



November 2025 CHNewsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

Journeys Home

Aquinas Won Me Over

By Erik Baldwin

Baptized Presbyterian at eight years old, I have a few hazy memories of going to church as a child in Huntington Beach, California, where I grew up. My family stopped attending shortly after my parents' divorce. This all changed the summer before my freshman year in high school. I reconnected with my best friend from second grade who had recently become a Christian. He shared the Gospel with me, and I started going with him to a Calvary Chapel youth group. During this time, I began playing bass guitar and joined a rock band with some church friends, performing at youth group events and Friday outreaches. When I was a sophomore, a close reading of Romans 12:1 made a strong impression on me: "I appeal to you therefore brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." I was moved to take my faith more seriously. I decided to stop playing in rock bands so I could dedicate myself to playing bass in worship bands for Friday night outreaches and Sunday morning services.



During my senior year of high school, some of my friends left Calvary Chapel to attend various Reformed churches. They thought that our church didn't teach the Gospel and that we had an inadequate understanding of theology. I was exposed to questions of free will, foreordination, predestination, the five points of Calvinism, and the like. My Reformed friends had a systematic

understanding of theology, but I wasn't sure what to make of such things. I decided to take a step back and address some philosophical questions first. I started reading apologetics, philosophy, and theology, starting with C.S. Lewis and Francis Schaffer, then moving on to the likes of Augustine, Plato, Pascal, and such.

Seeds of Doubt and Despair

It was also during my senior year of high school that I fell in love with my girlfriend, but we eventually broke up. After graduation, I still wasn't

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...Journeys Home Continued...

over her. I thought she was “the one,” and I was upset about how things had ended. I failed to understand why it didn’t work out between us. I attended a local community college but dropped out after a year. I started another alternative band with some friends. We didn’t get far, but we wrote some good songs, played a few shows, and had a lot of good times. Like many bands, we imploded trying to record a demo tape. After some time meandering about, I tried to work things out with my high school girlfriend. We got back together and were soon engaged, and things were good for a time. But I was plagued by various doubts about what to believe and why, which were compounded by a series of scandals involving my pastor. The worship band I was in with two of my roommates played a final gig, and we left that church.

In search of an explanation for how things could have gone so wrong, and accepting the critiques of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud, I came to think that Christians were deluding themselves and refusing to face reality. Leaving church and God behind, I leaned on my fiancée instead of God. She couldn’t handle my state of mind, and our relationship broke apart once again. I fell into despair. I no longer trusted God, but I couldn’t fully overcome Him or put Him out of my mind, though not for lack of trying.

Early Formation

Not sure what else to do with myself, I went back to college. I took an Introduction to Philosophy course that focused on philosophical and religious world views. Among other options, we read Thomas Aquinas. From Aquinas, I came to see that faith and reason could be fully compatible, that both reason and revelation were different means by which one can come to have knowledge of God. Now, determined to rise from the ashes, in a fit of confidence, I decided to do the most difficult thing possible for a Gen-X

slacker such as myself: I would get a PhD in Philosophy. Academically, I was a late bloomer. With my grades and background, I couldn’t get accepted to a good graduate school without first getting a master’s degree. I transferred to California State University – Long Beach, a college near me with both BA and MA philosophy programs.

While studying, I went to various churches intermittently. Having read Martin Luther, John Calvin, Cornelius Van Til, Charles Hodge, and Francis Turretin, I reluctantly accepted broadly Reformed views. I attended an Orthodox Presbyterian Church and enrolled in membership classes. I learned a lot, but I had serious reservations. I found certain passages of *The Westminster Confession of Faith* troubling. Calvinists maintain that God’s decree determines the occurrence of all events by establishing secondary, or proximate, causes in a way that doesn’t take away human liberty but rather establishes it; our actions are necessitated by God’s decree; God ordains them immutably and infallibly. I thought that if our actions are thus necessitated, how could they be both free and contingent? How, on this view, could I be justly held responsible for my sins? Not finding satisfactory answers to my questions, I couldn’t join the church. But it still seemed to me that the Bible probably taught Reformed doctrines. That made being Christian extremely difficult.

Around this time, I carefully studied Aquinas’s views on free will and foreknowledge. Aquinas maintained that God providentially orders all things in a way that provides the conditions for human freedom, including its abuse. We are naturally drawn to our ultimate Good, for God draws all things to himself (Colossians 1:20). God, gracefully and in accord with His providence, removes obstacles and puts in place lures that draw us to Himself, but not in a way that obliterates free choice. Free will is a function of the mind’s judgment; considering various objects of choice, we are made

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

JOURNEYS HOME 3: PENTECOSTALS AND CHARISMATICS

In this collection of testimonies, 13 men and women share their background in the Pentecostal and Charismatic world as Protestants, and how their desire to be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit culminated in them coming home to the Catholic Church.



#3286 - \$12.95

SOMETHING GREATER IS HERE DR. KENNETH HOWELL

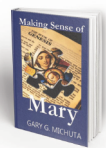
As a Protestant seminary professor, Dr. Kenneth Howell's pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty led him toward a world he had only vaguely glimpsed from afar; he began to realize that what he was seeking was the fullness of faith in the Catholic Church.



#3190 - \$9.95

MAKING SENSE OF MARY GARY MICHUTA

Written for non-Catholic Christians, Gary Michuta's approach is designed to show how Catholic teaching on the Blessed Virgin Mary is rooted in the Bible and the writings of the early Church fathers. Michuta works from Genesis through Revelation to show Mary's unique role in God's plan.



