



July 2024 CHNewsletter

I Have Found the One My Soul Loves by Kathryn Callahan	1
Encouragement for the Journey by JonMarc Grodi	4
Conversion Conversations by Matt Swaim	5
The Way of God More Fully by Kenny Burchard	5

THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

Journeys Home

I Have Found the One My Soul Loves

By Kathryn Callahan

My spiritual journey began when I was baptized at 13 years old at the non-institutional church of Christ in Starkville, Mississippi. I'd felt a pulling on my heart to be baptized long before this, but the fear of walking up to the front pew to make the request while everyone watched and the feelings of unworthiness stayed my feet. Thankfully, one Sunday afternoon, my Uncle George provided an alternative. He would baptize me right then while the church building was empty with only my family there. That was a less terrifying proposition, so I took him up on his offer. He also explained to me that I didn't have to be perfect to be baptized because that is what baptism is for—the remission of sins and the beginning of my journey towards perfection in Christ.



A Desire to Know God

From then on, a desire to know God more enveloped my heart. I tore into my Bible, learning and memorizing as much as I could and discussing the Scriptures with my grandmother, a very biblically knowledgeable woman who read her Bible every day. I garnered a strong Bible foundation at the Northside church of Christ, led by intelligent and detail-oriented Bible teachers and preachers. When I was in high school, I was very much noted as the Bible nerd. I went to a private non-denominational Christian school called French Camp Academy, where multiple Bible classes were required

to graduate. There, I was a zealous Bible student challenging the Bible teacher with my marked up NKJV Bible full of notes and essential underlined verses. I know I was annoying, but my teacher, with whom I disagreed a lot, found my voraciousness a good thing and awarded me the Bible class award at the end of the year, reading Acts 17:11 out loud to the school and comparing me to the Bereans. I was very honored by that.

Although the church of Christ is known for its biblical knowledge, I often found the application of it wanting, and there were many passages that my church leaders didn't know how to address. For instance, there were several passages about the "laying on of hands" (Acts 8:17; 6:6; 1 Timothy 4:14) for the appointment of offices or imparting of spiritual gifts. According to my Bible teachers,

Continued on page 2 ➡

...Journeys Home Continued...

these ideas didn't matter anymore. It was only necessary during that early period because Christians did not have the complete Bible then. They pointed to 1 Corinthians 13:8–10 (RSVCE), which states, "Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away." The Bible, they said, is the "perfect" that was to come. The Holy Spirit's mission was to inspire the writers of the New Testament and convince others with miraculous signs. But now the Holy Spirit resides only in the Bible. If you want to know Him, then read your Bible, and He will speak to you through the Scriptures.

During a study of Acts, I remember asking a Bible teacher if the original churches were still there in the many cities that Paul started. My question baffled him, but I now understood what I was asking. I wanted to know if this "laying on of hands" continued and if there was a remnant still left there passed down from elder to elder, family to family. However, the church of Christ taught that the Church founded in the first century would eventually fall into dissolution because of the corruption of the truth by the Church leadership. This is an idea found in the Restoration Movement, out of which the church of Christ arose. In fact, one of the claims I was taught about the church of Christ is that it was the true Church that had been restored. We were the original New Testament Church. Before, there had been 1700 years of corruption and falsehoods, taught by what is now called the Catholic Church, which had suppressed and persecuted the true Christians, who went underground.

Regarding Martin Luther, the church of Christ did not claim him as one of their own. I was taught that he almost had the truth but fell short. It was not until Alexander Campbell came along that truth was restored. But even this history troubled me. Were there no true Christians between 100 AD and the 1800s? How could they be saved if there was only the Cath-

olic Church? They only baptized babies with sprinkled water, which didn't count. However, I didn't worry too much about these holes, because I believed wholeheartedly in the teachings of the church of Christ. We were the one true Church, and every other denomination was in error. Worst of all was the Catholic Church with its many paganistic beliefs.

I believed everything—except for the one thing my grandmother disagreed with and pointed out to me regularly. Because my grandmother was so smart in the Scriptures, I believed her over the Church. The church of Christ is quite unique among other denominations in that they partake of the Lord's Supper every Sunday. During the presentation, some of the men would read Scripture about it and then give a short talk on it. All of them would remark that these emblems were a representation of Christ's body and blood. I could feel my grandmother bristle beside me, and I knew why. She would always say, "Jesus said, 'This is my body... This is my blood' (Matthew 26:26, 28). It doesn't say anywhere in the Bible that it's a 'representation!'" I agreed with her and began to bristle as well when I heard someone say it wrong, which was everyone except my Uncle George.

