



October 2026 CHNewsletter

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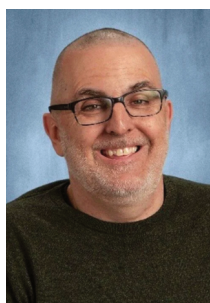
THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

Journeys Home

God's Chosen Path

By Bill Renje

My wife and I have been actively engaged in deepening our faith for over 25 years. We've read our Bible cover to cover numerous times, studied it, and heard tens of thousands of sermons. But what I had "known" about Catholicism during that time has now mostly been proven to be untrue or a mischaracterization of Catholic belief. Largely, I have found that what Evangelicals believe about Catholics comes either from other Evangelicals, Catholics who don't know their faith, or Catholics who had negative experiences with their own church upbringing.



The only Catholics I had known as an Evangelical were those who had come into our churches after "getting saved" or "born again," so I just assumed that the Catholic Church must not be worthwhile for anybody looking for depth in their own faith. That's the way it was—until I got around Catholics, and realized that many Protestant Evangelicals become Catholics for the very same reason: to go deeper into their faith. But what I heard was that "we need to pray for" so-and-so "because they're Catholic." The implication was that they need Jesus because they weren't real Christians—as if people who belong to a Church that professes Jesus as Lord and Savior, a Church whose lineage goes all the way back to the original disciples aren't real, authentic Christian believers. But I never knew any better. All I knew was what I had been conditioned to

believe, that we born-again, Evangelical Christians were the ones who had it all figured out.

For those of us who are Christ-followers, regardless of denominational or church differences, our God is a mighty God. He works through our brokenness and divisions, and I don't think, biblically speaking, the fractures and divisions across the Catholic-Protestant divide and across thousands of different Protestant denominations were His desired will. I do think that His desired will was a unified Body of Christ, a unified Church of order and structure that's much closer to the early Church and its founders and fathers—all of which and whom were Catholics—than what we've seen in the last 500 years, and certainly closer than what we see today. The Catholic movement of unity towards ecumenism (promoting unity across all of Christianity) is important, because we are not real enemies.

My wife, Amy, and I love everything about our Protestant background. We both believe that our salvation was good, starting the day we accepted

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...Journeys Home Continued...

Christ as our Lord and Savior. For me, that was November 26, 1995, and for Amy it was September 5, 1999. We were baptized, discipled, and mentored in Protestant Evangelical churches. We met and were married in a Protestant church. Our kids were dedicated and baptized in Protestant churches. Most of the best friends we have had in life, we met in Protestant churches. And we'll have with us and enjoy some of those relationships for the rest of our lives. Protestants do fellowship very well, and we will continue to do life with our closest friends, many of whom are still Evangelicals.

God can and does use all things. He used a "Contemporary Christian" church and pastor to draw me to Him when I was 24. There, I confessed Jesus as my Lord and Savior and was baptized. He used a Southern Baptist church to disciple me, mentor me, and mature me as I grew from a spiritual milk infant in the knowledge of Scripture to a solid food, mature Christian knowledgeable in the faith after I moved to Florida when I was 25.

At that time, that's what I needed—solid Bible preaching and teaching from the pulpit and Bible study through the life groups, Sunday school classes, and Bible studies made available through the church. I have numerous Bible verses hidden in my heart for every occasion through the memorization and meditation techniques I learned through the discipleship process. It was in my Evangelical church experience that I learned how to handle life and community with other believers. I know the Lord is in the Protestant Evangelical church because my wife and I experienced his supernatural peace, power and transformation there.

The Beginning of Our Journey Home

Amy began her own road to Catholicism two years before I did, being received into the Catholic Church in January 2022. When she started down this road, I told her that she should wait until I die to become Catholic. On the other hand, I've always trusted my wife, especially spiritually. She has always been the most-godly, Spirit-filled follower of Christ, so when she started

this journey, I was supportive, knowing that, wherever she was headed, it was because God was taking her there. I did not want her to become Catholic, but more so out of fear—fear of what others would think, friends abandoning me and ministry donors leaving me. That's why I told her she couldn't become Catholic until I died.

