



March 2025 CHNewsletter

Featured Story: The Eventual Catholic by Steve Sjogren.....	1
St. Joseph the Just by JonMarc Grodi.....	4
The Way of the Cross.....	6
Upcoming CHNetwork Events.....	8
Choosing a Confirmation Saint.....	9

THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

The Eventual Catholic: From Jesus People to Vineyard Pastor to Catholic

By Steve Sjogren

Like all later-in-life converts, the backstory of how this originally Lutheran kid became Catholic is a long one, with a few stops along the way. How *did* I come into the Church? The story contains two main parts: first, what happened to get me from there to here, and second, what I have come to appreciate about the Catholic Church.



Infant Baptism as a Lutheran

As is customary with Scandinavian Americans, our family was solidly Lutheran. My church involvement was spotty, and I was more confused than not, even about the basic message of the Gospel.

At least I knew enough to be confused. (My friend, Jon, had a similar experience. Growing up, he thought the Easter story was confusing. In his words, “How could the Apostles not see that Judas was the bad guy in the story, since his name was ‘Judas, the Scaredy Cat.’ With a name like that, the group should have seen that Judas was trouble!”)

Though I didn’t see it clearly until long after I came to an informed faith, my baptism as an infant was profound. My parents may have only understood the big picture when they had me baptized at six weeks of age. To me, for the longest time, that sprinkling

contained nothing of spiritual value. The truth, though, was that a spiritual time bomb of faith was unleashed.

First, I had to learn that personal faith is the *individual* experience of coming to trust in Christ, different from the faith that comes from being connected with other like-minded believers. My experience with personal faith came from my year as an exchange student. I had won a competition at our high school and was chosen as the American Field Service exchange student of our class. I went from living in the Arizona desert to a small Norwegian village located an hour north of the Arctic Circle. The people were amazing, which made it doable, because not only was it cold, gray and windy, but from late October through mid-February there was *no direct sunlight*. I would come to realize that this time and place was a set-up from God—a parenthesis in time for reading Scripture, listening for God, praying and pondering the invitation of God to commit to Him. It was a fantastic year in many ways, mainly because that

Journeys Home

Continued on page 2 ➡

...Journeys Home Continued...

is where I came to faith in Jesus one-on-one.

During the extreme winter darkness experienced in that part of the world, I read and re-read the New Testament until I was familiar with the story of Jesus. God was calling me to come to Him, not just once in my lifetime, but to launch a *lifestyle* of moving forward in His presence. One night, after many readings of Scripture, it was apparent: Instead of just having information about God, I recognized an invitation from the Holy Spirit to *know God personally and intimately*. “Here I am!” was my prayer. What else is there, other than to offer ourselves fully to Him and to what He is doing?

The Jesus Movement shaped my early Christian life and set me on a trajectory for going into vocational ministry. If you’ve seen the film *Jesus Revolution*, you have an idea of what was happening in southern California, with tens of thousands of young people coming into the Christian faith. The sort of characters finding their way into a belief in Christ were newsworthy. These new arrivals usually had little or no church experience. The unofficial leader to many was a recently converted hippie named Lonnie Frisbee. As different as he was, Lonnie was an everyman figure that many could relate to, especially those not used to any version of organized religion.

While I was in Norway, someone randomly gave me a book about what God was doing in southern California at that time. The story captivated me, and I was determined to be included in this rare happening. Upon returning to the United States, I moved to Los Angeles to attend a Lutheran Bible school and hang around the Calvary Chapel scene to soak up as much of what was going on as I could.

When the lightning of God struck that generation, there was a seismic shift in the Christian world overall, among both Protestants and Catholics. For one, the kind of music congregations would sing became a new type of worship and liturgy. In addition, the more relaxed communication style present in many churches has become the standard operating practice

from the model originating in this movement.

The Baby Boomer upheaval during this same time period was in large part due to unrest over the legitimacy of the Vietnam Conflict. All men 18 years of age and older were required to sign up for the mandatory draft. Although I was never called up by the military, having an assigned number was sobering. I began to think twice about the meaning of life and my longevity. When two of my relatives were killed in action, it hit me that no matter how long it may be in years, we are all still the grass that St. James refers to in his letter that is alive in the morning and gone by the end of the day (James 1:11).

When it came to the music of this era, I was captivated by *The Lord’s Supper* album by John Michael Talbot long before I’d ever attended a Mass. I was in Bible school in the mid-1970s when this album was released, and John Michael Talbot announced he had become a Catholic monk. My reaction to this news was two words—“A *what!?*” After years of playing back the album, I realized it was the Holy Mass set to catchy music. I found the music and words haunting. I was unknowingly singing the prayers of the Mass for decades before I began pondering conversion. In fact, when sharing my conversion story with Protestant friends, I usually tell them there ought to be a required warning label for Protestants: “THIS ALBUM MAY LEAD LISTENERS TO A CONVERSION.” In the words of St. Augustine, “When we sing, we pray twice.”

