



## April 2025 CHNewsletter

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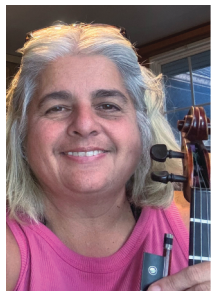
# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

Journeys Home

## Love is the Only Reasonable Response

By Jasmin Johnson

“Excellent student; talks too much.” That was pretty much my report card throughout elementary school. I had the beautiful gift of a sunny personality and was somewhat precocious. Around the age of 12, I remember riding home on the bus after a church camp and having an inner dialogue with myself, debating the question: “Should I believe in God or not?” I changed my mind many times on that 20-minute trip. The memory of that inner debate remains distinct in my mind. I remember vividly how happy I felt when I answered yes, but on the other hand, how immediately saddened I became when I answered no. That was my first spiritual experience. This is my memory of my true self, pure and turned toward God.



My second significant spiritual experience came in college, when I was awakened at 4:00 AM by a voice: “Yaz, I have something for you...” That was all I heard. The loving voice trailed off after that, probably because I was not ready to hear more. After all, I could barely handle the greeting; I knew the voice was from God. What could He possibly want with me? And why was He calling me by my nickname? Surely God would call me Miss R. I thought about this incident, and it felt way out of my control. This was not what I had said yes to. I was happy to be a Christian, but I was not going to do anything outlandish that defied rational thought.

I had come to America to go to a Christian college. Though it was a wonderful place and time of life, I had

a lot of difficulty distinguishing true Christianity from American culture. The loud music, the laying on of hands, seed faith, being slain in the spirit, the sinner’s prayer—some of these things were uncomfortable to me, and I did not know what to do with them. Yet it seemed that these were part of the standard faith experience. When I heard the voice that morning, I was a little horrified that I might become “one of them”—what I considered a “mindless Christian.” This experience shifted the “yes” in me, and I ran from a true walk of conviction, and sadly, from my true self.

### The Glittering Image

The next three decades of my life brought many good things: marriage, children, career, travel. I was a worldly success. I was a committed Methodist; after all, I was married to the pastor. I engaged in a mediocre,

Continued on page 2

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

comfortable Christianity, never facing the difficult things of life in myself or others. I paid little attention to those childhood experiences, and a false self evolved—a glittering of my true, sunny personality. I was proud of the shiny persona I had developed. As the years ticked by, though, the separation between that glittering image and the true self became greater. Life was busy, and I never stopped to recognize how lost I had become.

Then, in February of 2017, true trauma hit, and in an instant, the image was shattered, and what was left was my lost soul. It was not that I did not trust in God; it was more of a slow distancing from surrender in my life. Teresa of Avila's imagery of the soul being a garden where God wants to dwell illustrates my experience. Within my soul there was a beautiful garden, but it was contained in a glass gazebo, allowing me to control how much I would allow God to work. There were places in my garden that I did not want God to go. This imaginary gazebo was beautiful, with large French windows that overlooked scenic rolling hills. The garden bloomed year-round and no matter the issues of the outside world, I could find a beautiful place to dwell and hide from the cruel realities of the world. This is how I coped, stayed "sunny" and kept my glittering image shiny. As the years went by and troubles came, the gazebo had to be fortified—more denial of reality, more refusal to look at others' pain. These were moments of opportunity for humility, but instead, I pridefully closed the door and patched the walls. Preservation of the image that "all is well" was always key.

Then, in 2017, a bomb went off, and the fortified walls with patched-up cracks could no longer stand. The destruction was instant, without warning. There was no time to board up the windows, they were shattered. The glittering image was gone, and my naked soul was exposed.

There was no denial this time: the magnitude of the destruction was immense. I had to face reality, the horror. I found amid the great horror was God himself, God omnipresent within

the situation. My broken soul was gently scooped up and allowed to hide under His protective wings for close to two years. I mourned continually, the gazebo walls were fallen, and God in His great mercy came in and comforted me. Thus began my journey home to the Catholic Church down the Via Dolorosa.

### The Power of the Rosary

February 2nd, 2017: My bright and talented 14-year-old son lay in the ICU. He had just come out of the operating room, having had two brain surgeries in hopes of containing the damage of a self-inflicted gunshot wound suffered a few hours earlier. His cranium was split down the middle, and the left parietal bone removed to allow for swelling. Two drains were inserted into his brain, draining blood. A third tube was inserted to measure pressure and drain cerebrospinal fluid. He was on a ventilator and in a medically induced coma. He had left home in the morning happy and excited about his basketball game, and then, twelve hours later, our world had come to a crashing stop.

Midnight, day 2: I knew I had to pray, but I could not. Beyond exhausted and running on pure adrenaline, I was unable to think, I could not fit the words together to make a sentence to pray. In the hospital lobby, at midnight and alone (my very dear friends had left for a little break), I found myself googling the words 'healing prayer.' The first hit I found—I believe by divine providence—was Kathleen Beckman's prayer for healing and deliverance from 2010.