For my part, I traveled more slowly. I wouldn't even say that I was searching. But there was a longing to fill in what I thought were holes and gaps in my Christian faith—gaps in what I had been taught in my church experience that I now see were formed by the Protestant Reformation and by the ever-growing, ever-increasing westernized, Americanized, corporately modeled modern churches that would be unrecognizable just 75 years ago, let alone to those familiar with the Church in Acts. If you were to teleport the early Church here, they would figure out rather quickly and catch on to a Catholic Mass. Could you say the same about a modern Evangelical service?

In Protestant circles, churches and networks, much of our history is not told. Or if it is, it's told as if Christianity didn't start until the 1500s. And that's because there isn't a Protestant denomination or church that traces its roots back more than a few hundred years. In contrast, Catholicism traces its roots all the way back to Jesus. To my knowledge, the oldest Protestant decree (theological order) is the Westminster Confession of Faith in 1647. There's just naturally going to be a lot of misinformation and ignorance, and almost denial of history if you're largely overlooking 1600 years—some three quarters of Church history.

One of the benefits of Catholicism is learning about the Church fathers and mothers in following the daily Mass readings and the Liturgy of the Hours. Every day, along with the Old Testament, Proverb or Psalm, and New Testament readings, we learn about the sacrifices, the humility, the charitable work, and the trials of those who came before us. Learning Christian history and the growth of the Church down through the centuries is largely absent from the many Protestant branches.

Being an Evangelical also meant being very well schooled in

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

CONFESSIONS OF A MEGA CHURCH PASTOR

ALLEN HUNT

Dr. Allen Hunt was born into a Methodist family with a long line of pastors, and went on to be the senior pastor of a mega church in Atlanta. He shares the insights, experiences, and relationships that led him to resign that ministry and enter the Catholic Church.

#3270 - \$3.00



FROM MOHAMMAD TO JESUS

NIKKI KINGSLEY

Despite being born into the Islamic religion, the Lord Jesus Christ was relentless in pursuing Nikki Kingsley. Nikki's dramatic conversion will leave you filled with hope and wonder at the Living Lord, who even today is searching for His lost sheep.

#3267 - \$15.00



EVANGELICAL IS NOT ENOUGH

THOMAS HOWARD

In these pages, the late Dr. Thomas Howard describes his pilgrimage from Evangelicalism to liturgical Christianity. Non-Catholics will gain an appreciation of the formal and liturgical side of Catholicism; Catholics will see with fresh eyes the beauty of their tradition.

#3031 - \$16.95



having a personal relationship with Jesus, which was great for growing as a man or woman, a husband or father, wife or mother. But often, the message of church sermons centered around personal spiritual growth, with almost no reference to going out to serve and minister to the poor, the marginalized, the forgotten, the hurting around us. When it *was* mentioned, it was either in the form of an overseas mission trip or of a day of service, with matching “Serve The City” T-shirts... and then we’d come back and have a big “pat ourselves on the back” celebration with food trucks. I found, instead, that having a heart for the suffering is embedded everywhere within Catholic teaching—in the daily prayers, the daily Scripture readings, the DNA of the Church.

When I started going to Catholic Mass with Amy, I was struck by the stillness, the holiness, the richness and reverence that one feels within the church and the Mass itself. All of that was long ago stripped away from the seeker-friendly Evangelical services, most of which I find have become more like productions, with gimmicks, where they may not even have a cross on display anywhere within “the church.” I’ve always heard it said that Catholics were ritualistic. But really, what’s more ritualistic than a neatly choreographed production of a church service? Every Evangelical service follows the same pattern, just as they accuse of the Catholic Church of doing. The difference is that modern-day Evangelical churches, while they may not admit or recognize it, start with the question, “How would 21st century Americans like to worship God?” rather than, “How would God like to be worshipped?”

