanzanian sisters, many of whom demonstrate heroic faith and walk miles to Mass. I'm convinced He has wonderful surprises in store for all of us as we trust Him. ■

*Nadia Mitchell still travels to Tanzania frequently as the volunteer director of Maji Mlangoni and can be reached at [ohionadia@aol.com](mailto:ohionadia@aol.com)*

### Quote From *Thoughts for the Journey Home*

by Marcus Grodi

"The most difficult hurdle for so many Protestant converts to get over is our Blessed Mother Mary... I read that, from the cross, Jesus gave His mother into the keeping of John, rather than any supposed siblings. By grace I began, in imitation of my Lord and Savior and eternal brother Jesus, to recognize Mary, too, as my blessed loving mother" (56-57).

**EWTN'S THE JOURNEY HOME** on television & radio, hosted by JonMarc Grodi, CHNetwork Executive Director

### TELEVISION

Mondays at 8 PM ET — Encores: Tues. 1 AM ET, Thurs. 2 PM ET | *The Best of The Journey Home*: Sat. 6 PM ET

### RADIO

Mondays at 8 PM ET — Encores: Sat. 7 AM ET, Sun. 1 AM ET and 5 PM ET | *The Best of The Journey Home*: Mon.-Fri. 1 AM ET

#### Monday, May 1

**Ken Hensley & Kenny Burchard**  
Former Baptist & Pentecostal Pastors

#### Monday, May 8

**Jeremy Christiansen**  
Former Latter Day Saint

#### Monday, May 15

**Alicia Baker**  
Catholic Revert

#### Monday, May 22

**Dr. John Bruchalski**  
Former Pro-Abortion OB/GYN

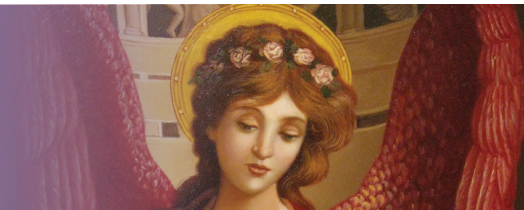
#### Monday, May 29

**Fr. Jonathan Duncan**  
Former Pentecostal and Anglican  
(Re-air from 12/16/19)

*Schedule is subject to change.*

To access the full archive of past Journey Home programs go to [chnetwork.org/journey-home](http://chnetwork.org/journey-home)

# Prayer List



## Clergy

■ **For Drew, an Anglican priest** who finds himself, once again, drawn to the Catholic Church, that he will find answers to the questions that remain for him.

■ **For Walter, a former Assemblies of God pastor** who with his wife was welcomed into full communion with the Church last Easter Vigil and who is developing a parish ministry to serve families who have dependents with intellectual disabilities.

■ **For Ken, a Baptist pastor** who wants to become Catholic and is seeking wisdom and guidance on how best to proceed in an environment where very few of those who know him will understand what he is coming to believe.

■ **For Grant, a non-denominational minister** on a journey toward the Church but still struggling with the Marian dogmas as well as the question of how he will support his family if he leaves the ministry to become Catholic.

■ **For Jay, a non-denominational pastor** with a wife and four children, who was raised Catholic, feels drawn back to the Church and is now meeting regularly with a Catholic priest.

■ **For Michael, an Anglican priest** who after many years of prayer and contemplation has finally made the decision to soon enter the Catholic Church.

■ **For Steve, a pastor in the Reformed Church in America** who feels strongly drawn toward the Catholic Church, that the Holy Spirit will open his wife's heart to the things he has tried, unsuccessfully so far, to share with her about what he's learning.

■ **For Gary, a Baptist pastor** who with his wife was welcomed into full communion with the Catholic Church this Easter Vigil, that the Lord will bless them in every way with all the grace they need to make a home in the 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 Darshak, who resigned his Protestant ministry in 2020**, has entered the Church and found a new job but is now facing very difficult medical and financial problems.

■ **For Hunter, a Protestant seminary student** who is quickly becoming convinced that Catholicism is true, that the Lord will help him to navigate his next steps.

■ **For Greg, a Methodist minister** who feels strongly drawn to the Catholic Church and yet also feels strongly drawn to be a pastor.

