



August 2025 CHNewsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

Journeys Home

Authority, Adoration, and Assent The Keys to My Catholic Conversion

By Barry Hamlin

I was fortunate to be raised in a loving Christian home in Corbin, KY, about 75 miles south of Lexington. Our family attended a Southern Baptist church. When I was nine years old, I understood the basics about Jesus. I knew that He was the Son of God, that He died for my sins, and that He loved me. My parents asked me if I wanted to be baptized, and I said yes. For the next six years, I went to church each week with my family but had no relationship with Jesus and had no interest in the things of God. I didn't get in trouble and was a good student, but I had developed a bad habit of using foul language because it seemed "cool" and helped me fit in with others. This all changed one night when I was 15.



Our church hosted a week-long revival. I had managed to stay away all week, but for some reason, I went on the last night of the revival. I don't remember the specifics of what the preacher was saying, but I know I began to feel greatly convicted of my sins, especially the bad habits I had formed. I knew I was far from Jesus, and that I needed Him in my life. During the singing of "Have Thine Own Way," I came forward and told the pastor that I needed to ask God to forgive me of my sins and that I wanted to rededicate my life to Christ.

That was the first of two times where God changed me in a radical way. God took away my desire

to use foul language immediately, and that bad habit stopped. More importantly, He created within me a desire to get to know Him better and to read His word. I began to read the Bible daily and formed a positive habit that I have carried through my entire life. Our church had a wonderful pastor during my high school and college years; he taught me much about Jesus, the Bible, and the importance of having a personal relationship with Him. My parents were very involved in our church. Mom taught Sunday school, and Dad served as a deacon and trustee at our church for many years. I was fortunate to have grown up in a home with strong Christian parents. It was a great time in my life.

After high school, I attended the University of Kentucky in Lexington. My relationship with Christ was strong, and my daily discipline of Bible reading

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...Journeys Home Continued...

continued, but I was primarily just a church attender. I was not active in a local church.

My Introduction to Catholicism

When I graduated from college, I moved to Louisville, KY, where I joined a local Southern Baptist church. During my time in Louisville, I started dating Annette, a co-worker who was a cradle Catholic. I would attend Mass with her from time to time, and she occasionally would come to church with me. I had never been to a Catholic Mass before meeting her, so I had no idea what to expect. I was used to church being a more upbeat place with lively music and fiery sermons. The Catholic Mass was so different from any type of church service I had ever attended.

It wasn't easy for us to be together and be in two separate churches. We spent a lot of time talking about this and had a long engagement period as a result. Finally, we decided that we loved each other, loved Jesus, were committed to serving Him, and believed we could navigate the two-church situation throughout our life together. It was important to Annette that we get married in the Catholic Church, and I had no objection to that. Looking back now, I realize that God gave me the grace to do that all those years ago. Annette and I were married in April 1991 at the Catholic parish she attended in Louisville. We then moved to Indiana, where we lived for four years during graduate school and our subsequent careers. After our time in Indiana, we relocated to Cookeville, TN, for my job in the spring of 1995.

Our time in Cookeville was a period of spiritual growth for me. There, I began attending a vibrant Southern Baptist church. Our pastor had a great command of Scripture, and his sermons challenged me to a deeper faith. In Cookeville, I attended an adult Sunday school class for years, was involved in several Bible studies, and sang in our church choir my last two years there. I had never felt closer to Christ in my life at that point and knew I was where I was supposed to be. By this time, our family had expanded to

include two daughters and a son. Life was good, but change always seemed to be around the corner. I accepted a promotion with my employer, and we moved to Findlay, OH. I attended an Evangelical Free Church, since there were no Southern Baptist churches there. We were there for five very good years before moving back to Kentucky, returning to Lexington in 2009.

Once back in Lexington, I settled in at a large non-denominational church. I enjoyed ten very good years there and was involved in several ministries, most notably a prayer team ministry. Throughout all these moves and church changes, Annette and our three children faithfully attended the Catholic parish. She and I attended with each other when we could make schedules work. At this point in my life, my Christian faith guided my daily life. I was far from perfect, but I considered my relationship with Jesus Christ to be the most important thing in my life. I was very happy with my life as a Non-denominational Christian and felt that my Sunday worship experience was better than Annette had in the Catholic Church. In my mind, there would never be a scenario in which I would consider becoming Catholic. Somewhat unexpectedly, my job situation changed, and we moved to West Chester, OH, a northern Cincinnati suburb, in May 2019.

I remember thinking, "Here we go again." I would need to do research and visit several churches to find one where I liked the pastor and the music style, agreed with the Statement of Faith, etc. I settled into another Non-denominational church and was in the process of learning about potential areas of service when COVID-19 hit in March of 2020. Annette, meanwhile, had joined St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic Church.

