



## May 2024 CHNewsletter

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# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

Journeys Home

## I Will Draw All People to Myself

By Fr. Jerry Brown

I lay face down on the floor before the altar as the Litany of Saints was being chanted. Part of the lore of some of the priests who encouraged me toward ordination was that during the litany, not only saints, but others would appear in the ordinand’s mind. I could “see” several people who had encouraged me along my way, as well as some who had discouraged me, and it occurred to me that both the good and the ill I had experienced had served to guide me to that moment. However, they were not the primary focus. I could sense Jesus drawing me to his open arms and embracing me. Jesus was the focus.



### Beginnings of Faith

The call to be a priest began at a tender age, even though my parents did not go to church. Although they had me baptized as a baby at the Presbyterian church in Napa, CA, where I grew up, I never attended Sunday school or worship services. Their religion was golf. Despite this, I built an altar in my bedroom with a picture of Pope Pius XII and some other odds and ends—a Bible from my grandmother and a creche I had asked for at Christmas. It was a cheap plastic nativity scene, but it meant a lot to me.

Growing up in a very Catholic town in northern California, many of my friends went

to Mass each Sunday with their families. Occasionally, I was invited to attend with them. The old Latin Mass enthralled me. For my friends it was boring, but for me it was beautiful. I didn’t dare to think that, one day, I might be the priest standing at the altar, but I longed to be an altar boy like my cousins.

After graduating from high school in 1963, I joined a group of 20 graduates on a study tour of Europe. The local Rabbi, Dr. Leo Trepp, was our leader. He was one of those I recalled during my ordination. I was anxious to learn as much as I could on the trip, and a highlight of the experience was that we happened to be in Rome for the coronation of Pope Paul VI. I gloried in the many churches we visited and decided that, when I got home in September, I would become Catholic. However, my father didn’t approve.

Continued on page 2 ➡

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

During a “what do you want to be when you grow up” conversation with him, I mentioned that I thought I wanted to be a priest. It didn’t go well. At the end of the argument, he said, “Why don’t you go to your own church?” I responded, “Which church is that?” He said, “Your grandmother is Episcopalian.” The next Sunday, I headed to St. Mary’s Episcopal Church. It was “high church” and looked Catholic, so I signed on. After confirmation, I began serving at the altar. Receiving communion was the highlight of my life.

### Episcopalian Seminary, Priesthood, and Tragedy

In my junior year of college, I met an Episcopal priest who was the chaplain at Sacramento State University. I spent the summer in Sacramento taking English classes and living at Canterbury House, a small residence for Episcopalian students. Fr. Al was young and a great preacher, and I became one of his disciples. Being close at hand, I blindly followed him—he was, after all, Jesus’ man, no? Sadly, he took advantage of me and abused me, though I was not underage. For me, it was a deeply confusing time. I thought I could get closer to Jesus by being close to Fr. Al, and he assured me it was not a sin.

Many other students would have jumped at the opportunity to be in a special relationship with Fr. Al, but I was conflicted and troubled. Was there something about me that invited this? What I needed from him was for him to be a holy priest, but he had misinterpreted my devotion to him as a come-on. I remembered that incident years later, when young people would look at me as if I were Jesus; I saw how easy it could be for me to take advantage of them.

College over, I applied for seminary; the bishop sent me to Church Divinity School of the Pacific (CDSP) in Berkeley. During that year, Fr. Al moved to the East Coast, and I never

saw him again. Oddly, he was one of the people who came to mind at my Catholic ordination. Even though he hurt me, he was also a factor in my call. One of the faculty at CDSP mentioned in passing that Fr. Al had given me a negative recommendation—in the language of the day, he suggested I had a “hang-up.” The professor concluded that, regardless, I really was in the right place in seminary.

In my last year of seminary, I had another very powerful, though confusing, experience. A priest gave a lecture on the charismatic renewal, and that same evening, as I knelt on the floor of my dorm, I received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. The seminary education was designed to call everything into question; it was the era of “demythologization,” and Rudolf Bultmann was our guide. He taught that anything “supernatural” was added by the early Church, and he doubted that Jesus had even existed. After my powerful and emotional encounter with Christ, I was completely undone and even more confused and troubled.

I needed to sort through my education and square it with my personal experience of Christ, so I postponed ordination and spent the next few years reading and discerning the truth of Christ. I had never read C.S. Lewis, but he became my guide during those years and helped me to sort out my faith. I was eventually ordained in the Episcopal Church in November of 1972, and began serving a small congregation outside Sacramento. In a few years, the parish had grown dramatically, and when a leader in the congregation who was grievously ill was miraculously healed, the growth exploded. (By the way, this healed man also showed up in my mind at my ordination.) Suddenly, the charisms of the Holy Spirit were flooding into the ministries as Christ drew in ever more people.