I believe it was this one misquoting of the Bible that began the slow unraveling of my belief system. Over time, I realized the many flaws in the church of Christ's teachings, and the more I studied the Bible, the more I realized the church of Christ really didn't follow the Bible. Many of the inconsistencies were big issues like divorce and remarriage. They taught that one could only divorce and remarry because of adultery based upon Matthew 19:9. But the Greek word there was not actually the word for adultery, it was sexual immorality, which referred to sexual sin before marriage. Jesus was only explaining how the old Mosaic Law worked, and it seemed to refer to what a woman did before she got married (Deuteronomy 24:1). In fact, Joseph was following this law when he wanted to put Mary away quietly after he discovered she was pregnant, and

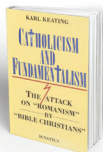
RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

CATHOLICISM AND FUNDAMENTALISM

KARL KEATING

Karl Keating shows the origins of fundamentalism, and examines representative anti-Catholic groups and presents their arguments in their own words. His rebuttals are clear, detailed, and charitable. Special emphasis is given to the scriptural basis for Catholic doctrines and beliefs.

#2581 - \$19.95

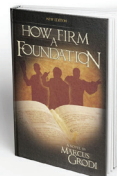


HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION

MARCUS GRODI

Stephen LaPointe believed in Jesus. He wanted to obey God in all things, and had given up a career to become an ordained minister. But there was one problem: How could he be certain that what he was preaching was true? In his first novel, Marcus Grodi explores a scenario familiar to so many members of the CHNetwork family.

#3137 - \$14.95

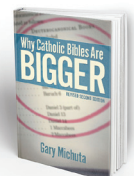


WHY CATHOLIC BIBLES ARE BIGGER

GARY MICHUTA

Gary Michuta presents a revised and expanded version of his authoritative work on this key issue. Combing the historical record from pre-Christian times to the Patristic era to the Reformation and its aftermath, he traces the canon controversy through the writings and actions of its major players.

#3234 - \$17.95



they were not married yet, but only betrothed (Matthew 1:19).

Wandering in the Darkness

By the time I graduated from high school in 2007 and entered college, my zealous Bible studying had dwindled, and darkness enveloped me. I never lost my faith, but I no longer knew who God was. He was an enigma to me, and every time I opened my Bible, I became more confused. The answers of the church of Christ no longer held any weight because I could poke so many holes in their arguments.

I got to a point where I wasn't sure anyone could know the truth. There were so many truths out there, and all that mattered was if you had a good enough argument to convince someone. I began to pray and ask God why he left us here on this earth. Jesus came and walked with His disciples and left them the Holy Spirit, but then the Holy Spirit left. Christianity was an absolute mess. Why did He make it this way? It made no sense. He should have left the Holy Spirit and the apostles to guide us. All He left us was a large collection of ancient literature on which no one agreed.

I got married and continued to go to the church of Christ with my husband, who had grown up in the same sect I had. We had met in college at Mississippi State University and attended the same childhood congregation in Starkville. We later moved to Tennessee because of his job and found a small non-institutional church of Christ close by. I no longer agreed with their teachings, but I also didn't know what I believed anymore. They were a nice group of people, but I felt very lonely and struggled to sleep at night because of the fear that enveloped me. If I couldn't know the truth, how could I be saved? I worried continuously about my salvation and struggled with a secret depression and anxiety.

A Renewed Desire

Eventually, I became pregnant, and suddenly the truth mattered more than anything. How could I bring my child to church and have them teach her something that I did not believe? I would constantly be forced to correct their teaching at home. This would cause a lot of disunity for my daughter. When I was younger, it always bothered me that my mother would take us to church but then grumble about what they taught. I wished she had attended a congregation that matched her beliefs, but she didn't because she feared her family disowning her.

While I was pregnant, I decided that I had to figure out the complete truth of the gospel. There had to be a church out there that had everything right. My voracious Bible study began again, and I slowly climbed out of my darkened hole. However, this time, I expanded my study outside the Bible, researching other denominations and listening to apologetic podcasts and videos. I even looked up what the early Christians after the first century believed. I'm assuming that the Holy Spirit put this in my heart, but I decided that if there was a widely held belief in something before the completion of the biblical canon in the fourth century, and it was close to the time of the apostles, then there was some merit to it. I remember briefly researching why the Catholic Church was so different from

other denominations and reading that the Catholic Church claims apostolic succession. I knew what it was talking about, since as a young adult I had seen that in the Scriptures, but I threw up my hands and said, "There is no way I could ever prove that. I would have to take their word for it." However, I didn't delve deeply into it, but quickly moved on. Of course, the most important doctrine to me was how the different denominations viewed the Lord's Supper, but none of them believed it to be the actual body and blood of Jesus. It still was only a symbol. I think I may have looked into what the Catholic Church believed about it, but they were not the right Church anyway, so I disregarded them.

I also prayed a lot at this time. My prayers at first were rambling, but after reading through the Psalms and noticing David and the other writers singing to God in the imperative, I changed the way I prayed. I prayed, "Show me the true Church so that I can worship you in spirit and in truth. I will go wherever you send me." It wasn't long after I prayed like that, that God started giving me answers.