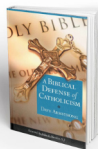
While churches were shut down, we watched services together most Sundays online on the couch. We would typically watch her Mass at 8:00am, and then watch my church service at 9:30am. I remember thinking that, while I could get much out of

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

A BIBLICAL DEFENSE OF CATHOLICISM

DAVE ARMSTRONG

Written in a popular and contemporary style, Armstrong's book is a defense of the Catholic faith by means of copious scriptural citations, which support Catholic doctrines and dogmas. Each chapter offers a precise definition of the doctrine considered, usually from conciliar or papal pronouncements, and verifying references from the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

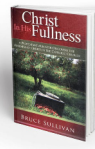


2 #2590 - \$20.00

CHRIST IN HIS FULLNESS

DEACON BRUCE SULLIVAN

Deacon Bruce Sullivan, who was a Church of Christ minister for seven years, presents an in-depth study of the issues that prevent many from ever considering the Catholic Church while emphasizing in a positive way the great gift awaiting all who will embrace the Catholic faith; the gift of having Christ in all of His fullness.



#3083 - \$12.95

FILLING OUR FATHER'S HOUSE

SHAUN MCAFEE

Converts often bring to the Catholic Church a zeal that can renew parish life. Shaun McAfee shares what he learned about evangelization from his time as an Evangelical, and what Catholics can glean from our Protestant brothers and sisters about sharing the message of the Gospel with a hurting world.



#3217 - \$14.95

my church service sitting at home on the couch, Annette's experience was fundamentally different. You couldn't replicate the Mass and the Eucharist with an online service. Eventually, COVID wound down and church life slowly returned to normal as our churches re-opened.

Everything Changed

On Sunday, September 12, 2021, I attended my church by myself. My pastor preached a sermon about discipleship. He began to talk about how the early Church started and what it became after Constantine. During this time, I began feeling uneasy with his teaching and conclusions. I can't remember specifics, but I know that I wasn't in agreement with what he was preaching. Somewhere in that message, I experienced a life-changing moment. As clear as a bell I heard an audible voice in my head that said: "How do you know he's right? What's his authority?" I heard the voice and could see the word "authority" in my mind. It didn't last long, but it was as real and as clear as anything I've ever experienced in my life. As time goes by, I refer to it as "the day God hit me upside the head with a baseball bat." It sure got my attention!

That week was a whirlwind of activity. I had interpreted—rightly, I believe—the "authority" message as a challenge to answer the following question: What is my true source of authority? As a Protestant, the Bible was my sole authority, known as *sola Scriptura*. The Catholic Church, in contrast, teaches that authority comes from three sources: Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium.

I was consumed with learning all I could about the issue of authority and whether the claims of the Catholic Church were true. I began to read challenges to *sola Scriptura* that I had never seen before, like 2 Thessalonians 2:15, which tells us to "stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter." All tradition wasn't bad after all. Only man-made tradition was condemned by Jesus. I also began to realize that the canon of Scripture wasn't settled until the late 4th century. Who settled the canon? Wasn't it the Church? What did people do before the Bible? How could they live by the Bible alone if there was no Bible? Even when the canon was settled, the common person didn't have access to the Bible until the printing press was invented, a relatively short time before the Reformation. Illiteracy was common. Why would God have put a system in place that only relied on the written word when most couldn't read or have access to a Bible? Doubts began flooding in.

I remembered that Annette had a book called *Rome Sweet Home* by Scott Hahn and knew that he was a former Presbyterian minister who had converted to Catholicism. Finding an audio version of his conversion story on the internet, I listened to it in its entirety. It shook me greatly, because he was making sense to me, especially about the Mass—how what is happening in the Mass is what is happening in Heaven. I began reading the book and knew that I was "in trouble."

I listened to more and more conversion stories online. Two that I listened to that week that had a great impact on me were the

conversion stories of Steve Ray and Keith Nester. Both were former Protestant leaders who left everything to join the Catholic Church. Their stories were incredibly compelling. They had believed like me, and now they were Catholic apologists. I finally told Annette what I had been doing throughout the week. She was surprised, though I'm sure very happy, that I was ready to consider learning about Catholicism.

The Search for Truth Intensifies

I read as many books as I could from September through December on various aspects of the faith—some focusing on apologetics, Church history, and the Church Fathers, and others presenting conversion stories like *Crossing the Tiber* by Steve Ray. I also discovered Marcus Grodi and *The Journey Home* program and watched over 100 episodes during that first couple of months. I had no idea that anyone, much less pastors, left Evangelical backgrounds to become Catholic. The cumulative effect of listening to these conversion stories had a great impact on me. Many of these people had converted because of the issue of authority, the very thing that led to my own search. I also considered the example of faith that Annette set for me during our marriage. Her faithfulness to the Catholic Church throughout our life together was beginning to increasingly resonate with me.

I also began to listen to podcasts. One of my early favorites, one that I still listen to, was *The Cordial Catholic* by Keith Little, a former Pentecostal in Canada who became Catholic. Most of his interviews are with Protestants who have converted, so again, I was hearing the stories of more and more people like me. During this time, I also read *Evangelical is Not Enough* by Thomas Howard and *Catholic Christianity* by Dr. Peter Kreeft. These were great books that taught me a lot.