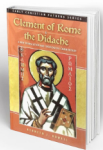
This prayer was a lifeline, a cry of protection from a mother's heart to look after her son. The prayer called forth the power of the Spirit, protection from evil, and the surrender of her boy to Jesus with the help of His mother Mary. All these were the very cry of my own soul. Here was this prayer that had all the words and themes that I desperately wanted to articulate, but it was embedded in the Hail Marys of the Catholic Rosary. I knew very little about the Rosary, except that it was used by Catholics to help them pray. I had never said a Hail Mary, but it was right there for me. All I had to do was read the prayer; I did not have to think. The words were there

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

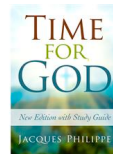
### CLEMENT OF ROME AND THE DIDACHE

DR. KENNETH HOWELL

Clement's letter and the Didache reveal how Christians were implementing and living out the faith taught by Jesus and passed on by the twelve apostles. The constant threat of schism and doctrinal deviation prompted these earliest writers to pen some of the most enduring wisdom known to the Church.



Fr. Philippe draws on years of experience as a spiritual guide to illuminate the fundamental principles of mental prayer. With simplicity and clarity, he explains the foundational principles for a healthy prayer life and gives advice for overcoming the obstacles that arise along the way.

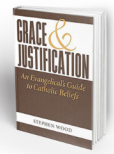


#3284 - \$14.95

### GRACE AND JUSTIFICATION

STEPHEN WOOD

Former Protestant pastor Stephen Wood presents a unique ecumenical perspective on several of the contentious doctrines relating to justification, such as works, merit, and infusion. He also lays out a simple yet profound way to grasp the priority of grace as taught in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.



#3226 - \$14.99

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

for me, and all I had to do was repeat them over and over. As I repeated the Hail Marys, I experienced an unimaginable peace.

The next day, I shared my experience with friends, and within 24 hours I was the owner of a beautiful rosary, gifted to me by the monks of St. Gregory's in Oklahoma. I was told that the rosary had been blessed by the pope. I was so grateful to know that—I am not sure why, since I was not Catholic—but I knew the pope was a very holy man. I physically clung to that rosary; it somehow connected me to Jesus. Amidst the terrible prognosis and the limits of medicine, I had tangible hope in my hands.

### Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Against all odds, Ian survived. The unknowns were huge, but he had come off the ventilator and within two weeks was discharged to a rehabilitation center. The ride to the rehabilitation facility was one of the worst days of my life. I prayed and prayed the Rosary but was overcome by the tragedy. Ian was far from being okay. I found myself in a van with my beautiful boy strapped to a gurney in the back. His big developing muscles were tight and clenched, he had almost no movement. He was speechless. I sat in the front seat with the driver, a routine day for him but the hugest of horrors for me.

I was greeted at the door by the rehabilitation chaplain, Dorothy. In hindsight, I can see that God was at the center, even before I arrived. I had known Dorothy for over 20 years. However, I did not know she loved the Blessed Virgin Mary and, at one point, had contemplated becoming a nun. I have no doubt she was placed there to help me. She talked to my Protestant brain about Mary and encouraged my devotion to her. I spent the next month in the rehab facility, with Ian being cared for by Dorothy and her friend, Wendy. They carried my burden and lightened my load in a very practical way. They laid hands on me, anointed me with oil, and prayed. The physical touch was meaningful. It united me to the heavenly realms of saints and miracles who have preceded us.

Within three weeks, Ian had progressed so significantly that we were ready for discharge. He was walking, talking and making jokes again. He still had a lot of recovery ahead of him, but it was so much better than the day we arrived. I was most fearful of leaving because, along with the Rosary, Wendy and Dorothy were my

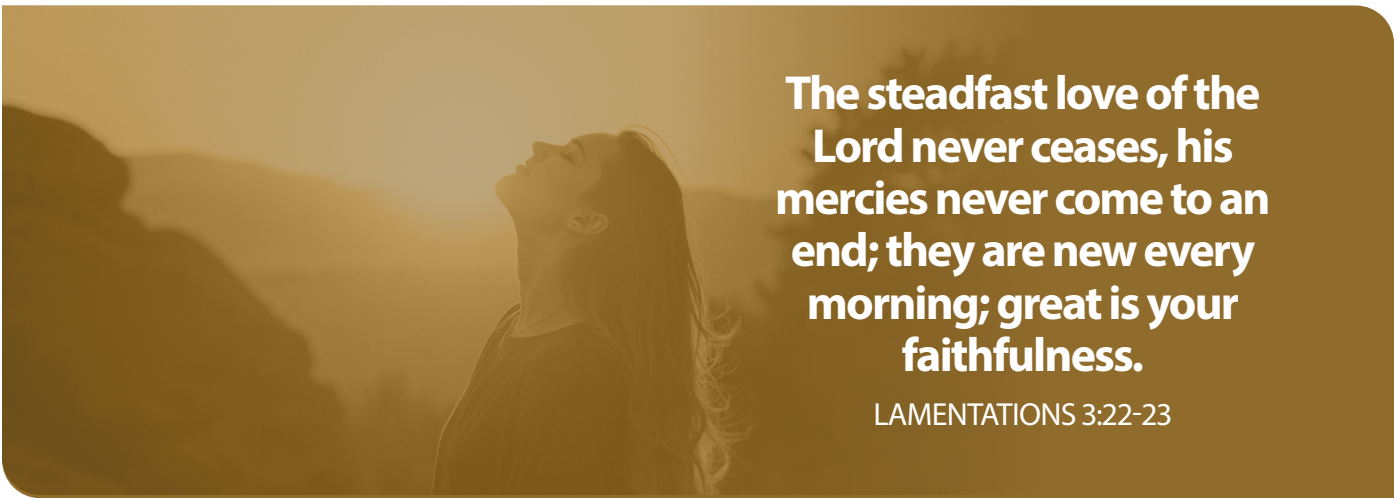
lifeline. I am not sure that I could have mentally survived rehab or the next year without these prayer warriors. I knew they would continue to pray for me, and indeed, over the next year, I sought them out on a couple of occasions because I needed to be anointed and prayed over again to survive this journey. I am reminded of the Stations of the Cross and Christ's journey to Golgotha, where Jesus falls twice. First, Simon of Cyrene is there to help carry the cross, then Veronica wipes His face. Real, tangible presence, ready to help carry the burden—that is how I think of Dorothy and Wendy. I am forever indebted to these women. They carried my burden and encouraged me to keep my eyes on Jesus.