Turning my attention to the written word, *Hungry For God* by Ralph Martin was a significant book for me. The title alone opened a part of my mind and heart to the notion that there were Catholics who passionately love Jesus in the same way I did. When I ran across Ralph Martin’s books, I was at an odd place in my understanding of Catholicism. After connecting with *Hungry For God*, I began to seek out other Catholic authors, both current and historical. Scott Hahn was a timely voice each time I read him. G.K. Chesterton shaped my heart and mind. His witty insights shaped my faith and eventually paved my journey into the

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

HOW GOD HAULED ME KICKING AND SCREAMING

KEVIN LOWRY

As a preacher’s kid at a Catholic university, Kevin Lowry settled into a “double major in beer and billiards” and got kicked out of school. In this book, he shares how God was working, even through his mistakes, to plant seeds that would lead him to the Church.

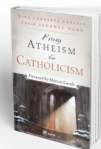


#3203 - \$15.95

FROM ATHEISM TO CATHOLICISM

FOREWORD BY MARCUS GRODI

Joseph Pearce, Rhonda Chervin, Dr. Kevin Vost, and six other Catholic converts share the stories of how they went from rejecting the very idea of God to discerning His voice calling them home to the Church.



#3224 - \$14.95

WHY DO CATHOLICS GENUFLECT?

AL KRESTA

This book answers in clear, concise terms many of the most common questions asked about the Catholic faith. Non-Catholics, new Catholics, and even cradle Catholics will find fresh insights into the Church’s liturgy, sacraments, hierarchy, and much more.



#2599 - \$9.09

Catholic Church. Chesterton's words especially gave me courage to take risks early in ministry: "*Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly.*" Through his wisdom, I learned to just get started, not waiting on the likelihood of 100 percent success. It became okay to do poorly at first and worry about perfection later.

My role in ministry at this time was to start up new congregations, usually from scratch. We did this by using a "parachute drop" strategy, arriving in a community without fanfare. Having few or no connections in the new city was the usual setting for us. My wife, Janie, and I would move into a community, meet a few folks here and there, and begin a Bible study, home group, or outreach. That pattern has been the spiritual "Rosetta Stone" of our lives. We are fluent in invitation, quickly making sense of the new community. My wife and I have always been enthused to connect with strangers and skeptics, then building a community. We have done that repeatedly on limited resources.

My Time in the Vineyard

When I started interacting with John Wimber, the originator of the Vineyard movement of churches (several thousand congregations worldwide as of this writing), I began to see the church as the entire activity of God across the spectrum of faith specifics. With intense emotion in his voice, I heard John comment that the greatest tragedy in the history of the church was her division into factions due to the Reformation, as championed by Martin Luther. God used all that happened on the Protestant side and the later Counter-reformation launched among Catholics, but overall, it resembled a tragic divorce. Coming to the macro picture of God's work on earth was a paradigm shift—a correction from my version of the church to something closer to God's big picture invitation.

The Vineyard group of churches held their movement-launching conference just as we were stepping out to plant a new congregation in Cincinnati. Going into this event, I was in a period of reflection over this move and our new church launch. I had already experienced incredible frustration in stepping out to plant a church in Oslo, so I wasn't eager to test our readiness unless it was under the direction of God.

Part of the conference included the showing of a 20-minute documentary video that, though technically rough, was profound. Fr. Rick Thomas and a group from his Catholic parish in the El Paso area did a Christmas Day outreach across the border in Juarez, Mexico. Burritos were on the menu and in great supply—or so they thought. Instead of the 100 people they expected, they had a few dozen more who came for the free meal. After feeding all 100 plus the unanticipated extra crowd, there were still burritos remaining for the servers. They somehow served considerably more burritos than they made. They called it the "miracle of the expanding burritos." The film captured my heart and imagination. I don't know if anyone else present had the same idea as me, but it came clearly: imitate Fr. Thomas, and you will capture the hearts of everyday people in your city. Those became our marching orders in starting out in Cincinnati.

What started as a kernel of an idea with Fr. Thomas became something broader with momentum. Servant evangelism was actually showing people God's love, kindness, and generosity while simultaneously telling them about Him. It never grew old seeing people's reactions anywhere around the country and the world; a light went on when we reached out to others in practical ways with the "kindness of God that leads to a radical life change" (Romans 2:4, NASB & MSG).

Based on my experiences with feasible and fun outreach, I wrote a story about our success and discoveries in starting outreaches from scratch: *Conspiracy of Kindness*. God's kindness is perhaps his best writing implement for communicating his presence and love to hearts. I am reluctant to use the line "God told me" unless it strikes a chord and bears fruit over time. I can say with confidence the clearest, most strategic message I've received boiled down to three directives and promises from God:

1. "You prayed for a microphone, but *I'm giving you a toilet brush* to communicate the message."
2. "*Love the discounted people first*—then your problem will be what to do with all those coming in."
3. "Don't start a church. *Change a city.*"

Chesterton's words especially gave me courage to take risks early in ministry: "*Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly.*" Through his wisdom, I learned to just get started, not waiting on the likelihood of 100 percent success. It became okay to do poorly at first and worry about perfection later.

