



August 2026 CHNewsletter

Whatever Became of That Horrible, Selfish Brat?

by David McClamrock 1

Prayer as a Training of Mind and Heart

by JonMarc Grodi 4

Islam, Christianity, and the Divinity of Christ

by Reza Akhtar 6

In the Words of St. Augustine

by Jim Anderson 9

THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

Whatever Became of That Horrible, Selfish Brat?

By David McClamrock

In the beginning, I was a selfish, obnoxious brat who somehow thought I was a good boy—and I couldn't stand Jesus. Protestant Sunday school teachers made a feeble effort to turn me into a Christian as a child, but with no success. They taught me absurd songs like, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." From an early age I knew it was wrong to believe something merely because you could read it in a book or hear a well-known person saying it. I did not know Jesus loved me because the Bible told me so, and I was angry that grown-ups thought I was stupid enough to fall for such obvious nonsense.



to them and let them kill you—that was the life and teaching of "gentle Jesus, meek and mild." That was straight out of the Bible (Matthew 5:39–41; 27:38–50), and anyone who claimed to believe in Jesus but didn't act like that was nothing but a hypocrite.

Me? As a boy, I favored the way of life of Western heroes I saw on television. They sure didn't act like Jesus. They killed bad guys or put them in jail; they

And Jesus wasn't just a made-up character in a storybook, I thought; he was a bad character, who favored letting evil triumph in this world. Turn the other cheek, give bad guys even more than they demand from you, never say a word about putting them in jail or killing them as they deserve, and finally bow down

saved beautiful, admiring girls from the bad guys; and they lived to tell the tale. There was only one problem: it didn't work in real life.

I got into a few fights with bad boys when I was young. The bad boys always won, and the police cared nothing about putting them in jail for their bad deeds. Obviously I couldn't save any girls from the bad boys if I couldn't win the fights, and no girls seemed to have any interest in being saved by me anyway. I started to despair of ever seeing good triumph over evil.

Even worse, although the Western heroes never died in the shows, I knew I was going to die. "What will happen to me after I die?" I once asked my mom. I regret to say that her answer was entirely unsatisfactory. Although she was supposedly a Christian then (though later became a Unitarian), she told me I shouldn't worry about it because it wouldn't happen for a long time. What kind of answer was

Continued on page 2 ➤

Journeys Home

that? I was heading toward a waterfall in a flimsy barrel, and I shouldn't worry about it because the waterfall was still far away?

With Christians like that, who needs atheists? You will not find it surprising that anger, loneliness, foolish thoughts and feelings, and despair were my daily bread for years—and they were not highly nutritious, to say the least. So it went through years largely filled with boring idiocy, though not entirely. I became a Quaker for a while, because the Quakers were in favor of peace (this was in the late 1960s and early 1970s, during the Vietnam War), though they couldn't actually attain the peace they favored. Over the years, I met a variety of other Christians, and they introduced me to the writings of C.S. Lewis, who wasn't at all like the boring, half-hearted, mediocre Christians in Sunday school. I still didn't become a Christian myself.

I also wasn't happy, and I began pondering suicide. I don't mean to say I was ever on the brink of actually harming myself—far from it. But I was miserable, and it led me to think on the matter nonetheless. As I reflected on it, though, I came to the conclusion that it would be the most idiotic thing I could possibly do. I was Me, with a capital M! I was a city unto myself, my only fortress in a hostile world! How could I ever throw myself, my only beloved self, away into nothingness, or worse than nothingness?

I was alive, and I wanted to keep on living. I didn't know much, but I did know that. And I had to admit I hadn't given myself life, and I couldn't keep myself alive forever. But if there was any way for me to live forever, I was going to find out—and I wasn't going to give up without the most terrific fight.

Do I Really Have to Become a Christian?

I tried hard to find fulfillment of my desire for limitless life in something, anything, other than the Christian religion I had detested since childhood, but with no success. In every other religion and philosophy I could find, the concept of eternal life seemed deficient, unworthy of acceptance by a fully human

person. There was nothing in them like a man who was also the one true God, who conquered death by dying and rising alive, who led the way to boundless fulfillment of every fully human longing for all who would follow him.

I didn't like it any more than C.S. Lewis did when he was unsuccessfully struggling to avoid believing in God (*Surprised by Joy*, Chapter 14), but if I really had to become a Christian to attain limitless life, I decided I was going to do it. I turned again to C.S. Lewis for guidance, and I tried to read the Bible with an open mind. It didn't take me too long to see the truth of the apostle Paul's words: "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:14). If Jesus conquered death for us, we too could rise again and live forever; if He didn't, we couldn't, in the absence of some other way to attain limitless life that no one had yet ever seemed to find.

So, I had to wonder, did He or didn't He? Were those who proclaimed His resurrection liars, body-snatchers, clever myth-makers, seeking to control the gullible masses by deceiving them? Were they merely mistaken—mass-hallucinating or taken in by unknown tricksters with remarkable power to pull off a fake resurrection—or misinterpreting what they saw, heard, and touched with their own hands? Or were they simply, almost incredibly, telling the truth?