I was very interested in Church history and learning what the first Christians after apostolic times thought, wrote, and practiced. The writings of St. Ignatius of Antioch, who was martyred around 110 AD, had a tremendous impact on me—so much so that he became my Confirmation saint. I read that he learned the faith from the Apostle John, and I discovered that he was the first to use the term Catholic when describing the Church. He wrote about the bishops, presbyters (priests), and deacons—the structure still used in the Catholic Church—and about the Eucharist being the real Body and Blood of Christ, stressing the importance of believing this. It was astounding! I was learning things I didn't know and had never wanted to learn.

The authority of the Magisterium was starting to make more sense. I've always been somewhat bothered that there were so many denominations in Protestant Christianity. If the Bible was so easy to interpret and what it said was self-evident, then why were there so many interpretations? Some believed in infant baptism, and some didn't. Some believed in "once-saved, always-saved," some didn't. Who was right and who was wrong? What was essential and what wasn't? I had always assumed that my interpretation was correct, and others were wrong—but based on what? They must think the same thing, right? I began asking myself questions I had never asked before, and I wasn't liking the



The Gaze of Love



Dear Friends,

One of my favorite moments in the Gospels, recounted by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, occurs during Jesus' encounter with the Rich Young Man, who asks Jesus what more he must do, beyond keeping the commandments, to inherit eternal life. There is much to be gleaned from the episode—Jesus' striking answer, the young man's response, and Jesus' additional commentary afterwards—about the nature of true conversion, the dangers of attachment to

wealth and worldly goods, and our radical call to follow Jesus with everything we have and are. However, what has always struck me most profoundly, recorded in Mark's account, is not what was said but rather in the tiny observation that Jesus, before delivering His challenging teaching, "looking upon [the young man] loved him" (Mark 10:21).

This "gaze of love" is such a beautiful and intriguing detail included in Mark's Gospel. We get the sense that we have received a priceless glimpse into the Sacred Heart of the Master; that beneath the surface level of the conversation—the information, the question, the challenging response, and the commentary afterward to unpack—Jesus really did *love* this young man and desire for Him to accept the Father's love and the upward call to holiness. Jesus shares with him the difficult and challenging truth, but He does so from a place of true and heartfelt charity.

But I think there is more here—a deeper connection between this "looking upon" and "loving," as Jesus loves. The Greek word for how Jesus looks at the young man is *emblepō* which means not just to casually "see" or "notice" but to "look at intently"—to "fix one's gaze upon." This word is used a couple of other key times in the Gospels. The first is John 1:36 when John the Baptist "looked at Jesus as he walked, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!'" The second is in Luke 22:61, in which Jesus turns to look at Peter moments after his third denial. In response to the gaze of his master, Peter remembers Jesus' prediction, is convicted of his sins, and breaks down weeping. The common thread in all three cases is an intent gaze that truly *beholds and recognizes* the person in question—there is a deep and profound seeing and being seen.

Again, I find this moment in the Gospel of Mark so significant because this *emblepō*—this "looking at intently"—seems to be connected fundamentally with the nature of love itself. Love is, of course, a complicated word, in any language. We use it, rightly and wrongly, for a whole variety of relationships with people and with things. Love, though, is not merely an "emotion"—not just temporary happy feelings prompted by the right stimuli. Rather, Love is active. Love wills and, to the degree it is able, works for the good of the other. And, of course, the New Testament is full of exhortations from Jesus and his disciples about the fact that love cannot remain simply a theory; our faith must be put into action.

Yet, in this glimpse of how Jesus *looks at and loves* the young man, I think we are also given an important and powerful reminder: even before the more active forms of love must come this

fundamental seeing. Love never occurs in a vacuum. It is fundamentally relational. In order to truly love someone, we must open our eyes and attempt to truly *see* them as God sees them.

We all have moments when we begin to lose sight of the people that God has called us to love. This may be the result of conflict, difficulty, or argument. But it also indeed happens in the midst of the busyness of trying to "love" the people around us as Jesus commanded! In the day-to-day flurry of activities and responsibilities in our marriages, parenting, working, evangelizing, teaching—we all have moments when our efforts to love become themselves the focus—and we lose sight of the people we are ostensibly loving. In fact, at times we can begin to see our spouse, or our children, or the neighbor who needs our help as simply problems to be solved, rather than people to be loved. From time to time, we must remember to *look upon* other people as Jesus does—attempting to see them in truth, in their dignity as children of God, as people whom Jesus still looks at with that piercing gaze of love, despite their sins.

This encounter in the Gospel of Mark gives us an incredible insight into God's love and how we can imitate it. Jesus *looks at us*—every one of us—and *loves us*, even though our sins and betrayals, past and future, are not hidden from his gaze. We in turn must work to open our eyes to truly see and appreciate Jesus and the people He has given to us to love.