St. Joseph the Just



Dear Friends,

This month we celebrate the feast of the Annunciation, the miraculous event in which the Angel Gabriel announced God's great invitation to Mary to be the mother of God's Son—an invitation which she accepted with perfect love and obedience. We also celebrate the feast of St. Joseph who, as we know, also received his own "announcement" shortly after—one that posed a potential crisis of faith and moral dilemma. As we read in the Gospel of St. Matthew:

When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly."

Matthew 1:18-19

St. Joseph is described in this passage as a "just man". What does this mean? The term "justice" has become common in public discourse. It is frequently used to refer to a lack of something "out there" in the world—to "injustices" in need of remedy. But this passage draws us back to an important reality. "Justice" is first and foremost a virtue—something interior, present or lacking, long before it manifests itself in the world. So, what does it mean to be a "just man"?

As with other virtues, Justice has diminished in its colloquial significance over time. If it is thought of as a virtue at all, justice is taken to be something cold and calculating, something concerned only with rules and laws rather than people—and certainly, there is a practical necessity to a certain impersonal objectivity when we think of the "justice system" performing its proper function. But once again, Justice is first and foremost a virtue of the human heart—and indeed of God's heart. The scriptures note that God loves Justice (Isaiah 61) and mankind is exhorted to "do justice, love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). Later on in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus criticizes the scribes and Pharisees, for their merely legalistic religiosity in which they "tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others" (Matthew 23:23).

The Catechism describes the virtue of Justice as "the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor" (CCC 1807). In other words, Justice is the virtue by which we turn outward toward other people, affirm their fundamental dignity, and strive to act in accord with their true good. Justice is the recognition that the deepest and most fundamental reality is that we are persons in relationship with other persons. To be a "just man" is to be a person who has made a habit of turning outwards toward other people and seeing them as God sees them, which, of course, is always with perfect and unwavering charity.

As a result of being a "just man," St. Joseph received the likely bewildering news about Mary's pregnancy not with a self-focused wrath or a desire for retribution—but with a primary concern to see true justice done in the situation; to protect Mary and her child from undue public scrutiny or even violence, and to create the conditions for some good to come out of what surely seemed a bad situation. In God's providential timing, the "rest of the story" is announced to Joseph in a dream, but again, this finds him having already persevered in justice. In the midst of the crisis, he acted justly and kindly, trusting God to make a way forward.

This event highlights the importance of the daily practice of Justice, in particular, and of virtue in general. Whatever virtues (or vices) we practice in all the ordinary aspects of our lives are what will be in play during moments of extraordinary crisis. When calamity or confusion occurs, will we reflexively turn inward and become self-focused or selfish? Or will we imitate St. Joseph in remaining turned outward—considering the needs of others and working for their good.

For so many members of the CHNetwork, especially for Protestant clergy and pastors, the journey towards the Catholic Church often involves moments of crisis: seeing Protestant doctrinal foundations crumble, realizing that much of what they thought they knew about the history and teaching of the Catholic Church was wrong, and realizing that to do "justice" to God by becoming Catholic may well lead to loss of income, vocation, identity, and crises within family and friend relationships. Our mission is to simply help people at these turning points to discern and take the next right steps of their journey deeper in Christ and His Church. We believe that God is indeed calling Christians home to the Catholic Church. But every step along that journey is an opportunity to grow closer to Christ and more conformed to His virtuous example: remaining committed to prayer, seeking the truth in study, building up relationships, sharing the new discoveries in charity, and receiving pushback or criticism with patience and grace.

Wherever you are on your own faith journey, let us together pray for the intercession of St. Joseph, the just man, and imitate his example. Even and especially during crisis moments on the journey, we must turn outward toward God and other people—persevering in prayer and in works of love and service. In His own, providential time, the Lord will show up, show the way forward, and bring about new life.

God bless and be with you,
JonMarc

Executive Director of *The Coming Home Network*
Host of EWTN's *The Journey Home*

Joyful Journey Updates

From Jacobus D., a former Dutch Reformed pastor

"Good day, Ken. I just thought to let you know. It is done. I'm out and I am free. I resigned on Monday evening as pastor and member of the Dutch Reformed community. So now I am officially moving into the Catholic Church. Job security is a concern, but we are ok for now. God will provide. Thanks again for the big role you and *On the Journey* with Matt and Ken, played in my life and my journey. You are in my prayers." ■

From Drew T., a former Anglican priest

It's been one and a half years since I resigned from my pastoral position, sold my home, and moved halfway across the country to be part of the Catholic Church. I have never regretted that decision, even through multiple setbacks, job changes, and misunderstandings with family and friends. I feel immense joy each time I receive our Lord in the Sacraments, and this journey has helped me trust in Him and His providential care every step of the way. God be praised! ■

Do you have a journey update to share? Submit it to info@chnetwork.org.

CALLING ALL CLERGY CONVERTS Save the Date!

We are extremely excited to announce a special conference taking place later this spring for **clergy converts** hosted by the Coming Home Network in collaboration with the Saint Paul Center for Biblical Theology. The conference is scheduled to be held the weekend of **May 30–June 1, 2025** at the Saint Paul

Center facility in Steubenville, Ohio. Intended for former Protestant pastors and ministers who have become Catholic *as well* as those who are preparing to enter the Church, this will be a **one of a kind** event!

