



## September 2025 CHNewsletter

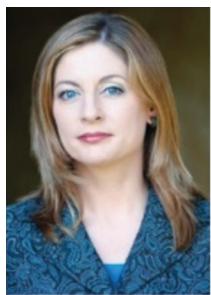
Our Coming Home Story by Andrea LaFountain .....	1
Patience and Perseverance by JonMarc Grodi .....	4
First CHNetwork Retreat in England .....	6
Prayer List .....	7
Community Question: Catholic Surprises .....	9

# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

## Our Coming Home Story

By Andrea LaFountain

I was born in Manchester, England in 1969 to Irish parents. We moved to my Mom's hometown, Donegal, Ireland, in 1977, where my four siblings and I attended the local Catholic school. At the age of 11, I received the Sacrament of Confirmation. My friends and I were very excited for the gifts of the Holy Spirit to descend upon us. We wondered what it would be like, if we would notice a difference in the moment. We were ready and waiting! After the big event, we huddled together and agreed that we were all much wiser—probably as mature as our parents!



I next attended the local high school, a Loreto convent. There, we occasionally had a service in the beautiful little chapel. We'd sing and have a lesson on being guided by the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, I was sure He showed up in person as we sang *Veni Sanctus Spiritus*. I wondered if others felt it. Most people never spoke about their faith. Faith wasn't very personalized, but rather, more institutional.

Growing up, we went to Mass every Sunday, but it didn't have any great appeal to me. I went because it was non-negotiable. When, at 18, I left home for college in Belfast, I didn't bother with Mass anymore, preferring to sleep in on Sunday mornings instead.

The Catholic/Protestant divide, also known as "The Troubles," was rife in Northern Ireland at the time. Being Catholic now took on a different meaning

altogether. It wasn't about Jesus and the Blessed Mother. It wasn't about going to Mass or holy living. It wasn't about religion at all. It was about which side of the fence you were on nationally. Were you proud of the Queen and aligned with British politics, or did you carry a vision for a United Ireland, free from British "occupation"? For me, I didn't have a political or historical bone in my body, but that didn't matter. I was born Catholic, came from Donegal, had the last name Moran, and attended the University of Ulster. There was no doubt to society where my "allegiance" lay.

Everyone played by the rules. There was no choice. You'd be shot in the head or knees if you wandered to the wrong side. It was easy to not get lost. Street curbs were painted either red, white, and blue, or green, white, and gold. Everything was segregated: schools, colleges, taxi stands, and even pubs. During this time, I had a job teaching preschoolers. The

Continued on page 2 ➡

Journeys Home

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

classroom was a double-decker bus in Protestant Rathcoole Estate, the epitome of poverty-stricken, downtrodden, hopeless living. However, the director of the group pulled me from the role. She said it was too dangerous, since I was Catholic, and gave me an office job. I was tasked with refurbishing a rundown Victorian mansion that would be used for cross-border events.

After receiving my B.S. in Applied Psychology, I continued my study in the same field. In 1993, I graduated with my Master's degree and went to England to study for a Ph.D. in Neuroscience.

### An Awakening: That's Not Me

About a year or so into my Ph.D., I started dating my professor. I was in my mid-twenties—he was over 50! We had an argument one night after coming home from the pub. He started punching me. After a few hard hits in the face, I managed to get out from under him and ran out the door.

I dressed pretty promiscuously in those days, and now I was out on the dark street alone. It was about two in the morning on a Friday night, when people were driving home from the pub, consciences loosened with alcohol. I got such a fright when I realized my vulnerability. I ran as fast as I could to my home, about a mile away.

When I got home, I went to my room and looked at myself in the mirror. My face was a mess. My mouth was cut and my nose was bloody. My eyes were puffed up and bruised—one was barely open. Blood was all over my face and mascara streaked down my cheeks. My hair was matted with blood from my nose. I was shocked at what I saw in the mirror. I didn't recognize myself—physically or emotionally. The person staring back at me was not me. I fell to the floor and cried, wondering how on earth I had gotten here. I knew there was a better me buried deep inside. How did I let her drift away? Where did she go? More importantly, how could I get her back? Was that even possible? I

knew I was at risk losing this inner soul for good. I needed a radical change.

### Becoming Protestant

Shortly after that awakening, I had a conversion experience. My Protestant friends called it being “born again.” I didn't like that terminology at all. It sounded cultish. I was told I needed to get back to church—but not a Catholic church. I didn't ask why it couldn't be a Catholic church; I just followed along and found a local Non-denominational church. It didn't seem to have much structure to it, and I was okay with that. They played nice worship music and studied the Bible. I did an Alpha course, which helped me understand where I was in my faith. I enjoyed studying the Bible, praying, and most of all, just speaking with Jesus—daily, throughout the day, moment-by-moment. Soon, a prophetic gift developed, and I had many deep, meaningful conversations with the Holy Spirit.