#3160 - \$14.00

...Journeys Home Continued...

aware of a range of possible actions. However, our sinful nature leads us away from God, our highest good, and so we are unable to choose God on our own. Without God's grace, we would reject him. Contrary to Reformed teachings, Aquinas held that God does not decree or determine that some are reprobate. Rather, those who fail to respond to God do so due to a deficiency in their wills. God, as first cause, enables us to cause what we bring about, and what we bring about is ultimately governed by God's providence. But we must be careful to avoid equivocation here. God's causal activity—His causing us to be able to cause things—is of another order altogether, and as such, His characteristic mode of causation is not in conflict with ours. At last, I saw a philosophical alternative to Reformed Theology. However, I was deeply conflicted and continued to wrestle with this solution to the problem of free will and whether it was consistent with Scripture. I remained persuaded that, probably, Calvinism was true, in which case my actions weren't free in the sense Aquinas proposed.

Continuing my studies, I took classes on Daoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. I reckoned things would have been much different for me had I been born in ancient Athens, medieval China, or modern Iran. I viewed my younger high-school self as a naive kid who fell into Christianity mostly because his friends did. It seemed to me that my religious beliefs were by and large products of circumstance. Contingent and arbitrary facts about my upbringing had primed me to accept Theism—and Christianity—in particular. What grounds did I have for thinking that my beliefs were epistemically better off than those I would have held in alternative circumstances? How was I to go about framing and answering philosophical questions? I figured the best I could do here was to take up alternative perspectives and see if they were any better than the one I had started out with. I read widely and interpreted everything as charitably as possible, as though I were a member of the tradition in question. Then I'd expose these views to radical internal and external critique, doing my best to conclusively refute them with fatal objections and counterexamples. By this time, I was skeptical about discovering significant metaphysical truths but kept looking for them.

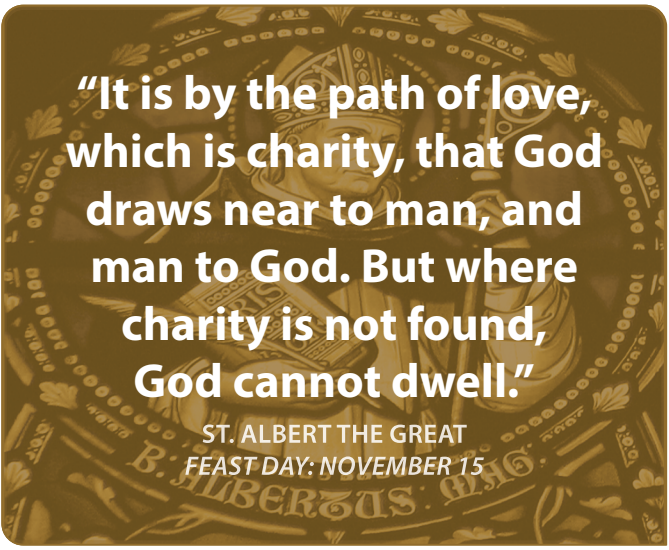
As I continued my studies, I was exposed to many and diverse philosophical and religious views. My department was divided between Analytic and Continental Philosophers. To overly simplify, analytic philosophers, following the likes of Bertrand Russell, G.E. Moore, and Willard V.O. Quine, tend to prioritize sensory experience and use logical conceptual analysis to frame and answer questions in accord with the methods of science and formal logic. In contrast, Continental philosophers, such as Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, engage more freely in metaphysical speculation about matters of ultimate concern and reason more broadly. They use reason, too, naturally, but tend to think that our best thinking is poetic, steeped in imagery and ineliminable metaphor. I

found myself drawn to analytical methods, but I thought that the Continentals were asking important questions and making good points, too. Influenced by existentialism, I came to hold that objective proof was impossible. I reasoned that since it's impossible to overcome our first-person orientation or achieve complete objectivity, knowing the truth was less important than being rightly related to it.

Influenced by Karl Barth and other Neo-Orthodox scholars, I accepted that Jesus was the Word of God and the Bible was a record of God's word. Unless one is inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Bible won't speak to you or have any authority. In principle, the Spirit could speak through various other texts. And it seemed that God was speaking to me through reading Buddhist and Daoist texts, particularly *The Dao de Ching* and stories about Chan / Zen masters. Han Shan's *Cold Mountain* was particularly influential. I had similar experiences reading *The Upanishads*, *The Bhagavad Gita*, and Epictetus' *Handbook*. It was confusing to relate to Ultimate Reality seemingly equally well through non-Christian categories. Eventually, I thought that many of my philosophical and theological problems arose because I was being overly discriminatory. I was relying too much on my rational nature to make practical and theoretical decisions. I adopted the Daoist notion of *wu-wei*, or non-action, according to which developing human-heartedness (roughly, happiness or human flourishing) is a matter of acting spontaneously and in accord with one's own nature. I stopped trying so hard and held things loosely. I remained broadly Christian, but I also considered myself something of a Buddhist / Daoist.

Writing my Master's Thesis and Making Music

A few years into my program, I met Charles Hughes, a Christian philosopher who had earned his doctorate in philosophy under Richard Swinburne at Oxford. I took his Philosophy of Religion course and completed many directed



**"It is by the path of love,
which is charity, that God
draws near to man, and
man to God. But where
charity is not found,
God cannot dwell."**

ST. ALBERT THE GREAT
FEAST DAY: NOVEMBER 15



Bringing People to Meet Jesus



Dear Friends,

The Gospel accounts of Jesus' calling the first apostles brim with the mysteries of grace and conversion. We've always taken St. Andrew the Apostle to be one of the patrons of the work of the Coming Home Network because of his example of *bringing people to meet Jesus*. As you may recall in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, after being invited by Jesus to "Come and see," Andrew runs to find his brother, Simon. We read how Andrew excitedly announced to his brother, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ) and, without further ado, "brought him to Jesus" (Jn 1:35-42), who immediately declared that Simon would henceforth be called "Peter," the "Rock" upon which Jesus would eventually build His Church.