Another thing that struck me was that the Easter celebration didn’t begin on Palm Sunday and end on Easter Sunday. Within the Catholic Church, you build up to Easter through the whole season of Lent. And the week leading up to Easter, you could be in church on Holy Thursday when the Last Supper and Jesus’ washing of the disciples feet is commemorated, on Good Friday when our Lord was crucified, on Saturday night for the Easter Vigil, and again on Easter Sunday if you wanted to. That’s how seriously Catholics commemorate the death, burial, and resurrection of our Savior. And for weeks after Easter Sunday, the Church’s daily readings and teachings build upon the resurrection and everything that happened afterwards, with Jesus appearing to the disciples, the Great Commission, and into the book of Acts and our roles as Christ-followers.

**“We have been called to
heal wounds, to unite
what has fallen apart,
and to bring home those
who have lost their way.”**

**ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI
FEAST DAY: OCTOBER 4**

It’s the same way with Christmas, as Advent is celebrated within the Church from the very beginning of December. In recent years, Evangelical churches have begun to embrace Advent as they adopt some of what the Catholics have been doing for 2,000 years. I realized that the purpose of observing Lent and Advent, with their fasts, feasts, and sacrifices, was not works-based legalism, but rather a preparation of our hearts and minds for the birth, life, death, and ultimate resurrection of Christ.

My wife’s journey home to Catholicism began as she looked around our church home at the time and just felt that something wasn’t right – something was missing for her. She had grown tired of the production, the gimmicks, the entertainment, the social aspect of it all. She couldn’t quite put it together, so she asked God, “Is this what worship is supposed to look like?” And God’s still small voice asked her in return, “What did it look like in the beginning?” Amy thus began her journey having no idea where it would lead.

As Evangelical Protestant Christians, we were always taught that Catholics over the early to mid-centuries added layers upon layers to true, biblical Christianity before the Protestant Reformation rode to the rescue to strip away all the excess and return Christianity to its core. But was this true?

The Deep Dive

When Amy did her deep dive, and when I subsequently did mine, we found the following: what Christian worship looked like for 1,500 years (again, think about how long that is) is exactly how the Catholic Mass looks today: a unified time of liturgical reading, communal worship, communal confession, communal prayer, communal greeting, all the while focusing on the altar containing the Body and the Blood, the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, concluding with the partaking of Eucharistic communion. Simply put, this was not what we expected to find.

In our search, we discovered that the earliest surviving documentation of the Catholic Mass is from 108 A.D., written by St. Ignatius of Antioch, who used the term “Eucharist” without stopping to explain it—which seemed to indicate that the term was already in use and well known.

The writing by St. Ignatius is also the earliest surviving mention of the “Catholic Church,” which comes from the Greek word “katholikos,” referring to the “universal church.” This was synonymous with the “Christian Church” for 1400 years before Protestantism came into being.

The Game Changer

For me, the game changer in my conversion to Catholicism was the Eucharist. It’s always been widely accepted in Protestant churches that communion (the Lord’s Supper) is “symbolic,” although I’ve never heard a sermon on John 6:49–66, nor ever really heard it discussed, at least not in any kind of depth. And, for whatever reason, it has become traditional practice to embrace this “symbolic” gesture (quarterly in the Southern Baptist churches I’ve been in, though many Evangelical churches have moved to a weekly communion) almost as casually as you would go over a quarterly fiscal report.

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Seeking Truth in Love



Dear Friends,

Some of my favorite episodes of EWTN's *The Journey Home* program have been interviews with couples who came home to the Catholic Church together; couples who navigated not only the apologetic and doctrinal questions from their respective backgrounds, but who, by God's grace, were able to do so as a team and in such a way that their marriage was strengthened as a result.

One of my favorite examples of this is the testimony of Deacon Gregory and Ellen Amarante, who I was blessed to meet and interview in 2024. They shared how when Gregory first told Ellen that he had been studying and now desired to return to the Catholic Faith of his youth, she was shocked and heartbroken at the prospect. The two had a deep and loving marriage and cared deeply about their shared faith, but because of her strong Baptist roots and family experiences, the idea of her husband wanting to become Catholic was world-shattering. So much so that she took the kids and went to stay with her sister for three weeks. After both of them had had time to pray and consider, Ellen returned home ready to re-engage and reconcile, but with this request: Because she found the notion of becoming Catholic so unthinkable and thus the questions so potentially all-consuming, she asked her husband that they begin having what they called "Theology Tuesdays". One night a week on Tuesdays, they would put the kids to bed early and spend time patiently talking about every possible question, concern, and objection to the Catholic Church that she could think of. Then at the end of the evening, they agreed to put the questions away until next week, allowing each other time to pray and process, but also so that they could focus on continuing to live out their marriage and family prayerfully, faithfully, and fruitfully. "Theology Tuesdays" ended up being a huge blessing and turning-point in their story, as it allowed them to slowly tackle the questions together, while growing even stronger as a couple. Eventually Ellen was ready to join the Church with her husband.