The event will be focused on fellowship among clergy converts, encouragement on the ongoing journey of faith, and on reigniting the fire for living out and sharing the Gospel now as Catholics. The conference will feature talks from former clergy converts such as **Ken Hensley, Kenny Burchard, Dr. Scott Hahn, and Dr. John Bergsma**. Space will be limited. Additional details will be forthcoming closer to the event. Please email ken@chnetwork.org for more information and to be added to the waitlist.

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

Monday, Mar. 3

Dr. Justus Hunter

Former Free Methodist

Monday, Mar. 10

Debbie Capen

Catholic Revert

Monday, Mar. 17

Phillip Seeberg

Convert from Judaism

Monday, Mar. 24

Tsh Oxenreider

Former Evangelical & Anglican

Monday, Mar. 31

Lucas Koach

Former Anglican Priest



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, April 7

Ashley Stinnett

Former Evangelical Protestant

Schedule is subject to change.

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



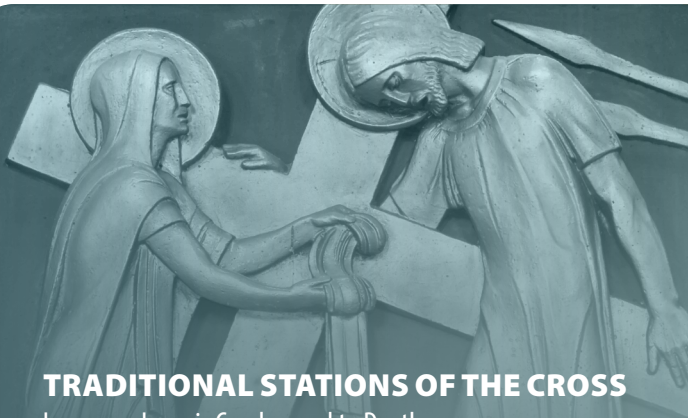
The Way of the Cross

By Rakhi McCormick

If you meander into a Catholic parish on a Lenten Friday evening, you are likely to find the faithful engaged in somber prayer through the Stations of the Cross, which recalls with “mindful affection” the final steps of the journey Jesus walked in His earthly life—from His condemnation to His burial in the tomb.

This practice began centuries ago as pilgrims retraced the path Christ walked through Jerusalem on the Via Dolorosa. The devotion in its current form dates back to the 16th century, though some form of the Way of the Cross can be traced back to the Middle Ages. (Archaeological evidence of earlier veneration of various “stations” in Jerusalem by the faithful dates as far back as the second century!) The attraction pilgrims felt toward these sacred sites inspired a desire to replicate them closer to home, and thus the devotion began to spread outside of Jerusalem, encouraged by the popes through the 17th and 18th centuries. While there have been minor variations of those traditional stations throughout the years, in 1991, Pope St. John Paul II introduced an alternative to the 14 traditional Stations based entirely on Scriptural references.

Both the Scriptural Stations and the traditional Way of the Cross invite the faithful to contemplate the passion and death of our Lord, to fully enter into the journey of his final moments. In doing so, we unite ourselves with the Lord in His suffering, remembering the gift of His sacrificial love for us and growing in trust that His promises of mercy and redemption will be fulfilled.



TRADITIONAL STATIONS OF THE CROSS

- I. Jesus is Condemned to Death
- II. Jesus is Made to Bear His Cross
- III. Jesus Falls the First Time
- IV. Jesus Meets His Mother
- V. Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross
- VI. Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus
- VII. Jesus falls a Second Time
- VIII. Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem.
- IX. Jesus Falls a Third Time
- X. Jesus is Stripped of His Garments
- XI. Jesus is Nailed to the Cross
- XII. Jesus Dies on the Cross
- XIII. Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross.
- XIV. Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

SCRIPTURAL STATIONS OF THE CROSS

- I. Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane
- II. Jesus, Betrayed by Judas, is Arrested
- III. Jesus is Condemned by the Sanhedrin
- IV. Jesus is Denied by Peter
- V. Jesus is Judged by Pilate
- VI. Jesus is Scourged and Crowned with Thorns
- VII. Jesus Bears the Cross
- VIII. Jesus is Helped by Simon the Cyrenian to Carry the Cross
- IX. Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem
- X. Jesus is Crucified
- XI. Jesus Promises His Kingdom to the Good Thief
- XII. Jesus Speaks to His Mother and the Disciple
- XIII. Jesus Dies on the Cross
- XIV. Jesus is Placed in the Tomb