Their opponents' first reported story was that they were lying (Matthew 28:11–15), which appeared far more likely than that they were merely mistaken, but there seemed to be a fatal flaw in the story. While people may often lie to get themselves out of trouble, rarely do they lie to get themselves into trouble. Absolutely never do they lie to get themselves into trouble if their aim is to survive and control the gullible masses, which will not occur if they get into really big trouble and suffer martyrdom. If there was any truth in the Bible accounts, then the apostles knew they were facing really big trouble for proclaiming the Resurrection, and they did it anyway. They must have really believed what they were saying.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

FILLING OUR FATHER'S HOUSE

SHAUN MCAFEE

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

#3217 - \$14.95



HOW GOD HAULED ME KICKING AND SCREAMING INTO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

KEVIN LOWRY

A preacher's kid at a Catholic university, Kevin Lowry settled into a "double major in beer and billiards" soon followed by run-ins with pious students, failing grades, and many other things. Kevin was kicked out, but God continued working, revealing the inevitable conclusion that Catholicism was all true despite his objections.

#3202 - \$15.95



A BIBLICAL DEFENSE OF CATHOLICISM

DAVE ARMSTRONG

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

#2590 - \$20.00



What if there was no truth in those accounts, and the whole thing was a fabrication by clever tricksters and myth-makers of a later age? Well, it couldn't have been a much later age, because it was historically verifiable that the Roman Empire was taken over by Christians within a few centuries, with no blood shed but their own—they, too, must have really believed what they were willing to die for. It was ascertainable, as well, that the Christians were already widespread and well known a mere 30 years or so after the (alleged) Resurrection, when the emperor Nero saw fit to blame them for the burning of Rome. I had to think it more likely than not, at least, that there was no fabrication, that the story of the Resurrection and its consequences was true from the beginning.

But was “more likely than not” good enough? If the Creator of the universe was so concerned for the wisdom and well-being of his rational creatures, I had to wonder, why did he not provide indisputable proof of the truths he wished them to accept? Why did Jesus Christ show Himself unmistakably to one man who doubted the truth of His resurrection, and yet proclaim, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (John 20:24–29)?

At the time I could not have explained my faith, any more than C.S. Lewis could say how he came to believe. When he set out to go to the zoo one day, he said, he did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God; when he got to the zoo, he did believe (*Surprised by Joy*, Chapter 15). It was the same for me. I, too, found myself coming to believe, coming to be born again, but with little more knowledge of how and why it was happening than when I was born the first time.

At long last, upon reflection, I think I came to understand better how and why it happened as it did. When something is

indisputably evident, then it can be accepted with little or no free and rational choice. But the right use of the power of free and rational choice, above all, is what makes a person fully human. To have this power is to be made in the image and likeness of God; to use it rightly is to become like God, who freely and wisely chose to create the universe. Those who believe without having seen, then, are blessed because they freely choose what they have good reason to believe, but the evidence does not force them to believe. St. Thomas Aquinas, I learned, says this is why they have the “merit of faith” (see *Summa Theologica* II-II, Q. 2, A. 10).

And that was what I did. Did I have good reason to believe I was created by a God who wanted me to hope for limitless life? You bet I did! What was the alternative? At best, that my desire to live forever was a meaningless, unexplainable illusion, to which I should respond “ho-hum” and try to forget about it—until my barrel went over the waterfall and smashed me up forever. At worst, that I was living in a nightmare fantasy in which a vicious creator gave me this desire, only to laugh like a maniac when it wasn't fulfilled. You tell me: which belief is the best supported by evidence and rational inferences? And which belief is the most consistent with living a free, rational, fully human life?

The suffering and death of Jesus before His Resurrection, which I found so loathsome as a boy, turned out to fit in perfectly with this belief, and with my long-suppressed desire for good to triumph over evil. The Western heroes who always made good triumph over evil in this life weren't real. Bad guys often won out in this life. By letting the bad guys do their worst, and showing that they still couldn't win in the end, Jesus had shown the only realistic way toward the ultimate victory of good over evil.

When I was thinking about this, I came across a helpful

Continued on page 10 ➡

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is well that we are here; if you wish, I will make three booths here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” He was still speaking, when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, **“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”**

MATTHEW 17:1-5 (FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION—AUGUST 6)

Prayer as a Training of the Mind and Heart



Dear Friends,

Prayer is a journey—a journey of relationship with a God who has called us into existence out of love. While God is timeless and eternal, we are pilgrims on the road—a road which, at times, prompts us to turn to God in wonder, adoration, praise, and gratitude, and at other times in fear, remorse, repentance, and the expression of distress and need. Prayer is a journey because as the road twists and turns, we are, by God's grace, changed and

transformed along the way through our responses, our decisions, and our choices. We thus return to God in prayer, again and again, not only to seek the providence we need for the road, but also to re-encounter and come to know more deeply this God who is ever ancient, ever new. This encounter itself, more than the provisions prayed for, is what drives the Christian's ongoing conversion.

While we can tend to think of prayer in terms of seeking God's help and grace to take back out with us into our "active lives," the activity of prayer itself (rightly understood) is the foundation and source of ongoing conversion. How does prayer transform us? On the one hand, we can rightly say that the transformative power of prayer is always a matter of God's grace. At the same time, Jesus calls his disciples to prayer and to works of love because God works through our free cooperation with His will. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us, man is made in the image of God primarily in that he is endowed with the spiritual powers of intellect and will (CCC 1705). Man, like his Creator, is a thinking and willing being, and it is through the engagement and exercise of these spiritual powers that he cooperates with God's transforming grace.

It is preeminently in the act of prayer—the "raising of the mind and heart to God" as St. John Damascene describes it—that our minds, wills, and hearts are exercised, purified, and strengthened, helping us to become the people God created us to be. Prayer trains our spirit first through the act of faithful obedience to Christ's example and teaching to his disciples. Before we even begin our prayer, we grow through the act of making and prioritizing time to be with God and then following through with this good intention. On a deeper level, it is then the act of praying itself—in talking to God and listening—that we engage our minds in reality and our hearts and wills in desiring and choosing in accord with what is true, good, and beautiful. More than mere words, prayer is a free action of the whole human person—body, mind, and spirit—to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37).