In the example of St. Andrew we have a microcosm of the whole story and essence of evangelization. Andrew has a simple but life-changing encounter with the Lord, and in response, goes off to tell his story and to bring others into a similar encounter. There is no long discourse to persuade Simon of the bona fides of the alleged Messiah. Andrew instinctively knows that if he can just get Simon to encounter Jesus, that will be enough.

We have a tendency to think of evangelization primarily as a matter of complex intellectual discourse or apologetic argument. Certainly, we should strive to learn our faith and to "make a defense to any one who calls [us] to account for the hope that is in [us]" (1 Peter 3:15). At the same time, throughout the Gospel, we see examples of people whose hearts are irrevocably changed simply by their encounter with Jesus. As Dr. Peter Kreeft writes in his book *Jesus Shock*:

"Those who meet Jesus always experience either joy or its opposites, either foretastes of Heaven or foretastes of Hell. Not everyone who meets Jesus is pleased, and not everyone is happy, but everyone is shocked."

It is not knowledge *about* Jesus but experiential knowledge *of* Him that changes us and prompts conversion. Our first priority should be to bring people to Jesus, because the potential "shock" of that encounter will always be more powerful than any explanation or persuasive argument we might add.

In order to bring other people to meet Jesus, we ourselves must be well acquainted with Him in the ways He has given us to be so. We must read Sacred Scripture, be committed to spending time in daily prayer, faithfully receiving the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation. If we are meeting and remaining close to Jesus in these ways, evangelization may well start simply by inviting other people to "come and see" with us. Protestant evangelicals are often better than Catholics at some of these simple types of invitations: *Would you like to pray for a moment with me? Some friends and I are getting together to read and discuss the Bible—care to join? Could I tell you a little bit of my story?* As Catholic converts, we now believe we have additional profound and incarnational opportunities to bring people to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist: *I'm going to the chapel to spend some time with Jesus. As Catholics we believe He is truly present in the Holy Eucharist. Would you like to come join me?*

Now, like St. Andrew, we don't know how people are going to respond to our witness and invitation to "come and see." They *might* accept our invitation to pray, read the Scriptures, come with us to Mass, etc.—especially if they know us and our lives lend some credence to our creed. They might also decline our invitation. But in either case, we have made an opening for the Holy Spirit and (provided we handle it graciously) left the door open for future conversations.

Perhaps we hesitate to invite because the possibility of questions and conversations are precisely what we are afraid of. Once again, not all are necessarily called nor given the ability to be skilled debaters or to carry around encyclopedic knowledge of the faith—and that is ok! These gifts can be helpful, but they are not a prerequisite for inviting people to encounter Christ and sharing our Christian witness. Indeed, such gifts can just as easily be an impediment if we are not careful. I am reminded of a quote that Brother Rex, a member of our Pastoral Care Team, shared with me many years ago from Thomas Merton:

Why do we get angry about what we believe? Because we do not really believe it. Or else what we pretend to be defending as the "truth" is really our own self-esteem. A man of sincerity is less interested in defending the truth than in stating it clearly, for he thinks that if the truth be clearly seen it can very well take care of itself. (No Man Is an Island)

More important than making a case for Christ is simply sharing Christ as we have met and come to know Him. We don't have to dress up the Gospel to make it more attractive nor does everything depend on our ability to make convincing arguments. *That the truth—that Jesus—be clearly seen*—this is the primary thing we should be trying to accomplish in our invitations, words, and example.

This is one of the reasons we love and believe in the power of the "conversion story" at the Coming Home Network. The authors who share their testimonies in this newsletter and the guests that come on *The Journey Home* program do not do so in their capacity as "experts"—as apologists, philosophers, or theologians—but rather as *witnesses*. Their goal is to simply, faithfully share their experiences of coming to meet Christ and discovering His fullness in the Catholic Church. Our conversion stories aren't, ultimately, about "us"—but about Jesus.

In his first homily after being elevated to the Papacy, Pope Leo XIV reminded his brother cardinals that it must be their commitment to:

"...move aside so that Christ may remain, to make oneself small so that he may be known and glorified, to spend oneself to the utmost so that all may have the opportunity to know and love him." (Homily, Sistine Chapel, Friday, 9 May 2025)

We are called to share the Gospel and to make disciples of all nations. May we learn from the example of St. Andrew of the power of simply *bringing people to meet Jesus*.

In Christ,
Jonathan M. Grodi

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

Joyful Journey Updates

A Former Baptist Member

"I just wanted to reach out and thank you and update you. Our last exchange regarding my status and options has been stuck in my mind. Especially the part about being Catholic already. Yesterday I was convicted by my conscience and felt the overwhelming need to go to confession.

I made the call and was giving my confession 3 hours later. I had a list of ongoing mortal sins I had compiled after multiple prayer and reflection cycles. So yesterday evening I receive my first absolution and reconciliation. I have never felt more free, more sure

of my desire to be in full communion with the one true apostolic church that Christ founded. We are working on an extraordinary catechizing by a Deacon tutor so I may be confirmed.

Without your diligence in following up with me, I am not sure I would have found myself thinking about my options so much, or had the desire rekindled. I would not have resumed my confessional prayers and reflections. And I might not have felt so convicted that I followed through. My being in a state of grace with all my mortal sins forgiven right now is thanks to you allowing God and the Spirit to work on me through you." ■

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) is underway in most parishes. If you are planning to join the OCIA process this fall, let us know!