Prayer List



Clergy

- **For Joseph, an Anglican priest** who finds himself drawn back to the Catholic Church in which he was baptized and raised, that the Holy Spirit will lead him as he considers what this would mean for his wife and children, not to mention his ability to earn a living.
- **For Rick, a Baptist pastor** who has desired to become Catholic for a long time but faces a number of obstacles which seem insurmountable, that the Lord will give him peace as he seeks a way forward.
- **For Mitchell, a Protestant pastor** who has long known that he wants to become Catholic but whose wife has no interest whatsoever, that the Holy Spirit will give him wisdom as he navigates this very difficult time of life.
- **For Joseph, who after many years as a pastor in various Protestant denominations** has begun to explore Catholic teaching and finds himself drawn to the Church, that the Lord will encourage him as he attempts to communicate what he is learning to his family.
- **For Christopher, a United Methodist minister** who is just beginning a serious study of theological issues as he finds himself increasingly nostalgic for the Catholic Church of his childhood and fed-up with the changes that have taken place within the Methodist Church, that the Lord will enlighten him.
- **For Derrick, an Adventist academic** who is firmly on the journey toward the Church but surrounded by Adventists with no interest whatsoever, including his wife and children, that the Holy Spirit will grant him wisdom and courage as he navigates a very difficult situation.
- **For Erik, a Mennonite minister** who is beginning the OCIA process and planning to enter the Catholic Church, that the Lord will give him wisdom as he seeks to lead his wife and children into the Church as well.
- **For Jeremiah, an Evangelical pastor** struggling deeply with how he would make a living and support his family if he

were to leave his current position to become Catholic, that God will give him courage and wisdom.

- **For Jacobus, who recently resigned his pastoral position with the Dutch Reformed Church** and is moving toward becoming Catholic, that the Lord will show him how he can provide an income for his family.
 - **For Daniel, a Protestant minister** raised by extremely anti-Catholic parents who has recently come to believe that "Bible only" Christianity cannot be true, that the Holy Spirit will give him courage to follow His leading as he finds himself on a path toward the Church.
 - **For Aaron, a Protestant pastor** who just recently resigned his ministry to enter the Catholic Church, that the Holy Spirit will lead him as he considers what kind of occupation to pursue in his new life as a Catholic.
 - **For Corbin, a young and newly-wed Protestant pastor** who has been exposed to the writings of the early Church and begun to struggle with how Catholic they seem to be, that God will give him much wisdom as he continues to pursue the truth for his ministry and family.
 - **For Caleb, a young Presbyterian pastor** who left the ministry and is now working for Catholic Charities as he works towards entering the Church, that the Holy Spirit will lead him as attempts to lead his family.
- For Rod, a Presbyterian, that the Holy Spirit would grant him a greater understanding of the holy liturgy.
- **For James, a Non-denominational Evangelical**, that Jesus would guide him back home to the Catholic Church.
 - **For Stephen, a former Baptist**, that the Holy Spirit would guide his and his wife's OCIA journey.
 - **For Dalton, a Protestant**, that he may find guidance to his questions concerning

Scripture and authority in the Church.

- **For Antonio, a lapsed Catholic**, that the Lord Jesus Christ would guide him back to the sacraments of His holy Church.
- **For John, a Baptist**, that as he discovers a deeper devotional life in the Catholic Church his love for God would become ever more profound.
- **For Hammond, a Presbyterian**, that our Lord would grant him answers to his many questions as he journeys to the Easter sacraments.
- **For Randolph, an Anabaptist**, that he may be granted a profound hunger for Jesus in the holy Eucharist.
- **For Isaac, a member of the Latter-day Saints**, that he may come home to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church founded by Jesus.
- **For a Muslim in Afghanistan** who wishes to become a Christian, that he may be able to move to where he may safely do so.
- **For Karl, a Baptist**, that his OCIA journey may be a blessing.
- **For Melody, a Non-denominational Protestant**, that she may receive wisdom and guidance for her and her family as they journey to the Catholic Church.
- **For Linda, a Presbyterian**, that she may be granted peace, guidance, provision, and protection.
- **For Denise, an Evangelical**, that the Lord would pour out His grace as she awaits entry into the Church and marital graces for her and her husband.
- **For Anna, an Episcopalian**, that the Holy Spirit would lead her to unity in faith for her family, new friends in their new Parish, and a strong faith for her husband and son.
- **For Lenore, an Evangelical**, that the Divine Healer would grant her good health and marital unity in faith, as well as the grace of perseverance on her journey into the Church.
- **For Jamie, an Evangelical**, that the Lord may give her strength to persevere in her faith as she continues on her journey to the Church, make a clear path for her to come into full communion, and grant her the grace of marital unity in the faith.

Laitie

CHN COMMUNITY UPDATE chnetwork.org/community

We now have **SIX** weekly opportunities for members of the CHNetwork Online Community to come together LIVE via Video Call. Join us!

THE HOLY ROSARY
Mondays at 4:30pm ET

FELLOWSHIP FRIDAY
Fridays at 2:00pm ET

TOPIC DISCUSSIONS
Wednesdays at 4:00pm ET

THE DIVINE MERCY CHAPLET
Fridays at 3:00pm ET
(follows Fellowship Friday on the same call)

MORNING PRAYER
Thursdays at 10:15am ET

BOOK CLUB
Thursdays at 10:30am ET

Info about each event can be found under 'Events' at chnetwork.org/community

CHNETWORK STAFF, ADVISORS, & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President/Founder
Marcus Grodi
(former Presbyterian pastor)

Director of Development
Kenny Burchard
(former Foursquare pastor)

Executive Director
JonMarc Grodi

Communications Coordinator
Rakhi McCormick
(former Hindu)

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

Pastoral Care Coordinator
Melissa Slagle
(former Baptist)

Office Manager
Ann Moore

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

Studio Manager
Bill Bateson
(former Secularist)

Financial Advisor
Kevin Lowry
(former Presbyterian)

Director of Pastoral Care
Ken Hensley
(former Baptist minister)

Spiritual Advisor
Br. Rex Anthony Norris
(former Anglican)

Director of Outreach
Matt Swaim
(former Methodist)

Office Assistant
Karlie Carpenter

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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



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

Find us on Social Media



The Coming Home
Network International



740.450.1175



CHNetwork



info@chnetwork.org



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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Join members of our staff and others on the journey at one of our in-person events!