I love Gregory and Ellen's story, first of all, because such stories may offer a needed word of hope and encouragement to some of our members facing conflict in marriage and other close family/friend relationships as the result of their journey toward Catholicism. But I also love such stories because they are a reminder that even during moments of crisis, change, and uncertainty, we must keep first things first in our lives. We have many members of the Coming Home Network who are at just such moments of change and uncertainty in their faith journey. Some have had their hearts and minds opened to Catholicism and are trying to figure out how to take the next steps to move forward. Others have already become Catholic and are now

trying to learn the ropes and discern how to use their gifts. And of course all of us have and will face times of change and uncertainty in life, during which the questions and stresses can feel nearly all-consuming. At such times and throughout the journey, we must keep first things first: Prayer & our relationship with God, on the one hand, and carrying out the duties of love toward the people He has given us on the other.

Such stories are a reminder that while the journey to the Catholic Church can involve a lot of the "head" knowledge and activity—reading the Early Church Fathers, rethinking doctrinal positions, challenging anti-Catholic assumptions and prejudices, etc—all of this is ultimately *for* the heart—for love. Our faith at its most essential is not an intellectual exercise but a matter of love. Jesus' summary of all the law and the prophets remains as true now as it was 2000 years ago: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind... You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39). While there are many reasons and ways to approach and answer the questions "Why should I become Catholic?", they can all ultimately be boiled down to **love**. The Body of Christ, the Church, is the way, cleared, paved and prepared by Christ Himself to allow us to experience the Father's love. He founded His Church and guides it by the Holy Spirit into all truth, in order to communicate His divine love to His people through prayer and sacrament, and then to teach and empower us to love as He loves. It is this love—this Charity without which we are merely "clanging gongs and clashing cymbals" (1 Corinthians 13:1)—that our faith and hope are all, ultimately about. Becoming Catholic, if you walk the journey patiently with the Holy Spirit, should be a journey that draws you closer to Jesus in prayer and helps you to love more purely and courageously the people God has put into your life.

Sometimes in life the question "What is truth?" can threaten to consume us and even tempt us to place the search for the answers before what we already know to be true and is most important. However, it is in keeping first things first—a daily, determined life of prayer and carrying out the duties of love to which God calls us—that we will have hearts and minds that will truly be open and receptive to the fullness of truth to which God wants to lead us. And when we keep those first things first, we simply do not know the ways God may work in and through us to bring other people closer to Him.

In Christ,

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

"For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways." –Psalm 91:11

FEAST OF THE GUARDIAN ANGELS: OCTOBER 2

Joyful Journey Updates

Samuel G., Former Baptist pastor

After two decades of praying the [Liturgy of the] Hours and attending Mass occasionally as an observer, it was such an overwhelming and emotional experience to take part in the Eucharist. I'm overjoyed to be continuing this lifelong journey of faith in full communion with the Catholic Church throughout time and around the globe. ■

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 beginning in most parishes. If you are planning to join the OCIA process this year, or if you are an OCIA leader or sponsor, please let us know! Email us at info@chnetwork.org

"God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons.

He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do His work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it if I do but keep His commandments.

Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him, in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him. If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends. He may throw me among strangers. He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me. Still, He knows what He is about."