Email us at info@chnetwork.org

"...the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

JOHN 14:26-27

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

Monday, Nov 3

Eben Emerson

Former Church of Christ Minister

Monday, Nov 10

David & Roseanna White

Former Baptists

Monday, Nov 17

Jennifer Bryson

Former Agnostic

Monday, Nov 24

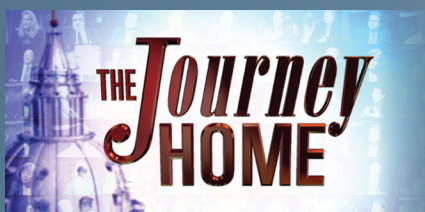
Dr. Terry & Renee Wortz

Former Pentecostal Missionaries

Monday, Dec 1

Dr. Brian McGee

*Former Wesleyan
Original Air Date:
12/14/2020*



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

Schedule is subject to change.

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



EIJI TSUBURAYA

Catholic Maker of Monsters (Kaiju)

by Tim McCormick

One of my fondest memories growing up in the 1980s was the weekly Saturday afternoon creature double feature that used to play on our local UHF station in Detroit. Before the era of streaming and 4k Blu-rays, almost every major city in America had a channel that regularly showed movies like this. My favorite films during this time were the Godzilla films. The tone of these films began in a somber way, but as the series progressed, they catered more to children. Even with the shift in tone, the movies often contained humanistic themes and social commentary on Japanese culture in the 60's and 70's. While there were many "fathers" of the Godzilla franchise, it was really one man's imagination and creativity which gave Godzilla the look and personality that has made him the "mon-star" I grew to love—Eiji Tsuburaya, special effects master and convert to Catholicism.

Tsuburaya was born in 1901 to a Buddhist family in Japan. At a young age he showed great skill in art, seen as a remarkably skilled craftsman for his age. He was also fascinated with planes and considered becoming a pilot. At the age of 18 he found himself working at various movie studios learning the craft of both camera work and special-effects. During the years that followed, and especially during the Pacific War, he continued to hone his craft in special-effects, most notably in war time films that depicted air and sea battles. All of these experiences would serve him well when after the war he was hired by Toho Studios to create the special-effects for his most famous work: *Gojira* (1954).

It was also during these early years, before *Gojira*, that he met his future wife, Masano Araki, whom he married in 1930. Though Tsuburaya was often influenced by aircraft, special-effects, and set designs, it also seems that Masano had a profound impact on her husband's faith, bringing him to Christ and His Church. (Masano herself was a convert, introduced to the faith by her sister.) Godzilla historian August Ragone notes that it was during these early years that their third son, Akira, was born, the first to be baptized as a Catholic. Masano began raising her sons as Catholics, and eventually led Eiji to convert as well. From all accounts, Tsuburaya was a faithful Catholic the rest of his life.

Though it was typical of Japanese culture to keep one's religious faith rather private, hints of Tsuburaya's Catholicism can be gleaned from a number of his most iconic kaiju creations. Some have suggested that in his kaiju universe, Tsuburaya is more subtle like Tolkien than the more directly allegorical works of C.S. Lewis. I think it can be said that Tsuburaya's love of fantasy and fairy tales for children found a perfect home in his adopted Catholic faith. In a 1962

magazine article he talked about how his youth affected his later film making: "My heart and mind are as they were when I was a child...then I loved to play with toys and to read stories of magic. I still do. My wish is only to make life happier and more beautiful for those who will go and see my films of fantasy." This concern for providing places of joy for children was evident even during the war years. As Allied bombing raids were entering mainland Japan, Ragone recounts that "Eiji, Masano, and their children sought refuge in a bomb shelter, and, as the incendiaries fell, Tsuburaya told his children lovely fairy tales to calm them."¹ We see Eiji's love for children in Godzilla's transformation from humanity's scourge to humanity's savior and defender as the series progressed. Godzilla changed from a monster to be feared into to a savior who could be counted on and cheered.

Godzilla wasn't the only monster providing clues of Tsuburaya's growing faith. There was also the divine moth-like creature *Mothra*, the benevolent kaiju who often exhibits Christian ideals of self-sacrifice, compassion, and even resurrection. The clearest hint of his Catholicism, though, came in Tsuburaya's own creation: Ultraman. In this TV series, an alien comes to earth and rescues a man from certain death by joining with him bodily. This union of space alien and man saves humanity from a series of monster-of-the-week foes. Who can forget how Ultraman would so often, with seconds remaining, make a cross with his arms and fire a spacium beam to defeat his (and humanity's) enemies? Ultraman, who united both the human and the otherworldly, overcomes every evil that is thrown at him through courage and self-sacrifice, a clearly Christian archetype.