## Laity

■ **For Carl, a Presbyterian in Virginia**, that the Holy Spirit would guide him to the answers he needs about the Catholic faith.

■ **For Tim, an Independent Baptist in Alabama**, that our Lord would provide the answers that he is searching for about the Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

■ **For Andrew, a Lutheran in Indiana**, that he might search for a deeper sacramental life that would draw him into full-communion with the Catholic Church.

■ **For Porter, a Southern Baptist in Alabama**, that our Lord Jesus would open the hearts of his friends and family to his interest in the Catholic Church.

■ **For James, a member of the United Church of Australia**, that our Lord Jesus would grant him the grace to joyfully receive the Easter sacraments.

■ **For John**, that the Holy Spirit would rescue him from the confusion caused by Gnostic teaching and lead him back to Christ's holy Church.

■ **For Greg, a United Methodist in Tennessee**, that his curiosity concerning the teaching of the Catholic faith would bear much good fruit.

■ **For Allen, a Baptist**, that the Spirit of our Lord would guide each and every step of his journey of faith.

■ **For Bryan, a Pentecostal in Oklahoma**, that the Holy Spirit may guide him to his home in the Catholic Church so that he will no longer feel lost and let down.

■ **For Stephanie E., a Baptist**, that she may be drawn all the way back to Mother Church and that her husband will be open to learning more about the Catholic Faith.

■ **For M.P. and all like her**, that husbands and wives will discover the beauty and unity of sharing the Catholic Faith.

■ **For Lisa, a Presbyterian/Reformed Christian**, that her family will join her one day and come home to the Church.

■ **For Andrea, an Assemblies of God Christian**, for marital unity in faith and for discernment in making a good first confession.

■ **For Gary**, that he might have wisdom to know how to step away from the church he has served and loved for so many years.

■ **From Liz, a Baptist**, for help in finding transportation to Mass.

■ **From Jennifer, a Mennonite**, that her husband might return to his family and his faith.

■ **From Kathy, a Presbyterian**, for the Lord's guidance as she seeks a parish with mentors that can lead her and her husband.

■ **From Autumn, a member of the Latter Day Saints**, that her daughter might receive health, strength, and motivation to complete her school year.

■ **From Janis, an Anglican**, that she might receive divine assistance as she discerns the steps to come in her faith journey.

■ **From Amanda, a Church of Christ Christian**, that there will be a softening of her father's heart to her becoming Catholic and for a healthy baby.

■ **Elisha, a separated Catholic**, for Elisha's family and all who suffer and are lost.



# 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

PIONEER

\$10  
MONTHLY

PATHFINDER

\$25  
MONTHLY

GUIDE

\$50  
MONTHLY

NAVIGATOR

\$100  
MONTHLY

[www.CHNetwork.org/Compass](http://www.CHNetwork.org/Compass)

Please contact Ann at 740.450.1175 or [ann@chnetwork.org](mailto:ann@chnetwork.org) if you have any questions or concerns.

## CHNETWORK STAFF, ADVISORS, & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President/Founder  
**Marcus Grodi**  
(former Presbyterian pastor)

Executive Director  
**JonMarc Grodi**

Ministry Membership & Pastoral Care Coordinator  
**Jim Anderson**  
(former Lutheran)

Office Manager  
**Ann Moore**

Studio Manager  
**Bill Bateson**  
(former Secularist)

Director of Pastoral Care  
**Ken Hensley**  
(former Baptist minister)

Director of Outreach  
**Matt Swaim**  
(former Methodist)

Developer of Web & New Media  
**Seth Paine**  
(former non-denominational)

Director of Development  
**Kenny Burchard**  
(former Foursquare pastor)

Pastoral Care & Publications Coordinator  
**Denise Bossert**  
(former Presbyterian)

Pastoral Care Coordinator  
**Melissa Slagle**  
(former Baptist)

Ecclesial Advisor & Chaplain  
**Msgr. Jeffrey N. Steenson**  
(former Episcopal bishop)

Financial Advisor  
**Kevin Lowry**  
(former Presbyterian)

Spiritual Advisor  
**Br. Rex Anthony Norris**  
(former Anglican)