One topic I researched was the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts, or as the Catholic Church calls them, charisms. As I said above, I had severely neglected this topic because my church didn't believe in any of it. However, I needed to look into it for myself. I remember reading through all the scriptural passages about the Holy Spirit and charisms. However, I kept thinking that the writers in the Bible were only addressing the Christians that lived during that time. How could I apply this to myself, living almost 2000 years later. I remember one day, frustrated at not finding any answers, I cried out to God, "How can I know the answer? Why can't you just show me the answer?" I cried and cried about this until I eventually calmed down, resigned to the fact that I wouldn't get an actual answer from God, and continued my daily Scripture reading.

I think I was reading in 1 Corinthians when I noticed some strange wording in the passage that I didn't understand. I looked at the notation, and it cited another Scripture passage to turn to: John 14. I turned to the passage in question, which was about the coming of the Holy Spirit, but one of the verses caught my eye as I read it: "Jesus answered and said to him, 'Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him'" (John 14:23 NAB). What struck me about this verse was that previously, Jesus was addressing his apostles, but in this passage, he was not saying "you" but "whoever." Whoever? That means not just the apostles or the ones in the first century, but anyone far off in the future. Even me. I started to cry and thank God for answering me right then. He had actually shown me the answer: there has to be a Holy Spirit today. Suddenly, I felt a warm, tingling sensation spread over me like I was being hugged by a loved one, and He spoke to me from the inside out, telling me, "I've always been here."

Not long after that, the Holy Spirit bombarded me with Catholics in all my social media feeds. On my Pinterest account, it recommended Pins about the Holy Father, Pope Francis, showcasing his humility and love for the poor, and I thought, "This man is truly a Christian!" It also recommended



Encouragement for the Journey



Dear Friends,

This April, we hosted our Spring CHNetwork retreat for Catholic converts and journeyers. During our retreats, members share their conversion stories, discuss the difficulties they faced or are facing on the journey to full communion with the Catholic Church, connect with CHNetwork staff and other members, and spend time with the Lord in prayer, reflection, and reception of the sacraments. Our latest retreat was yet another wonderful experience for both our team and the members of CHNetwork who were able to attend. It was a week filled with amazing stories of struggle, sorrow, and joy—a week that reminded and convicted us of God's loving providence, even during those times when the path ahead seems dark and the way uncertain. It was a reminder that God works powerfully through each of us—if we let Him—to be His hand of encouragement on the shoulders of our brothers and sisters at difficult moments in their journeys.

During this particular retreat, the Mass readings we heard were from Acts 11 and 12, regarding the journeys of St. Paul and St. Barnabas. My father has always considered St. Barnabas to be one of the patron saints of the Coming Home Network precisely due to his evangelistic and missionary work, his pastoral advocacy for the newly converted St. Paul, and his later discipleship of "St. (John) Mark" who fell away from the ministry but would eventually be reconciled and pen his namesake Gospel under the direction of St. Peter. An additional connection to the mission is that, as Msgr. Jeffrey Steenson (CHNetwork chaplain and Board Member) pointed out in one of his homilies at the retreat, St. Barnabas' name can be fittingly translated as "son of encouragement." Some of his most valuable impacts on the life of the fledgling Christian Church as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles were the ways in which he encouraged his brothers in Christ during moments of difficulty on the journey—helping them to overcome fear and doubt and to persevere in following God's call.

Over the years "encouragement" has become a summary theme of all of our work here at the Coming Home Network. We have always recognized that we do not and cannot "convert" anybody either to Christ or to His Catholic Church. Every conversion is a work of grace and we are called simply to be cooperators with that grace. As my father has noted over the years, we do not "push, pull, or prod" anyone on their particular journey of faith. Rather we stand beside them, pray for them, answer their questions, but perhaps most importantly, **encourage them**—encourage them to not give in to fear, to not doubt God's loving care and guidance, to not grow impatient at God's timing, to simply and faithfully walk by the light they have been given, and trust that if they do so, Christ will direct their paths.

When we consider the significance of "encouragement," it is helpful to remember that courage is a virtue. Virtues such as Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Courage are habits of the soul which grow by practice and make us more like Jesus. Virtue disposes our hearts towards the good so that loving God and neighbor becomes natural to us and a source of joy and peace. Whenever we choose to act virtuously, it is not just that the action itself is good, but that we ourselves are converted and transformed to be the kind of people for whom acting virtuously out of love for God is simply part of who we are.

So too with the virtue of courage, which is the virtue by which someone sees what God is calling them to do and freely chooses to do it—in spite of the fear or even suffering they might have to endure as a result. Whenever we encourage someone—when we through word, deed, or example help them to act with courage—we have not only helped them conquer fear and act rightly in the eyes of God in the present moment, but we have helped them become the kind of person who can be even more courageous on the path ahead.

When we encounter a fellow Christian who is considering the claims of the Catholic Church, we recognize that God is already at work in their lives, calling them onward, giving them grace, and blessing their sincere attempts to follow Him. As St. Paul reminds the Thessalonians, **"God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we wake or sleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."** (1 Thessalonians 5:9–11) When we seek to encourage, we never presume to think that we are investigating a story from scratch, but rather stepping into a story that is already in progress. And so we enter humbly and cautiously, desiring to faithfully play only the small role Christ is calling us to play. If we do so, we know that God will bring the increase.