### The Long Journey to the Cross

As I stepped back into my life at home, the magnitude of the disaster became real. When one person in a family unit suffers, they all suffer. Though Ian was getting better the ripple effects of this terrible event became evident. The toll this had taken on his sister was tremendous. She was 10 years old and had to endure her brother almost dying, the horrors of violence and suicide, and her family split apart for months. The toll on my husband was immense as he tried to work through the trauma and keep what was left of normalcy together for all of us. My family was badly hurt, and I found myself prostrate every morning, begging for God's grace to make it through the day—grace for healing, grace for restoration, grace for protection, grace for hope and joy to come back to all of us.

I continued repeating the Rosary and pleasantly discovered that there was more than one set of mysteries. In the Luminous mysteries, I found myself asking Mary to petition her Son for more wine, since we had none left. The wineskins were empty; we were spent. My daily Bible readings were all in the Psalms. My once sharp mind could not reason or think, but my soul connected to the Psalms. I read the Psalms every day, several times through. For the first time, I understood the extremes of emotion that would cause someone to ask God to smite an enemy's children dead. Mary was with me every day; I felt her presence.

*“Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty” (1 Timothy 2:15)*



**The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.**

LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23





# Courage and Discernment



Dear Friends,

The season of Lent is coming to a close, and Easter is just around the corner. We are fervently praying for all members of the Coming Home Network who are in OCIA preparing to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church and receive the sacraments this month. These men and women, pastors and laypeople, from all different religious traditions and walks of life, are nearing the end of one journey—Christ calling them home to the Catholic Church—

and preparing for another one.

As Christians, we want to avail ourselves of every grace and opportunity that Christ wants to give. This is ultimately why we are Catholic and why we share the truth and beauty of the faith with others and help them come home to the fullness of truth in the Catholic Church. As Christians we need sound and authoritative doctrine, we need communion with the saints and fellow Christians, and we need Christ's ultimate gift of Himself—His body, blood, soul, and divinity—which we receive in the Holy Eucharist. Becoming Catholic is not the end of the Christian journey but a new beginning. To become Catholic is to simply accept this great gift of Christ's grace and presence in His Church and to be thereby fully equipped for the Christian journey, which continues as long as we draw breath.

## Courage & Discernment

I have been blessed in recent months to be involved in a number of heartfelt conversations with members of the CHNetwork who are on the "home stretch" of their journey to the Catholic Church. These dear friends are navigating many tough decisions and repercussions as they've announced their intention to become Catholic to friends, family, and congregations, and then dealing patiently and charitably with the fallout and pushback.

I was reminded in a conversation recently about the importance of the cardinal virtue of Courage with regard to the discernment of God's will, especially involving life-changing decisions and in facing much fear of the repercussions. At such moments in our lives, we must persevere in prayer in order to discern not just the "what" we are being called to do, but also the "when" and "how" we are to take each next right step forward. At times we may see or suspect where God is leading us, but we still have to take the journey one step at a time, neither rushing ahead of the Holy Spirit nor refusing His call to keep going. Like St. Peter getting out of the boat to approach Jesus, our ability to endure fear and anxiety and thus keep our eyes on Jesus, is the difference between walking on the waves and beginning to sink beneath them.

In our lives there are many journeys we have to take and many decisions we have to make in the presence of great fear—fear of the unknown, fear of making a wrong choice, fear of suffering pain

or discomfort as the result of following where Jesus is leading us. We are called to face and endure fear in the pursuit of God's will—to ensure that fear itself never become the reason for the decisions we make, either to move forward or to hold back. When we allow fear itself to be our motive for actions—even apparently "good" actions—we make of fear, and thus of our comfort and safety, *idols* that we bow down to and allow to dictate our decisions. Courage precisely means to keep our eyes on Jesus as Lord, to endure the fear and suffering that comes our way in the course of the Christian journey, and to insist on continuing to discern God's will and to carry out the next right step, at the right time, in the right way.

Why do we fast from creature comforts during the season of Lent and on Fridays throughout the liturgical year? One of the many reasons is that we must have these regular opportunities to practice getting *uncomfortable* while keeping our eyes on Jesus. Unless we build the habit of facing and enduring discomfort during "ordinary time" we will be unable to do so during the "extraordinary times." As you persevere in your Lenten prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, this year embrace the opportunity to grow in the virtue of courage and offer up your discomfort for your fellow Christian brothers and sisters whose courage is being tested as they navigate the journey home to the Catholic Church.