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Marcus Grodi** (President)  
**Msgr. Jeffrey N. Steenson** (Vice President)  
**Kevin Lowry** (Treasurer)  
**Donald Brey** (Director)



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



740.450.1175



[info@chnetwork.org](mailto:info@chnetwork.org)



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.**

## PARTNERS IN Mission



By *Kandice Longstreth*  
Donor since 2016 (6+ years)

I received my first Bible—a pocket-sized King James Version New Testament—during a hospital stay when I was only ten years old. As I learned to read it, I was convinced that it was all true! It was a treasure and a spiritual compass for me.

Though I was not raised in a religious family, I had a hunger to grow spiritually, and a deep desire to go to church. I attended various non-Catholic churches in my neighborhood with some of my young Christian friends. As a young person, I prayed what many know as “the sinner’s prayer,” and dedicated my life to Christ.

But, like so many Protestants and evangelicals, my spiritual journey devolved into a cyclical wandering, going from church to church, and from denomination to denomination, eventually abandoning church attendance for some time. At every phase of the journey, I sensed there must be something more.

Catholicism was not an option. All I knew about Catholics was that they “prayed the rosary and worshiped Mary.” During a season of spiritual confusion, while scanning stations on the car radio, I landed on a Catholic radio station. I almost turned the channel, but as I listened I thought, “These people really know God. How is that possible? They’re Catholic!” Each time I tuned in, I felt a deep sense of “homesickness” for Catholicism, though I had never visited a Catholic Church.

My hunger to learn more about Catholicism led me to my local public library where I found a book of conversion stories published by CHNetwork called *Journeys Home*. That’s when I discovered this incredible apostolate, its founder Marcus Grodi, *the Journey Home* on EWTN, and thousands of people like me who were coming home to the Catholic Church. I entered into full communion in 2016 and became a monthly donor to the COMPASS program.

During this Lent season, I felt that I should increase my monthly gift. I am so overwhelmingly grateful for the impact of CHNetwork on my own life—especially for the program *On The Journey* (with Matt, Ken, and Kenny). These resources have always given me true accompaniment as I grow in the Catholic Faith.

I encourage those who may be considering supporting CHNetwork to think backwards. How was your journey enhanced by having an apostolate like this one? Then, ask yourself, “What can I do to make sure those coming behind me receive what I have – and more!?” It’s worth sacrificing if others can be helped just as we have been!

*Kandice Longstreth has been a monthly COMPASS donor to CHNetwork since May of 2016. To join her with your own one-time or monthly gift, use the enclosed envelope, or visit [chnetwork.org/compass](http://chnetwork.org/compass). Watch Kandice’s conversion story at: [CHNetwork.org/Kandice](http://CHNetwork.org/Kandice)*

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

are you going to do for a living?"

I said, "Well, there is this process called the Pastoral Provision whereby, if I can get a dispensation from the Pope, I could be ordained a Catholic priest."

"With a wife and children?"

I assured her that was the case.

"Great," Sherri said. "Now I get to learn how to be the wife of a Catholic priest. No pressure there!" As it turned out, there was no pressure. When you are the first Pastoral Provision priest in a diocese, there is no frame of reference for a priest's wife; so there were no expectations thrust upon her.

Sherri asked, "How long will this process take?" By now, I had done some research; I had even spoken with the late Fr. John Parker, who lived near Charleston, South Carolina. It had taken him eight years, and he had traveled to Rome to help put the process in place. I had talked to a few other Pastoral Provision priests and believed a single, consistent process was taking shape, and the time it would take had gotten shorter.

So I told Sherri, "Two or three years, four at the most." What I learned was that I was entirely misreading the tea leaves. Until the *Anglicanorum Coetibus* document and the establishment of the Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter, there was no consistent process if you were the first Pastoral Provision aspirant in a particular diocese; the powers that be had to reinvent the wheel just for you.