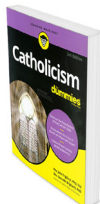
The bishop had the reputation of being very negative toward the Charismatic Renewal, and with what was happen-

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### CATHOLICISM FOR DUMMIES—THIRD EDITION

VARIOUS AUTHORS

Whether you’re a member of the Faith or just interested in it, *Catholicism For Dummies* offers a simple introduction to the ins and outs of the contemporary Church. You’ll take a full and rich look at our diverse and vibrant faith and understand what it means to be a Catholic today. (limited supply)



#3249 - \$22.99

### NOW WHAT? A GUIDE FOR NEW (AND NOT-SO-NEW) CATHOLICS

PATRICK MADRID

You’ve joined the Church or rediscovered your faith: Now what? If you’re at a loss about how to participate fully in the Church, connect with your local parish, and understand all those “quirky” Catholic things they didn’t cover in your catechism classes, this book can help.

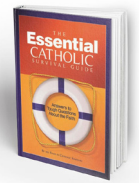


#3199 - \$14.99

### THE ESSENTIAL CATHOLIC SURVIVAL GUIDE

CATHOLIC ANSWERS

*The Essential Catholic Survival Guide* is indexed according to topic in a unique question and answer format that allows the reader to find the right answer to any question instantly. It covers many of the questions and misconceptions people have about the Catholic faith.



#3082 - \$24.95

ing in the parish I needed to make an appointment and tell him. After my tale of the healed man and the movement of the Spirit, I waited anxiously for the bishop to fire me. Instead, he leaned back in his chair and said “Well, praise the Lord.”

My preaching was “confirmed...by the signs that attended it” (Mark 16:20) and my faith was strong, but the enemy counterattacked. I had gotten married a couple years before, and when Kathy, my wife, gave birth to our first, the child was stillborn. My world collapsed, and many of the old conflicts and troubles resurfaced. I blamed Kathy for the death of the child; it’s a long story, but in essence she had been raised in Christian Science and feared the medical establishment, so she decided to give birth at home. The death of David, our baby, divided us, and my coping mechanism was to throw myself totally into my work. Eventually, after years of counseling, we separated. I left the parish for another one in Berkeley, while also teaching part-time at the seminary. An affluent congregation gave funds to provide full-time ministry for three years, with the idea that the Good Shepherd mission there would grow and become self-sufficient. Early on, the plan seemed to be working, but my depression increased, and I felt like I was wandering in a wasteland. It was clear to me that I needed to do something else to make a living. There were several nurses in the congregation, and they said, “Go to nursing school.” (At the time there was a terrific shortage of nurses.) So, I continued half-time at the church and went to school.

### **The AIDS Epidemic and Our Lady**

When I started working full-time at the hospital, I resigned from the parish, and when a position came open in the AIDS unit at Kaiser San Francisco, I jumped at it. I had a desire to care for the lepers of our time, and it seemed to me that I had found a new ministry. I worked in that unit for seven years during the height of the epidemic. Little we did made any difference to our patients, who died in vast numbers. (Oddly, some of those patients who had made an impression on me were also in my mind as I prostrated myself at the altar during my Catholic ordination.) The Archdiocese of San Francisco supplied a Catholic chaplain to our unit, Sister Mercedes, who came seven days a week to see her “muchachos,” as she called them.

One day, we were both in the break room, and I asked her, “Sister, how do you find the strength to do this ministry?” She said, “Have you heard of the Virgin of Guadalupe?” I had, but I knew nothing about the apparition. She explained that the Mother of Jesus had called her to do this work in His name. That didn’t mean much to me; I believed in the virgin birth of Jesus, but Mary had never been much of a focus for my faith. I watched Sister visit with the boys; many had been raised Catholic, but because of their lifestyle, they were angry and separated from God and their families. I watched her non-judgmental approach and saw the miracle

of reconciliation occur as they approached death. I perceived that something truly holy and special was occurring through her ministry.

One Sunday, after working all night and having several patients die in our unit, I went to the Episcopal church where I was resident. Church of the Advent in San Francisco is a very “high” church, and near the altar, there was a shrine to the Blessed Virgin. After the service, I knelt before it to commend the souls of those who had died to God. I felt that her arms embraced me, and in her, the arms of Jesus were opening to me, calling me.

Not long thereafter, I caught pneumonia from one of our patients and ended up in the hospital for 10 days with horrible complications. I remember waking up one night, not knowing where I was, profoundly fearful, and calling out to the Lord. He showed Himself to my mind with His arms extended, saying, “Come to me.” I saw that, while I had not abandoned my faith, I had put everything else before God.

When I was well enough to go back to church, I ended up attending the local Catholic parish. The crucifix in the front of the church, always in the past a symbol to me of Christ’s atoning sacrifice and suffering, was transformed in my mind to the living Christ, who said, “When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself” (John 12:32). As I wept my way through the Mass that Sunday, I knew that I had a clear call to “come home.”

### **Conversion and a New Priesthood**

I spent the next few months talking to as many priests as I could to begin the process of finally becoming Catholic. I started RCIA at a parish south of the city and was confirmed at the Easter Vigil in 1995.

At first, the call seemed to be for me to put Christ and his Church ahead of everything else, and because I had experienced enough turmoil in the ministry of the Episcopal Church, I had no interest in ordination. But my pastor kept encouraging me, so I took a long weekend retreat at the Carmelite House of Prayer in Napa Valley, praying and seeking God’s face. After the retreat, I visited my dad, and he could tell something was happening. I explained to him that I wished to move toward ordination, and he gave me his blessing. Still, there were several obstacles I needed to deal with.