There is a uniquely transformative and purifying power in praying with Sacred Scripture and participating in the liturgies of the Church, as these forms of prayer present us with truths and attitudes (beatitudes!) that will inevitably challenge us. For example, the Psalms constantly invite us to pray in words and attitudes—joy, love, righteous anger, remorse, desperation—that may run counter to our

feelings on a particular day. So too, in the liturgies of the Church—the Holy Mass, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Liturgy of the Hours—we are continually invited to praise, give thanks, confess, repent, and express our needs, whether or not we would have otherwise been moved to do so on a given day. Hence, in prayer we are invited to approach God, the source of all transforming grace, and in the context of prayer to apply our minds and hearts to the truth and to be changed in the process.

The greatest and clearest example of this is precisely the Our Father, the prayer that Jesus gave his disciples in response to their request that He teach them to pray. The seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer are the blueprint for a Christian mind and heart, transformed and purified by God's grace. As St. Thomas Aquinas notes,

The Lord's Prayer is the most perfect of prayers...In it we ask, not only for all the things we can rightly desire, but also in the sequence that they should be desired. This prayer not only teaches us to ask for things, but also in what order we should desire them. (St. Thomas Aquinas, STh II-II, 83, 9)

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus not only invites us to call upon God as "Father," but He then teaches us what we ought to desire, to will, and thus to pray for and to strive to bring about in our lives. He gives us these petitions in order, beginning with the desire that Our Father's name be hallowed, that His kingdom may come, and that His will may be done. The final four petitions involve praying for our physical and spiritual providence (daily bread), forgiveness for our sins, the grace and guidance to avoid sin, and ultimately for final deliverance from evil, death, and hell.

As we continue on the road together, let us persevere in the journey of prayer, placing before God our own needs as well as those of our family, friends, and our fellow journeyers in the CHNetwork. And let us remember that God will always answer our prayers—sometimes in the ways we ask for, but always in giving us His grace and transforming us "into his likeness from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 3:18).

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Jonathan M. Grodi".

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

THE DAUGHTERS OF ST. MONICA

An Invitation from Melissa Slagle



The journey home to the Church can be a very lonely path for many people. However, the heartache a wife feels who journeys apart from her husband can be very overwhelming. Our hope is that no woman will walk this path alone.

From a desire to support wives in this situation we have created The Daughters of St. Monica. This is a private online group within our Coming Home Network Community. Our hope is to provide a very safe and private place for women to share their struggles, to encourage one another, pray for one another and to create fellowship with those who deeply understand this unique situation.

Many women long to be Catholic yet wait to protect a husband's position as a Protestant Pastor. Others find it very difficult to even discuss Catholicism with their husbands and some have become Catholic and are struggling with a marriage divided. This group offers a space to ask questions, share difficulties and celebrate updates. We also meet via zoom once a month for a more personal fellowship.

Many of our members have become friends outside of the online group, personally helping each other in daily life. What a blessing this has been!

We place all our hope and trust in God and know that His timing is perfect. You never have to feel alone on this journey.

If you would like to join The Daughters of St. Monica, please email Melissa Slagle, CHN Pastoral Care Coordinator at melissa@chnetwork.org

"For by doing what God demands of us with total surrender of our innermost being, we cause the divine life to become our own inner life. Entering into ourselves, we find God in our own selves."

ST. EDITH STEIN (FEAST DAY—AUGUST 9)