I resigned from my Episcopal parish in October 2000 and was received into the Catholic Church at the next Easter Vigil. Bishop Joseph Kurtz admitted me to the process to become a Catholic priest in the Catholic Diocese of Knoxville. Bishop Kurtz's invitation was a unique opportunity. To support my family, I fell back on my medical experience as a Navy Hospital Corpsman (a position I had held after high school). I worked as an emergency room tech and a cardiac monitor at a local hospital in my hometown of Knoxville, Tennessee.

The hardest thing was telling my parents. They were so proud that I was an Episcopal priest. Mom even made me a complete set of vestments for my graduation from seminary. It was so hard to put them into storage, not knowing if I would ever wear them again. Not long after I met with Bishop Kurtz, my dad called to try to talk me out of my decision. He said, "This will be harder on your family than you think." About that, he was 100 percent correct. He thought I was overreacting to the liberalizing trends in the Episcopal Church. He even cried and said, "You know, I would never ask you to go against your conscience, but what worries me is that if priests like you leave the Episcopal Church, it doesn't bode well for its future." He was right about that, too. A couple of years later, I was sitting with him, watching the news, when a story came on that reported that the Episcopal Church was about to ordain its first openly gay bishop, Gene Robinson, in 2003. Dad looked at me and said, "You know, if I were a younger man, I'd be looking for a new church myself."

Throughout the Pastoral Provision process, there was occasionally some resistance from within the diocese's clergy. I think there were some priests whose reaction was, "Hey, I want a wife! Who's this Johnny-come-lately?"

A deacon also said, "I wanted to be a priest, but the church said I couldn't and be married."

Also, a priest asked, "Do you think it's fair cutting in line in front of those nuns?" Finally, there was the married couple who made an appointment to ask if I slept with my wife. None of these conversations gave me the slightest concern. People had to learn to adjust, and that never bothered me.

I was concerned about how long the process took and the havoc it wreaked on my family's finances. We were deeply in debt when I was ordained while trying to put two children through college. We achieved that, and finally, I was ordained a deacon on June 4, 2007. In the end, the process took seven years and eight months. Those were the hardest years of my life. You can only tell your wife 25 or 30 times, "No, honey, they are serious..." before she stops believing you. We gradually climbed out of debt and shifted into high gear to save money for retirement. I have served as a Catholic priest at four parishes in the last 15 years. I also served four parishes in the Episcopal Church. My years as a Catholic priest have been much more rewarding.

When I started to investigate the Catholic Church and its teachings seriously, one of the first things I learned was that those teachings make much more sense when Catholics explain them than when Protestants do. When I was a Protestant, I never thought Catholics worshiped Mary, but I did think that the cult of Mary was a distraction from the Gospel. It hadn't occurred to me that she never drew attention to herself but always pointed toward Jesus. Then there was her Immaculate Conception. I soon saw that it was her womanhood that established Jesus' human nature, but that her Immaculate Conception protected our Lord from any taint of sin or

### *The Saints on Mary*

"They will see clearly that she is the safest, easiest, shortest, and most perfect way of approaching Jesus, and will surrender themselves to her...in order to belong entirely to Jesus."

(ST. LOUIS DE MONTFORT. *TRUE DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY*. 55)

"Some people are so foolish that they think they can go through life without the help of the Blessed Mother."

ST. PADRE PIO

"Never be afraid of loving the Blessed Virgin too much. You can never love her more than Jesus did."

SAINT MAXIMILIAN KOLBE

effect, even in the womb. The Blessed Virgin Mary established Jesus' humanity and protected his divinity.

I also came to a better understanding of transubstantiation; the elements of bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus in the sacrament is an objective truth. Regarding sacramental theology, I had inherited a lot of fuzzy thinking about this. In the Episcopal Church, any baptized Christian can receive communion, with no notion of what it means to receive communion, much less to be in communion. You could believe it was the transubstantiated Body and Blood of Christ, or not. You could think it was a sacrament, or you could think it was a symbolic act. It didn't matter. You can be an Episcopalian and believe something—or you can believe in nothing, theologically speaking.

To be Catholic, though, is to embrace Truth. Objective and eternal Truth. There is no changing the Church by Tom, Dick, or Harriet, but only receiving Mother Church with thanksgiving for the gift we have been given.