First, I needed an annulment to move forward, and Kathy, my ex-wife, was dead set against it. Oddly, when the annulment was granted, not only did it open the door to seminary for me, but Kathy met someone and married. We had been separated for 13 years, but it took the healing of the annulment process to open the door for her to a new marriage. Annulment does open up old wounds and fears, but also resolves them; it is truly a healing process. In 1998, I entered St. Patrick’s Seminary in Menlo Park, CA. I didn’t need to complete the whole curriculum since I had several degrees, but the faculty required two years of residence in order to give a recommendation.





## A Note from JonMarc



Dear Friends,

As we enter the month of May—a month of special honor and devotion to Mary—I would like to reflect with you on the Communion of Saints. In the course of our work, we frequently field apologetics questions from inquirers about what Catholics believe (and don't believe) about the saints. This, for most people, is the easy part. The longer head-to-heart journey is that of actually engaging the saints, learning about them, and seeking their aid as spiritual companions. With that in mind, here are at least four key ways I can think of that we can start inviting the saints to be part of our walk with Christ.

### Embracing the Whole Body of Christ

Catholics believe that the saints are alive, active, and praying for their fellow Christians who are still on the journey of life (as well as the holy souls in purgatory who are being purified in preparation for heaven). We have an immense "cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1) present to us at all times of our Christian life—at work, at prayer, and especially at every Mass, in which we enter into an even greater communion with the whole Body of Christ through our reception of the Holy Eucharist. Like Christ himself whom they persevered in imitating, the saints have a purified and perfected love for the persons of the Holy Trinity, whom they contemplate in the beatific vision. But as a result they also have perfected love for you and I as fellow Christians.

We talk a lot around the CHNetwork about being a community of people who are on the journey—standing beside and encouraging each other on our way home. The CHNetwork is a microcosm of this much greater reality of the communion of saints. All of us—lifelong Catholics, new converts, and people considering Catholicism—are on the journey to our heavenly home, and the saints are cheering us on, praying for us, and spiritually accompanying us along the way.

### Looking Up

As we begin to consider this wider fellowship of the Body of Christ which includes the saints who have "run the race" and received the crown (1 Corinthians 9:24-27), we will rightly begin to "look up" to these elder brothers and sisters in Christ. This "looking up" is a healthy and virtuous thing to do. After all, this posture of "looking up" is how we must approach God who is infinitely higher than we. When we "look up" to a fellow brother or sister in the faith—whether on earth or in heaven—we practice in a small way good "habits of soul"—"virtues", such as humility and charity. Recognizing what is good and holy in the saints also elevates and enlarges our understanding of God Himself who is the source

of all holiness. We all have a mental picture of who God is, but however great that image might be, it is an imperfect icon, one always in danger of becoming an idol if we cling to it. God is the great iconoclast in this regard. He is always shattering our idols and calling us "further up and further in". Whenever we encounter and "look up" to holy men and women of God—marveling at the wisdom and virtue that God wrought in their lives by grace—we begin to realize that our image of God is way too small.

### Following the Example

The lives of the saints not only help to elevate our image of God, they also help to inform our understanding of who God is calling each of us to be. They help us envision what the Gospel could truly mean if we surrendered to it and followed Jesus unreservedly. What the Lord has done in the lives of His saints—and most gloriously what He has done in the life of his own human mother, Mary—He wants to do in our lives as well—if we will only let Him.

As St. Paul instructs the Corinthians, we should strive to be imitators of the saints as they are imitators of Christ. The saints can be a source of practical inspiration on how to live out the Gospel in the particularities of the times in which we live and the missions, responsibilities, and relationships God has entrusted to us. How did the saints live out the Christian life? How did they pray? How did they discern? How did they deal with hardship and obstacles? Of course the external aspects of their lives are not always perfectly applicable. But the virtues they practiced and exemplified are what God is calling us to at all times and places. You are likely not being called by God to sell all you have and become a poor beggar like St. Francis of Assisi, but you are indeed called to be just as faithful, courageous, humble, and detached as he.

### Asking for Help

Finally, and perhaps most familiarly, Catholics do ask the saints in heaven for help and intercession, just as they ask their fellow pilgrims on earth. Our Heavenly Father chooses and delights in working out his plan of salvation through the work and prayers of His children. And because of their greater surrender to His will, God works through the saints to powerfully encourage, inspire, instruct, and aid us along the way. Their prayers are powerful, not because of who they are, but because of who God is.

As always, thank you for sharing the journey together with us here at the Coming Home Network. May we avail ourselves of the witness and assistance of the saints this month—and most especially that of Our Lord's own beloved mother, Mary.

In Christ,

JonMarc Grodi

***"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."*** Hebrews 12:1-2



# Community Question: Mary, Queen of Heaven

The month of May includes a special devotion to Mary in Catholic parishes throughout the world. In 1987, the bishops of the United States dedicated the month of May to Mary as the Queen of Heaven, encouraging the May Crowning devotion, where a statue of the Blessed Mother in the church is crowned with a wreath of flowers, and flowers are laid at her feet.