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

Monday, Aug 3

Sam Nunnally

*Former Protestant
Pastor*

Monday, Aug 10

Amy McEntee

*Former Church of the
Brethren*

Monday, Aug 17

TJ Nielsen

Former Evangelical

Monday, Aug 24

David Lach

Former New Age

Monday, Aug 31

Maija Fish

*Former Evangelical
Protestant
Orig. Air Date: 4/26/21*



TELEVISION

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

RADIO

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

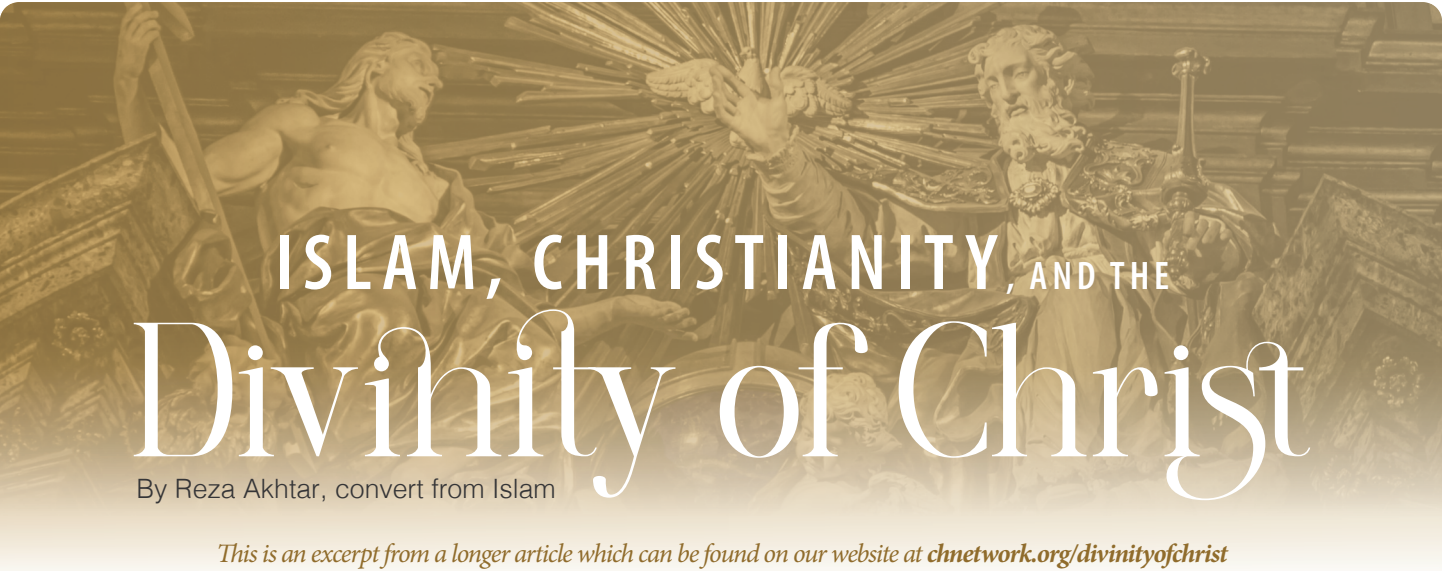
Monday, Sept 7

Fr. Eric Roush

*Former Agnostic
Orig. Air Date: 5/10/21*

Schedule is subject to change.

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



ISLAM, CHRISTIANITY, AND THE Divinity of Christ

By Reza Akhtar, convert from Islam

This is an excerpt from a longer article which can be found on our website at chnetwork.org/divinityofchrist

In my experience, the divinity of Christ is one of the most difficult facets of the Christian faith for Muslims to grasp, perhaps because Muslims *also* hold to definitive teachings about Jesus Christ. These agree with the Christian position in some ways, but are radically opposed to it in others. In particular, the Quran is unequivocal in teaching that Jesus is not God (5:72), that He is not in any sense the Son of God (4:171), and that even referring to Him as the Son of God is a grievous departure from truth (9:30). It is perhaps a little less clear what positive assertions about Jesus the Quran endorses. In many verses, Jesus is described as a messenger of God, and even as “only a messenger” (5:75). However, in a partial account of the annunciation to Mary, He is also described as “a word from Him [God]” (3:45); this phrase recurs in 4:171: “...Christ the son of Mary is a messenger of God, and His word which He cast on Mary, and a spirit from Him.” An obvious question then arises: if Jesus is “only a messenger,” then what could it mean for Him to be God’s word (or even a word from God)? The goal here is not to discredit Islam or the text of the Quran. It is rather to show that Christianity offers a coherent explanation of how Jesus is not only a messenger of God and His Word, but also the Son of God and God Himself, all in a manner consistent with the data of the Old and New Testaments.

Muslims and Christians both agree that God is Truth. This means that every instance of God’s self-revelation is expressed in truth. If both the Old Testament and the New Testament are His revelation, then no passage of the New Testament is more or less true than any passage from the Old Testament. Nevertheless, owing to the logic of the process, older revelations are more fundamental than new ones, in the sense that the truth of newer revelations builds on and adds to the truth of older ones. Therefore, the truth of the unity of God must undergird all understanding of later revelation. Yet this is precisely the obstacle Muslims find the greatest difficulty in overcoming: how can doctrine like the divinity of Christ, which Christians claim is grounded in the New Testament, be consistent with the unity of God? Another question that often puzzles Muslims is that if the divine figure of the Old Testament who talked to Moses is God, how can Jesus Christ also be God?

As the Creator of time, God dwells outside time, so He does not think about things the way we do before resolving to do something. His intellect comprehends everything in an instant, and yet He is not static. As both the Quran (2:255) and the Bible (Ps 42:2) attest, God is living; He is in fact the source of all life. His intellection is but one aspect of His being the “living” God.

While Genesis 1 goes back to the creation of the natural world, John 1 goes back even further and describes God in His essence: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and without Him not one thing came into being” (John 1:1-3). Thus, we see that the Word was with God from the beginning: He is not part of creation, but is God. The last sentence expresses the relation of the Word to creation: God creates through His Word. The notion of God creating through his Word is not at all foreign to the Quran: “[He is] the Originator of the heavens and the earth. And when He decrees a matter, He simply tells it, ‘Be,’ and it is” (2:117). However, the most striking claim of John’s Gospel comes later in the prologue: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

The last point is often a source of difficulty for Muslims. Many of them claim that they can know God directly, without any need for an intermediary. Yet this claim is not entirely valid: they must have come to know God through some form of revelation. Most likely it was through the Quran, which they believe to be His word, and which even from the perspective of a Christian contains elements of truth about God. Or perhaps they encountered God through prayer. Regardless, the only way any human—Muslim, Christian, or otherwise—can know God is if He reveals himself to them in some form they are capable of grasping. The Christian doctrine that the Son reveals the Father to us is expressing the same thought, but in theological language. The sense in which Jesus is an intermediary (or a mediator, to use the language of the Bible) is that He “bridges” the gap between God and man. Jesus is not a third party standing between man and God. In His divine essence He is God, and by His assumption of a human body and soul at the Incarnation, He is also man.