CHN Spring Retreat

March 31 - April 4, 2025

Mount Angel Abbey in St. Benedict, Oregon

Find more information and register at

chnetwork.org/retreats.

St. Jude Parish Mission

Featuring Ken Hensley, Director of Pastoral Care

April 11-12, 2025

Mansfield, TX

Get full details at chnetwork.org/events.

Clergy Convert Conference

May 30 - June 1, 2025

St. Paul Center in Steubenville, Ohio

Find more information on p. 9 or visit

chnetwork.org/clergyconference.

CHN Fall Retreat

October 6-9, 2025

Maria Stein Retreat Center in Maria Stein, Ohio

Find more information and register at

chnetwork.org/retreats.

Interested in having one of our staff members speak at your parish? Contact us at speakers@chnetwork.org. To stay up-to-date on all CHNetwork retreats, conferences, and talks, visit chnetwork.org/events.

**Mary said, "Behold, I am the
handmaid of the Lord. May it be done
to me according to your word."**

LUKE 1:38

TAX LETTERS

Tax letters for 2024 contributions will be emailed to donors who have email addresses on file. If you would like to receive your tax letter by postal mail, please contact **Ann Moore** at ann@chnetwork.org or call 740.450.1175 x101.

Confirmation Saint

As Easter approaches, the question of how to pick a Confirmation saint comes up often in our work. How does one go about selecting a saint to formally identify with? For some, the nervousness over picking a Confirmation saint can come from not knowing much about the saints; for others who know a lot about saints, the difficulty can come from narrowing the choice down to a single person! And there are often lots of questions about the purpose of picking a saint, and what it means. Practically speaking, the name of the saint you pick will be pronounced over you when you are confirmed. But in the long term, that saint is meant to be a heavenly friend and mentor; someone you can look to for a holy example, and ask for prayer along the way.

Here are a few stories from our members about how they came to be connected with their Confirmation saints:

■ “During the final process of RCIA, we were asked to research and pick our confirmation saint. I had no clue where to begin since there are literally hundreds upon hundreds of saints. So, I started to research if there were any saints that represented actors or entertainers and sure enough, I found St. Genesius of Rome.

His story, his conversion, and his ultimate martyrdom—as well as the fact that his feast day is on my birthday (August 25)—was such a powerful and spiritual moment in my life. It moved me to tears and confirmed it was divine intervention for me to get confirmed with his name.” —**Ashley Stinnett**

■ “(While I was discerning Catholicism), I asked St. Boniface of Mainz to pray for me. I learned that Boniface, like myself, had discovered a desire to be a foreign missionary at the age of twelve. Like me, he was shaped by Benedictine spirituality. Like me, he experienced disappointment and pain in his conflict with fellow

missionaries...On April 3rd, 2021, my wife and I, along with our four sons, were received into the Catholic Church, and Saint Boniface sponsored my entrance.” —**John Bacon**

■ “I had been to Rome and stood two feet from Pope John Paul II while searching for answers...(when) I came into full communion with the Church through the Sacrament of Confirmation, I chose the saint that I had only stood a few feet from as my confirmation saint: Pope St. John Paul II. Not many can say they have met their confirmation saint!” —**Dr. Matthew Harrison**

■ “On the Sunday that we were all to go to the Cathedral for the Rite of Acceptance, I glanced at the table in front of me, and there were a couple of pamphlets there... I couldn’t help but notice that the picture of the saint on the pamphlet was a little girl. I picked it up and put it in my purse.

Later, the Sunday came when I was to be confirmed. One of the deacons asked for the name of my patron Saint, and I told him I didn’t know what he was talking about. Then I remembered the little pamphlet I had grabbed off the table at the Rite of Acceptance. I said, ‘Well, I have heard of one saint. A little girl. She had a very odd last name. But I don’t know anything about her.’

The deacon smiled and asked me, ‘Was it Maria Goretti?’ I nodded. Who else would I choose? I knew of no one else. Several weeks later, I thought about that Sunday I stood at that doorway, saintless. Then it occurred to me that I had not yet read about the little girl saint. I pulled out the pamphlet and read it. Tears filled my eyes in an instant. Maria Goretti is a saint of abused people.

I know beyond a shadow of any doubt that every single unexplainable moment and circumstance during that time of my life, from the Scripture laid on my heart all the way to the pamphlet with the little girl’s picture on it, and all the moments in between, were beautifully and perfectly orchestrated by my Jesus.”