Eiji Tsuburaya died on January 25, 1970. In addition to the private ceremonies of mourning and the funeral at their parish, a Catholic service was held in February on Stage No. 2 on the Toho Studios lot in his memory, extending the impact of his faith beyond the confines of his personal life, much like the messages of sacrifice and justice found throughout the works he poured himself into creating. Though dead for over 50 years, Tsuburaya's legacy as the "Master of Japanese Monsters" continues today, with Ultraman and Godzilla still being as popular and relevant as ever. While the Saturday creature feature seems largely a relic of the past, I still love watching Godzilla DVDs with my youngest son. My little Goji buddy and I still enjoy being transported to Japan to watch our favorite monsters battle it out. There is always that wonderful knowledge that the man behind the monster was a fellow brother in Christ. ■

Prayer List

Clergy

- **For Joseph**, who after many years as a pastor in various Protestant denominations has begun to explore Catholic teaching and has now entered OCIA; 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 Jacobus, a former Dutch Reformed pastor** who has become Catholic and is now entering the seminary to become a Catholic priest, that the Lord will bless him and bless the Church through him.
- **For Toby, a Baptist pastor** who 18 months ago began a deep study of the early Church and the case for Catholicism, that the Lord will lead him in his studies and eventually home to the Church.
- **For Austin, an Evangelical pastor** who has been drawn to the Catholic Church for a long time and who 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 Scott, an Anglican priest** who at the end of 2024 entered the Church with his wife; that the Lord will help him to find his new vocation as a Catholic.
- **For Justin, a former Protestant pastor** who has become Catholic and is dealing with a great deal of fallout in his personal life; that the Lord will console and heal.
- **For Joel, a Presbyterian pastor** who recently resigned his ministry to enter the Catholic Church with his family, that the Holy Spirit will bring comfort to a difficult situation and bless him in his new work teaching in a Catholic context.
- **For John, a Baptist pastor** who finds himself powerfully drawn toward the Catholic Church but faces serious difficulties that would make it very hard for him to leave his ministry at this time; that the Lord will provide him consolation and clear the path toward full communion with the Church.

- **For Paul, a Baptist pastor** who recently stepped down from ministry to enter OCIA with his wife, but who lives in an area of the country with few Catholic parishes; that the Lord will bless him in his work as a chaplain and lead him as he works through the issues with which he still wrestles.
- **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 Tyler, a Pentecostal pastor** who recently stepped down from ministry as he feels drawn to the Catholic Church; that the Holy Spirit will bless him with peace as he seeks to lead his family home and discover God's plan for his future employment.
- **For Joshua, a Baptist pastor** who was raised Catholic and knows now that he must return to the Catholic Church but who 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.

Laity

- **For Victor, who grew up in the SSPX**, that our Lord Jesus would open his heart to all that God is offering him.
- **For Kurt, a Baptist**, that his studies of the truths of the Catholic Faith would bring him to the altar of our Lord Jesus.
- **For Dan, a member of the United Church of Christ**, that the Lord would guide him back home to the Catholic Church.
- **For Nate, a Lutheran**, that the Holy Spirit would clarify to him the Catholic Church's true teachings on justification.
- **For Mike, a former Agnostic**, that OCIA would successfully bring him rejoicing to the Easter sacraments.
- **For Schuyler, a member of the Church of God**, that his desire to delve more deeply into his faith would bring him to the Catholic Faith.
- **For Yvonne, a Lutheran**, that the Lord grant her patience and discernment as she journeys home to the Catholic Church.
- **For Shonda, a Non-denominational Protestant**, that the Holy Spirit may guide her discernment as she studies Catholicism.
- **For Kati Beth, a Presbyterian**, that she may have a blessed experience in a Bible study she is joining, that the Holy Spirit would lead her with wisdom in how to share my conversion with friends, and that the Lord would hear and answer her private intentions.
- **For Jane, an Evangelical**, that the Lord would bless her continued journey home to the Church, lead her discernment in sharing her faith with family, and increase in her wisdom and good health.
- **For Michelle, a Lutheran**, that the Lord may send her educated and charismatic instructors in her OCIA class and that the catechumens and candidates may have patience and a true desire to learn.
- **For Daniel, a Baptist**, that he may find the home that he is looking for in the Catholic Church.
- **For James, a Lutheran**, that the Holy Spirit would guide his conversations with the deacon in his parish.
- **For Erik, a lapsed Catholic**, that our Lord Jesus would guide his journey back to the holy Eucharist.
- **For Kyle, who is Eastern Orthodox**, that he may find his home in full-communion with the successor of St. Peter.
- **For David, a Seventh-day Adventist**, that God would guide and direct his OCIA journey.
- **For Matthew, a member of the Churches of Christ**, that the Holy Spirit would direct the path of him and his wife.

“Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.”

COLOSSIANS 3:12-15

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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*.

Join our mission...

GIVINGTUESDAY

Help us bring them home!

December 1st is Giving Tuesday! Your support helps us walk with those who are curious about Catholicism and those on their journey home to full communion with the Catholic Church.

- Since January of this year, we've had over 130 current and former Protestant clergy and ministers reach out to us for the first time seeking support on their journey of faith.
- We were able to provide financial assistance for nearly 20 former and current Protestant clergy to attend our first ever Clergy Convert conference with Scott Hahn and John Bergsma at the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology.
- We provided financial assistance to six current and former Protestant clergy to attend one of our in-person retreats in the U.S. and U.K.