Read the full article at chnetwork.org/divinityofchrist

Prayer List

Clergy

- **For Asher, a Baptist pastor** who is struggling with how "Catholic" early Church history is as he has begun studying theological history and is now wrestling with all that it would mean to leave his ministry and Christian connections to become Catholic; that the Lord would provide consolation, wisdom, and guidance for the way forward.
- **For Paul, a former Episcopal priest** who is in OCIA with his wife and looking forward to becoming Catholic; that he will be successful in working through the annulment process for a former marriage.
- **For Samuel, a Baptist minister** who entered the Church this past Easter Vigil; that the Holy Spirit will comfort him as he struggles with the loss of his identity as a pastor.
- **For Cory, a Presbyterian pastor** who has become convinced that he needs to leave his ministry to become Catholic and is thinking about entering a doctoral program in Catholic theology; that the Lord will lead him through what will be a very difficult process.
- **For Henry, a Presbyterian minister** who has begun attending OCIA and is preparing himself for the very difficult work of resigning his pastoral ministry to enter the Catholic Church; that the Lord will give him the courage he needs to follow his conscience in this matter.
- **For Andrew, a Baptist minister** who recently resigned his position, entered OCIA, and is reading everything he can get his hands on about Catholic teaching and history; that the Holy Spirit will inspire him and lead him home to the Church.
- **For Joshua, a Baptist pastor** who was raised Catholic, knows now that he must return to the Catholic Church, but 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 Andrew, a former Baptist elder** who was received into the Church this Easter; that the Lord Jesus will fill him with faith, hope, charity and joy as he begins his new life as a Catholic.
- **For Rick, a Baptist pastor** who has been wanting to become Catholic for a long time but faces a number of obstacles that at this point seem insurmountable; that the Lord will give him peace and he seeks a way forward.
- **For Catherine, a former Methodist pastor**, who was received into the Catholic Church this Easter season with her husband John; that the Holy Spirit will give them great joy as they begin to live this new life.
- **For Joseph, an Anglican priest** who finds himself drawn back to the Catholic Church in which he was baptized and raised; that the Holy Spirit will lead him as he considers what this would mean for his wife and children, not to mention his ability to earn a living.
- **For Gabriel, a former Church of Christ minister** who has become Catholic; that the Lord will provide wisdom and guidance as he works to bring his family in as well.

Laity

- **For Cory, a former Agnostic**, that our Lord Jesus would speak to him at Mass and Adoration and that his wife would become more open to his newfound faith.
- **For Peter, a Lutheran**, that the Holy Spirit would grant him discipline in his prayer life.
- **For Derek, an Episcopalian**, that the Lord would guide him as he searches for teaching with apostolic authority.
- **For Aaron, a former member of the Reformed tradition**, that the Holy Spirit would bless and anoint his and his family's OCIA journey.
- **For Luis**, that he may soon return to the sacraments of the holy Catholic Church.
- **For Chris, a Southern Baptist**, that he may find the guidance he desires to continue his journey to full communion with the Catholic Church.
- **For Mike, a former Atheist**, that as he prepares to begin his OCIA journey, our Lord Jesus would prepare his heart and mind.
- **For Don, a United Methodist**, that the Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the holy Eucharist would draw him home to the Church.
- **For Zachary**, that he may, by God's guidance, find a functioning OCIA program in his community.
- **For Daniel, a member of Calvary Chapel**, that he may become more comfortable with the liturgy and be able to understand what is going on.
- **For Scott, a Southern Baptist**, that the Holy Spirit would guide him and his wife as they deal with the misunderstandings of their friends and relatives.
- **For Simon, a former Agnostic**, that our Lord Jesus would bless and guide him as he grows in faith and understanding of Jesus and His Church.
- **For Sarah, an Evangelical**, that the Lord would bless her with good health and peace as she continues her journey to the Church.
- **For Esme, an Evangelical**, that the Holy Spirit would guide her as she continues to discern becoming Catholic.
- **For Rhonda, a Catholic**, that our Lord grant her good health and recovery from illness for her husband.
- **For Vivian, an Evangelical**, that she may receive the Lord's wisdom on how to return to the faith without her husband joining her and be blessed with a grace-filled marriage within their differences.
- **For Karen, an Anglican**, that the Lord of consolation would grant her peace of mind and an abundance of wisdom.
- **For Cindy, a Presbyterian**, that God grant her wisdom and guidance as she discerns the truth.

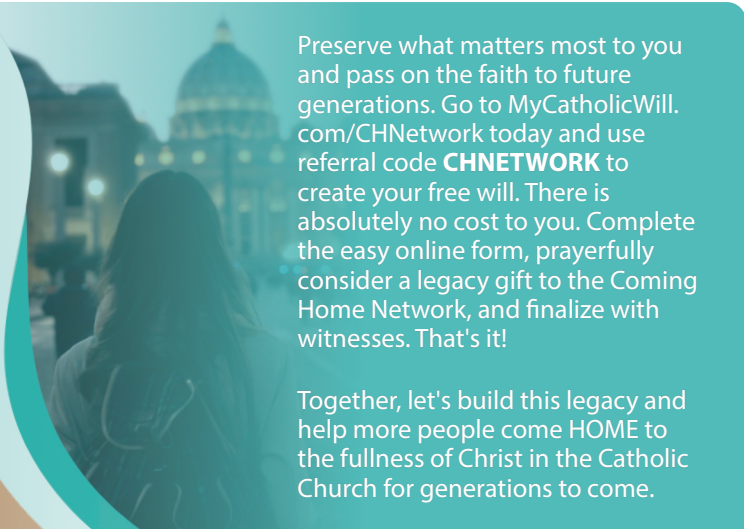


Introducing a new avenue for you
to partner in mission with the
Coming Home Network!



**PROTECT YOUR FAMILY &
HONOR YOUR FAITH WITH**
MyCatholicWill

MyCatholicWill.com/CHNetwork



Preserve what matters most to you and pass on the faith to future generations. Go to MyCatholicWill.com/CHNetwork today and use referral code **CHNETWORK** to create your free will. There is absolutely no cost to you. Complete the easy online form, prayerfully consider a legacy gift to the Coming Home Network, and finalize with witnesses. That's it!