Around this time, while I was in the north in Chester, I met my husband, an American, in London. We began dating, spending most of our time together on the phone. After a year, we got engaged. Back in Ireland, my mum was making arrangements for our wedding. She called a local priest and told him she was looking for a date for her daughter's wedding, and mentioned that my fiancé was a Protestant. The tone on the phone changed instantly. I could hear the priest screaming at her. He yelled that both me and my heathen husband were damned to hell for all eternity! My mum was outraged. I found the whole thing amusing.

Adding insult to injury, the priest hung up on my mum. I suggested she call him back and give him a word or two of her own. She did. She shouted back at him, “Is it any wonder the youth are leaving the Catholic church these days with bigots like you at the helm?” She told him that my Protestant fiancé was

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### THE HIDDEN MANNA

FR. JAMES T. O'CONNOR

In this in-depth study, Fr. O'Connor lets the breadth and richness of the Church's Tradition speak for itself. Both historically and theologically, the author explains key terms associated with the Eucharist in Catholic theology, including Real Presence, Transubstantiation, and many more.

#3035 - \$21.95

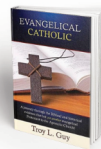


### EVANGELICAL CATHOLIC

TROY L. GUY

What explains the conversion of evangelical ministers to the Catholic Church? There are multiple examples. This book points out that Protestantism is pastor-centric, while apostolic Christianity is Eucharist-centric. The center of the former is a pastor and a sermon, while the center of the latter is the Real Presence of Christ.

#3231 - \$14.95

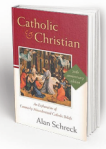


### CATHOLIC & CHRISTIAN

DR. ALAN SCHRECK

Dr. Schreck's classic work is a readable and concise summary of the commonly misunderstood Catholic teachings and practices that don't get much attention in Sunday homilies and in religious education, but which puzzle Catholics and non-Catholics alike. This book is for Catholics who want to know more about their faith, and Protestants who want to learn about Catholicism.

#3186 - \$16.99



more a testimony of Christ than she'd seen in any Catholic priest in a long time. Then she hung up on him. Six months later, my husband and I got married in a Methodist church in Ireland. I was 30 years old.

## The American Dream

After our wedding in December 1999 and a New Year's celebration in Ireland, I emigrated to the United States with my American husband. We arrived in Philadelphia on January 2, 2000. For church, my husband and I settled into a Calvary Chapel in Philadelphia, then attended another Calvary Chapel when we moved to the suburbs. I was learning tons about the Word of God. I began doing children's ministry and participating in small group Bible studies. I got into a pattern of daily devotions, my prayer life was deepening, and my obedience to the Holy Spirit was becoming more consistent. My walk with the Lord was good and growing, and I was loving it!

Leaving behind a life of academia in the UK, I began my American career working in the pharmaceutical industry, using my psychology background to understand patient cognition and health behavior. It was very fulfilling. I worked for a large pharmaceutical company for several years and then resigned to establish my own consulting company. I loved my work and planned to see this through until retirement. I was living the American dream—that is, until God got in the way.

In 2017, after almost two decades in the pharmaceutical industry, the Lord told me to give it up. I said, "No!" After months of wrestling with the Lord over the future of my business, the Lord pulled the rug out from under me. Maybe if I had gotten off of the rug, the fall wouldn't have been so painful, but I was stubbornly holding on. I fell hard and was stunned! My whole purpose and identity were instantly stripped from me. I felt naked, lost, unjustly robbed—by God, of all people! I was confused and angry with God. I lay on the floor in my home office and cried my eyes out, completely stymied about what had just happened and what my life was going to be now.

I had thought I was doing what I was created to do. Applied cognitive science was my life and purpose; now all of that vanished. Trying to see into the future, all I could see was a blank. There was no definition, no plans, no goals, no purpose—nothing; just lots of white space and nothingness. I felt like a zombie.

One day around that time, while I was doing AirBnB, I had a lady staying with me who asked me at breakfast, "So, what do you do?" This was the first time someone had asked me that question since the Lord took me out of my consulting. I had no answer. After a couple of minutes of hemming and hawing, I answered rather circumspectly, "I guess I'm a stay-at-home mom," and I burst into tears. She said, "Oh dear, I didn't mean it to be a difficult question." It was a cathartic moment. I didn't want to be a stay-at-home mom. As much as I value that role, I had never seen it as my calling, despite having five children, four of whom were hurtling towards the teenage years! (Looking back now, spending time close to my children during their teens was a cherished time.)