This "looking at and loving" also gives us insight into the journey of prayer itself, which is, at its heart, simply the journey of loving God more and more. While some of the time our prayer involves expressing ourselves to God—repentance, gratitude, our needs and concerns—prayer is a relationship and journey that proceeds, with practice and perseverance, toward something deeper than words. As the *Catechism* notes about Contemplation, the deepest form of prayer towards which we are all called to strive:

Contemplation is a gaze of faith, fixed on Jesus. "I look at him and he looks at me": this is what a certain peasant of Ars in the time of his holy cure used to say while praying before the tabernacle. This focus on Jesus is a renunciation of self. His gaze purifies our heart; the light of the countenance of Jesus illumines the eyes of our heart and teaches us to see everything in the light of his truth and his compassion for all men.

Just as with our neighbor, in order to grow in our ability to love, at times we need to simply be silent, to look upon Jesus, to love Him—and to allow ourselves to be looked upon and loved by Him as well.

Thank you as always for your prayers and support. God bless and be with you today!

In Christ,

JonMarc Grodi

Executive Director of the CHNetwork
Host of EWTN's *The Journey Home* Program

Christ's Transfiguration aims at strengthening the apostles' faith in anticipation of his Passion: the ascent on to the "high mountain" prepares for the ascent to Calvary. Christ, Head of the Church, manifests what his Body contains and radiates in the sacraments: "the hope of glory."

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH 568
FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD—AUGUST 6

New Release!

A new collection of conversion stories is now available!

Journeys Home 3 highlights the experiences of thirteen former **Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians** as they discovered the fullness of faith present in the Catholic Church and made the decision to come into full communion with the Church. Though created especially for converts and those exploring the Catholic Faith from a Pentecostal background, this compilation is sure to provide insight, encouragement, and inspiration for all.

Order your copy today at chnetwork.org/jh3

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

Monday, Aug 4
Rhonda Gruenewald
Former Agnostic

Monday, Aug 11
Dr. Matthew Wiseman
Former Hebrew Roots Movement

Monday, Aug 18
Fr. Scott Wooten
Former Episcopal Priest

Monday, Aug 25
Fr. Michael Nixon
Former Hare Krishna



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. 7AM ET, Sun. 1AM ET and 5PM ET
The Best of The Journey Home: Mon.–Fri. 1AM ET

Monday, Sept 1
Dr. Alicia Thompson
Former Agnostic
Original Air Date: 11/23/20

Schedule is subject to change.

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

2025 CLERGY CONVERT CONFERENCE

In June, the Coming Home Network partnered with the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology to launch a groundbreaking event in Steubenville, Ohio—a conference for Protestant clergy converts to Catholicism. Led by JonMarc Grodi and Dr. Scott Hahn (who also spoke at one of the plenary sessions), the three-day gathering featured speakers including CHNetwork's founder and President-Emeritus, Marcus Grodi, Dr. John Bergsma, Ken Hensley, Kenny Burchard, and Dr. Jeffrey Morrow, all of whom inspired attendees with their shared journeys.

The inaugural event also honored Marcus Grodi with the St. John Henry Newman Award, celebrating his long-standing dedication to guiding non-Catholic clergy home to Catholicism. The more than forty participants found encouragement in their passion for Scripture, along with support amidst the many challenges of conversion faced by non-Catholic clergy. This historic conference, fostering deep connections and renewed purpose, will hopefully become an annual beacon for current and former pastors exploring the Catholic Faith, reflecting the decades of impact since the conversion of both Marcus Grodi and Dr. Scott Hahn.



"The messages of the various speakers were perfectly fitting for our stage of the journey. It was especially comforting for Matt (my husband), as he is still in the 'smile and dial' stage (coined from Ken's journey). It is challenging for Protestant pastors whose identity was closely linked with ministry as they ponder when and how they might offer themselves in service again. The sacrifice is great to become Catholic—a death needs to take place—a dying to self (or even greater surrender). Just the notion that 'you are not alone' on the journey was soothing."

Rachel S., former Salvation Army officer



"The conference was absolutely amazing, and I haven't stopped talking about it with my wife and trusted friends. Thank you for allowing me to be a part. I am already in the online community and look forward to engaging very soon. I also need to get started and finish your video series on Mary."

Randy G., on the journey





"It's a profound thing to spend time with other 'unicorns' who have walked a similar path from full-time pastoral ministry to the recognition that the only way forward is to surrender it all in humble (and even humiliating) submission to Jesus and the Church He established. Every person had a profound story mingled with sorrows and joys, desolation and consolation—and some were still being written. These are truly heroic men and women of God who testify through their obedience that the greatest reward is Christ Himself who gives His very Self to us in the Most Holy Eucharist. I thank God for each one of [them]! I'm encouraged, emboldened, and expectant: the best is yet to come. May we have oil in our lamps when it does."