Devotion to Mary can often be a stumbling block for Protestants who are curious about the Catholic Church. This month, we asked our members: “At any point in your journey, have you been bothered by talking about Mary as ‘Queen of Heaven?’ If so, why? And has anything helped you better understand this title for her?” Here is what some of them had to say:

## FROM THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

“Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death.” The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son’s Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians...

CCC 966

## FROM SCRIPTURE

“And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars...”

Revelation 12:1

## FROM THE SAINTS

“Because the virgin Mary was raised to such a lofty dignity as to be the mother of the King of kings, it is deservedly and by every right that the Church has honored her with the title of ‘Queen.’”

– St. Alphonsus Liguori

“Seeing Mary as the woman with the 12 star crown standing on the moon in the heavens in Revelation 12:1 was a clincher very early in my journey to the Catholic Church along with us being the rest of her offspring in Revelation 12:17.”

– Howard H.

“I used to be (troubled by it), until it was explained that in history, the mother of a king was often the queen of a nation. Then it made sense that Our Lady is the Queen of Heaven.”

– Janis J.

“I privately asked the question on occasion where our heavenly mother was over the years. There was never a context for it in my understanding of Christianity. Protestants barely acknowledge Mary and denigrate her implicitly. But, I thought, in families there’s a father and mother. I wondered who the mother was in the heavenly family. Now I know. Understanding the Queen Mother’s role was the key that unlocked the Church’s theology on Mary in that regard.”

– Anna Y.

“When I first read about it, it made perfect sense. It was a kind of ‘DUH!’ moment, Mother of

the King is the Queen Mother and it also clicked with the woman crowned with the twelve stars in the Apocalypse. So no, it didn’t bother me except for the fact I never realized or thought about her much at all until that point.”

– Leonard A.

“Honestly? It still bothers me even though I have been Catholic for 15 years. I know all of the verses and apologetics for it. That said, I trust the Church’s judgment more than I trust my own gut reactions and I remind myself of that.”

– Laura F.

“This was my biggest hang up, coming from the Evangelical space. All of the points above really helped me understand her role better. It’s been such a healing process finding a relationship with her. I read *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary* and that completely shifted my thoughts. Highly recommend!”

– Meghan G.

“I had hesitations with parts of the Hail Holy Queen prayer, but not Mary as Queen. It helps to look at history and know the role of queens in the royal courts. She is never equal to the King, but she represents the crown. It all fits together so nicely!”

– Morgan C.



# JOIN US ON OUR NEXT DEEP IN HISTORY PILGRIMAGE TO POLAND

SEPTEMBER 2-13, 2024

With Ken Hensley, Kenny Burchard, & Msgr. Jeffrey Steenson

Explore the beauty of one of the most historically Catholic countries in the world as we visit some of the great cities of Poland (including Warsaw, Częstochowa, Zakopane, and beautiful Krakow) with a focus on the truth, history, and beauty of the Catholic Church.

We will pray and celebrate Mass in some of the most beautiful churches in the world as we learn about some of the great saints of our faith: St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Faustina, St. Edith Stein, and especially Pope St. John Paul II.

**Please consider joining us!** It will be a wonderful time for us to share our stories and forge life-long friendships as we experience the power of Catholic Poland.

Cost\*: \$5,628/person based on 30 participants & double occupancy. Find complete details, including a full itinerary and registration forms, at [chnetwork.org/poland](http://chnetwork.org/poland).

\*Price listed is for cash/check transactions. There will be a 5% surcharge added for credit transactions. Land only rates are also available.



## Joyful Journey Updates

### From Roger M., a former Baptist pastor

We love being Catholic. It's been a period of growth for me and my children. Nearly every Mass, I'm still overcome with the beauty and truth of it all. I even look forward to Confession (mostly...) And, by God's grace, I've been able to help others come to the Church in this short time. ■

### From Carl L., a former Presbyterian

Things are going very well and I'm on track to be confirmed at my parish on Easter Sunday! I can't wait, and I'm so grateful for the journey that brought me into the Roman Catholic Church. Now I know what people mean when they say "welcome home"! Thank you for helping to share resources and check in periodically. It's been great knowing I can reach out when I have questions. ■

Do you have an update on your journey to share with us? Send it to [info@chnetwork.org](mailto:info@chnetwork.org).

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



### TELEVISION

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

### RADIO

Mon. 8PM 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 6

**Dan Venezia**

Former nominal  
Catholic

Monday, May 13

**John Bacon**

Former Anglican Priest

Monday, May 20

**Jack Williams**

Former Evangelical  
Christian

Monday, May 27

**Dr. Jonathan  
Fuqua**

Former Evangelical  
Protestant

Orig. Air Date: 3/2/2020

Monday, June 3

**Alan Webb**

Former Mainline  
Protestant

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)



# Holy Spirit, Bring Your Gifts To Us—And Others Through Us!

Kenny Burchard, Director of Development

# PARTNERS IN *Mission*

As we draw near to the Feast of Pentecost on May 19th, I am inspired to reflect a bit on a specific charism (a special gift of the Holy Spirit given to empower the faithful) that makes our work possible here at the Coming Home Network. As a former Pentecostal pastor, most of the pages of my Bible that mention spiritual gifts are dog-eared, worn out, and marked up (see Rom. 12:3-7, 1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4:11). In my Pentecostal background, the more dramatic gifts (prophecy, tongues, healing, miracles, etc.) tend to be those most often desired. But nestled among all these “power gifts” is a spiritual gift without which most ministry would *never* get done. No, it’s not preaching, teaching, or prophesying. Rather, according to the list in Romans 12:6, it is “generous giving.” But is generous giving *really* a spiritual gift? Yes! In my twenty years in pastoral work, and ten years in charitable resource development, I can tell you that God is powerfully at work—doing miraculous things—through the lives of people who are open to *this* charism of the Holy Spirit.