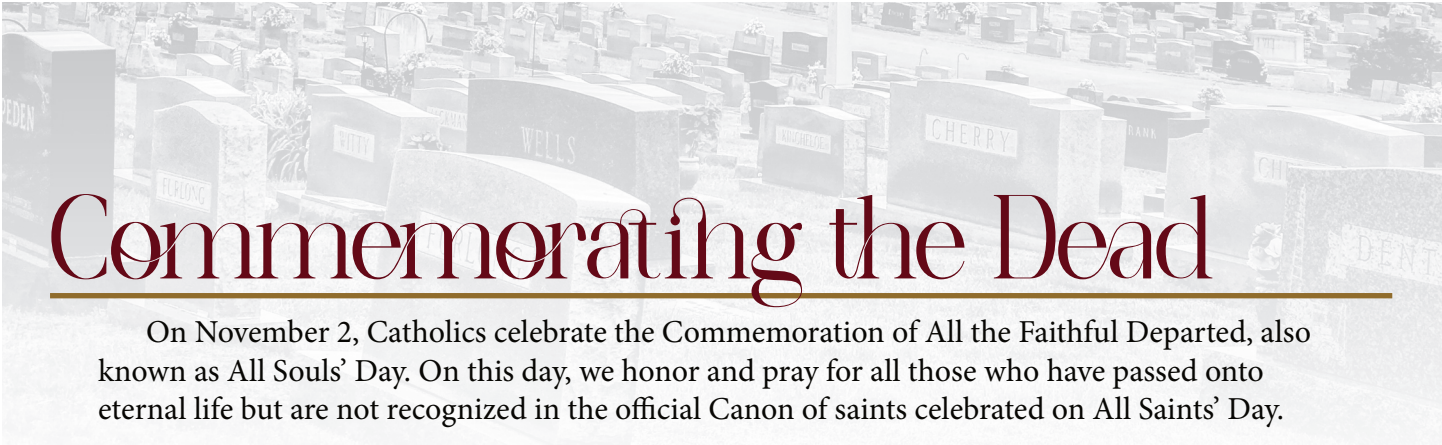
In addition, we have been able to walk alongside so many who have made their way home to the Catholic Church this year, including:

- A Protestant seminarian who graduated and entered the Catholic Church with his wife this summer;
- A Presbyterian pastor who resigned his ministry and entered the Catholic Church with his family and is now teaching at a Catholic school;
- A Dutch Reformed pastor in South Africa, who left his pastoral ministry and entered the Church last year, and is working with his bishop to begin training for the Catholic priesthood;
- A Protestant evangelist in England who came into full communion with the Catholic Church...and so many more!



Your generous gift this Giving Tuesday helps us share the truth and beauty of the Catholic Church with those making the journey home!

chnetwork.org/givingtuesday



Commemorating the Dead

On November 2, Catholics celebrate the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed, also known as All Souls' Day. On this day, we honor and pray for all those who have passed onto eternal life but are not recognized in the official Canon of saints celebrated on All Saints' Day.

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches:

1030 All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.

1032 This teaching is also based on the practice of prayer for the dead, already mentioned in Sacred Scripture: "Therefore [Judas Maccabeus] made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin" (2 Macc 12:46). From the beginning the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God (*Council of Lyons II*).

This month, we offer our prayers for the members of The Coming Home Network who have passed onto eternal life in the last year.

Eternal rest grant unto them O, Lord, and may perpetual light shine upon them. May they, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

IN MEMORIAM

Cecilia Allen
Helen Borsum
Robert Buehler
Olga Fairfax
Marie L. Halvorson

Jeanne Heppne
Reed Jennings +
Kenneth Kluesner
Henry Knapp
*Fr. Brian Mullady

Joseph Olivier
Corrine Paige
Patricia Petrilli
Fr. Richard Puetz
John Ryan

Bishop Edward J. Slattery
Robert Stephens +
Bishop John G. Vlazny
Ben Zweber

+ Family member of CHNetwork Staff
*Journey Home guest

COLLECT FOR ALL SOULS

Listen kindly to our prayers, O Lord, and, as our faith in your Son, raised from the dead, is deepened, so may our hope of resurrection for your departed servants also find new strength.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

...Journeys Home Continued...

studies classes with him in metaphysics and epistemology. I took a graduate seminar from him that focused on Alvin Plantinga's *Warranted Christian Belief*, on which I wrote my MA thesis with Dr. Hughes as my chair. His mentorship and friendship over the years has been invaluable.

While working on my master's degree, my roommate—who had been my high school worship band leader—decided to start a Christian record company and asked me to help out. I was committed to philosophy, but still wanted to do music. I was in. I helped him record bands and handled all the computer work, including designing CD layouts and artwork. I was a roadie, assistant tour manager, and helped work the merch tables. We recorded demos for several bands, including PAX 217, Project 86, and a few others. We released East West's debut on our own label, Back Bone Records. Our goal was to become an imprint label and then go on and develop our talent and become an independent label. I recorded a few official demos of my own and played in a few bands.

During this time, I attended a Korean church for about a year. I started going because a friend of mine had a crush on a girl who attended the church. When that relationship didn't work out, he left, but I stayed. I played bass and sometimes electric guitar in the praise band there. The pastor had a PhD in Sociology. After church, he taught classes on Church Doctrine, Church History, and the like. The church was small, more akin to a college and young adult group than a full congregation. Eventually, the pastor was led to other things and stepped down, which resulted in the dissolution of the church.

Long story short, while all of this was going on, I was drifting farther away from my Christian roots. Christianity seemed like one life option among many. Soon after the Korean church dissolved, I started dating a Muslim woman I had met at school. I stopped going to Church entirely.

While neither of us was serious about our respective faiths, each of us had certain lines we were unwilling to cross. I thought that I had let go of my Christianity, but being around another child of Abraham from a different branch was unsettling, and our points of difference became quite problematic. Yet, even though our relationship was a veritable roller coaster, it was difficult to let it go. I didn't want to leave and go on to graduate school, but I knew I was being called elsewhere. Like Jonah going to Nineveh, I reluctantly moved to Lincoln, Nebraska.

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Once I was accepted to The University of Nebraska–Lincoln, I set my musical career ambitions aside. All things considered, I reckoned the world didn't need another Christian bass player. It would do more good for there to be a greater number of Christian philosophers.