Grant A., former Non-denominational pastor

"I thoroughly enjoyed the conference. I thought Dr. Bergsma did a masterful job of tying many theological strands together and shedding a lot of light on the Jubilee from a Christian perspective. It was also very meaningful to have a moment with Marcus and JonMarc to express my gratitude for their work (although I mainly just found myself overwhelmed by emotion). I also thought Scott Hahn went above and beyond to interact with everyone who attended."

Gary M., former Cowboy Church pastor



JOIN US ON RETREAT!

CHNetwork Fall Retreat
October 6 – 9, 2025 | Maria Stein, OH



This journey of faith we are on consists of so many mountaintop experiences—as well as the low valleys of loneliness at times. It is an experience best lived out with others, especially others who understand. No one in our lives can support us more perfectly than those who are traveling the same path.

I will never forget my first CHNetwork retreat. There was a gentleman present who remarked that he felt like he had found "his people." That has remained with me ever since. I have attended several retreats since my first one in 2019, and I can honestly say I come away each time blessed by the whole experience. These moments sharing how God has worked in our

lives, praying together, celebrating Mass together, laughing and crying together, have built the foundation for lifelong friendships.

Every retreat experience is truly incredible. I absolutely love getting to meet so many people in person who I have gotten to know through our Online Community. It is such a joy for our Pastoral Care Team to witness the friendships between so many of our members that began online come together in person on retreat. Each experience feels very full circle in its own way.

My hope is that you will consider joining us on our upcoming Fall Retreat. I would love to meet you there!

Melissa Slagle, Pastoral Care Coordinator



COMPASS

Become a COMPASS Donor, an ever-growing community of benefactors who give a monthly gift of \$10-\$100 (or more) to support the CHNetwork as we help to guide men and women who are coming home to the Catholic Church.

Please contact Ann at **740.450.1175** or via email ann@chnetwork.org if you have any questions.

www.chnetwork.org/compass

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ComingHomeNetwork

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

Joyful Journey Updates

Lynnette W., Baptist on the journey

I am discovering a genius, depth, and logic in the Catholic Faith that is so beautiful. Most recently, I've been praying the Rosary. I never really understood the Hail Mary, but I can now see the beauty in it. As a woman, I am reminded over and over that we matter! God included a woman as part of the redemption story! It reminds me that motherhood is important and have someone who understands and we can aspire to. Also, when I hear men praying the Rosary, it feels like they are blessing women. Somehow it has helped me with my insecurities and knowing my worth as a woman and mother. As a Protestant, I didn't really have a way of expressing this and sometimes, as a woman, I felt we needed to fight for our equality or worth. I don't know if that makes any sense but this is where I'm at presently. I know there is so much more to learn, and I'm excited for that. ■

Eric B., former Anabaptist

There is a great peace in being Catholic, especially in having access to the sacraments. The sacraments have brought greater peace to my life and have strengthened my marriage. I am so glad to have the grace and courage to come home. ■

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

READY TO BECOME CATHOLIC?

Instruction for the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) will begin soon in most parishes. If you are planning to join the OCIA process this fall, let us know!

Email us at info@chnetwork.org

Prayer List

Clergy

- **For Jay, a minister in training** who has begun to study the case for Catholicism and is quickly becoming convinced, that the Holy Spirit will lead him.
- **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 Erik, a Mennonite pastor** who is in OCIA 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 Frank, a Methodist minister** and Christian media personality who has struggled for many years with the thought that he might become Catholic and who has seen obstacles in the way; that God will hear his prayers and make the path plain to him.
- **For Randy, a Protestant minister** with many years of successful ministry who began a deep dive on the Catholic Church and is now facing the difficult question of what to do; that the Holy Spirit will enlighten him and give him the courage he will need.
- **For Derrick, an Adventist academic** who was recently received into the Church and is 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 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 Arthur, a Lutheran pastor** who has come to reject *sola Scriptura* and has poured himself into listening to Catholic podcasts and reading Catholic books; that the Lord will make his way straight as he is just beginning to think through the implications of becoming Catholic.

■ **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, some of whom are extremely anti-Catholic.

■ **For Aaron, a Protestant pastor** who recently resigned his ministry and entered the Church with his wife on Easter Vigil of this year, that the Holy Spirit will lead him as he considers what kind of occupation to pursue in his new life as a Catholic.

■ **For Terry, a non-denominational academic** who has been researching the early Church and ecclesiology and is attracted to Catholicism but would face significant headwinds with his family should he move forward with becoming Catholic; that God will give him wisdom in how to share what he has learned.

Lay

■ **For Meg, a Protestant Christian**, that she may be granted patience, self-control and mindfulness toward others with regard to her own actions as well as clarity when she seeks conversation with some dear older friends in her denomination; that God would make clear an opportunity to seek out her local priest for his pastoral counsel; and a prayer of thanksgiving for the freedom her husband affords her to follow her inner promptings and to constantly attend Mass.

■ **For Anna**, that the Lord would shower her with consolation over the loss of her grandfather who recently passed away, and for God's providence in finding good employment opportunities.

■ **For Gal, a Jewish woman**, that she may receive an increase in faith and spiritually edifying catechesis as she continues her studies.