ST. JOHN HENRY NEWMAN—FEAST DAY: OCTOBER 9

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

Monday, Oct 5

Deacon Cary Klivan

Convert from Judaism

Monday, Oct 12

Pierce Benefield

Former Evangelical Protestant

Monday, Oct 19

Dr. Jonathan Bieler

Former Swiss Reformed Seminarian

Monday, Oct 26

Fr. Jonathan Mitchican

Former Episcopal Priest



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, Nov 2

Luma Simms

Former Orthodox & Evangelical

Schedule is subject to change.

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

10 More Signs

YOU MIGHT BE A CATHOLIC CONVERT

Many Catholic converts experience a certain measure of “culture shock” that comes along with conversion. Depending on what faith background you come from, that can take different forms.

Several years ago, as a way to start conversations at our CHNetwork Retreats, we began sharing a list of ten of those “culture shock” experiences that are common to especially those who come from a Protestant background. You can read that list at chnetwork.org/youmightbeaconvert.

Over time, we’ve gotten several more great suggestions from retreat attendees of indicators that you might be a Catholic convert; here are 10 more of those signs:

You might be a convert if...

1

...when someone says the word “crusade,” your first thought is still Billy Graham rather than the Knights Templar.

2

...you’re the only person in your church who goes up to people after Mass and asks them if they’re new here.

3

...you still sometimes refer to the “cry room” as the “nursery”.

4

...you only ever gamble at church and you always play to lose.

5

...you still sometimes accidentally refer to the 8AM Mass as the “Early Service” and the 11AM Mass as the “Contemporary Service”.

6

...you used to have negative associations with the word “religious,” but now you associate it with the coolest monks and nuns you know.

7

...you’ve ever wondered why they call it a Catholic bookstore when most of the stuff in there isn’t books.

8

...you’ve ever been to a parish festival and wondered why they booked a Bon Jovi tribute band instead of the Christian version of Bon Jovi.

9

...you used to stress out about what church you were going to visit on vacation but now you’re relieved because you know exactly where you’re going to go no matter what town you’re in.

10

...you used to drink caramel cappuccinos at church, and now you’re exploring Carmelite and Capuchin spirituality.

Thank you to the CHNetwork family, and especially “cradle Catholics,” for helping us converts come home and be at home in the Catholic Church!

Read more: chnetwork.org/youmightbeaconvert.

Prayer List

Clergy

- **For Jeremy, a former Evangelical Youth Minister** who was received into the Church with his wife and daughter this past Easter Vigil; that the Lord will bless his family as they begin to live their new lives as Catholics.
- **For Christopher, a United Methodist minister** who finds himself increasingly nostalgic for the Catholic Church of his childhood and fed-up with the changes that have taken place within the Methodist Church, but just beginning the serious study of theological issues; that the Lord will enlighten him.
- **For Toby, a Baptist pastor** who two years ago began a deep study of the early Church and the case for Catholicism and is drawn to understand the ancient Church; that the Holy Spirit will lead him in his studies.
- **For Paul, a former Episcopalian 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 Jeremiah, an Evangelical pastor** struggling deeply with how he would support his family if he were to leave his current position to become Catholic, that God will give him courage and wisdom.
- **For Samuel, a Baptist minister** who entered the Church this past Easter Vigil and who struggles with his loss of identity as a pastor.
- **For Catherine, a former Methodist pastor**, who was received into the church with her husband this Easter season; that the Holy Spirit will fill them with joy as they begin to live this new life.
- **For Cory, a Presbyterian pastor** who has become convinced that he will need to become Catholic and is entering a doctoral program in Catholic theology at Franciscan University, that the Lord will lead him and his wife through this change in life.
- **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 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 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 the move; that the Holy Spirit will guide his steps with clarity.
- **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 as he seeks a way forward.
- **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, and his ability to support them.
- **For Gabriel, a former Church of Christ minister** who has become Catholic and needs much prayer as he works to bring his family in as well.