When I joined the CHNetwork as the Director of Development two and a half years ago, I found myself interacting regularly with people who have this powerful charism of giving. Their thoughtful, radical generosity (many having supported this work for years), made it possible for the CHNetwork to offer me and my family crucial clarity and encouragement during our journey into the Church. To be sure, generosity is a gift of the Holy Spirit in that it is not natural (in terms of our human brokenness) to be generous.

I invite you, as we celebrate Pentecost, to open your own heart to the grace of God and the charism of generosity. Think about what your gift to the CHNetwork could unlock for a non-Catholic pastor or layperson who is seeking our assistance in their journey *home* to the Catholic Church. Your partnership in this mission provides them with the personal counsel, resources, community, and guidance they so desperately need as they make this difficult journey. As St. Peter exhorts in his first epistle, “As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Pet. 4:10, RSV-CE). Please join us as a partner in this mission with a generous gift on behalf of those making their way home! ■

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*Kenny Burchard is a former Pentecostal pastor who entered the Catholic Church in 2019. He now serves as the Director of Development for the Coming Home Network, and is featured on the CHNetwork program, On The Journey with Matt, Ken, and Kenny. To make a gift, please use the enclosed envelope, or give online at [chnetwork.org/donate](http://chnetwork.org/donate)*

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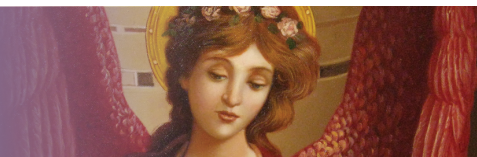
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*CHNetwork was founded to help men and women, clergy and laity, from every background imaginable, discover the truth and beauty of the Catholic Church and make the journey home.*

***“At the end of this mission of the Spirit, Mary became the Woman, the new Eve (‘mother of the living’), the mother of the ‘whole Christ.’ As such, she was present with the Twelve, who ‘with one accord devoted themselves to prayer,’ at the dawn of the ‘end time’ which the Spirit was to inaugurate on the morning of Pentecost with the manifestation of the Church.” CCC 726***



# Prayer List



## Clergy

■ **For Mark, an Evangelical minister** who returned this Easter to the Catholic Church in which he was baptized and raised; that the Holy Spirit will lead him forward.

■ **For John, a Baptist pastor** living in a world almost entirely made up of Baptists who is becoming convinced that he may need to become Catholic, that he may have the courage to do it and lead his family into it.

■ **For Hunter, a Protestant seminary student** who finds himself strongly drawn to the Catholic Church, that he may receive the wisdom needed to take his next steps and to eventually lead his family home.

■ **For James, an Episcopal priest** struggling with the direction of his church and sensing the Holy Spirit leading him toward becoming Catholic, that the Lord will show him how to navigate this journey with his family.

■ **For Drew, a priest in the Orthodox Anglican Church** who has been drawn to the Church and exploring the idea of becoming Catholic for a number of years and has recently become more serious about this journey.

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

■ **For Ignatio, an Episcopal priest** who has begun to explore becoming Catholic (as well as a Catholic priest), and is praying for the possibility of being ordained through the Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter.

■ **For Sergio, a Christian Reformed preacher** who is struggling a great deal with feeling that he may have moved too quickly when he left his ministry to enter the Church while still working through so many personal, vocational, and even doctrinal issues.

■ **For Chris, a Baptist pastor** who has recently begun a journey toward the Catholic Church and is buried in historical and theological questions as well as concerns

about future ministry and employment if he were to become Catholic.

■ **For Jacob, the pastor of a very anti-Catholic Protestant denomination** who is coming to the conviction that Catholicism is true and needs prayer for the Lord's assistance in opening up to his wife and determining what to do.

■ **For Andy, a former Evangelical pastor** who has left the ministry and found work but continues to attend church with his wife and kids and struggles to even discuss the things he now believes.

■ **For Roger, a Baptist pastor** who resigned his ministry last year, found a new job, and has lead his wife and kids into full communion with the Catholic Church.

## Layity

■ **For Sue, a Baptist**, that her family would grow to accept her desire to become Catholic, and that the Lord would provide consolation for her until she is able to receive the Sacraments.

■ **For Carmen, a Catholic "revert,"** that as she and her family seek to return home to the Church, they may all receive the wisdom and discernment needed for the journey, that her sons would come into full communion with the Church, and that there would be an increase in outreach to Arabic speaking Muslims.

■ **For Lalona, a Baptist**, that God would grant healing and full recovery from illness for her dad and her cousin Tammy, comfort as they go through medical treatments, and a lessening of their fear and pain.