Encouragement is a crucial work of mercy for the times we live in. Surrounded by so many reasons to become distracted or discouraged, it is a powerful act of faith in God and charity towards our neighbor. It is crucial that we live our Christian lives in such a way that we ourselves are growing in the virtue of courage so that we can share it with the people around us—because so much of the journey of life comes down to simply *not giving up*.

As always, wherever you are on your own journey of faith, I pray that this newsletter and the Coming Home Network are a source of encouragement and inspiration to you. Let us take heart, keep our eyes on Jesus, and continue the journey together.

St. Barnabas, pray for us!

Jon Marc Grodi

Executive Director and Host of EWTN's *The Journey Home*

DID YOU RECENTLY ENTER THE CHURCH? WE'D LOVE TO CELEBRATE WITH YOU! LET US KNOW! EMAIL INFO@CHNETWORK.ORG.



Conversion Conversations

In speaking with those who are exploring the Catholic faith, we sometimes notice different themes emerge. It can be helpful to hear how those questions are answered by others as we consider our own responses should we ever be on the receiving end of similar questions ourselves. Below is an excerpt of a conversation between an inquirer and Matt Swaim, Director of Outreach:

Inquirer from YouTube: "So the Catholic Church thinks that during each Mass, Christ descends down from heaven onto the altar? There's only one true Jesus Christ, and there are hundreds of Masses being said worldwide at the same time. So which of the hundreds of altars does Christ descend on? It doesn't make sense that he would descend on all the altars at the same time."

Matt's Response: That's a good question, and one that many of us who come from Evangelical backgrounds wrestled with before becoming Catholic. There is indeed only one Christ, who died once for all, in atonement for our sins.

And yet, even as Evangelicals, we had a mysterious sense that it was possible for that same Jesus to be everywhere but also personally close to us as individuals. He is resurrected, glorified, ascended to the right hand of the Father, and yet closer to us than we are to ourselves. How is that possible, with a billion Christians worldwide? At some of the revival services I used to attend, there were hundreds of people being led together in the "Sinner's Prayer," asking Jesus to come into their hearts. So to turn that question around, if there's only one true Jesus Christ, and there are hundreds of people asking Him into their hearts at the same time, which of the hundreds of hearts does Christ enter?

To those of us who come from Evangelicalism, we'd think the idea preposterous that in a situation like that, the real Christ only descended into one heart, and false Christs descended into the other hearts.

For many of us, the first question about the Mass was, "how is it possible for Jesus to be truly present in the Eucharist—body, blood, soul and divinity?" But as Christians, we know that the question we're asking is a loaded one: how is it possible that the Word who became Flesh, who walked on water, who calmed storms, who healed the sick, raised the dead and even rose from the dead Himself, could be uniquely present to us in the Eucharist? The answer is, it's possible, because Jesus is God.

The question that follows from that is, "if it's *possible* for Jesus to be truly present in the Eucharist, then *is* He truly present in the Eucharist?" And that leads us to the Last Supper accounts—John 6, 1 Corinthians 11, and other passages from the New Testament—which are interpreted in various ways by various Christians. But the first Christians, the ones taught by the apostles themselves, believed and attested to what we still believe today as Catholics: that the possible is true, and that Jesus really is with us always and everywhere, but uniquely so in Holy Communion. ■



SAVE THE DATE FOR THE FALL RETREAT!

Join us for the CHNetwork 2024 Fall Retreat
November 11-14 — Saint Benedict, Louisiana

CHNetwork Retreats are opportunities to meet (or catch up with) our staff and other members of the network for a time of discussion, prayer, and fellowship. Intended for both converts and those on the journey to Catholicism, whether lay or clergy, the goal is to meet with others who are facing tough questions or decisions, and to encourage all in an ever deeper walk with Christ.

For more information, visit chnetwork.org/retreats



Joyful Journey Updates

From Amity, a former Church of Christ member

Having wandered through many Protestant denominations to find where my heart was at rest in Jesus, I was first a Lay Speaker in the United Methodist Church, a women's bible study author/teacher in the Church of Christ, and finally a worship leader in a non-denominational mega-church. As a woman who loves to teach other women, I wondered where my Catholic journey would lead me beyond the pew at Mass. In this past year since my confirmation, I can confidently say that God will use our gifts if we simply pray and are open to opportunities. I have enjoyed a weekly ladies Bible study with my new Catholic friends (even leading a few), and cantoring at Mass. Praise God from whom all blessings flow! ■

From Anna, a former Agnostic

Ever since joining the Catholic Church in 2020, I have been experiencing a profound peace. In the last 4 years my faith only grew more but there is still a lot to learn and discover. My family is a part of a wonderful and vibrant Catholic community in a small town in Montana and we could not be happier. I thank God every day for the grace of faith he gave me. ■

David H., former Methodist pastor

Praise the Lord that Jesus and Mary drew me into the ever-flowing stream of God's mercy manifested through the Church. Grateful to God that I said yes to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. My ongoing conversion in Christ has been wedded to Jesus through the sacraments, especially the intimacy with Jesus in the Eucharist—the very banquet of never-ending overflowing love. Alleluia! ■

Do you have an update on your journey to share with us? Send it to info@chnetwork.org.