Laity

- **For Joanna, a Catholic**, that the Holy Spirit would lead her family toward conversion and spiritual and physical healing, guide her sister-in-law to come back to the church, and grant her wisdom to know what God wants her to do with the rest of her life, as well as patience while she discovers what He's trying to show her.
- **For Deb, a Catholic**, that the Holy Spirit would lead her children and grandchildren to return to the faith.
- **For Krissy, a Church of Christ member**, that the Holy Spirit leads her in her discernment as she begins her exploration of the Catholic Faith.
- **For Nicole, an Agnostic**, that the Lord will guide her (and the others in her OCIA class) as she begins her journey to the Church and bless her with courage to persevere in the faith.
- **For Lynne, a Non-denominational Protestant**, that the Holy Spirit would grant her wisdom and courage to share her journey with friends and family.
- **For Maria, a Non-denominational Protestant**, that God would lead her family and friends to not be hostile toward her conversion and grant her grace to maintain these relationships.
- **For Janine, a Lutheran**, that the Holy Spirit showers her with grace as she begins her journey home to the Church and that her family be united in the true faith.
- **For Suzanne, a Catholic**, that the Holy Spirit would guide the conversion of her husband to the faith.
- **For Sharon, a Baptist**, that the Lord would provide guidance and wisdom as she begins her journey home to the Church.
- **For Lillian, a Catholic convert**, that the Holy Spirit would lead her to continued growth in the Lord and make a way for the conversion of her family and friends.
- **For Amy, a Non-denominational Protestant**, that God would lead her family toward unity in the faith and bless her with perseverance and wisdom on her journey home to the Church.
- **For Anne, on the journey**, that the Lord would bless her with good health and good outcomes for an upcoming medical procedure.
- **For Daniel, a Reformed Baptist**, that he and his wife would find the courage to attend Mass and that they meet our Lord's presence there.
- **For Aaron, a Non-denominational Evangelical**, that the structure, order, and authority of the Catholic Church would enable him to grow in his faith.
- **For Alexander, a Russian Orthodox brother**, that the Holy Spirit may lead him into full-communion with the successor of St. Peter.
- **For Edward, a member of Calvary Chapel**, that our Lord Jesus would bless and guide his OCIA journey.
- **For Ezekiel, a Non-denominational Evangelical**, that by God's grace he may find answers to his many questions.
- **For Seth, an Evangelical**, that our Lord would enable him to overcome his concerns about Mary, the saints, and papal infallibility.
- **For a member of the Latter-day Saints**, that his search for the Truth would bring him to the fullness of the Truth in the Catholic Church.
- **For Cody, a Baptist**, that our Lord Jesus would grant him a hunger for His Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist.
- **For Mike, an Evangelical**, that the Holy Spirit would use his disappointment with his current church to lead him home to the Catholic Church.
- **For Jake, a Charismatic**, that God would guide his OCIA experience and that his wife would grow in her interest in the Catholic Faith.
- **For Mohammed, a Muslim**, that Jesus would show him the path he must follow to obtain the graces of holy Baptism.



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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*.

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

The Power of the Rosary

Our Lady of the Rosary—Feast Day: October 7

“The Rosary is the book of the blind, where souls see and there enact the greatest drama of love the world has ever known; it is the book of the simple, which initiates them into mysteries and knowledge more satisfying than the education of other men; it is the book of the aged, whose eyes close upon the shadow of this world, and open on the substance of the next. The power of the rosary is beyond description.”
(Blessed Fulton Sheen)

The Rosary is perhaps one of the most recognized Catholic prayers. With similarities to many early Church prayer traditions, the Rosary in its earliest form began to spread as a devotion through St. Dominic in the early 13th century. It has remained a core devotion of the faithful over the centuries. As St. John Paul II reminds us, this devotional prayer has one main purpose: to contemplate the face of Jesus alongside His mother.

THE MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY

THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

Mondays and Saturdays

Sundays of Advent & Christmas

1. The Annunciation
2. The Visitation
3. The Nativity
4. The Presentation
5. The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

Tuesdays and Fridays

Sundays of Lent

1. The Agony in the Garden
2. The Scourging at the Pillar
3. The Crowning with Thorns
4. The Carrying of the Cross
5. The Crucifixion

THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

Wednesdays and Sundays

1. The Resurrection
2. The Ascension
3. The Descent of the Holy Spirit
4. The Assumption
5. The Coronation

THE LUMINOUS MYSTERIES

Thursdays

1. The Baptism in the Jordan
2. The Wedding at Cana
3. Proclamation of the Kingdom
4. The Transfiguration
5. Institution of the Eucharist

HOW TO PRAY THE ROSARY

Begin with the Sign of the Cross.