Moving to Nebraska from Southern California, I was seriously homesick. It seemed like I was stuck on a small island surrounded by corn. Despite the distance, and all

advice to the contrary, I tried to make things work with my girlfriend. I held on as long as I could, while deep down knowing it couldn't last. Things ended poorly. I was in a bad place. I actively resisted the things of God but still identified as a Christian. When anti-theistic philosophers would rant against God, I'd defend Theism. I'd go to church occasionally. I saw myself somewhat like Peter, following Christ from a distance, not having anywhere else to go, but unable to fully commit to either. Deeply unhappy, I started going out to bars with colleagues and drinking heavily.

As I was finishing my course work and was putting together my dissertation committee, my advisor, Robert Audi, took a position at the University of Notre Dame. I no longer wanted to stay in Lincoln—Dr. Audi was the only reason I went to study there. With his help, I transferred to Purdue University, but that meant I had to start all over. Again.

Purdue University

By this time, having completed the equivalent of two master's degrees, I could coast for a bit. For the most part, I enjoyed my classes and didn't stress out about them. All this time, I had wanted to focus on epistemology, but I became disillusioned with the field and lost interest in many of the current debates. I developed a growing interest in ethics. Reading Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* fundamentally changed my way of framing and answering philosophical questions. I came to see that ideas have histories, and that we don't—and can't—think in a vacuum. We depend on the resources of others, including the resources of tradition, when we go about asking and framing questions about what to do and what to believe and why. Thinking I had left epistemology behind, inspired by MacIntyre, I ended up returning to it in a more holistic and classical manner.

A few years into my program, I started playing music at open-mic nights at The Lafayette Brewing Company. One thing led to another, and I ended up forming an old school punk band with a friend from the Philosophy Department and some local musicians. I was sick of being a graduate student and missed playing music. I began drinking much more heavily and took my studies less seriously. We played many local gigs and recorded a very rough demo we'd give away at shows. We were basically a gang of hooligans. We were intense, on and off the stage. The band imploded in 2007. Bottoming out, with the help of an intervention from my uncle, I stopped drinking. With new clarity, I was too tired to be angry at God or blame him for my bad choices. I found Aquinas' views on human free will and God's providence much more compelling. *God* was drawing me; I was resisting him. I still struggled, but I was no longer double minded or deeply convicted about my faith.

Dissertations and Notre Dame

Completing my coursework in the 2008–2009 academic year, I was awarded a research fellowship to write my dissertation. I didn't need to take or teach classes, and it didn't

matter where I worked. So I decided to visit the Philippines to spend time with my then girlfriend. Long story short, in April 2010, I married Melanie, one of the best decisions of my life.

I was a visiting graduate student at the University of Notre Dame Center for Philosophy of Religion the 2009–2010 academic year. We went to a Presbyterian USA Church that some of my colleagues at Notre Dame attended. Unlike the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, they didn't affirm double predestination, and affirming Aquinas' views was permissible. After my fellowship ended, I stayed at the Center for Philosophy as a visitor. I began teaching for Indiana University, Northwest in 2010, where I am still employed. From 2012 to 2017, I also taught at the University of Notre Dame as a contingent Philosophy faculty member, teaching between four and six classes each year.

I wrote my dissertation on the epistemology of disagreement in relation to Alasdair MacIntyre's rationality of traditions. In the process, I came to hold that, when doing philosophy, one can't help but be part of a conversation over time about shared matters of concern. Doing philosophy well essentially involves being aware of and carefully studying the history of ideas. This applies to theological thinking as well. We can't accurately interpret Sacred Scripture apart from tradition-based resources, including texts, methods of interpretation, and institutions. We must rely on extra-Biblical texts and methods of interpretation, for no text can self-referentially interpret its own meaning. Looking back on the history of Christianity, I thought that while Luther and other Reformers made some good points, the Counter-Reformation had dealt satisfactorily with their major theological criticisms. For quite some time, I had affirmed Luther's principle of private interpretation, according to which each person, before God and in accord with their conscience, becomes their own interpretive authority of the Scriptures. However, from that theological starting point, there's not much to prevent one from making the turn towards Kierkegaardian subjectivity, as I had done years early in following Neo-Orthodox scholars. No longer leaning on my own understanding, I gave much more weight to Church councils and to the Unanimous Consent of the Church Fathers (*unanimem consensum patrum*). I was no longer thinking like a Protestant, but I wasn't yet thinking like a Catholic.

Becoming Catholic

I had gotten into philosophy to settle deeply vexing theological questions and concerns. My long journey was finally coming to an end. My major turn towards Catholicism came in 2018, as I was writing my contribution to *Debating Christian Religious Epistemology: An Introduction to Five Views on the Knowledge of God*. Working on my chapter, I found myself giving Aquinas' substantive views a measure of authority I hadn't before. Without realizing it, I was thinking like a Catholic, so much so that one of my Protestant