■ **For Priscilla, a Non-denominational Protestant**, that the Lord may grant her healing and good health.

■ **For Sara, a Baptist**, that she may receive the grace of discernment regarding

becoming Catholic as she is feeling drawn to the Church and in need of wisdom.

■ **For Ashley, an Anglican**, that she may receive the gift of patience as she waits on reception into the Church, and consolation for her family and friends as she shares the news of becoming Catholic.

■ **For Adam, a Non-denominational Evangelical**, that our Lord Jesus would call him to himself to through the holy Eucharist.

■ **For Daniel, who is from a secular background**, that the Lord would give him a hunger to embrace the fullness of the truth in the Catholic Church.

■ **For Seth, a member of a Non-denominational Bible church**, that he and his wife may soon be able to have their marriage convalidated.

■ **For Michael, a Southern Baptist**, that the Holy Spirit would bless and guide his conversations with his Evangelical coworkers.

■ **For Sean, a young Non-denominational Evangelical**, that the Holy Spirit would soften the hearts of his parents toward the Church.

■ **For Bob, an Independent Baptist**, that our Lord Jesus would guide him and his wife to full communion with the Catholic Church.

■ **For Miguel, a Seventh-day Adventist**, that Holy Spirit would open the hearts of his friends and brothers to his journey to the Church.

■ **For Michael, a Non-denominational Christian**, that he may find proper guidance in his search as to how to enter the Catholic Church.

■ **For Tim, a former Baptist**, that God would guide him back home to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

■ **For Jonathan, a former Atheist**, that as he prays, reads, and ponders, the Holy Spirit would guide him Home.

■ **For Walter, a member of the Presbyterian Church in America**, that he may find good answers to his questions about the Catholic Faith.

answers I found.

As a Protestant, our pastor was our primary authority aside from the Bible. There are many good pastors who are sincere but disagree on biblical interpretation. How could we know our pastor is correct—on what authority? The same Bible that others read and interpreted differently? Things I had always assumed to be right were now being called into question. During all my time with Annette, I had never fully questioned these matters. I had done some research, but I was usually just looking to confirm that I was right. Based on the Protestant sources I had read and listened to over the years, that was easy to do. Until now, I had never read a Catholic source about Catholic teaching.

My understanding of the Christianity timeline was something like this:

Apostolic times → Protestant Reformation → Today

Growing up in Sunday school classes, I learned nothing about Christian history other than what was in the Bible. I assumed that the early Church had come off the rails, fell into error, and Martin Luther saved Christianity. However, if Jesus promised that the gates of Hell wouldn't prevail against the Church (Matthew 16:18), would God have let the Church fall into heresy for 1,500 years? What about all those people that lived during those times? Were they all lost and in Hell? They lived much closer to the time of Jesus than we do. What made us right and them wrong?

The Scales Fall From My Eyes

Amid this, I went to my first Eucharistic Adoration with Annette. It was exceptionally reverent and special for me. I was beginning to consider the possibility that I might believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, something I never had done before. I had never considered a literal reading of John 6, but now I could see how that could change everything.

It quickly came to the point where I needed to give my full attention to this issue. I decided I would now only go to Mass with Annette and no longer attend my Non-denominational church—at least until I got my questions answered. The first Sunday I did so, the choir was accompanied by a violin. It was beautiful and added to the reverence of the Mass. Though I had stopped kneeling during the consecration years ago when at Mass with Annette and had never in my life genuflected before sitting down, now, as I attended Mass, I began to genuflect, recognizing that Christ could truly be present in the tabernacle. I knelt during the consecration and was having a hard time holding back the tears. I felt a bit like Paul on the road to Damascus, with something like scales falling from my eyes.

That morning was a pivotal turning point to accelerate my conversion. I began to see the Catholic Mass as true worship and began to view what I had called worship in my various churches over the years as something different. It felt like God was re-programming my mind and my heart in short order. I couldn't believe what was happening. Part of me thought things were happening way too fast, while another part of me was ready to dive into the Catholic Church head first.

Annette and I were now going to the chapel weekly for Eucharistic Adoration. I also started going to Mass during the week over my lunch hour. Even though I couldn't receive the Eucharist, I was drawn to attend Mass as often as I could get there. I wrote the following in my journal: "To me, the issue is still all about authority. If the Catholic Church (Magisterium), along with Scripture and Tradition, is the true authority, then my doctrinal concerns about salvation, Mary, the Pope, purgatory, etc., are irrelevant. If that is the true authority, it doesn't matter what I believe. I must conform my will to that of the authority."

I decided to start RCIA (the process to inquire about joining the Catholic Church) and asked Annette to be my sponsor. The night of my first RCIA class, we attended Eucharistic exposition and benediction in the church. I had never attended anything like it in my life. It was more worshipful than any other type of service I've witnessed. Others may have been more emotional and moving, but not more filled with authentic worship.