## Read, Pray, Give Away

As we have noted often in the past, a key element of the mission of the Coming Home Network is *encouragement*—that is, the sharing of that virtue of "courage" with the people around us by our words, example, and service. One of the most important things we can do for a brother or sister on the journey to the Catholic Church (and beyond) is to inspire them to not give up—to keep seeking answers, persevering in prayer, attending to the people and tasks God has given them to steward, and taking the journey one step at a time.

This monthly newsletter is a great labor of love for our team and your fellow members of the network, and is intended to be a source of that encouragement to all those who read it. With that in mind, I would like to remind and invite you each month to READ the monthly newsletter, PRAY for the members whose stories and prayer requests are shared, and GIVE IT AWAY to someone in your life, especially other converts and inquirers into the Catholic faith, along with your invitation for them to join the CHNetwork and receive the newsletter as well.

Thank you for your continued prayers and encouragement.

God bless and be with you,

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



# Clergy Convert Conference

*"Did not our hearts burn within us?" Luke 24:32*

**May 30 – June 1, 2025**  
**St. Paul Center in Steubenville, Ohio**

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



We are extremely excited to announce a special conference taking place later this spring for clergy converts co-hosted by the Coming Home Network in partnership with the Saint Paul Center for Biblical Theology. Intended for former Protestant and other non-Catholic Christian pastors and ministers who have become Catholic as well as those who are preparing to enter the Church—especially those converts who bring with them a love for sacred Scripture—this will be a one of a kind event!

The conference will feature talks from members of the Coming Home Network and St. Paul Center teams, including **Marcus Grodi, Dr. Scott Hahn, Ken Hensley, Dr. John Bergsma, Jeff Morrow, and Kenny Burchard**. You will also enjoy catered meals, evening social hour, and times for prayer and reflection. The goal of the event is to cultivate fellowship among clergy converts, provide encouragement in the ongoing journey of faith, and to reignite the fire for living out and sharing the Gospel now as Catholics.

**Conference Cost: \$500**

**Lodging/Accommodations** A block of rooms will be available at the Best Western Plus Franciscan Square Inn and Suites Steubenville. Find full details and register at [chnetwork.org/clergyconference](http://chnetwork.org/clergyconference).



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

Monday, April 7

**Ashley Stinnett**

*Former Evangelical Protestant*

Monday, April 14

**Rhonda Ortiz**

*Former Evangelical Protestant*

Monday, April 21

**Andrew Petiprin**

*Former Episcopal Priest*

*Original air date: 9/21/20*

Monday, April 28

**Fr. Scott Woods**

*Former Evangelical Protestant*



### TELEVISION

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

### RADIO

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

Monday, May 5

**Fr. Andrew Crabtree**

*Former Non-denominational Evangelical*

*Schedule is subject to change.*

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



# THE THREE SCRUTINIES

by Msgr. Jeffrey Steenson

In parishes which have active RCIA (now OCIA\*) programs, there is a fascinating moment at Mass on the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent. The elect—adult candidates for baptism and confirmation (and sometimes those to be received into full communion)—are called forward to undergo what are called the three scrutinies. In the OCIA process, this is the period of purification and enlightenment. The scrutinies follow upon the Gospel readings (from Year A): the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:5-42), the man born blind (John 9:1-41), and the rising of Lazarus (John 11:1-45). “Their purpose is to deliver the elect from the power of sin and Satan, to help them resist temptations, and to find strength in Christ” (OCIA, para 141).

The theme is deliverance: from thirst, from darkness, from death. We thus learn that catechesis is more than simply knowing what the Church teaches. We must also incorporate the truth into our lives. For the mind to receive the truth, the soul must be pure. And so the elect come forward and kneel or bow, when all the faithful pray for them. Then they receive a prayer of exorcism and the laying on of hands, to cleanse their souls from evil so that the Holy Spirit would enter. The exorcism prayer invokes the three Gospel events – thirsting for the living water, moving from darkness into the light, freedom from the tyranny of death.

The origin of the three scrutinies dates back to the early Church, but these preparatory rites had come to be incorporated into the one rite of baptism itself. It was the Second Vatican Council which called for the restoration of the ancient catechumenate process (including the handing on of the Apostles’ Creed and the Lord’s Prayer after the third and fifth scrutinies). There is abundant testimony to what this journey encompassed.

From the third century, we can see how critical this period of purification was. St. Hippolytus emphasized how important it was for the candidates’ lives to be carefully examined: “If there is one who is not good or is not pure, he should be excluded, because he has not heard the word of faith” (On the Apostolic Tradition, 20). Every day the catechumens would receive the prayer of exorcism. St. Cyril of Jerusalem warned of the grave danger of receiving the sacrament unprepared, invoking the example of Simon Magus (Acts 8:13ff). Submit to the exorcisms devoutly, Cyril taught; it is like gold ore being refined of its impurities (Procatechesis, 2, 9).