## The American Nightmare

During this time of being a stay-at-home mom, the Lord was providing me lots of material to write down. Soon I had notebooks packed with teachings and lessons. There was a definite theme in the writings. The church was struggling to be a testimony to the world of God's love and grace. My heart began to lament for a deeper spirituality within the church, and within myself. It grieved me to see people sloshing their coffee mugs around in the "sanctuary." It grieved me to see people focus on themselves during worship instead of on God. It grieved me to see God being reduced to a prayer buddy. It grieved me that His people didn't bow down in humility and reverence to Him—our Creator and our Redeemer.

I spent a lot of 2018 in tears crying over the lack of honor and obedience within the church. My heart was broken. I cried with Christian friends, with my husband, with church leaders, by myself—always about the same stuff: the church isn't loving and honoring God from the depths of its heart. I saw a desperate crisis, and work to be done. I started with a meager and humble effort: writing a blog on Spiritual Formation.

## Truth First

I enjoyed writing the blog. It grew into a small ministry, which I set up as a 501c3 organization in 2018 under the name *Truth First*. I began teaching seminars and conferences. The theme was always the same: providing practical tools to prosper sanctification so that Christians could live authentic lives that glorified God.

Then the pandemic hit. I stopped doing seminars and conferences and took to writing again. The Lord kept pressing on my heart about the desperate state of the church. The feeling became overwhelming to the point that I couldn't bear it any more. I told my husband I needed to get away for a while to write what the Lord was laying on me. He gave me his blessing, and off I went in our RV, just me and my dog, to Cape May for a while.

The first morning I woke up at 4:55 AM—the first miracle of the day! After breakfast and a walk with my dog on a cold, dark October morning, I sat at the tiny table and asked the Lord "Now what?" God spoke. He said "Before you write, I want to tell you why you are writing this book." What happened next was an experience that deepened my faith across heart, soul, and mind more than anything else that I had ever experienced. He said, "You are writing this book to bring people back to me." I can be a scribe for that, I thought casually. Then He said, "You are writing this book because I am desperate." I said, "Lord, I didn't hear you right. Can you say that again?" He said "You heard me right." I was incredulous. Surely, it's not possible for God to be desperate. I argued back "Lord, no. You are the God of heaven and earth. It's not possible for you to be desperate. You can have whatever you want." I felt my own sanity was on the line. What would I cling to and revere if my Rock—God—was desperate? I begged Him again, "You can't be desperate!" He answered plainly, "I am desperate for my people to love me." Then he placed in my heart a modicum of His grief. It was overwhelming. I felt like Moses,



# Patience and Perseverance



Dear Friends,

As Christians, we remain people on the journey. Every person's starting point is different. So are the experiences and challenges they face along the way, along with the gifts, talents, treasures, and opportunities that the Lord equips them with for the journey. At the same time, we have all been similarly loved into existence by our Heavenly Father, and we are each called to the depths of prayer and the heights of holiness—to be saints! We know that in Christ we are each equipped with every necessary grace to "run with perseverance the race that is set before us" (Heb 12:1), and that if we do so, we too will finish the race having fought the good fight and having kept the faith (Timothy 4:7).

As St. Paul notes, this virtue of perseverance is crucial to the journey. While we should live mindfully and be prepared for a holy death, most of us still have a long road ahead, a road that at times will be marked by suffering and evils—at least some of which will be the result of our own sins. In the face of such difficulties and potential discouragements, we must remain steadfast. We must persevere in faithfully following Jesus and carrying out the tasks and missions He has given us, through the good times and the bad in this life. No matter how many times we fall, we must get back up and press onward, trusting in the Lord's mercy and grace.

Perseverance is a virtue—that is, it is a "habit of soul" that grows by practice and grace, which disposes us toward the Good and thereby makes us more like Jesus. **The virtue of Perseverance is the ability and willingness to endure suffering—pain, uncertainty, discomfort, fear, evil—not out of insensibility or pride or stubbornness, but out of an even stronger love for the good.** When we fix our sight on what is true, good, and beautiful, and we voluntarily accept the pain or suffering of the present cross, we are practicing and growing in the virtue of perseverance—becoming, by God's grace, people who will be able to "suffer with [Christ] in order that we may also share in his glory." (Romans 8:17)

The heart of perseverance is, thus, love, and this fact points then to another key virtue that accompanies and sustains perseverance. Patience, like so many of the virtues, has lost the original clarity and distinctiveness of its meaning in modern discourse. We might think of patience simply as the ability to wait for an event to happen OR to restrain oneself from responding with angry words or actions in the face of some difficulty. However, long before you act out with words or deeds, you have lost your patience in your heart. To remain patient, is to guard in your heart the love and peace of Jesus Christ. Patience is not something passive, but rather an eminently active and vigilant clinging to this love that is the foundation of perseverance. Josef Pieper summarizes it thus:

**To be patient means to preserve cheerfulness and serenity of mind in spite of injuries that result from the realization of the good. Patience does not imply the exclusion of energetic, forceful activity, but simply, explicitly and solely the exclusion of sadness and confusion of heart. Patience keeps man from the danger that his spirit may be broken by grief and lose its greatness. (The Four Cardinal Virtues, 129)**

At difficult or frustrating moments in the journey, we may look externally like we are persevering just fine. We may continue to put one foot in front of the other and to power through the obstacles in our way. But what is happening inside? The virtue of patience, properly understood, is a fundamental integrity of body, mind, and spirit—it is a holding fast to the object of our Love, in Faith and Hope, even while the spiritual and/or physical battles of life rage around us.

Patience is the heart of perseverance because it is a vigilant guarding of the great gift of love we have received from Jesus, the love for whom it is worth enduring any and all difficulties and sufferings the journey may entail. Whenever we "lose our patience"—whether out of fear, anger, or some other passion—we surrender this inner peace and joy that is the result of knowing the Lord Jesus. We "lose heart" and thus falter in our ability to persevere. On the other hand, whenever we make a conscious effort to practice patience, we grow in the ability to keep our heart intact amidst trials: "through patience, man possesses his soul" (Luke 21:12)

How is the virtue of patience cultivated? As with any habit of the soul, it takes practice, in cooperation with God's grace. But the best place to begin building up the foundations of any virtue is in prayer, where we turn to the reality of God's presence, we enter into relationship with Him through Faith, Hope, and Charity, and we learn to recognize and accept this peace and joy that only Jesus can give us, and which no one and nothing can take away from us—save by our willing surrender of it.

During this month of September, many members of the Coming Home Network who have already patiently endured so much on their journey home to the Catholic Church, are now entering an important next step as they begin OCIA classes (the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults). At the same time, many remain at extremely difficult places on the journey—perhaps facing confusion, opposition, doubt, and despair as they seek to hear and heed God's will. Wherever you are on the journey, let us pray for each other today, let us patiently offer up each and every difficulty we face as a sacrifice of love, and let us persevere in following Jesus wherever He leads.

In Christ,

JonMarc Grodi

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

# JOIN US ON RETREAT!

## CHNetwork Fall Retreat

October 6 – 8, 2025 | Maria Stein, OH

Intended for converts and those on the journey to Catholicism, both clergy and laity, our retreats are an opportunity to gather with the CHNetwork staff and other members of the network for a time of discussion, prayer, and worship. As we share our stories of how Christ drew us to the Church, the obstacles we faced, and the difficulties involved in



finding a home in the Catholic Church, our goal is to promote Christian fellowship among the attendees, assist in discernment for those who are facing tough questions or decisions, and to encourage all in an ever greater walk with Christ.

Find full details and register at [chnetwork.org/retreats](http://chnetwork.org/retreats).



**“The cross stands for Christ’s suffering because on it he freely suffered unto death. But it is also his trophy because it was the means by which the devil was wounded and death conquered.”**

**ST. ANDREW OF CRETE**

FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS—SEPTEMBER 14

**For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18

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

Monday, Sept 1

**Dr. Alicia Thompson**

Former Agnostic  
Original Air Date:  
11/23/20

Monday, Sept 8

**Bishop James Conley**

Former Baptist &  
Presbyterian

Monday, Sept 15

**Joshua and Teresa Mangels**

Former Assemblies of  
God

Monday, Sept 22

**Deacon Matt Halbach**

Catholic Revert

Monday, Sept 29

**Bishop Earl Fernandes**

Lifelong Catholic



### 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, Oct 6

**Michael Garcia**

Former Oneness  
Pentecostal Minister

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)



# Our First CHNetwork Retreat in England was a HUGE Success!



From June 23–25, 2025, CHNetwork hosted our first UK retreat at the breathtaking Ampleforth Abbey in Yorkshire. It was a holy moment. Facilitated by Ken Hensley and assisted by Kenny and MaryJo Burchard, the retreat welcomed 17 participants from across the UK and Germany, including a former Anglican (now married Catholic) priest. Each attendee was navigating a different phase of their journey into the Catholic Church.

For many, that journey brings both profound joy and deep loss—strained friendships, vocational uncertainty, and the disorientation of leaving behind a familiar evangelical or Anglican world. Over three powerful days, participants gathered

for five honest, heartfelt sessions, rich times of prayer, and laughter-filled meals that turned strangers into friends. Late-night wine and cheese gatherings sparked conversations that stretched long into the night—spaces where no one had to “translate” their story.