■ **For Meghan, an Evangelical Christian**, that the Holy Spirit directs her steps and gives her wisdom on how to walk this path, that her husband would be receptive and open to the Catholic Faith, and that peace would flood their home.

■ **For Karen, a recent convert**, that she will find acceptance from her family regarding her becoming Catholic and for healing from being taught things that hurt her Christian walk.

■ **For Anne, a Baptist (and former Catholic),** that she may receive help as she returns home to the Church.

■ **For Virginia, a Lutheran**, that her eyes will continue to be opened to the heart of Jesus as she further explores becoming Catholic, and that she may receive courage to take the steps necessary to join the Church.

■ **For Michelle, an Evangelical Christian**, that the Holy Spirit may guide her to the understanding she seeks to fully embrace what the Church teaches.

■ **For Lee, a Southern Baptist**, that as he slowly works his way through all the On the Journey podcast episodes, the Holy Spirit would bless and guide his heart.

■ **For Luke, a Free Methodist**, that he would meet some good Catholics in his neighborhood who would guide him in his journey to the Church.

■ **For Mark, an Episcopalian**, that his disillusionment with his denomination would not cause him to become bitter during his journey to the Catholic Church.

■ **For Allen, a Baptist**, that as he reads stories of others' journeys to the Church, he would be inspired to make his own.

■ **For Trent, a former agnostic**, that our Lord would grant him the grace to heal his relationship with Christ and guide him to full communion with the Church.

■ **For Andrew, a Lutheran**, that as he reads the accounts of the journeys of others he would be granted a hunger for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

■ **For Rosendo, an Evangelical brother**, that his interest in the teachings of the Catholic Church would spark a desire for him to become a Catholic Christian.

■ **For Porter, a Southern Baptist**, that as he continues to learn the teachings of the Catholic Faith, his friends and family would be accepting of his journey.

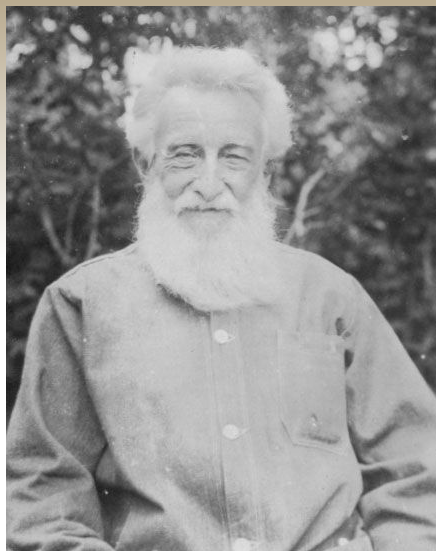
■ **For Joey, an Episcopalian**, that he would come to accept the fullness of truth taught by the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

■ **For Joyce, a Messianic Jew**, who has requested prayers for her husband.



# A BAPTIST CONVERT ON THE PATH TO Sainthood

*In January of 2024, the sainthood cause of Joseph Dutton concluded its local phase of exploration in the Diocese of Honolulu, meaning that he became officially recognized by the Catholic Church as a Servant of God. If miracles are approved through his intercession, he would be the third person from Hawaii to become a canonized saint. So who was he?*



As it turns out, Brother Joseph, as he was known to the lepers of Molokai, followed a long and winding path to Christian service, through sin and struggle and discernment, before leaving everything behind to honor Jesus by ministering to those affected by leprosy.

He was born Ira Barnes Dutton on April 27, 1843, in Stowe, Vermont, and was living in Wisconsin when the Civil War broke out a couple of decades later. He joined the 13th Wisconsin Infantry and witnessed the horrors of brother fighting against brother, as well as the fallout of a nation divided by violence and strife. Dutton grew up Baptist, but his experience of war factored into his descent into alcoholism, as well as a broken marriage. That struggle with alcohol would go on for several years, until he made a resolution to quit drinking in 1876. This was part of a deeper conversion in his life, which led him to eventually consider and embrace the claims of the Catholic Faith.

In 1883, he joined the Catholic Church, and in his vocational discernment, spent more than a year living with the Trappist monks at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky. When he learned of the mission of Fr. Damien de Veuster in Hawaii, and how St. Damien was ministering to the lepers there, he decided to leave everything behind and make himself available to that work.

When Dutton, who had taken the name "Brother Joseph," arrived in Hawaii, he made a simple declaration to Fr. Damien: "My name is Joseph Dutton; I've come to help, and I've come to stay." Brother Joseph would remain there until and after the passing of St. Damien of Molokai, going on to found the Baldwin Home for men and boys.

The work of Brother Joseph even garnered the attention of U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt; after learning of Brother Joseph's work, Roosevelt had the naval fleet dip their flags in tribute as they sailed past the island where he was ministering.

Brother Joseph Dutton died in March of 1931 at the age of 87, and nearly a century later, the Diocese of Honolulu organized a committee to begin exploring the possibility of recommending him to the larger Church for possible sainthood. The files sent to Rome regarding Brother Joseph detailed over 2,000 pages of documentation regarding his work and correspondence. After a thorough review of them by the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, the Vatican concluded that the canonization cause could move forward, meaning that Brother Joseph could officially be recognized by the Church under the title "Servant of God."