"I have given my soul to Jesus in the Eucharist and my body to Jesus on the Cross."

St. Kateri Tekakwitha (Feast Day: July 14)

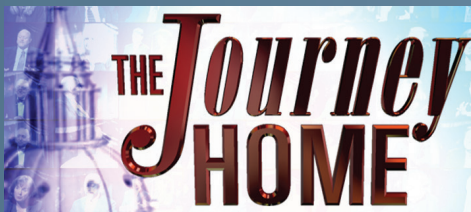
"I think peace will be a long time coming. But our faith teaches us that we must always keep on hoping, we shall enjoy it one day."

Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati (Feast Day: July 4)



CHNetwork's Jim Anderson with Msgr. Donald Horak and sponsor, Andy Potter, on the day he was received into the Catholic Church: July 25th, 1981—the feast of St. James the Greater.

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, July 1

Fr. Ken Geraci

Catholic "Revert"

Monday, July 8

Fr. Scott Borgman

Former Pentecostal Missionary

Orig Air Date: 3/16/20

Monday, July 15

Deacon Gregory & Ellen Amarante

Catholic "Revert" & Former Evangelical

Monday, July 22

Pam Mings

Former Baptist

Monday, July 29

Becca Dickerson

Former Evangelical Protestant

Monday, Aug. 5

Keith Nester

*Former Methodist Pastor
Orig Air Date: 3/30/20*

Schedule is subject to change.

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



Ernest Price

Donor since 2005 – 19 Years

Though I grew up in a Catholic family, I wandered from the faith of my youth as a young married man and during the years I was raising my family. My wonderful wife was baptized in the Presbyterian church but was not a committed Presbyterian. Since it was important for me to keep my family in church together, and feeling that the Catholic Church in those days was not doing much for young people, we joined a Methodist church near our home. I can still remember my father's grief when I shared my decision with him. For all the years that I was away from the Church, I carried the internal conflict of both disappointment (with the condition of the Church), and loss (knowing I was away from the fullness of faith that comes to us only through the sacraments).

In the early 2000s, when my children had grown and gone off to college, I strongly felt God was calling me back to the Catholic Church. During that season of "reversion," my parish hosted a mission with a guest speaker who had been a Protestant pastor, converted to the Catholic Church, and was helping others do the same. **It was none other than Marcus Grodi!** I listened to his story and his mission, got a copy of his book *Thoughts For The Journey Home* (which I still have to this day), and signed up to receive the CHNewsletter, which I have received every single month for the past nineteen years! The CHNewsletter has been a great gift to me and has been my primary link to the CHNetwork. I have shared copies of it with many others, and have often placed it in our parish library. There is nothing like it!

As I read the stories of conversion, the apologetics articles, and the questions (and answers) that were being provided in the monthly newsletter, I felt strongly that I should be supporting the work of the CHNetwork in some way, and I began to give. When I think of all the conversion stories I have read over the years, and how they have helped me grow in following and defending my own Catholic Faith, I can't help but feel that I have a share in the good work the CHNetwork is doing.

I want to encourage everyone who, like me, is built up in their faith by this apostolate—who knows that it is a vital resource to both non-Catholic Christians *and* life-long Catholics—to join me in supporting this mission. ■

Ernest Price became a partner in the mission of the Coming Home Network in February of 2005, with intermittent gifts every year. In March of 2017, he became a monthly donor to COMPASS. To join him in supporting our mission, return the enclosed envelope, or give online at chnetwork.org/donate

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ComingHomeNetwork

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.

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Mission

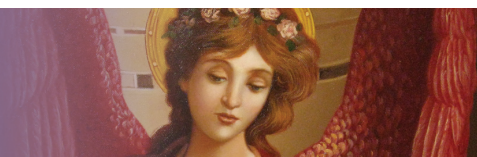


MEET OUR TEAM!

CHNetwork team members will be at the *Defending the Faith Conference* at the **Franciscan University of Steubenville** July 27–29.

Be sure to stop by and say hello if you plan to attend!

Prayer List



Clergy

■ **For Glen, a Methodist pastor** deeply troubled by what he sees happening in his denomination, who finds himself drawn to explore the Catholic Church but fearful of all this would mean for his family, as well as his sense of vocation and employment.

■ **For David, a Methodist pastor** who made the decision to leave his ministry to enter the Church this past Easter Vigil and is now discerning a vocation to the religious life, that the Holy Spirit may fill and lead him.