Participants repeatedly emphasized how vital it is to have retreats specifically for the UK—where the Catholic voice has long been quieted, and the social cost of conversion remains high. And yet, there are signs of revival: Catholic churchgoing in the UK has risen from 23% to 31% since 2018, with 41% of new Mass-goers under 35.

This retreat was just the beginning. The soil in Britain is ready.

## REFLECTION FROM AN ATTENDEE:

*The retreat was wonderful! It was everything I was hoping for and so much more. I met some incredible people and made some good connections. I also had time to pray and reflect. The location was beautiful and the hospitality was excellent.*

*Thank you very much for your help preparing for it, and thank you again for arranging the funding. I'm so grateful I could go. Please pass my gratitude to everyone involved in making that possible for me.*

*I think the experience will stay with me for a long time.*

*Thank you,  
Katherine*



# Prayer List

## Clergy

- **For Austin, an Evangelical pastor** who has been drawn to the Catholic Church for a long time and has recently become convinced that his time as a Protestant minister is nearing an end; that the Lord will bless him as he attempts to find new ways to support his family.
- **For Charlie, a Pentecostal pastor** who wants to become Catholic, but whose wife is open but not ready; that God will give him the grace and love he needs to lead her home to the Church.
- **For Chris, an Evangelical lay minister** for whom *sola Scriptura* is beginning to unravel; that the implications of this will move him in the direction of the Church.
- **For Chris, a former Protestant missionary** who entered the Catholic Church with his family this Easter and is loving his new life as a Catholic; that the Lord continues to pour out His blessing in his family.
- **For Daniel, an Anglican lay-minister** who finds himself on a journey toward Catholicism but still has much to learn; that we at the Coming Home Network will be able to guide him.
- **For Gabriel, an Amish minister** who finds himself drawn to the Catholic Church; that the Holy Spirit will fill him with wisdom.
- **For Joshua, a Baptist pastor** who was raised Catholic and knows now that he must return to the Catholic Church, but also loves his current ministry and has no idea how and when to make a move back; that the Holy Spirit will give him the wisdom and courage needed.
- **For Karl, a Mennonite missionary** who is learning, praying, and finding himself drawn to the Catholic Church; that the Lord will help him as he faces many difficulties.
- **For Michael, a Baptist minister** who is well on his way toward the Church after encountering the early Church Fathers and beginning to read and listen to Catholic teachers; that the Holy Spirit will give him wisdom in how to address his family.

■ **For Ross, a Methodist lay-minister** who has been studying the case for Catholicism in recent months and is attracted to what he's learning; that the Holy Spirit will continue to lead him as he seeks to follow the Lord.

■ **For Tim, a non-denominational Christian pastor** who has become curious about Catholic teaching and wants to learn more; that the Lord will draw him closer to full communion with the Church through what he discovers.

## Laily

- **For Alyssa, an Evangelical**, that she may receive guidance toward the truth and divine assistance in overcoming fear.
- **For Andrew, a Wesleyan**, that he may be able to connect with a faithful and supportive Catholic community in his area.
- **For Casey, a Southern Baptist**, that the Holy Spirit would assist him in getting past his feelings of intimidation of priests.
- **For Chloe, a Wesleyan**, that she may receive the gift of wisdom as she shares with her family about her journey into the Church.
- **For Davis**, that he may find the answers that he craves in the Catholic Church.
- **For Dawn, a Catholic Convert**, that her family may become completely united in the faith.
- **For Eli**, that our Lord Jesus Christ would bless and guide him as he seeks to understand the Catholic Faith.
- **For Gal, who is Jewish**, that she may receive the grace she desires to grow in devotion and love of Christ.
- **For Hannah, a Non-denominational Protestant**, that the Holy Spirit may guide her with grace in conversations with family and friends regarding her conversion and that they may receive understanding.
- **For Jack, a former Agnostic**, that his OCIA journey would bring him into full communion with the Church founded by Jesus.
- **For Jennifer, an Episcopalian**, that the Holy Spirit would equip her with perseverance as she and her husband seek full communion with the Church.
- **For Joanna, a Baptist**, that she may experience healing in her relationship with her sister.
- **For Laura, an Episcopalian**, that she may enter into full communion with the Catholic Church very soon, that the Holy Spirit would continue to convert the heart of her spouse, and that the Lord would grant provision for many medical needs.
- **For Lauren, a Baptist**, that the Holy Spirit grants wisdom and perseverance as she and her family begin their journey home to the Church this year.
- **For Matthew, an Evangelical**, that he may receive answers to his questions about the Church and that his friends and family accept his journey.
- **For Paul, a Lutheran**, that his desire for something deeper, more rooted in Scripture and authority, would bring him into full communion with the Catholic Church.
- **For Reid, a Southern Baptist**, that he may be granted the grace to embrace the fullness of the truth in the Catholic Faith.
- **For Renee, a Catholic convert**, that the Lord may bless her with marital unity in faith.
- **For Sam, a Non-denominational Evangelical**, that while he attends Mass, our Lord Jesus would give him a hunger to receive Him in the holy Eucharist.
- **For Scott, a Non-denominational Evangelical and a former Atheist**, that his long journey would bring him Home to the altar of our Lord Jesus.
- **For Wendy, who is on the journey**, that the Lord pour out his healing as she undergoes a medical procedure for her eyes.
- **For William**, that he may receive consolation over the passing of his mother and that she may enter the glory of God's presence cleansed of all sins.
- **For Zach, a Lutheran**, that the Holy Spirit would grant him the grace to embrace the Catholic teaching of faith and justification.