St. Cyril’s Catechetical Lectures from the mid-fourth century provide an extraordinary perspective on how carefully the examination of conscience was incorporated into the catechetical process. It is important, because the enemy will attack the soul relentlessly, trying to divert him from the path to Christ. Cyril describes that dramatic moment outside the door to the baptistry at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The candidates would face west, extend their hand and declare, “I renounce you, Satan, and all your works.” Then they would turn to the east, the place of light, and invoke the Blessed Trinity (Mystagogical Lecture, 1).

The custom soon arose of embellishing this renunciation with a “ptui!”—the act of spitting to the west to dismiss the evil one. We don’t usually find spittoons outside the church door, but the metaphor is a good one about telling the devil where to go.

It is worth noting that those baptized Christians who are entering into full communion with the Catholic Church are to be distinguished from the catechumens and are not required to undergo the rite of scrutinies (OCIA, para 477-478). However, it is the whole community of the faithful who come together in these acts of “spiritual recollection,” for the Lord scrutinizes all who follow Him (para 138).

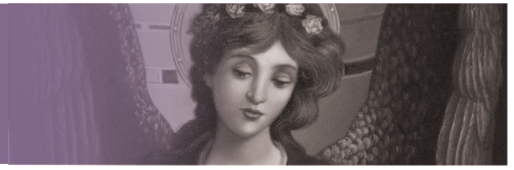
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*\*The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults has now been renamed the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to emphasize that this is an ongoing journey and not simply a one-time event. The new OCIA statutes came into effect on Dec. 1, 2024. An excellent resource for further study is The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition (Chicago: LTP, 2024).*

**READ, PRAY,  
GIVE AWAY!**

Once you’ve finished reading this issue of the CHNewsletter, consider sharing it with someone who might enjoy it as well! (They can always sign up to receive their own at [chnetwork.org/join](http://chnetwork.org/join).)

# Prayer List



## Clergy

- **For Gideon, a Protestant Youth Minister** enrolled in OCIA and on his way into the Church after being on the journey for some time, that the Lord will bless him as he rethinks his future with Christ.
- **For Cameron, a Baptist pastor** exploring the Catholic Faith and dealing with many questions, that the Holy Spirit will continue to inspire him to seek the answers he needs.
- **For Guillaume, an Evangelical Pastor** who was baptized and raised Catholic, later became Protestant, and now finds himself wanting to come home, that the Holy Spirit will enlighten and guide him as he continues to struggle with certain issues and seeks to lead his family into the Church.
- **For Karl, a Mennonite Missionary** on the journey into the Catholic Church, that the Lord will give him answers to questions that remain.
- **For Paul, a Baptist minister** who has become convinced that the Protestant principle of *sola Scriptura* isn't true and is struggling in an area of the country with few, if any Catholic parishes, that the Lord will give him wisdom and courage to do what he increasingly believes he must do.
- **For Brian, a former Baptist pastor** who was received into the Church with his wife last Easter Vigil, that the Lord will continue to help him lead his family into their new life in the Catholic Church.
- **For Andrew, a Protestant minister** for many years who has begun exploring the Catholic Church, that the Holy Spirit will lead him in his studies.
- **For Nicklaus, a Presbyterian seminarian** who has been drawn to the Catholic Church for some years and recently decided to pursue full communion with the Church after completing his Master's program recently, that the Holy Spirit will lead his family as they move to a new location and he begins a new job.
- **For Scott, an Anglican priest** who just entered the Church with his wife this past

Advent, that the Lord will help him to find new work as a Catholic.

- **For Mathieu, a Protestant seminarian** who has begun to study Catholic theology, is reading widely, and feels drawn powerfully toward the Church but has many questions, that Jesus will lead him home.
- **For Nicholas, a Lutheran minister** in OCIA and praying there will be a way for him to work in ministry in the Catholic Church, that the Lord will grant him the desire of his heart, unless he has something better in mind.

## Laity

- **For Holly, a Non-denominational Protestant**, that she may be granted perseverance and be blessed with peace as she and her husband journey home to the Church, and that the Lord grants her a healthy pregnancy and safe and healthy delivery for her and the baby.
- **For Adriana, a Non-denominational Protestant**, that she may find marital harmony and peace in the faith.
- **For Ruth, a Presbyterian**, that the Lord grants her good health for her and her husband, strength to care for her husband as he recovers, and peace and joy in her life as she continues her journey home.
- **For Ivy, an Evangelical**, that she and her husband may feel the nearness of the Lord as they participate in OCIA and in the challenges they encounter, that their three children may be in good health, that her sponsor may find relief from knee and back pain, and that her husband's sponsor remains cancer free and his wife in good health.
- **For Susan, on the journey**, that she may receive the grace to persevere in the faith even amid isolation from her family who does not share her new faith and experience a fruitful first Lent.
- **For Carla, a convert**, that the Lord may grant her marital unity in the faith, protect the spiritual and physical health of her husband, and lead her children to be baptized.
- **For Jennifer, an Anglican**, that she may find marital and family unity within the Catholic Church and be given the grace to faithfully live the teachings of the Church within her marriage.
- **For Ashley, an Anglican**, that the Lord would bless her with patience and lead her discernment on her journey of faith and that she may have the courage to obey.
- **For Philip, on the journey**, that the Holy Spirit would guide him back to the holy Catholic Church.
- **For Louie, a former Agnostic**, that his prayers may be heard and his faith in our Lord Jesus would become strong and deep.
- **For Timothy, on the journey**, that he may find good faithful Catholic friends who will assist him on the road back to the Church.
- **For Paul, a Pentecostal**, that the Holy Spirit would guide his OCIA journey to the Easter sacraments.
- **For David, on the journey**, that he and his wife would find good Catholic friends who will assist them on their way to the Catholic Church.
- **For Jesse, a member on the journey**, that his love for his fiancée would spark a growing love for Jesus and his Church.
- **For Ed, a Reformed Baptist**, that he would find support and guidance in his journey to the Catholic Church.
- **For Paul, a cradle-Catholic**, that he may find his way back to Jesus through the holy sacraments.
- **For John, an Evangelical**, that he may be granted the grace to get beyond his annulment roadblock.
- **For Bruce, a convert from Evangelicalism**, that he may find his way back to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.
- **For James, a United Methodist**, that the love of Christ would guide him and his wife to the Church and that he may be healed of cancer.
- **For Shawn, a former Agnostic**, that our Lord Jesus Christ would guide him and his son to the life-giving sacraments of the Catholic Church.