■ **For John, a Baptist pastor** living in a world almost entirely comprised of Baptists who finds himself thinking he may need to become Catholic, and is wondering how he will have the courage to enter the Church and lead his family into it.

■ **For James, an Episcopal priest** struggling with the direction of the 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 of 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 Mark, a former Evangelical preacher** who was received into full communion with the Catholic Church in which he was raised after being away since he was very young, that the Holy Spirit will lead him forward.

■ **For Ben, a former Nazarene pastor** who was received into the Church this past Easter Vigil but continues to struggle with how to bring his family along.

■ **For David, an Anglo-Catholic priest** who wants to enter into full communion with the Church but struggles with some of the things taking place in the hierarchy of the Church.

■ **For Jeff, an Episcopal priest** who has been on a journey toward the Church for a number of years and is praying for an opportunity to enter the Catholic priesthood through the Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter.

■ **For Aaron, a Reformed pastor** who has been reading deeply in Catholic biblical studies, theology, and apologetics and is considering how he might earn a living for his family if he decided to leave the ministry.

■ **For Caleb, a Presbyterian pastor** who just recently resigned his pastoral ministry to lead his family into the Catholic Church, that he will find employment to support his young family.

■ **For Chris, a former Anglican priest** who entered the Church two years ago but who continues to struggle with what the next steps are for his life.

Laity

■ **For Ivan, an Evangelical**, that the Lord would answer his many questions about the Catholic Church and give him a receptive heart.

■ **For Adam, a former Cumberland Presbyterian**, that his journey to the fullness of the faith would bring him to the Altar of our Lord Jesus.

■ **For Albert, a Methodist**, that the Holy Spirit would guide him back to full-communion with the Catholic Church of his youth.

■ **For Ron, a Messianic Jew**, that he may find the fullness of his Messiah's truth in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

■ **For Peter, an Evangelical**, that he may find healing, truth and love in the Catholic Church.

■ **For Eli, a Pentecostal**, that the Holy Spirit would provide him all that he needs to grow in Christ in the Catholic Church.

■ **For Duane, a member of the Christian & Missionary Alliance**, that our Lord Jesus would grant him the grace to accompany his wife on the journey home to the Catholic Church.

■ **For Mark, a former nominal Baptist**, that any stumbling blocks obstructing his journey to the Catholic faith may be cleared away.

■ **For Sai, an Evangelical**, that the Lord would enable him to grow in the love and grace He offers him through the holy sacraments.

■ **For Karyn, a Non-denominational Protestant**, that her she and her family would discover the truth of Catholic teachings if that is where they belong.

■ **For Miranda, an Episcopalian**, that she would be granted peace in her discernment, the ability to find a vibrant young adult Catholic community in her local area, and protection from any spiritual warfare.

■ **For Jenn, an Evangelical**, that she may find peace and follow the Lord's leading through the journey.

■ **For Joyce, a newly confirmed Catholic**, that she may receive grace to go through a season of suffering due to a chronic illness, and for a return of remission from this illness.

■ **For Mildred, an Episcopalian**, that God grant her guidance and grace as she begins her journey to the Church.

The Way of God More Fully

FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF SAINTS PRISCILLA AND AQUILA (FEAST DAY, JULY 8)

by Kenny Burchard



When he discovered I had become Catholic, one of the men whom I had pastored for several years called me.

In a distraught voice, he asked, “Pastor Kenny, didn’t you think you were a Christian before? Didn’t you think I was? Do you think I am one now?”

Initially, I didn’t understand the question, but as the conversation unfolded, I discovered that since he didn’t believe Catholics were true Christians, he assumed Catholics believed the same in reverse. Nothing could be further from the truth! (CCC 817-819).

When I assured my friend that I thought both he and I really were Christians while I was his pastor, he asked, “Then why would you become Catholic?” The answer came flying out of my mouth: “Because being a Catholic is the difference between ‘something’ and ‘everything,’ and that’s a big difference.” I would later learn the phrase “the fullness of the faith” to explain what I meant.

The “difference between something and everything” is illustrated in Acts 18:24-28 when, while ministering in the church in Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila come upon an eloquent itinerant Alexandrian preacher named Apollos. From what they could tell, he “*had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John*” (v. 25).

Notice that it was not the impulse of Priscilla and Aquila to call Apollos’ salvation into question. No! His was a real, vibrant, genuine—though not fully formed—faith in Jesus. Priscilla and Aquila realized that Apollos needed “the difference between something and everything,” so “*...when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him*

and expounded to him the way of God more accurately.” (Some translations read “more fully.”) To use the phrase I learned later, they brought Apollos into “the fullness of the Catholic faith.”

Commenting on this text, a 4th century Alexandrian preacher, St. Didymus the Blind, said: “[Apollos] was speaking in the Spirit, and he was teaching in the synagogues what he knew about Jesus. Being students of the apostle Paul, Priscilla and Aquila take him, being full of eagerness, aside in order to pass on to him the entire way of the gospel.”