—**Pam Mings**

* * * * *

There are many possible starting points for picking a Confirmation saint; you can go with someone who comes from the same country as your family, or worked in the same profession as you, or experienced the same kinds of physical or spiritual struggles you’ve faced. Whoever you pick to identify with specifically at Confirmation, all of us are invited to ask for the help of all the saints as we journey together toward our heavenly home.

PENTECOSTAL CONVERTS

Are you a convert or exploring the Catholic Faith from a Pentecostal background?

Visit chnetwork.org/pentecostal to read and watch the stories of former Pentecostals who have come into the Catholic Church!



Do you know someone who is curious about the Catholic Church? We would love to hear from them! Invite them to join our network at chnetwork.org/join.

...Journeys Home Continued...

Outreach project ideas began to flow as I pondered what God was saying. An outreach car wash that was 100 percent free, with no donations accepted, was our first attempt—serving to give an example of God’s presence and love in a practical way. The car wash projects later morphed into the idea of doing the exact project God had challenged me with: cleaning public toilets. We went to businesses, restaurants, A.A. meeting locations, bars, and retail establishments to offer a free toilet spiff up. The response was usually memorable! After cleaning many hundreds of toilets around the U.S. and beyond, I can testify that when a believer offers to clean the employee restroom, we gain their attention and favor immediately!

Cleaning toilets was not just a powerful offer to a business. It piqued curiosity. The question came up more than a few times: “Is this a joke? Where’s the hidden camera?” A common response to our service has been, “I’ve always believed in *that* Jesus—the one who lived humbly and served.” It turns out that a lot of people are looking for “that Jesus.”

The pattern of people staying away from church attendance by the thousands shifted to them *coming in* by the several thousands over a short span of time in church years. Over a decade we shot up from five people in a little Bible study group to 4,000 worshipping over seven weekend services; ultimately, we grew to yet several thousand more weekly attendees. That sort of momentum is exciting, in a sense. But to me, the feeling of spiritual responsibility was growing emotionally uncomfortable. I often thought that I was the one most responsible for the spiritual welfare of all these people who had shown up.

One day, I had a chance encounter at a colossal computer center store. Of the dozens of aisles and hundreds of customers there, I found myself next to the Most Rev. Daniel Pilarczyk, the Archbishop of Cincinnati. We recognized one another, and he introduced himself.

“Hello, Pastor. I understand you have a big church. Right?”

I replied, “Yes, sir, I guess we do.”

“And you have a lot of our Catholic people, right?”

“Yes, sir, we have a lot of Catholics at our place.”

“I was just wondering—when will you send them back?”

I responded from my heart, “I don’t know how to do that. I don’t see them as my people. Tell you what. I will, in all seriousness, ponder this. Maybe something is up.”

I never saw those at the Vineyard Church as *my* people. They were always God’s people—full stop. To see them otherwise was an act of manipulation. Walking away from that spontaneous chat, I felt upended in the best way possible. It was time to reconsider whose people those were and how to get them home.

Medical Catastrophe and the *Felix Culpa* of COVID

Not long after I turned 42, I experienced a medical-surgical disaster during an operation to remove my gall bladder. According to my surgeon, I had experienced some pains that seemed like a textbook gall bladder issue. After five medical tests and no sign of my gall bladder, the surgeon concluded I needed to remove “what was surely there somewhere.” His advice was to have the surgery sooner than later. In his opinion, the lack of evidence of gall stones made it likely I’d have

an emergency surgery.

The doctor who had my case was on the younger side but came highly recommended by my trusted family doctor, so I followed his advice. One problem became apparent pretty quickly—I am one of the rare cases of people born without a gall bladder. To be born minus a gall bladder isn’t unheard of, but it is a rarity that occurs only once in about every 30,000 patients.

It’s still up for debate how it happened, but in the first minutes of the laparoscopic procedure, what should have been a small incision by my navel went deep enough to hit my descending aorta. Though my aorta is about the diameter of my thumb and located close to my spine, the device penetrated all the way through, from top to bottom. My blood pressure plummeted to 30/10 (a healthy reading is 120/80). After 75 minutes, my heart stopped. For those several minutes, I saw and heard things better read about in detail in my memoir, *The Day I Died*, for the whole story.

Fast forward to 2020, when COVID-19 hit the world. The pandemic was a bittersweet time for me. A number of acquaintances and a close friend didn’t survive the ordeal. On the other hand, if it hadn’t been for that down time, I’d likely still be limping along, growing increasingly jaded and not fitting into a family of faith.

Felix culpa (“O happy fault”) is a Latin phrase used to describe those times in life when we experience loss, but something good comes out of it. Romans 8:28 may be a verse you have memorized: “We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.” When God said “all things” will be redeemed, he meant even the tragedy of COVID. My experience with the months and eventually years of COVID was not much different from staring into a mirror—not gazing at oneself on the outside, but a more profound interior gaze that led me to ask myself a couple of

**If we wish to serve God
and love our neighbor
well, we must manifest
our joy in the service we
render to Him and them.
Let us open wide our
hearts. It is joy which
invites us. Press forward
and fear nothing.**

ST. KATHARINE DREXEL
FEAST DAY: MARCH 3

moving questions: What am I enthusiastic about that I need to dive deeper into, and what am I less than stoked about that I need to exchange for what is on God's menu for me?