In a Mass of celebration for the announcement, Bishop Larry Silva of Honolulu said that Brother Joseph "left everything behind, so that he could not only change course himself but change the course of many others, by catching them from drowning in despair and raising them to the light that is Jesus Christ."\* The next step in his cause for sainthood will be a deeper review of his life and legacy, to determine whether or not he can be officially recognized with decree of Heroic Virtue. This would result in him being given the title "Venerable Servant of God,"

which would put him one step closer to the possibility of being held up to the Church as "St. Joseph Dutton."



In being recommended to the Church for possible sainthood, Dutton joins the ranks of two other significant missionaries to the lepers of Hawaii; St. Damian of Molokai, the Belgian priest whose mission he joined on the island, and St. Marianne Cope, who left her hospital work in upstate New York to minister in the North Pacific. If Brother Joseph ends up being canonized, it will set Hawaii apart as a hotbed of American saints; all three of them having done the bulk of their ministry before Hawaii was admitted to statehood in 1958.

Servant of God Joseph Dutton, convert, veteran, and missionary, pray for us!

\*<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/256612/servant-of-god-joseph-dutton-s-cause-for-canonization-sent-to-vatican>

**"I make myself a leper with the lepers to gain all to Jesus Christ."**

**ST DAMIEN OF MOLOKAI**  
FEAST DAY: MAY 10

I worried that it would be a miserable time and feared I might be turned down for ordination, but I felt that I had to trust Jesus' leading and give 100 percent. Those two years were actually wonderful; I had a library at my disposal, classes I found interesting, and fellow seminarians who accepted me and made me a part of that community. Having the opportunity to go to Mass daily kept me growing. That summer, I went to Mexico to do language immersion with 17 other seminarians. During that time, four of us went to Mexico City and the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. I entered the shrine more or less a skeptic, but was encountered by "la Virgencita." As I gazed upon the image on the tilma (reed cloak) of St. Juan Diego, her hands seemed to open, and her extraordinary presence in that place brought me face to face with Jesus, her Son. After the visit, I read everything I could on Our Lady of Guadalupe, as well as the other apparitions and Church teaching on Mary. Another obstacle dissipated.

The big obstacle, though, was authority. From the outside, the Catholic Church appears as a big monolith that gives little freedom to the People of God, requiring them to have blind faith. I learned, however, that this is not the way the Church actually functions. At every step along the way, I had the opportunity to question and to engage the truth. The bishops have life and death authority over seminarians, and as a part of the process of ordination, we were required to give assent to the Magisterium of the Church—that is, to the Pope and the body of bishops. Much time was spent on understanding the dogmatic teaching of the Church (Trinity, Incarnation, Atonement) and to understanding teachings such as priestly celibacy and other elements of priestly life and ministry. I was never forced to accept anything to which I didn't freely and openly give consent. In the ordination liturgy, we are asked to give respect and obedience to the bishop and his successors. In sum, I came to understand that being docile and open to the truth made my promise of obedience something that clarified the relationship between the priest and his bishop. Along the way, I read from cover to cover the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which I found reasonable, and in short, true. The documents of the Second Vatican Council were also a great help for understanding why the Church teaches as she does. After being immersed in Catholic orthodoxy and orthopraxy (correct practice) in the seminary, the pieces fell into place for me as I moved toward the goal of priestly ordination.

That is not to say that I did not struggle. When I arrived at St. Patrick's Seminary midyear, I was placed with a class that would be ordained in 2000. My ordination was held back until 2001, in order to fulfill the faculty's obligation of completing two full academic years for a recommendation. It was painful to watch my classmates being ordained while I was not. However, with patience and trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I was ordained a transitional deacon in January of 2001, and then shortly thereafter, on February 22nd, I was ordained a priest.

### On the Job

After ordination, I was assigned to St. Joachim parish in Hayward, a large multicultural parish with an excellent school and many ministries. I jumped right in with my first pastor, Fr. Sergio; there were also three newly ordained deacons and an excellent staff.

It was during the "Long Lent" of 2001, when the sexual abuse crisis erupted. The Oakland diocese had been very proactive in protecting children, but with all the pain that resulted from the revelation of the abuses, I wondered what I had gotten myself into. I was also delegated by my pastor to call on and spend time with families who had suffered at the hands of a particular notorious priest who had been assigned to St. Joachim some years before. The diocese had set aside funds to enable counseling for the abuse victims, but for the most part the families did not want to deal with it. As a result of the abuse of their children, most of them were no longer practicing their faith, but there were a couple of families who were still active in the parish. While it is all too human to sweep such pain under the rug, my own experience of abuse helped me to empower those who would take advantage of the resources we had made available. By the end of the year, I felt that we had made a difference.

St. Joachim parish also gave me my first opportunities to celebrate the Mass and preach in Spanish. The faithful who worshiped in Spanish were very kind and enabled me to get comfortable with the liturgy in a second language. Because they were so welcoming, I got good experience toward my second assignment, which was as pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Church in Concord. St. Francis had been an entirely English-speaking community. Although they permitted Spanish Masses in the church, these Masses were celebrated by priests from an organization called Concord Hispanic Ministries; they had Masses in three parishes, as well as in school auditoriums.