When we say that our mission at the Coming Home Network is to “help non-Catholic clergy and laity discover the truth and beauty of the Catholic Church, and make the journey home,” we are assuming the same thing about them that Priscilla and Aquila assumed about Apollos. Many of them have a genuine faith in Christ, and unlike Apollos, a valid baptism! (CCC 818, 1256, 1306). They have real spiritual gifts, effective ministries, evidence of God’s grace in their lives, and passion to follow Jesus wherever he leads them. Like Apollos, they are serving Christ with all their hearts and faithfully walking in all the light they have.

In His providence, the Lord is leading many of these dear men and women into the company of Catholics and Catholic apostolates to help them see that while they truly do have “something,” there is a unity and fullness of faith—an “*everything*”—still available to them, which subsists only in the Catholic Church. (CCC 816, 830, 870).

Let us, then, take up this call to follow in the footsteps of Saints Priscilla and Aquila, and to prayerfully, lovingly, patiently, and gently, introduce them to the *everything*—the *way of God more fully*—to be found only in the true and beautiful Catholic Church. ■

PRAYING FOR THE FAITH OF OUR GRANDCHILDREN

In the course of our work, we often hear from grandparents asking us to pray for their children and grandchildren who have stopped practicing their faith or have left the Church.

On July 26, the Church honors Sts. Anne and Joachim, the Blessed Virgin Mary’s parents and Jesus’ grandparents. Through their intercession, we lift up the prayers of those grandparents:

Saints Anne and Joachim, you were especially favored by God to be the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the grandparents of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Come close and be near to us in our distress over loved ones who are far from Christ and His Church. Intercede for us to your grandson, Jesus, for our children and grandchildren and all who have wandered away from the Faith. Remain close to them and help them find their way back home to the Church. Place in their paths godly women and men who can speak the Truth in such a way that they can hear. Help us also to discern how best to guide them with a gentle heart as you did, and pray that we may not give into despair. Amen. Saints Anne and Joachim, pray for us.

For those who find themselves in a similar situation, Brother Rex (CH-Network Spiritual Advisor) recommends **The Catholic Grandparents Association**, an international charitable organization whose mission is to provide prayer and support for grandparents. They have been instrumental in advocating for greater recognition of grandparents for their role and vocation in passing on the faith, including the establishment of World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly by Pope Francis in 2021, now celebrated by the universal Church on the Sunday closest to the memorial of Sts. Anne and Joachim. You can learn more by visiting catholicgrandparentsassociation.org.

quotes from Mother Teresa and a grizzled old man named Padre Pio, whom I absolutely loved. But when I looked him up, I was quite disappointed as he was a Catholic priest! On YouTube, Catholic apologists popped up on my feed, refuting the Protestant apologists I followed, and it scared me that they had better arguments.

The Darkness Disappears

During the last week of July, I listened to *Mere Christianity* on audio, agreeing with everything Lewis said; I wished I could find a church that taught like this. I knew Lewis was an Anglican and considered trying to find an Anglican Church nearby. However, at the end of the week, I watched a YouTube video of Matt Fradd, a Catholic apologist, and Cameron Bertuzzi, a Protestant apologist, discussing some of the stranger aspects of Catholicism like praying to the saints, purgatory, etc. Matt Fradd explained them so well that I really could not see what was wrong with them. It sounded biblical. I wondered if any members of the church of Christ had ever converted to Catholicism. I searched on Google, and the Coming Home Network popped up.

On their website, I devoured all the written stories of previous church of Christ members. I was in shock, especially after reading Bruce Sullivan's story and his issue with the biblical canon. How could I believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God without recognizing the authority of the Catholic Church, when it was that church which gave us the Bible? In fact, I found out that Protestants were even missing books that the early Christians accepted as inspired. Something like scales fell from my eyes, and suddenly, I could see everything. My world had been black and white, and I never knew there were so many colors until now. All the verses and passages I had read and memorized in my youth but wasn't sure what to do with now flooded back into my head with a renewed understanding.

One passage came to mind from the prophet Daniel, who

interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The king had dreamed of a statue, representing all the kingdoms of the earth, and a stone being cut with no human hands, destroying all the other kingdoms. The stone itself became a great mountain and filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:31–35). Of this stone, Daniel said "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever" (Daniel 2:44). This contradicted what the Restoration Movement claims about the first century Church falling away. The Church would never fail, and it would grow to be like a mountain. The only church like this is the Catholic Church, which has been here from the beginning. It is the single largest religion in the world and covers the entire earth.

The Catholic Church is the true church of Christ! She was there all along in the backdrop of my life, prodding me, trying to get my attention, but I kept swatting her away like an annoying sibling. I rejected her out of prejudice. If I had only given her a chance sooner! Thankfully, God is patient.

I shocked my husband that Sunday afternoon when I told him that I wanted to join the Catholic Church. I went to the nearest church that Monday, which was St. Mary's in Savannah, Tennessee. I walked in and sat down in the back row and decided to just observe and then ask someone—I guess the priest—to join. I had never seen a priest before in real life.