During COVID, it became apparent that my "Evangelical family" held values, perspectives, politics, and life directions that were clearly different from mine. As politics increasingly seeped into the culture of that part of the church, there was less and less grace for me to remain, much less be a leader there. The COVID "break" was a chance to ponder where I best fit into God's trajectory for the rest of my life.

My final stepping stone into the Catholic Church came from the encouragement and invitation of a couple of high school friends from a small town in Arizona, Colleen and Jerry DeRose. They had been raised Catholic, but spent years away until the Holy Spirit drew them back. Their journey gave light to my own as their words and occasional nudge kept me on the path across the river Tiber. Without a doubt, Colleen and Jerry's coaching and encouragement sped up my journey tremendously. Through them, I was introduced to books that would significantly help me understand what I was learning about the Catholic Church and quicken the pace of my journey as those hurdles were overcome. Scott Hahn's books became particularly helpful in escorting me into the Church. They reminded me that to be a Catholic is to join an ancient faith, which was a 180 degree shift for me. It has given me the perspective of *millennia*, not just decades or even centuries. "We've had the same pastor for 2,000 years!"

The DeRoses were patient with me as I struggled with other doctrines and teachings. Understanding Mary, in particular, was a challenge. As a dyed-in-the-wool Evangelical, Mary wasn't often present beyond a cursory Christmas reading of Scripture, and even then she was more of a detail along the way in Christmas messages. When I said to Colleen and Jerry, "What's the deal with Mary?"—a line that would warrant a phone hang up with some—they didn't turn away or become offended. Their patience and willingness to help me as I was attempting to comprehend a concept mostly foreign to me until now led to a beginning point of understanding. I was realizing that the Holy Mother is worthy of honor in much the same way as when your own mother enters a room.

What began as a result of a high school scholarship in Globe, Arizona kicked off a decades-long journey that landed in Globe again—and in a move to the Catholic Church. God is good—all the time!

Some Things I've Learned

I am excited and overwhelmed by the learning curve I find myself in now and anticipate that I will likely be in for the rest of my life. There is much about the Church that I don't yet grasp, but there are also parts I have come to understand, things that deeply inspire me.

Doctrine, history, and tradition have come to mean a great deal to me, now that I am Catholic. I've come to see that the Tradition of the Church has little to do with the idea that "this is the way it is, because that's how we've always done things." Living out the value of doctrinal stability is stellar. With the Magisterium (the Church's teaching authority) as a central backbone to hold the Church together theologically, there is less need to re-examine or debate doctrinal issues incessantly.

When it comes to structure and teaching, I like knowing that, on various issues and doctrines, I can stand on the shoulders of like-minded fellow believers who have thought through these issues for hundreds of generations since the advent of the Church two millennia ago. At the same time, I find it brilliant that, within the enormous scope of the Catholic Church, there is an allowance for unique subgroups ("sodalities," we call them) with a specialized calling and ministry focus.

My understanding of conversion has also grown. Romans 2:4 in *The Message* translation says that the kindness of God leads to "a radical life change." A radical change is a complete transformation from the inside out. The prophet Joel spoke of the power of conversion, saying that God will "restore the years the locusts have eaten" (Joel 2:25–27 MSG). He will pull off a complete restoration, even when that requires a whole new re-creation.

That image of beginning a one-on-one relationship with God is fitting. We come with nothing to offer other than our love and availability to God in a love-based relationship. God has considered that level of change from the beginning of his inviting us into his kingdom. I am grateful to be connected with those who believe in being converted personally and then working as "converters." I realize that, when we convert, we start to notice the beginning of a "radical life change" unfolding.

My experience with Protestant groups often focused almost entirely on our individual relationship with Jesus. The Catholic Church has shown me the importance of communal faith as well—to become part of a "group faith" that also comes with a radical life change. It's no mistake that there are half a dozen plural pronouns in the Lord's Prayer that Jesus gave us in Matthew. "*Our* Father. . . give *us* our daily bread. . . forgive us *our* trespasses. . . lead *us* not into temptation. . . deliver *us* from evil." To be strong in the Lord, I have come to understand that I must identify as an integral part of the unified body of Christ with my brothers and sisters.

Through my own experience of conversion and working with people coming toward a personal faith, I have seen that converts are often developed slowly, through more of a process than an instant knee-jerk version of change. It was certainly true in my own life. Our call as believers is to nudge those around us onto the same life-giving path we are walking and let the Holy Spirit do the rest. ■

Steve Sjogren is the founder and former lead pastor of Vineyard Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, which under his leadership defined itself to the community by meeting practical needs in creative ways.

He is now the president of Kindness Outreach Ministries, a non-profit organization working to help pastors and ordinary Christians "do small things with great love to change the world." His home parish is Our Lady of Assumption in Claremont, California.

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Even now, says the LORD,
return to me with your whole heart,
with fasting, and weeping, and mourning;
Rend your hearts, not your garments,
and return to the LORD, your God.
For gracious and merciful is he,
slow to anger, rich in kindness,
and relenting in punishment.

JOEL 2 : 12-13

March 2025 Newsletter



THE
COMING HOME
NETWORK
INTERNATIONAL