I did not leave the Episcopal Church because I thought women should mind their place, nor because I was homophobic. The Episcopal Church left me when many of its leaders ran roughshod over anyone with whom they disagreed, when they dismissed Scripture if it conflicted with their secular agenda. I left because the church leaders ignored even the most basic tenets of Anglicanism whenever it suited their purpose.

Friends and family thought I was overreacting. In 2001, when I said, "It's only a matter of time before the Episcopal Church recognizes same-sex unions," the general response was, "Surely not!" But look at where America and Protestant churches, including the Episcopal Church, are today. As a result, the Catholic Church is where I have chosen to take my stand. My protections are the truths of the Holy Scriptures, which inform the Catechism and all the Church's teachings.

Seven years after I resigned from my Anglican parish and renounced my vows, I was ordained a Catholic priest. It was not an easy transition, but it was well worth it.

While I studied for ordination, I had worked a number of jobs in the medical field. Finally, in 2007, I was ordained and incardinated into the Diocese of Knoxville, Tennessee. Before I was ordained in the Catholic Church, I was very nervous about preaching something unorthodox: "What if someone reports me to the bishop?" That has never been an issue. I preach the Gospel as I always have, but now I am more fully informed by solid Catholic teaching, and if someone can show me how I have strayed outside the Magisterium, I will gladly correct myself. But that hasn't happened in 15 years of preaching.

I was also concerned that people would not relate to me, since I have a different background and life experience than most priests. That, too, has not been an issue. I have raised a family and had secular jobs, both in the Navy and the private sector, mostly in hospital settings. I know what it's like to get up in the middle of the night to care for a child with an ear infection.

I have tremendous respect for my brother priests, who attended Catholic seminary. No other ordained ministers are better prepared academically than Catholic priests. That has made me study harder,

**Did You Know** Mary's Gardens began in the 1900s in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to research the hundreds of flowers named in medieval times as symbols of the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary by botanists, folklorists and lexicographers and to assist in the planting of Mary gardens.

## THE LITTLE CATECHISM

Thus the "perfect woman" (cf. Prov 31:10) becomes an irreplaceable support and source of spiritual strength for other people, who perceive the great energies of her spirit....The present reflections, now at an end, have sought to recognize, within the "gift of God", what he, as Creator and Redeemer, entrusts to women, to every woman. In the Spirit of Christ, in fact, women can discover the entire meaning of their femininity....The Church gives thanks for all the manifestations of the feminine "genius" which have appeared in the course of history, in the midst of all peoples and nations; she gives thanks for all the charisms which the Holy Spirit distributes to women in the history of the People of God, for all the victories which she owes to their faith, hope and charity: she gives thanks for all the fruits of feminine holiness.

(CCC#30-31)

even after ordination in 2007, to be on par with them. I never want my Protestant "brown shoes" to embarrass me.

My present assignment is as pastor of Holy Ghost parish in Knoxville, Tennessee. Founded in 1907, our main church building approaches its 100th anniversary. We have beautiful mahogany woodwork and Austrian stained-glass windows. The traditional style of our church complements the traditional orientation of our parishioners. There are five Masses every Sunday, which include Latin and Spanish communities. We also have a monthly Mass in Swahili for our African parishioners. Holy Ghost parish is representative of the melting pot which is the United States and the universality of the Church, serving the sacraments to more than a thousand parishioners every Sunday, people of various colors and languages from around the world. We do so without compromising the Church's teachings.