While all this was going on, I was still working through my issues about the pope, Mary, and purgatory among others. I had never understood or believed any of these teachings. During this part of the process, I began to understand and appreciate that there was biblical evidence for key Catholic teachings: Apostolic Succession, the Sacraments (the Eucharist, Confession, etc.), the pope, Mary as the Mother of God and the Ark of the Covenant, etc. Though I may have interpreted many of the verses differently as a Protestant, I could see the arguments and reasoning behind the Church's teaching. I loved my life as a Protestant Christian but was feeling a strong pull to become Catholic.

Through my observations in the last 30+ years, it seemed as if Catholics worshipped Mary. This may have been my biggest hurdle to becoming Catholic. It was during this time that I learned the terms "latria," "dulia," and "hyperdulia." Latria is true worship and adoration. Latria is due to God and God (the Creator) alone. Dulia is honor and veneration given to saints (creatures). Hyperdulia is extra dulia that is due to Mary, the greatest saint, but it is not worship or adoration. Learning that distinction helped me to better understand that Catholic teaching doesn't place Mary on the same level as the Holy Trinity.

**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.)

Since I was beginning to submit to the authority of the Church, I began to accept on faith that these things were true, even though I still had many questions about them. A quote from one of the people I listened to along the way helped me here. Kenny Burchard is a former Pentecostal pastor who became Catholic. In a Cordial Catholic podcast episode, he expressed it this way: “I stand under the authority of the Church until I understand what the Church teaches and what it means by what it teaches.” That is exactly how I felt.

I can summarize my journey with these three words: Authority, Adoration, and Assent. I was convicted on the issue of authority, began feeling the pull in my heart during adoration, and finally assented to the authority of the Church. In one way, it seemed to be going very fast. In another way, it seemed that it had been part of a 30+ year journey. Eventually, it became an issue of obedience. God had clearly called me to join the Catholic Church, and failure to do so was putting my will above God’s will. I could no longer do that, and I knew in my heart that I had become Catholic.

At this point, I began to tell family and friends about my decision to enter the Catholic Church. Most were supportive but didn’t really understand. Some still struggle with my decision and may always do so. I pray I get the chance to have a more in-depth conversation with many of them about the “why” of my conversion. I am so grateful for my life as a Protestant. That is when I learned to love Scripture, love Jesus, and developed an ongoing, personal relationship with Him.

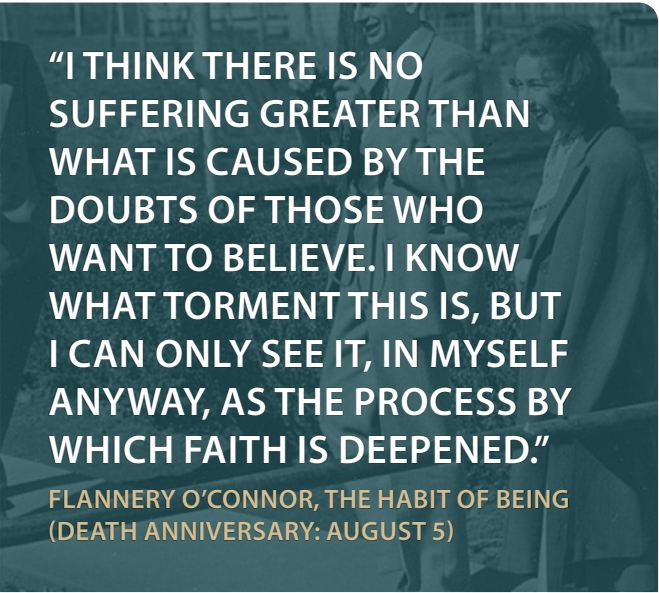
Life as a Catholic

On February 1, 2022, I had my first confession with our parish priest. I met with him for over an hour. I had prepared for weeks and had lots of notes. It was a humbling experience and hard to discuss all my sins in detail to another human. I didn’t feel any fireworks or any different when I left him. However, I did notice a few days later that my soul felt lighter, and when I thought of some of the things I had confessed, I didn’t have the same feeling of guilt or shame that I did before. It was truly a grace that I received from the sacrament.

My Confirmation was on May 15, 2022. In just eight months I had gone from being a very happy Evangelical to a confirmed Catholic. It was only through a miracle of God that this could happen. Annette and I walked up for the Rite of Confirmation. I was calm, stated that I believed all that the Holy Catholic Church believes, teaches, and proclaims, and was anointed with oil by our priest. I knew something of great importance had just happened.

My life as a Catholic has been nothing short of amazing. Annette and I are serving in the Church together for the first time in our married life. We have walked with three couples preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage as marriage mentors. We’ve taken instructional classes to learn more about our Catholic faith. Annette and I both serve on ministry committees at our parish. We’ve developed a community of Catholic friends.