Together, let's build this legacy and help more people come HOME to the fullness of Christ in the Catholic Church for generations to come.

CHNETWORK STAFF, ADVISORS, & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Founder & President-Emeritus
Marcus Grodi
(former Presbyterian pastor)

Executive Director
JonMarc Grodi

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

Office Manager
Ann Moore

Director of Pastoral Care
Ken Hensley
(former Baptist minister)

Director of Outreach
Matt Swaim
(former Methodist)

Head of Media Production
Seth Paine
(former Non-denominational)

Director of Development
Kenny Burchard
(former Foursquare pastor)

Communications Coordinator
Rakhi McCormick
(former Hindu)

Pastoral Care Coordinator
Melissa Slagle
(former Baptist)

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

Financial Advisor
Kevin Lowry
(former Presbyterian)

Spiritual Advisor
Br. Rex Anthony Norris
(former Anglican)

Office Assistant
Karlie Carpenter

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Marcus Grodi (Founder & President-Emeritus)
Msgr. Jeffrey N. Steenson (Vice President)
Kevin Lowry (Treasurer)
Donald Brey (Director)



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



740.450.1175



info@chnetwork.org

Find us on Social Media



The Coming Home
Network International



CHNetwork



ComingHomeNetwork

The 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

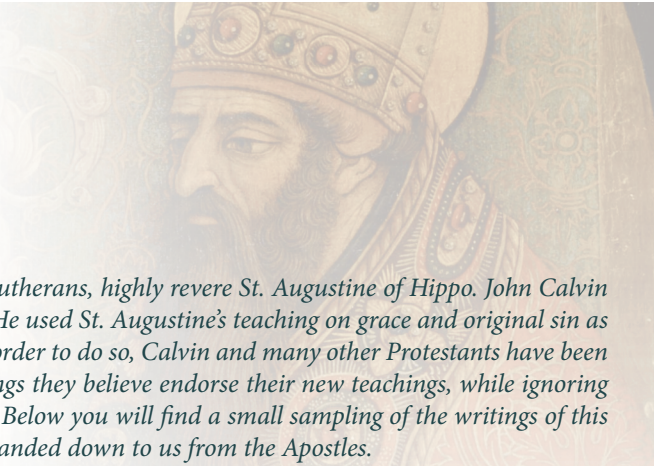
\$100/month

CHNetwork.org/Compass

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

Do you know a Catholic
convert or someone curious
about the Catholic Church?

Encourage them to connect with us!
chnetwork.org/join



IN THE WORDS OF Augustine

by Jim Anderson

It is well known that many Protestants, especially Calvinists and Lutherans, highly revere St. Augustine of Hippo. John Calvin called him the most orthodox and biblical of the early Church Fathers. He used St. Augustine's teaching on grace and original sin as proof texts to bolster his personal interpretations on those doctrines. In order to do so, Calvin and many other Protestants have been forced to cherry pick from his multi-volumed writings, choosing teachings they believe endorse their new teachings, while ignoring the fact that Augustine was a champion of orthodox Catholic doctrine. Below you will find a small sampling of the writings of this Doctor of the Church's witness to ancient orthodox Catholic teachings handed down to us from the Apostles.

ON BAPTISM

"The sacrament of baptism is undoubtedly the sacrament of regeneration." (*The Merits and the Forgiveness of Sin* 2:27:43, AD 412)

"Baptism therefore, washes away indeed all sins – absolutely all sins, whether in deeds or words or thoughts, whether original or added, whether committed in ignorance or allowed in knowledge." (*Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 3:5, AD 420)

"The custom of Mother Church in baptizing infants is certainly not to be scorned, nor is it to be regarded in any way as superfluous, nor is it to be believed is anything but apostolic." (*Literal Interpretation of Genesis* 10:23, AD 408)

ON THE EUCHARIST

The Real Presence: "The bread you see on the altar, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the body of Christ. The chalice, or rather what is in the chalice, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the blood of Christ." (*Sermons* 227, AD 411)

"What you see is the bread and the chalice; that is what your own eyes report to you. But your faith obliges you to accept that the bread is the body of Christ and the chalice is the blood of Christ." (*Sermons* 272, AD 411)

The Sacrifice of the Mass: "Was not Christ once for all offered up in his own person as a sacrifice? And yet, is he not likewise offered up in the sacrament as a sacrifice, not only in the special solemnities of Easter, but also daily among our congregations; so that the man who, being questioned, answers that he is offered as a sacrifice in that ordinance, declares what is strictly true." (*Letters* 98:9, AD 408)

ON THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Perpetual Virginity: "Thus Christ, by being born of a virgin who, before she knew who was to be born of her, had determined to continue a virgin, chose to approve, rather than to command, holy virginity. And thus, even in the female herself, in whom he took the form of a servant, he willed that virginity should be free." (*Holy Virginity* 4:4, AD 401)

Mary Being Without Sin: We must except the holy Virgin Mary, concerning whom I wish to raise no question when it touches the subject of sins, out of honor to the Lord; for whom we

know what abundance of grace for overcoming of sin in every particular was conferred upon her who had the merit to conceive and bear him who undoubtedly had no sin. (*Nature and Grace* 36:42, AD 415)

ON THE INTERCESSION OF THE SAINTS

"It is true that Christians pay religious honor to the memory of the martyrs, both to excite us to imitate them, and to obtain a share of the merits and the assistance of their prayers." (*Reply to Faustus the Manichean* 20:21, AD 400)