## PRAYER TO ST. MICHAEL

WRITTEN BY POPE LEO XIII

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.  
Be our protection against the wickedness  
and snares of the devil.

May God rebuke him, we humbly pray;  
and do Thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host,  
by the Divine Power of God, cast into hell  
Satan and all the evil spirits  
who roam throughout the world seeking  
the ruin of souls.

FEAST OF THE ARCHANGELS—SEPTEMBER 29

## CHNETWORK STAFF, ADVISORS, & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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(former Presbyterian pastor)

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**JonMarc Grodi**

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info@chnetwork.org

Find us on Social Media



The Coming Home  
Network International



CHNetwork



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*.

# COMPASS

## SUPPORT THE CHNETWORK!

Become a **COMPASS Donor**, an ever-growing community of donors 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.

PIONEER

\$10/month

PATHFINDER

\$25/month

GUIDE

\$50/month

NAVIGATOR

\$100/month

**CHNetwork.org/Compass**

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

## READY TO BECOME CATHOLIC?

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

Email us at **info@chnetwork.org**

## COMMUNITY QUESTION

# Catholic Surprises

*As members of the Coming Home Network explore the Catholic Faith from a wide variety of faith backgrounds and ministerial experiences, many encounter moments of conflict and tension, trying to reconcile what they have known with the multitude of things they are discovering about the Catholic Church. Some approach with trepidation, while others absorb all that is new with wonder.*

*With this in mind, we asked our community members what they were surprised to love about being Catholic after making the journey into full communion with the Church or coming back after having been away. Here is what some of them had to say:*

***“The way the entire congregation responds in perfect unison when saying the Creed or Our Father. It’s a full and happy sound.”***

~Helen D.

***“I can go to Mass anywhere in the world. Even if it’s not in my language I can still follow along.”***

~Travis R.

***“The Catholic Church housing many schools of theology/philosophy in one big tent. I was raised Fundamentalist and Dispensationalist... (we) were actually way more dogmatic than the Holy See has ever been, when it came to what we could and could not believe. But in Catholicism, I came to love and appreciate that Thomism, Augustinianism, Benedictine Spirituality, Franciscan Spirituality, Carmelite Spirituality, Ignatian Spirituality...can all cohabitate and cooperate together in One Church.”***

~Bradley T.

***“Adoration and veneration of Saints. My whole understanding of Eucharist and Ecclesiology has changed and it’s wonderful—and I was an Anglican priest!”***

~Michael B.

***“Catholic apologetics on Biblical points counteracting fundamentalism. While Mary wasn’t a problem in my mind, I didn’t get a rosary until my confirmation. I am loving it now that I’ve kept at it, like I keep gaining new insights and more peace—it never gets old, and so many suffering people need our prayers!”***

~Misha S.

***“Kneeling in Mass. I was so afraid of it as a Protestant. Now I get it. The sacred space with His presence!”***

~Gina B.

***“I didn’t expect to love the Saints so much. Getting to know them through their writings is an absolute joy for me!”***

~Tomer S.

***“The Mass. Goodness gracious there’s so much but as I got older I didn’t expect that I would love almost every minute of Mass and look forward to it so many days of the week! The peace there is beyond anything we can explain!”***

~Suzanne M.

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

barely glimpsing the tiniest piece of His emotion, and I was utterly undone. My Christian mindset just imploded. Something was desperately wrong.

Through the grace of God, I was able to regain myself in service and sacrifice to the work I was tasked to do. The Lord said, “Write this down,” and I began typing, only stopping for a few seconds to shake the pain off my wrists. The Lord continued to pour His words into me during those days in Cape May. Then my dog and I returned to Pennsylvania. After this watershed experience, what had been a blank, white slate for my purpose was now filled with a manuscript for *Loving God* and a mission to bring God’s people back into a relationship of love and obedience to Him.