### Alejandra Sosa

CHNetwork Donor since December 2017

I am a 64 year old Catholic writer and painter from Mexico City. For over 30 years, I've been an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, and for the past 21 years, I've written weekly in *Desde la Fe*, a publication of the Archdiocese of Mexico. I've also authored several books on religious topics, and I share articles on faith through social media

and my website. My journey back to the Catholic Faith began in 1987 after a powerful conversion experience that rekindled my love for Jesus, Mary, the Bible, and the Church. This led me to

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explore apologetics and deepen my understanding of my faith.

A year before starting college, I drifted away from the Church for nine years. However, my reversion in 1987 brought me to discover Catholic apologetics. I subscribed to This Rock magazine, which introduced me to figures like Karl Keating and Scott Hahn. Through their work, I eventually found Marcus Grodi and The Coming Home Network International. I first found CHNetwork's website by searching online and was delighted to find an archive of programs going back to 1997. Watching those shows, especially the old ones, has been a source of joy, as it's like traveling back in time to witness the early years of the program.

What is most meaningful to me about CHNetwork is the way it helps people discover the fullness of truth in the Catholic Church. I especially appreciate the personal relationships CHNetwork fosters. I've had the privilege of developing a lasting friendship with David Emery, one of the CHNetwork Online Community moderators, who provided much-needed support during a difficult time in my life. CHNetwork's focus on providing charitable, thorough answers to questions and their genuine care for people has inspired me to support them.

I decided to contribute to CHNetwork because their work is invaluable, offering excellent resources for free at a time when many other Catholic organizations charge for access. I believe it is important to support this work, especially in reaching out to Protestants and lapsed Catholics, helping them come home to the Church. I encourage others to support CHNetwork as well. Their apostolate is a generous and effective ministry that has touched my life, and I pray that many will join in supporting it. ■

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(former Presbyterian pastor)

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## CHN COMMUNITY ZOOM VIDEO CALLS

### THE HOLY ROSARY

Mondays at 4:30pm ET

### TOPIC DISCUSSIONS

Wednesdays at 4:00pm ET

### MORNING PRAYER

Thursdays at 10:15am ET

### BOOK CLUB

Thursdays at 10:30am ET

### FELLOWSHIP FRIDAY

Fridays at 2:00pm ET

### THE DIVINE MERCY

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

Info about each event can  
be found under 'Events' at  
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## 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](mailto:ann@chnetwork.org) or call 740.450.1175 x101.

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.



# BECOMING

## *Pilgrims of Hope*

*"Hope does not disappoint." (Romans 5:5)*

At a ceremony in St. Peter's Basilica on Ascension Thursday in 2024, Pope Francis officially proclaimed the Jubilee Year 2025, dedicating this year to cultivating the virtue of hope among the faithful. "We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision. The forthcoming Jubilee can contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire."

### What is a Jubilee?

The concept of "Jubilee" has its origins in the Book of Leviticus (chapter 25) as a special year of pilgrimage, reconciliation, and coming home. As Pope Francis explains: "Ever since 1300, when Boniface VIII instituted the first Holy Year... God's holy and faithful people has experienced this celebration as a special gift of grace, characterized by the forgiveness of sins." During this year, the faithful are encouraged to participate in the life of the Church universal as she leads them to more fully encounter Christ through pilgrimages to holy sites (near and afar), celebrations of Mass, processions, and in particular through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. These intentional celebrations of "messianic favor" throughout the Jubilee Year offer us opportunities to receive the Lord's love and mercy, that we may invite others to receive God's mercy through the performance of works of mercy.

In these celebrations, Pope Francis is intentional in his call for us to become "**pilgrims of hope**." Christian hope, though, is not merely a feeling or a wish for good things. It is a virtue rooted in God's heart and proclaimed through His word.