"This it was that the blessed martyrs did in their burning love; and if we celebrate their memories not in an empty form, and in the banquet at which they are filled to the full, approach the table of the Lord, we must, as they did, also be making similar preparations. For on these very grounds we do not commemorate them at the table in the same way, as we do others who now rest in peace, by praying for them, but rather that they should pray for us, that we may walk in their footsteps." (*Tractates on John* 84:1, AD 416-17)

ON PURGATORY

"Temporary punishments are suffered by some in this life only, by others after death, by others both now and then; but all of them before the last and strictest judgment. But of those who suffer temporary judgment after death, all are not doomed to those everlasting pains that are to follow that judgment; for to some, as we have already said, what is not remitted in this world is remitted in the next, that is, they are not punished with the eternal punishment of the world to come." (*City of God* 21:14, AD 419)

ON PAPAL AUTHORITY

"There are many things that keep me in her [the Church's] bosom. The consent of the peoples and nations keeps me in the Church; so does her authority, inaugurated by miracles, nourished by hope, enlarged by love, established by age. The succession of the priests keeps me, beginning from the very seat of the apostle Peter, to whom the Lord, after his resurrection, put in charge of feeding his sheep, down to the present episcopate [of Pope Siricius]." (*Against the Letter of Mani Called "The Foundation"* 4:5, AD 397)

Keep in mind that this is but a small sampling of writings by St. Augustine of Hippo, who is most truly a Doctor of the Church. While a narrow excerpt might seem to lend weight to thought that developed through the Reformation, it is clear that the whole of Augustine's preaching and writing gives ample witness to a thorough and complete adherence to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

illustration in a story about a really tough bad guy, Stalin, who later became the Communist dictator of the Soviet Union. Before the Russian Revolution, the story goes, Stalin was arrested and put in a prison camp. One of the soldiers' grim amusements was to make the prisoners run between two lines of soldiers while the soldiers whacked them with rifle butts. Most of the prisoners were terrified and ran as fast as they could, but not Stalin. Stalin walked between those lines of soldiers—slowly—while they were hitting him as hard as they could and blood was streaming down his face, to show them they could never beat him down, no matter how hard they tried.

I couldn't help seeing that Stalin wasn't the originator of that kind of behavior. Jesus was. "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild," was even tougher than Stalin, and He showed that the bad guys could never beat Him down even when they killed Him.

Well, All Right—But What Kind of Christian?

And so, incredibly, I decided to become a Christian—but what kind of Christian would that be? I looked again to C.S. Lewis, especially in his book *Mere Christianity*, for guidance. He said a mere Christian must belong to a church, but he declined to say which church. It was obvious from the Bible, too, that Christians were supposed to belong to a church (Matthew 16:18, 18:17; 1 Timothy 3:15). But, the question remained: which church?

I still knew it would be irrational to believe everything in the Bible without knowing why it should be believed. Nevertheless, I decided to read the Bible with as open a mind as possible, to see if it could tell me which church was the right one—if there even was a right one. (I had a Protestant Bible, so it had fewer books than a Catholic Bible, but it turned out to be good enough for the purpose.)

Though I had never been a believing Protestant, I had readily absorbed the Protestant view on one point: the Catholic Church must be rejected. (I had particularly admired the story of the great Martin Luther leaving the Catholic Church and taking a wife who had been a nun, though I then cared nothing for the Christian religion that Luther had claimed to reform and purify.) Now the Bible itself, in which the Protestants claimed to place their faith, led me to question whether their view of the Catholic Church was the true one.

In the Bible I saw bishops (Philippians 1:1); the founding of the Church of Christ upon Peter (Matthew 16:18); the exaltation of the apostles who ruled the Church (Acts 15); the great importance of baptism, which I had never received as a boy (1 Peter 3:21); and the continued offering of the Body and Blood of Christ, through which a man could be condemned by receiving

unworthily (1 Corinthians 11:29). I saw the holiness of matrimony, partaking of the everlasting union of Christ and His Church (Matthew 19:3–9; Ephesians 5:22–33). Most importantly for my purpose at the time, I saw the great prayer of Christ that all who believed in him should be one, and visibly one, so that the world would know that the Father had sent him to save the world (John 17).

Was the Catholic Church the one that had this visible unity from the start? Was the Catholic Church "merely" the Christian Church, from which the others had unjustifiably split off? I had to think these things might well be true, if the Bible itself could be believed.

But should the Bible be believed? If so, why? I came to see that, if there was any good explanation, it had to be the one provided by the Catholic Church: the Bible should be believed on the authority of the Church; the Church should be believed because it received its authority from God Incarnate, Jesus Christ; and Jesus Christ should be believed because He has conquered death, which no mere man could do.

"Lord, I Believe; Help My Unbelief!"

Uncertainty remained. Could it be overcome? By now I knew the prayer of St. Thomas the Apostle, that man of immortal memory who had said, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24). I could see that, if God did love His human creatures as alleged, and if He had power to become a man and conquer death as it seemed He had probably done, then He could and would hear my prayer and help me, even if I was not sure it would happen. I did pray for help in believing with certainty in all that was good and true, if God was there to hear and help me. I know now that the God of all truth and goodness did help me to pray and to believe.

The choice was between life and death. My Creator—yes, by now I knew it would be far too silly to think I didn't have a Creator—had made me so that I might freely choose life. To have faith in my Creator, I didn't need to leap blindly into anything; I only needed to choose to take one long step of faith, praying for help, with my eyes wide open, across a bottomless abyss.