For most of my life, I felt I needed the excitement and energy that comes from most Evangelical worship services, from the time



“I THINK THERE IS NO SUFFERING GREATER THAN WHAT IS CAUSED BY THE DOUBTS OF THOSE WHO WANT TO BELIEVE. I KNOW WHAT TORMENT THIS IS, BUT I CAN ONLY SEE IT, IN MYSELF ANYWAY, AS THE PROCESS BY WHICH FAITH IS DEEPENED.”

**FLANNERY O’CONNOR, THE HABIT OF BEING
(DEATH ANNIVERSARY: AUGUST 5)**

you walk in the door before the service to the time it ends. Now, I’m much more drawn to the peace and tranquility of kneeling before Christ in the tabernacle in a spirit of prayer before Mass. I attend daily Mass at a neighboring parish most days before work and love starting my day in the silence, preparing for the Mass, and receiving the Eucharist.

One of the biggest surprises to me was the love and appreciation I have for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. I could never understand why I needed to confess to a priest when I could confess directly to God. When I read John 20:21–23 without my Protestant filter, I understood the biblical support for the sacrament. Now, as a Catholic, I have been blessed to be able to participate in this sacrament frequently.

I’ve learned to love things I never thought I could love. Saying a memorized prayer was not something I did; it almost felt wrong to me as “vain repetition.” Now, I love and appreciate many of the great Catholic prayers, especially the *Anima Christi* prayer, the Liturgy of the Hours, the majestic *Te Deum*, and even the Rosary, which had been a major stumbling block for me. I still say personal prayers as I always have, but these Catholic prayers have added so much to my prayer life that I didn’t have before.

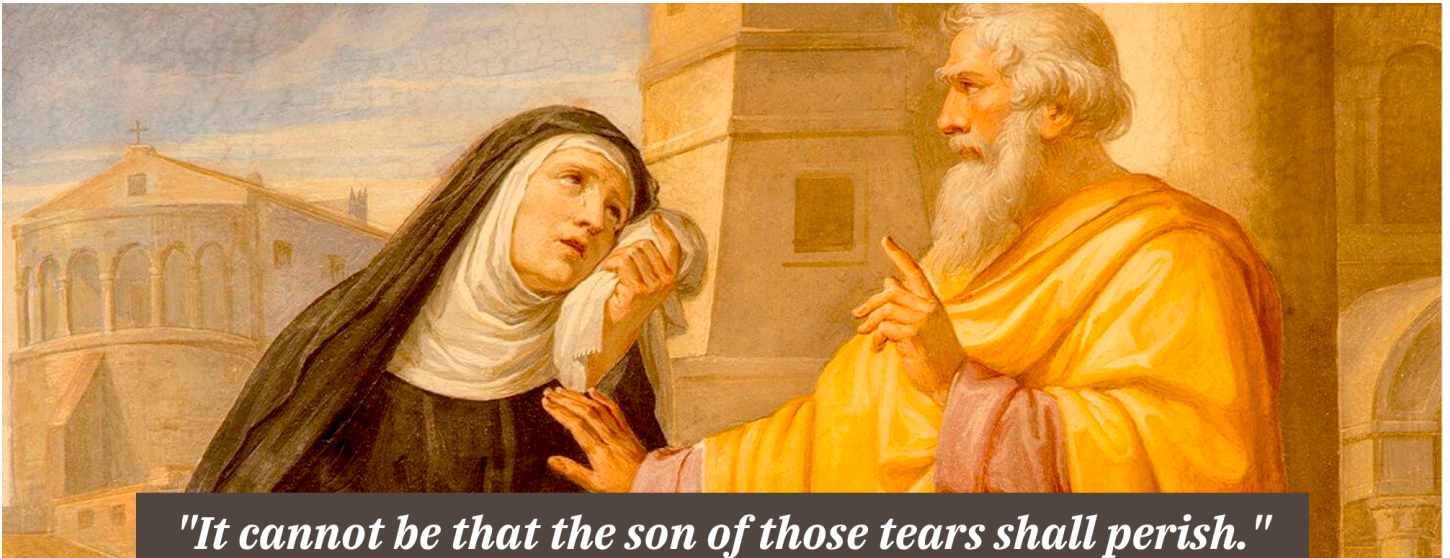
Just over three years ago, I would have never imagined a scenario where I became Catholic. Now, I can’t imagine my life without my Catholic faith. I’ve come to know the truth, beauty, and goodness of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

Praise be to God! ■

Barry Hamlin lives in West Chester, OH with his wife Annette. They have three adult children, a son-in-law and a granddaughter. He and Annette serve together at St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic Church. He works as a Director of Manufacturing Operations and is currently taking graduate classes in Catholic Theology at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary & School of Theology in Cincinnati.

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



"It cannot be that the son of those tears shall perish."

ST. AMBROSE TO ST. MONICA (Feast Day: August 28)

St. Monica spent many years praying through tears for her son, St. Augustine. Her fortitude and trust as she prayed bore much fruit in God's time. She reminds us to remain firm in prayerful hope for those lost or struggling in their faith, trusting that the Lord is moving in their lives, calling them home to Himself through their own unique journey.