As I gazed upon the image on the tilma (reed cloak) of St. Juan Diego, her hands seemed to open, and her extraordinary presence in that place brought me face to face with Jesus, her Son.



The bishop decided to put the Spanish speaking Catholics back into the parishes and dissolve Concord Hispanic Ministries, so the day I arrived at St. Francis, 2,400 Spanish speaking families arrived as well. It was good for an overly entitled English speaking congregation to make room for others, although there were stresses and strains along the way. Sadly, the previous pastor had a serious drinking problem that ultimately took his life, and the pastor before him had active Alzheimer's disease for several years, and some of the staff of both school and parish had taken advantage of the leadership void, getting paid for doing nothing. All that had to be cleaned up while I lived my first year at St. Francis of Assisi, a parish that one of my brother priests described as "notoriously cranky." Human relations is the cross of being a parish leader, but with faith and perseverance, we got through the transition, and I settled in for an anticipated long ministry there. But that was not to be.

I gave my obedience to the bishop that ordained me, but he was replaced in 2002 by Bishop Allen Vigneron (now Archbishop Vigneron of Detroit). One of the parishes out in the Delta area of California, Immaculate Heart of Mary in Brentwood, needed a new pastor, and some dozen brother priests had turned it down. Too far away, too much Spanish, and too much debt were the usual reasons given. Finally, our new bishop called in desperation and asked if I would consider it; my answer, based on obedience, was an unqualified "yes." The parish had been without a pastor for a couple of years, and a young priest, Fr. Ken, with whom I was very close, was their temporary administrator. I called Fr. Ken and drove out to Brentwood. He showed me the church, which had been built in 2004; it was now the end of 2006. In the course of our time together, I confided in him that the bishop had asked me to be pastor. I asked if he could give me some time to spend in the church to pray and seek the Lord's will. The new church was beautiful, thoroughly from the post-Vatican II era, but with traditional elements that made it feel like a church. I had the sense that Jesus' arms were opening to me in that place, that He was calling me to be there. I ended up being the pastor of that parish for 10 years, and it grew from some 1,700 families to over 6,000 during my time there. Demographics drove that growth, but the parish was also alive and bursting with ministries.

For me, it is the people who make up the parish, and I quickly fell in love with them. Fortunately, they seemed to respond to me as well. The enormous debt I had inherited was paid off within a couple of years, allowing us to borrow around four million dollars to build a hall, offices, and classrooms. This new debt was also retired before I left. I asked the bishop to allow me to retire in my 70th year, partly be-

cause I had experienced a brush with cancer, but also because the day-to-day pressure on a pastor is enormous, even though most people think we only work one day a week.

### Retired but Still Working for the Lord

Jesus always calls us to himself and to ongoing conversion. After retiring, I immediately got involved in ministry in the diocese of Stockton, where I moved to be near family. I hadn't expected to be busy, but I love being a priest and doing the things that priests do. In 2022, Bishop Myron Cotta of Stockton asked that I take on a parish in crisis: St. Anthony in Manteca. The previous pastor had resigned, and the circumstances greatly divided the community. It was my task to heal those wounds, or rather be the midwife that allowed Jesus to heal them. St. Anthony is a wonderful parish with a great school and many ministries, and I was graced to be present for the transition of the parish from the loss of their previous pastor into their preparation for a new one. Behind the church's altar stands a life-size crucifix, with Jesus inviting the faithful in with outstretched arms. I mentioned previously the verse about the Son of Man being lifted up and drawing all to Him (John 12:32)—this, coupled with the sight of such a dramatic crucifix was, and remains, a powerful image and message, not only for me personally, but definitely for the people as they returned to Mass at the end of the pandemic. It is true that Jesus continues to love us and call us. I am grateful to the Lord, who has opened His arms to me, and through my ministry, to those who have come to love Him.

My personal experience, especially with abuse, caused me more than a little heartbreak, not to mention downright confusion as to what it said about me as a priest. Abuse is not the stigma of a single church, though; it is found everywhere. We cannot change the past, but we can change how we respond. Because God was always my loving Father, Mary my loving mother, and Jesus the source of all good, by the grace of God, I did not respond with anger and hatred toward the Church and the priesthood. Perhaps my experience was less drastic than others; still, my simple faith is that, when we are faithful to God, He can use every experience in our lives to bring good out of evil, life out of death. ■

*Fr. Jerry Brown is a priest of the Oakland Diocese, now serving in active ministry in the San Joaquin Valley. He has four children, two of whom are living - a daughter, Amy, in Portland, and a son, John, in Anaheim. He currently resides in Lodi in the Diocese of Stockton, after having spent many years serving in the Oakland Diocese as pastor of several parishes, as well as director of ongoing formation for priests.*

***"When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home."*** John 19:26-27

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**V. Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia.  
R. For He whom you did merit to bear, alleluia.  
V. Has risen, as he said, alleluia.  
R. Pray for us to God, alleluia.  
V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.  
R. For the Lord has truly risen, alleluia.**

**Let us pray. O God, who gave joy to the world  
through the resurrection of Thy Son, our Lord  
Jesus Christ, grant we beseech Thee, that  
through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, His  
Mother, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life.  
Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.**