My first Mass was strange. I had no idea what was going on, but I was excited to learn about it. After the Mass, the priest threw a plastic rosary at me and a brochure about the Divine Mercy Chaplet and proceeded to lead everyone in prayer. I tried to keep up, but I really had no idea what was going on. I had never seen or held a rosary before. After the prayer, some of the parishioners walked up to me, and I asked them how to join the Catholic Church. They were very nice to me and told me I had to join RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) in



SITTING WITH *Scripture*

"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."

PHILIPPIANS 2:1–3

"Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of man and drink His Blood, you have no life in you; he who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My Flesh is food indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed. He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood abides in me, and I in him."

JOHN 6:53–56

September, and gave me the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and *Catholicism for Dummies*. I chose to read through *Catholicism for Dummies* first, since it looked less daunting. It was actually a well written book, and it seemed to answer all my questions. I learned a lot about the Church even before I started RCIA that fall. The connection between the laying on of hands and the priesthood, apostolic succession, and the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist finally became clear to me. Without a bishop or priest descending from an apostle's appointment, there can be no true presence. Even if I found another Protestant Church that preached this, it would still not be Christ's body because they lacked apostolic succession. I had to become Catholic to receive Him.

A New Journey

Although I was elated to have finally found the true Church, I also felt lonely. I told my mother and my sister that I was going to join the Catholic Church. At first, they thought I was joking, but they soon became angry and disappointed when they realized I was serious. After a long discussion, they accepted my decision, but there remained a strangeness between us. My husband would not tell his family for the longest time, because he hoped I was just going through a phase. A few other family members asked me why I'd made this decision, and I tried to answer them as best I could, believing if I could just explain it to them the way it was explained to me, then there was no way they could reject it. But they were not convinced.

I felt like I had found the pearl of great price, but I was the only one who could see it for its true value. Everyone else only saw a lump of coal and looked at me like I was crazy. There were a few Bible teachers I knew who tried to convince me of the errors of the Catholic Church, but they only solidified my belief when they submitted very weak and uninformed arguments against the Church. I thought to myself, that once was me, so I shouldn't take offense, but rather believe they were doing it out of love for my soul.

Despite all this, my husband was very supportive. He went to RCIA with me, though it didn't convince him of anything. He agreed to have all three of our children baptized into the Catholic Church after I explained to him that if, later, they wanted to be baptized into the church of Christ, I would respect their decision. So, on Easter Vigil of 2022, I entered the Catholic Church without my husband. My family came to my confirmation and was supportive, but I could tell they were uncomfortable. This has probably been the hardest part for me since entering the Church—the loneliness. I try to remember Matthew 19:29: "And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my

name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life."

It was true that my family didn't disfellowship me because of my conversion (disfellowshipping for conversion tends to happen in the church of Christ a lot) and remain very civil, but there is no longer the spiritual union with them that belonging to the same church brings. Even if my whole family had abandoned me (which I'm grateful they didn't), I could never dream of returning to a Protestant Church, especially after finally discovering the Eucharist. I try to remember

that my decision, although difficult and lonely, pleases God, and that is what is most important to me. My hope is that, over time, if I persevere, my conversion can lead the rest of my family and fellow church of Christ brethren into the fullness of the truth.

When all you have is the Bible alone, it is very difficult to grow closer to Jesus. The sacred Scriptures are an amazing, enigmatic masterpiece, but they can only bring one a certain distance toward him. It's like standing at the gate of a magnificent cathedral, but never entering inside. The outside of the cathedral is a sublime experience, but to never enter in and explore its depths is an unknown loss. Once I entered into the true Church and was able to partake of all her sacraments, I have been able to grow closer to Christ in ways that I never thought was possible, and I can finally share the whole truth with my four children with full confidence.

Shortly after I entered the Church, my daughter, Maggie, asked me why I became Catholic. I tried to simplify it as best I could for a five-year-old, saying, "Because I want to be closer to Jesus." All those years ago, when my grandmother first pointed out the true presence, I knew that Jesus was calling me to seek Him. "Seek and ye shall find." Hanging on my bedroom wall is a quote from the Song of Solomon: "I have found the one whom my soul loves." I think about the moment during the Mass when the priest holds up the Eucharist and says, "Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb." I have indeed found the one whom my soul loves. ■

“
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Kathryn Hope Callahan is a wife and mother of four young children, whom she homeschools in Stantonville, Tennessee. She is a member of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Savannah, Tennessee. She is a life-long learner and loves to wander in the woods. Her patron saint is St. John the Apostle, whom she shares with her favorite writer, J.R.R. Tolkien.

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ANIMA CHRISTI

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me.
Within Thy wounds hide me.
Permit me not to be separated from Thee.
From the wicked foe defend me.
At the hour of my death call me.
And bid me come to Thee.
That with Thy saints I may praise Thee
For ever and ever.
Amen.

St. Ignatius of Loyola (Feast Day, July 31)