So I freely chose to believe, though God must have been the first mover in this, as in everything. He helped me to believe by leading me freely to choose what I rationally saw as best—best for myself, and best for all His creatures—while rationally inferring that what was best was also true. Having chosen, I sought the help of the Catholic Church to make me firm in what I had chosen, not like double-minded men and women who flap around wildly in whirlwinds of hot air, such as I had been for far too long.

My first try at seeking the help of the Catholic Church was not entirely successful. I talked with a priest who recommended the Dutch Catechism, which I later learned was infamous for its

**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)

failings. It seemed to me to contain few, if any, concise, solid statements of what one must believe and do to be a Catholic.

I briefly backed off, but soon tried again with a different priest, who recommended Father John Hardon's *Catholic Catechism* (this was in the days before the present *Catechism of the Catholic Church* existed). Though not superbly concise, Father Hardon's book succeeded for me where the Dutch Catechism had failed—it outlined what one must believe and do to be a Catholic. After learning and accepting these things, I received the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil in 1980. I then began the long, slow, ongoing process of transformation from a goofy, mediocre, fairly unwise new Catholic into someone more nearly worthy of the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Whatever Became of That Horrible, Selfish Brat?

I needed help, and plenty of it. I was blessed to be accepted into Thomas Aquinas College. There I managed to acquire a modicum of learning from great minds of the past who wrote great books (St. Thomas Aquinas above all), and found a great wife while doing so.

Having a wife who agreed with me (and the Church) that children must be welcomed as gifts from God, I needed a good way to make a living. Having little or no skill with anything but words, I considered becoming either a lawyer or a professional philosopher. A couple of years in graduate school cured me of any interest I may have had in the life of a professional philosopher. Why? I could hardly put it better than Pope Leo XIII did in *Aeterni Patris* (section 24): "Systems of philosophy multiplied beyond measure, and conclusions differing and clashing one with another arose about those matters even which are the most important in human knowledge... a multiform system of this kind, which depends on the authority and choice of any professor, has a foundation open to change, and consequently gives us a philosophy not firm, and stable, and robust like that of old, but tottering and feeble."

I thought it would be most unwise to risk putting myself and my growing family in the arbitrary power of any set of professors with clashing conclusions, shifting foundations, and feeble philosophies. My moderate interest in the possibility of teaching at a genuinely Catholic college was far outweighed by my horror at the thought of teaching anywhere else. Besides, I was not even good at understanding the immeasurably multiplied systems of modern philosophy; for example, I am sure I would still fail to comprehend Kant's ethics even if I forced myself to study it until my eyes popped out!

In the end I had to conclude that I would do better to become a garbage collector than a professional philosopher. This I proceeded to do, under the patronage of St. Thomas More. (As a lawyer, I collect a very special kind of garbage, consisting entirely of paper and electronic documents with legal language in them; I process it and try to render it harmless, often by writing and speaking persuasively about why it is rubbish and should be rejected.)

When I graduated from Thomas Aquinas College in 1985, the commencement speaker, Dr. Ralph McInerny, shared a quote

from the famous author Herman Melville: "Be true to the dreams of your youth." I've always remembered it, and I find that, to a remarkable extent, I have been true to the dreams of my youth, with a great deal of help from my Creator. Even my unrealistic dreams of Western heroism have found their fulfillment. I still wouldn't be able to win physical fights against bad guys, but I've won many verbal fights, defeating bad guys (and their attorneys) seeking to evade the demands of justice. And, in lieu of actresses impersonating beautiful, admiring girls, I have someone far better: my wife.

What's more, unlike when I was a boy, I now know why the Bible should be believed. I no longer find the suffering and death of Jesus loathsome and incomprehensible; and I have some realistic hope of attaining limitless life, through the saving power of God. But what about turning the other cheek, which I used to think signified a willingness to let evil triumph in this world? I learned the right perspective on this once-appalling teaching from St. Thomas Aquinas. Here's an illustration of how you can only get a true understanding of what the Bible means by listening to the wisdom of the Catholic Church, as manifested by the great Doctors of the Church—not just by reading the Bible and trying to figure out what it means on your own.

Turning the other cheek is an example of not resisting evil. Sometimes, not resisting evil is the right thing to do, or even the only thing that can well be done, under the circumstances. (There are, of course, other times when we need to resist evil, to punish evildoers for the protection of other people and the common good, so far as possible.) So when Jesus says things like "I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil" (Matthew 5:39), it may sound like He's giving a commandment that must be obeyed always and everywhere, like "You shall not commit adultery," but He isn't. He's actually giving us an affirmative command to exercise the virtue of meekness, by which we govern our feelings of anger—and His affirmative commands have to be obeyed in the right way, at the right time, for the right purpose, and not otherwise.

So, led by my Creator, I've been true to the dreams of my youth, which I used to imagine were totally inconsistent with being a Christian. They weren't. Actually, my life for some time now has been not entirely different from that of a Benedictine monk, except that I'm married and a lawyer. True, those are big differences—but like the monks, I pray and work. I've even come a fair distance toward fulfilling St. Paul's admonition to pray without ceasing—especially to pray for the conversion of sinners. ■

David McClamrock is a Catholic convert from total unbelief. A graduate of Thomas Aquinas College (B.A., 1985) and the University of Notre Dame (M.A., 1989; J.D., 1991), David is a Hoosier deputy prosecutor, the husband of one wife for over 40 years, and the father of four home-schooled children, who is looking for opportunities to use his limited spare time in writing for the glory of God and the dignity and freedom of the human person.

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

JOIN US ON THE CHNETWORK FALL RETREAT



October 5-8, 2026
Maria Stein Retreat Center
Maria Stein, Ohio

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.**



August 2026 CHNewsletter