During this same time, my husband and I had left Calvary Chapel, a Non-denominational church we had attended for about 15 years. We joined a Baptist church and quickly found ourselves in leadership. My husband was the worship leader and I was a deacon. Again, we availed ourselves of great biblical teaching, but something just wasn’t right. Where was the love of God and obedience? Where was the sacrifice of daily living? There was much good talk about Christian living but little applied reality. There were no crosses to bear, only titles; no sacrifices, only celebrations; no mercies, only graces; no humility, only pride; no conviction, no accountability, no confessions, no reverence, no obedience; only grace, lots and lots of grace—as Bonhoeffer would say, “cheap grace.” It was all about cheap grace and a free ticket to heaven.

### Protestant Spaghetti and Catholic Steak

It was also around this time that the Lord told me to go to seminary. Again, I promptly said, “No!” I thought the idea was ridiculous. The Lord wouldn’t relinquish. The Holy Spirit kept dialing up the conviction on my disobedience until I couldn’t take it any more. So in 2020, I registered for an online program at Liberty Baptist University to study for a Masters in Theology. I loved the academic life of my earlier years in the UK. Now though, I was in my fifties and a stay-at-home mom with five kids. Also, my ministry was taking up time. I couldn’t quite figure out how the Lord was going to carve out space for full-time study. Through earlier mornings, later nights, and a few good hours during the day, I was able to find the time to study and write papers. I loved getting back into reading and writing essays. I was hungry for more meaty, intellectual fodder to feast on. Surely I’d find this in a theology master’s program.

As I unpacked the doctrines of the faith, slowly but surely

things began to unravel. I had been taught *sola Scriptura*, but now I was seeing evidence for tradition (1 Cor 11:1). I had been taught a congregational model of leadership was best, but now I read about servant leadership under ordained authority (Matt 16:18–19; Acts 14:23), and I had seen congregational “leadership” fall apart into chaos due to disobedience, arrogance, and pride. I had been taught “once saved, always saved” and then wrote a paper analyzing Hebrews 6, which came to a radically different conclusion. I had been taught that the sacraments and “working out our salvation” (Phil 2:12) was a Catholic tyranny, and that “faith without works is dead” (Jas 2:26) did not mean that faith without works is dead. I had been taught infant baptism was useless because an infant cannot state their faith, then I was taught by the same Baptist professor that irresistible grace meant no response from the person was required to receive the grace of God. These weren’t the only contradictions I encountered. It all seemed like a big plate of spaghetti. Everything was a heap of non-nutritional stodge.

One of the most important lessons for me during this time of study was that I had cultivated a deep Protestant bias. When I put away my preconceived Protestant beliefs and studied through a cold or Catholic lens, verses I couldn’t reconcile with my Protestant doctrines made sense. “Faith without works is dead” was an obvious reality to me now, and I believed the apostle James when he said it was foolish to believe otherwise (Jas 2:20, 26). “Work out your faith with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12) was no longer a “mystery.” Instead, it served to spur me on to actively living a sacrificial faith day-to-day. Mistruths like Calvin’s “total depravity” now saddened me when I considered that Scripture states, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps 139:14) and that we are all made in the image of God (Gen 1:27). Moreover, I was explicitly taught in seminary, and through countless sermons over the years, that the Bible was canonized in the 4th century containing 66 books. Only through my extracurricular research did I discover that the Protestant Bible was originally the same as the Catholic Bible—containing 72 books—through the Reformation and up until as late as the 19th century, when six books were removed. I felt like I had uncovered a dirty little secret, and that I had been deceived.

### My Husband’s Journey

My husband, Andy, grew up in a strong Protestant home. He spent formative years on the mission field in Brazil before going to high school in New Jersey and college at Drexel University. He went to London to study for a PhD in Chemical Engineering,

# 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).)

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

where we met. Back in the US, as we both journeyed through church over the first 20 years of our married life, Andy became increasingly aware of the poor testimony of the church in its day-to-day living. There was never a shortage of good Bible teaching, but reverence for the Lord, love and kindness towards fellow Christians and non-Christians, and plain old obedience were much harder to find. In our leadership roles, the scope of disobedience and arrogance we witnessed became burdensome to him.

In the small Baptist church where we were leaders, Andy was somewhat outraged that the pastor defied a stream of prophetic words, visions, signs and discernments, and the firm voice of his leadership team and instead chose his own self-serving preferences for the church. This was the last straw that spurred our departure from the Baptist church—but where to now? My husband and I both had developed a distaste for the congregational governance model of church leadership, and were also deeply saddened by the church's flippant disregard for sacrifice and obedience.