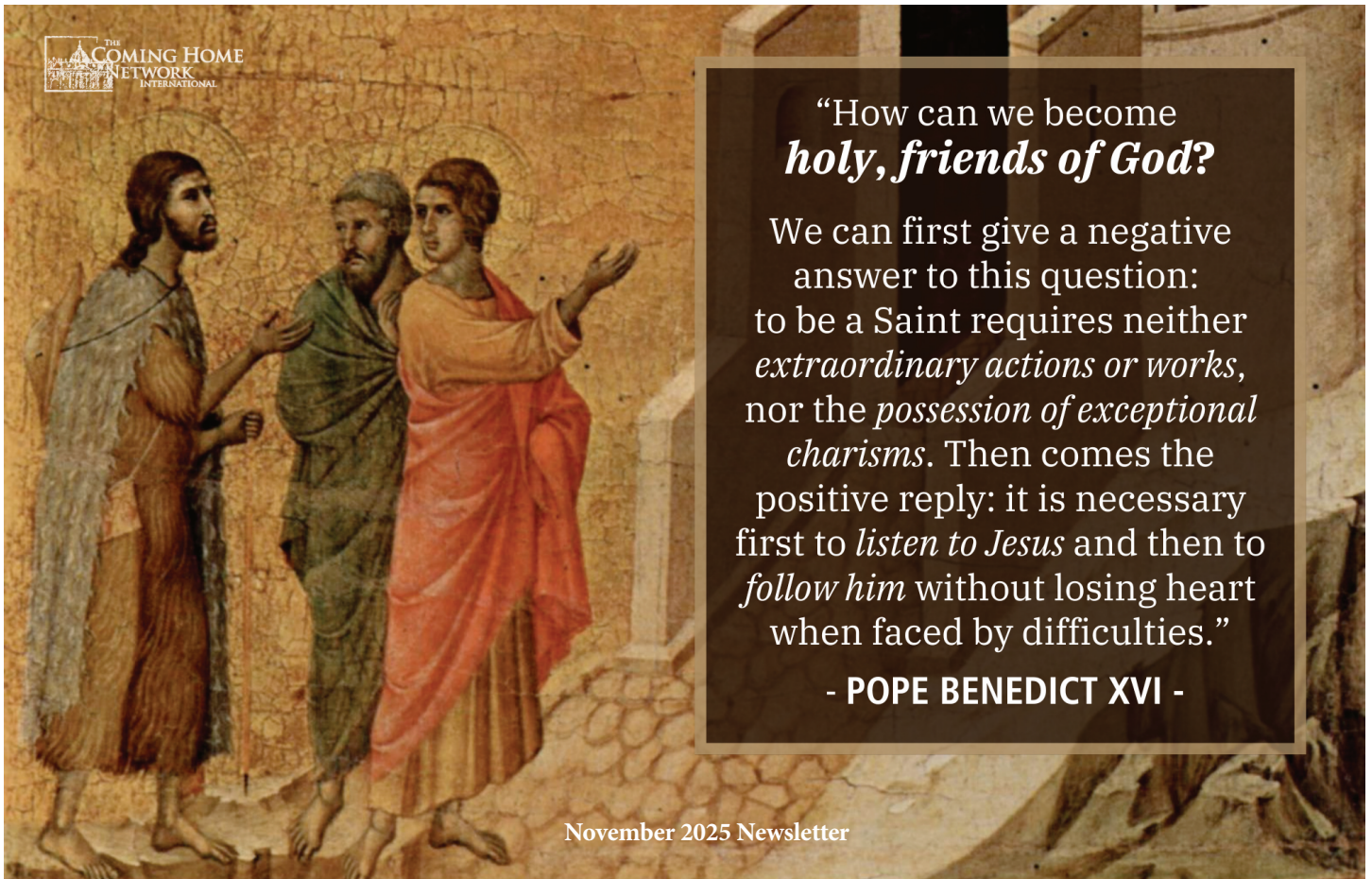
interlocutors assumed I was Catholic, and a Catholic contributor told me that my chapter was more Catholic than his. I was becoming more attracted to Catholicism, but there were obstacles and difficulties to overcome, mostly ones related to Marian dogmas. On a friend's recommendation, I read Tim Staples's *Behold Your Mother* and was convinced that Marian dogmas were coherent and fitting. It became reasonable for me to accept them as part of Sacred Tradition. Classical Theism was another obstacle for me. For years I had explicitly rejected it in favor of views commonly held by contemporary analytic Christian philosophers: God-talk is univocal; God has a nature, with both essential and accidental properties; God is a temporal being; that in order to account for creaturely freedom, the future is open and God essentially lacks or voluntarily empties himself of knowledge of (at least some) human choices, and the like. Over the years, I saw that there were strong philosophical objections to these views and became more open to Classical Theism, but I remained unconvinced. Eventually, my study of Aquinas and his interpreters—ranging from Gilson, to Maritain, to Feser—I was convinced that a core thesis of Classical Theism was true: there is no distinction between God's existence and his essence; God doesn't "have existence," but rather God IS his being. In other words, God is subsistent being itself—*Ipsum Esse Subsistens*. It was a short step from there to the acceptance of Divine Simplicity and the rest of the views associated with Classical Theism.

I was finally ready to become Catholic. I knew there were still many points I needed to work through, but I realized that I would rather work through them from within the Church. I entered RCIA in 2018, and at Easter of 2019, I received the Sacrament of Confirmation, bringing me fully into the Catholic Church. Although Aquinas had more of an influence on my intellectual development, in my struggle to find faith, I related more to Augustine, whom I chose as my patron saint. Becoming Catholic hasn't settled all my questions and concerns. But I am no longer like a reed in the wind. I'm no longer floundering about in my faith. Coming into full communion with the Church, I now have a secure standpoint and a firm foundation from which to ask questions and evaluate answers. ■

Erik Baldwin grew up in California. He moved to the Midwest to study philosophy, eventually earning a PhD in philosophy from Purdue University. He is Adjunct Professor of Philosophy at Indiana University Northwest. His areas of research include philosophy of religion, epistemology, and comparative and cross-cultural philosophy with an emphasis on Buddhist and Islamic philosophy. He has published extensively in these areas. He lives with his wife and daughter in Bloomington, Indiana.

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



“How can we become
holy, friends of God?”

We can first give a negative answer to this question: to be a Saint requires neither *extraordinary actions or works*, nor the *possession of exceptional charisms*. Then comes the positive reply: it is necessary first to *listen to Jesus* and then to *follow him* without losing heart when faced by difficulties.”

- POPE BENEDICT XVI -