**The Catechism**, teaches us that *"Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and*

*relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit... Christian hope unfolds from the beginning of Jesus' preaching in the proclamation of the beatitudes... trace[ing] the path that leads through the trials that await the disciples of Jesus... Hope is also a weapon that protects us in the struggle of salvation and affords us joy even under trial" (para 1870-1820).*

**Scripture** reminds us that hope is an anchor in a life of faith, firmly connected to the cross of Christ: *"Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. We also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Romans 5:2-5).*

**Pope Benedict XVI** wrote the faithful an entire encyclical about the importance of hope, *Spe Salvi (By Hope We Are Saved)*. In it, he instructs us that *"Only the great certitude of hope that my own life and history in general, despite all failures, are held firm by the indestructible power of Love, and that this gives them their meaning and importance, only this kind of hope can then give the courage to act and to persevere. Certainly we cannot "build" the Kingdom of God by our own efforts— what we build will always be the kingdom of man with all the limitations proper to our human nature. The Kingdom of God is a gift, and precisely because of this, it is great and beautiful, and constitutes the response to our hope."*

Taking part in this Jubilee year, may we be drawn into this hope and become witnesses of it, spreading the hope of Christ to all who anxiously seek it.

## METHODIST CONVERTS

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

Visit [chnetwork.org/methodist](http://chnetwork.org/methodist) to read and watch the stories of former Methodists 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](http://chnetwork.org/join).





## ...Journeys Home Continued...

The journey at home became one of perseverance, and I understood what Timothy meant: motherhood brings us to God. Daily, it became clearer that this would be a long, uphill climb rather than a 400 meter sprint. The left side of Ian's body was frozen, and he needed speech, occupational, and physical therapy. We did not want to be there, but we were. I was fully aware that how we chose to walk this journey would not only be a testament of our faith, but an example to both our children of how to handle adversity. My prayer became: "Lord give me the grace to parent in this impossible situation."

There were extremes of emotion in this journey, hence the connection to the Psalms. It was a mental roller coaster full of paradoxes. One moment there was screaming pain at the loss; the next moment there was anger and outrage at the injustice of the situation; then after these emotions were spent, there was full surrender and gratitude for survival. This cycle repeated itself, sometimes multiple times a day. Permeating these emotional highs and lows was the unanswered question of, "Why, God?"

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:21).

### EWTN and a Growing Faith

In the middle of all of this, I started watching EWTN every night. I had never heard of the channel prior to this journey. For me, the mornings were awful. The thought of facing another day in this paradigm was overwhelming, but at the end of the day, we had survived, and I was able to settle down. I had no desire to watch my former favorite shows; I needed to connect with people of faith. I was looking for a miracle and stories of miracles, and EWTN had them. For the first time in 30 adult years of being a Christian, I heard of saints, Eucharistic miracles, appearances of Mary, and Jesus alive in the Eucharist. It was mind blowing, and I soaked it up like a parched sponge.

One night, about two years after the injury, I was watching a rerun of Mother Angelica's show, and a woman had called in explaining that she could no longer attend Mass; she was too grieved over the loss of her husband. Through further conversation, Mother Angelica found out this woman had lost her husband over seven years ago. Kindly, Mother Angelica said to the woman, "You have been reliving the worst moments of your life over and over again for the last seven years." Mother explained that this is exactly where the devil wants us—replaying our sorrows and losses continually and losing our life amid the replays. I recognized immediately that the grief I clung to was now standing in the way of God's grace. Two years out, I had a choice to stay stagnant and broken, or to try to move on.

Being a pragmatist, I had tried to let go of this grief many times, but was unsuccessful. The grief had become precious, an intimate part of me. It made me softer and kinder, and I did not want to go back to the old, pretentious, glittering image. I also did not want to accept that the healing was over; Ian "needed more recovery." Giving up on the grief felt like accepting the status quo. I

turned to a poem written by St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, for help because I thought the dark night was about the journey of grief. I had tried to understand this poem for over a decade; however, it was always out of my grasp. I simply did not get what he was trying to say. My heart was hardened when reading the poem previously, but now, I was reading it with a heart turned to God. This time I understood the poem clearly and found that faith had already lit the way through the dark night for me to walk to Jesus.

I echoed St. John's thoughts of the paradox: "amid the struggle, the soul is free." All desires had been stripped, and my soul was ready to leave the house. I wanted God, and I wanted Ian to be fully healed. Faith led my journey and shielded me. The enemy did not recognize me, because I had no earthly desires. I felt my soul arrive at the allegorical ladder and then stop. I could not ascend because I had two competing desires—that of union with God and that of full healing for Ian. Union with God cannot coexist with any other desire, no matter how noble. At the bottom of the ladder, I realized that my desire for union with God was self-serving; it was still in hope of finding full healing for Ian. Before I could ascend the ladder, I knew all desire must be surrendered. The only thing that must be sought was God, sought only for the love of God. I had to let go of the search for healing.

I was stalled in the dark and had to take time to surrender. The letting go of this intense desire was done daily, some days better surrendered than others. I begged Mary to pray for me, to help me leave Ian at the feet of her Son. Only by the grace of God, for just a moment initially, I was able let go. My soul then moved on quickly, guided by faith through the rest of the dark night.

The ladder was climbed, and the morning dawn brought transformation. I found myself held in the sanctuary of the Beloved's breast. There was no fear, no pain; my soul was at rest. Two and a half years into this journey, for the first time that morning, I woke up forgetting my care among the lilies. I had traveled the dark night and was now forever changed.