Holding the Crucifix, pray the **Apostles' Creed**.

On the first (usually larger) bead, pray an **Our Father** for the intentions of the Holy Father

Pray one **Hail Mary** on each of the next three beads for Faith, Hope, and Charity

Pray the **Glory Be**

For each of the five decades, announce the **Mystery** (*perhaps followed by a brief reading from Scripture as relates to the Mystery*) then pray the **Our Father** on the large bead.

Next pray ten **Hail Marys** (*a decade*), advancing through the smaller beads, while meditating on the **Mystery**.

Finish the decade by praying a **Glory Be** followed by the **Fatima Prayer**.

After praying the five decades, pray the **Hail, Holy Queen**, followed by this dialogue and prayer:

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray: O God, whose Only Begotten Son, by his life, Death, and Resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant, we beseech thee, that while meditating on these mysteries of the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE PRAYERS OF THE ROSARY

THE APOSTLES' CREED: I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day He rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

OUR FATHER: Our Father, Who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, On earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

HAIL MARY: Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of death. Amen.

GLORY BE: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

THE FÁTIMA PRAYER: O My Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those most in need of Thy mercy.

SALVE REGINA/HAIL HOLY QUEEN: Hail, holy Queen, mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

...Journeys Home Continued...

Yet, as I discovered when I dove into the early Church, the altar with the Body and the Blood was *always* the central focus of the worship. It wasn't about the music, nor about how dynamic the pastor was. It was about the Body and Blood of Christ. This has huge implications for how we approach worship. Catholics attend the Mass because its sole focus is Christ. Their focus and encounter with God comes through the altar, the Body and the Blood that Christ shed for us.

Again, I had to ask myself why the earliest Christians were considered cannibals. Historically, I found, it's because the most identifiable element of the Christian life from the beginning was the Eucharist, the Real Presence of Jesus in the bread and the wine. It was there from the beginning, when the disciples' eyes were opened after the resurrection on the road to Emmaus, when Jesus blessed, broke, and gave them the bread.

When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight.... they found the Eleven gathered together... who said, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" (Luke 24:30–31, 33–34)

It was there at his last act with them before the crucifixion during the Last Supper. It was there in 1 Corinthians 10:16, where Paul refers to the "participation" in the Blood and the Body. It's also found later in Revelation 3:20 when Jesus extends his invitation to repent.

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. (1 Corinthians 11:23–30)

Both Catholics and Evangelicals partake in "remembrance" of Jesus, but only one group takes the Word "is" as literal. The

question becomes, how can one who takes communion in an "unworthy," yet "symbolic" manner, be guilty concerning the Body and the Blood of the Lord if it is indeed only "symbolic," to the extent that people were getting sick and dying?

There was no debate nor question in the early Church about the Real Presence of Jesus' Body and Blood in the bread and the wine—just as there was no question about the liturgy, the properly ordained clergy, or the ritualistic form of the Mass. We have existing documentation that dates back to the late first century, just decades after Jesus' resurrection, in the form of the *Didache*, which outlines the teachings of the apostles regarding Church order and the sacrifice of the Eucharist. These teachings, order, worship, and sacrifice still exist today in the Catholic Mass.

All the early Church fathers (like Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas, just to name some of the more well-known figures), whom Protestants will selectively quote, were practicing Catholics who believed in the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Eucharist. That is, they believed in the conversion of the substance of the eucharistic elements into the Body and Blood of Christ through consecration by the priest. This belief has been with us since the earliest generations following Christ, and was widely accepted, practiced, and established Church doctrine for 1,500 years before Protestantism existed.

The earliest documentation about the literal Body and Blood of Christ is from Ignatius of Antioch, written in 110 A.D. Ignatius was the second bishop of Antioch, who learned from the Apostle John, the same John who wrote John 6. St. Ignatius writes:

"I have no taste for corruptible food nor for the pleasures of this life. I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David; and for drink I desire his blood, which is love incorruptible" (Letter to the Romans 7:3 [A.D. 110]).