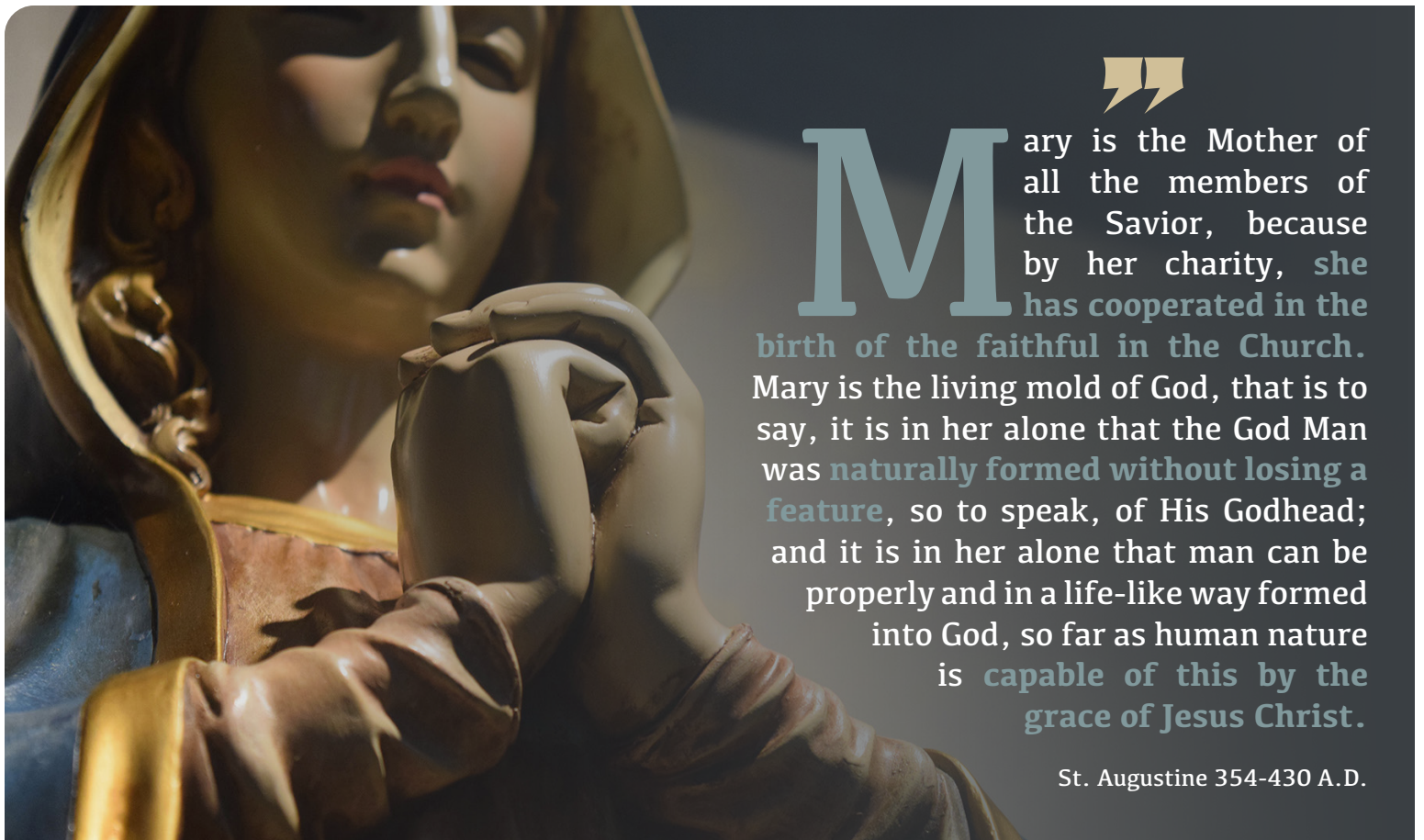
I have no regrets, except that I didn't come home to Rome even sooner. Holy Ghost Catholic Church is where I make my stand, and yes, it is a hill on which I am willing to die. I pray that the Lord should make me worthy of the martyr's crown, if it comes to that. I will follow Christ and His Church all the way to eternity, by way of grace and the sacraments. ■

*Fr. Bill McNeeley grew up in Norris, Tennessee. Before entering seminary, he served in the United States Navy and earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga. He and his wife Sherri were married in 1980 and are the parents of three grown children and four grandchildren.*



The Coming Home Network International  
PO Box 8290  
Zanesville, OH 43702-8290

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



“  
**M**ary is the Mother of all the members of the Savior, because by her charity, **she has cooperated in the birth of the faithful in the Church.** Mary is the living mold of God, that is to say, it is in her alone that the God Man was **naturally formed without losing a feature**, so to speak, of His Godhead; and it is in her alone that man can be properly and in a life-like way formed into God, so far as human nature is **capable of this by the grace of Jesus Christ.**

St. Augustine 354-430 A.D.