### EWTN: Women of Grace

I continued to be pulled toward the Catholic Church because these were the only people in my life who understood my experiences with Mary and the Rosary. The Catholic Faith appeared so beautiful to me—the icons, the art, the liturgy all so carefully constructed and preserved. I recognized in the Catholic Church the suffering Christ, full seasons dedicated to His passion, crosses with His holy body displayed, the Sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary repeated twice a week. The Catholic Church helped me align my sufferings to Christ. It was like I was looking at my familiar faith with a new set of lenses. There was so much to explore.

EWTN schooled me in the faith in many ways. I watched shows on the Marian apparitions; I attended Masses from all around the world; I learned about religious orders and their lives of prayer. My favorite show was *Women of Grace*; there were many episodes where the messages were key for me. I had experienced the power of prayer in the Rosary, and now I learned of its history.



## ...Journeys Home Continued...

I bought many books based on the show's recommendations. I read Fulton Sheen, Mother Angelica, and Pope John Paul II, to name a few. I could not get enough! Even as a committed Christian, I had never heard of the many incredible people who had lived in my time.

Two episodes of *Women of Grace* in particular stood out. The first was about a book called *Mary's Way: The Power of Entrusting Your Child to God*. In ways, the book paralleled the story of my son, the suffering of our family, and the coming to know the most blessed of all mothers. This prompted me to write my story, telling others that Mary is there, standing at the foot of the Cross during her Son's suffering. However, I did not know how to write the story in my Protestant world. I knew I could never leave Mary out of the story; I would rather not write it.

The show then introduced me to Sister Breige McKenna, a wonderful Irish nun. On the show, Sister Briega drew me in as she recounted miracle after miracle. Of course, I bought her books, including *Miracles Do Happen: God Can Do the Impossible*.<sup>2</sup> Even four years after Ian's brain injury, I was still looking for full healing—looking for the impossible. I went to Sister Briega's website and saw people could call her on Facetime, so I did. She was delightful and a kindred spirit. I explained to her I was a Methodist who loved the Catholic Church. Without hesitation she said, "You are on the wrong ship." Instantly, I knew exactly what she meant. It was time for me to enter the Catholic Church. This was

no surprise to me. I knew I should do this, but I had needed someone to confirm it. Sister Briega did that for me. The next day, I contacted the local Catholic parish in my town to sign up for RCIA classes.

### The Beautiful Catholic Church

I entered the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil in 2023. My parish asked that we choose a saint to commemorate our day of joining the Church; I chose St. Veronica. Dorothy and Wendy were there for me. Easter Vigil was a beautiful liturgy, and I am so very happy to be Catholic. My heart is full, and I love my Church.

Life is a little complicated still. My 16-year-old daughter is active in the Methodist youth group she grew up in, and I continue to go there to support her and my husband, who teaches classes there. I still have many friends at the Methodist church, and they are beginning to come to me, asking why I joined the Catholic Church. My answer is simple: I cannot deny Mary any more. I want to shout from the rooftops what Mary has done for me. Mary held me and turned my head toward Jesus at my weakest moment. She was there for me every step of this journey. In Michelangelo's *Pieta*, Mary holds Jesus as He is taken down from the cross, her heart clearly pierced. In prayer for many months, I had the image of the *Pieta* in my head but in *my* version, Mary held Ian for me and brought him to Jesus.

I have often wondered about the appropriate response to a journey that has been filled with unending mercy and grace. What is left when the soul has travelled through the dark night, when everything has been surrendered? The answer to all these questions is love. Love is the only reasonable response, love is all that is left. I have been given so much and now it is my turn to give back, to join in communion with the saints and walk the way of the cross, pointing others to Christ.

I will close with a thought from Henri Nouwen, who so eloquently wrote in *A Cry for Mercy*:

"Most of all, O Lord, I pray that you help all who suffer to look to you, who have carried all the sufferings of the world and have died to bring new life. May those who are in agony and pain see in your cross a sign of hope, and may they catch a glimpse of the mystery that they can make up all that has still to be undergone by you for the sake of your body, the Church. Help us see that in our suffering we can indeed become intimately connected to your ongoing work of salvation. O Lord show all who are in pain your boundless love and mercy. Amen." ■

**Eternal God, in Whom  
mercy is endless and the  
treasury of compassion—  
inexhaustible, look kindly  
upon us and increase Your  
mercy in us, that in  
difficult moments we  
might not despair nor  
become despondent, but  
with great confidence  
submit ourselves to Your  
holy will, which is Love  
and Mercy itself.**

DIVINE MERCY CHAPLET CLOSING PRAYER

*Jasmin (Yaz) Johnson has journeyed to the Catholic Church and finds herself now in a season of life where faith has been transformed from an 'analytical knowing' to a 'humble consciousness'. In this season, Yaz has dusted off her violin and plays daily. She is a wife, a mother and grandmother. She takes great joy in teaching Sunday School for children. She loves a good read, stories of the Mystics, great poetry and contemplative musings. She tells her story to point all to the graces and mercies of a loving God.*

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*O God, who make this most sacred night radiant with the glory of the Lord's Resurrection, stir up in your Church a spirit of adoption, so that, renewed in body and mind, we may render you undivided service.*

EASTER VIGIL IN THE HOLY NIGHT, COLLECT



*Many of those we have been walking with at the Coming Home Network are coming into full communion with the Church this Easter. Please join us in praying for them in this next step of their journey.*

April 2025 Newsletter