There was a wonderful Non-denominational Protestant church right around the corner from our home, Grace Bible Fellowship, and a Catholic church right next to it. We assumed we would go to Grace, but I asked my husband if we could try the Catholic church for two weeks before we started Grace Bible Fellowship. He was agreeable. In February 2023, we sat in a Catholic church for Mass. My husband was overwhelmed with the Holy Spirit and cried throughout the Eucharistic liturgy. I felt deep pangs of nostalgia for my childhood in Ireland. Our two younger children (Simon, aged 15 and Molly, aged 11) were curious about Dad's tears. "It's just the Holy Spirit," he told them. The second week we went to Mass, Andy again sat with tears streaming down his cheeks. The kids looked on curiously. "It's just the Holy Spirit," he told them. But why was the Holy Spirit moving him like this? And what were we to do next week? Could we really jump over to Grace Bible Fellowship when the Holy Spirit was clearly doing something within Andy? The next Sunday we agreed to go to the Catholic church again.

Now we were weekly attendees—nothing more. How long could we sustain this non-committal posture? It was March, and Easter was right around the corner. I had remembered, and shared with Andy, that the Catholic Church does a bang-up job for Lent and Easter. I suggested that we stay at the Catholic parish until Easter, and then make a decision to either commit, or leave for Grace Bible Fellowship. He agreed.

We thoroughly enjoyed the sacrificial time of Lent, and sobbed at the Good Friday service like never before. It was as if we were seeing the crucifixion for the first time. Christ hanging there naked and tattered for our sins—but yet, not a shred of condemnation, only love. It was thoroughly humbling for both of us. Molly and Simon also cried when they saw Jesus on the cross. This was a new way of seeing the cross for them—raw, sacrificial, passion-filled. By now, the Lord had a tight hold on Andy, and it would be a struggle to go anywhere else.

For the two years prior, Andy and I had had some great theological debates concerning the new discoveries I was making in my seminary studies. As I threw questions to him around inconsistencies that I couldn't untangle, he initially was able to defend Protestantism. He had, after all, been brought up on a staple diet of *sola Scriptura* and knew the Scriptures well. But as the plot thickened, Protestant theology kept running aground, and the new (to us) Catholic theology that we were both now devouring continued to steam ahead, unstoppable, unwavering. It provided answers to what Protestant theology couldn't explain. Andy now also was hungry for theology and reverence, and the Catholic Church was providing a rich diet of both.

After the Easter service, we met with the priest and shared our stories. He told me I was still a Catholic. I was surprised, and confessed I hadn't described myself as such in 36 years! He told Andy that to join the Church, he needed to receive First Holy Communion and Confirmation. I had an image of him wearing small patent leather shoes and white tie with his hands flat together prayerfully. He asked Andy to take a year to do RCIA, during which time, he would abstain from the Eucharist. Andy pushed back, saying he was not willing to forego communion for an entire year. A happy compromise was reached. Andy would study select parts of the *Catechism* over the next few weeks, and the priest would exercise his Easter privilege of administering the Sacraments at Pentecost. The following week, we met again to check in on the Catechism study. Andy had read the whole thing front-to-back and was all in. Well, almost! He told the priest that he agreed with 98% of the Catechism. The priest was delighted, gave him a big smack on the shoulder and said, "Well, that's more than me!" We were in! So were Molly and Simon; they were baptized and received First Holy Communion on Pentecost 2023, while their Dad received First Holy Communion and Confirmation—six Sacraments in total. The Holy Spirit showed up big time! ■

*Dr. LaFountain is a psychologist, theologian, author, and speaker. She is passionate about how truth is defined by the Bible, processed through our cognitive system, and manifested in our behavior. She earned her Ph.D. in Neuroscience at the University of Liverpool, UK, and she completed her Masters in Theology at Liberty Theological Seminary in Virginia.*

*She recently came back to her roots in the Catholic Faith after 36-years of Protestantism. She is the founder of Truth First, a non-profit purposed to prosper sanctification in believers. She writes and speaks on a variety of Christian issues that get to the heart, soul, and mind of the matter. Born in Manchester, England, and raised in Donegal, Ireland she now lives in Wallingford, Pennsylvania. You can learn more about her ministry work at [truth-first-ministry.com](http://truth-first-ministry.com)*

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*Our mother of sorrows, with strength from above you stood by the cross, sharing in the sufferings of Jesus, and with tender care you bore him in your arms, mourning and weeping.*

*Holy Mary, may we follow your example, and stand by all your children who need comfort and love.*

*Mother of God, stand by us in our trials and care for us in our many needs. Pray for us now and at the hour of our death. Amen!*

**OUR LADY OF SORROWS**  
(Feast day: September 15)



September 2025