"Take note of those who hold heterodox opinions on the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us, and see how contrary their opinions are to the mind of God.... They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which that Father, in his goodness, raised up again. They who deny the gift of God are perishing in their disputes" (Letter to the Smyrnaeans 6:2–7:1 [A.D. 110]).

Even Martin Luther, the great Protestant reformer, believed in the Eucharist and wanted to hold to its teachings. Amy and I

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)

...Journeys Home Continued...

once heard an Evangelical pastor—a man who believed in the inerrancy of Scripture, who taught that the Bible is literal, that the best defense of Scripture is Scripture—critique Martin Luther for using Scripture as a defense of Scripture at the Marburg Colloquy of 1529, a meeting of Protestant reformers who gathered to discuss the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The pastor said:

“Luther finally says, ‘All right guys, Matthew 26, here is the Word, here’s the key’—This IS my body.’ He wrote ‘is’ because, doggone it, Luther was right. He has Scripture to back him up. ‘Is’ means is.

And then there were brothers who came to extend the right hand of fellowship, and Luther would not have it. Because the disagreement was going to be bigger than the advancement of the gospel. And by the way, I believe Luther was wrong. And by the way, not only do I believe he was wrong, I believe he was unreasonable.”

So Luther was wrong for taking the Bible literally in this case, but he was correct in doing the opposite of what Paul called us to do in Paul’s pleas for unity in leading a revolution that forever fractured the Body of Christ? While reasonable minds can certainly disagree, I will always err on the side of those who were a lot closer to Jesus’ time than anyone who came in the last 500 years. For me, I’ll always go back to Scripture, and my understanding of Scripture does not say that the bread and the body are symbolic. It tells me:

“Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever.” This he said in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before? It is the

spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you that do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him (John 6:49–66).

I’ve always been taught that the Bible is the literal word of God. I don’t know how much more literal Jesus could be than he is in this passage. He used the word “is” four times: “This IS the bread from heaven”; “The bread IS my flesh”; “My flesh IS true food”; “My blood IS true drink.”

He also tells us, “Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.” To me, you can’t have it both ways. You can’t say that the Bible is the literal word of God, but then, when it no longer suits your narrative, centuries later, say that Jesus is just being symbolic here.

When they turn away, He doesn’t say, “Hey, I was only being symbolic.” He doesn’t explain it away to the disciples as a parable, as he does on other occasions. This is pretty literal. And why did they turn away? Because they believed He was being literal, and a first century Jew would fully and completely understand the context.

We pondered and prayerfully wrestled with many other questions as well: salvation, Church order, Church authority, *sola fide*, *sola Scriptura*, Mary and the saints, baptism, etc. As we worked through all our questions, it all pointed to and led us on our journey home to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

This is not a path that we would’ve chosen, nor a path we were looking for, but rather one that God chose for us, although I did everything in my power to avoid it. Several years ago, Amy and I shared the same prevalent Evangelical understanding that Catholics “aren’t real Christians.” But like being called to salvation, once God gets hold of your heart, it’s no longer you, “but Christ who lives in you” who is now in control. ■

Bill lives in Locust Grove, GA with his wife Amy and their three children. After 15 years, he retired from full-time ministry in 2025. Prior to being called into ministry, he was an industry-award winning commercial real estate broker in Tampa, FL. Bill earned his B.A. and M.S. degrees from the University of Illinois and won two gold medals at the 1996 Atlanta and 2000 Sydney Paralympics.

Today, Bill and Amy write, speak, and teach on scripture, tradition, church authority and the lived experience of conversion, helping others rediscover the unity and authority Christ intended for His Church.

They’ve shared their full journey in their book The Final Pieces: Our Spiritual Journey.

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*“Consult not your fears but
your hopes and your dreams.
Think not about your
frustrations, but about your
unfulfilled potential.
Concern yourself not with
what you tried and failed in,
but with what it is still
possible for you to do.”*

POPE ST. JOHN XXIII

Feast Day: October 11

