

The

Coming Home Network International

FEBRUARY 2008 NEWSLETTER

JOURNEYS HOME

A HOMECOMING

BY DEE DEE GRIFFEY

WIFE OF A FORMER SOUTHERN BAPTIST PASTOR

“What am I doing in a Catholic Church on Christmas eve, when only four years ago I was the wife of a Southern Baptist minister? Sitting in our parish church, looking at the altar before me, seeing the sights and hearing the sounds of the Mass, I can only reflect on the long journey that brought me here, to a place I would never have imagined. Now I must say I was never one to believe Catholics and Christians were mutually exclusive. But in my youth, I could barely fathom anyone outside of Baptist life having a truly fulfilled Christian walk - certainly not Catholics. I was sure Catholics could be saved, but it would be despite the Catholic Church, not because of it. So why did I make such a journey? The limited space cannot do justice to all the various issues, concerns, and yearnings that led me, along with my husband and my children, into full communion with the Catholic Church. But a brief glance will show that it was something that had its roots in my earliest days as a Christian, and a longing for something that through my entire Evangelical pilgrimage, had never truly been satisfied.



Living in Christ

For as long as I can remember, God simply was a part of my life. As a young person, I realized that having a personal relationship with Christ was the basis for my strength. As I grew, I saw friends around me struggling with the temptations of this world. To resist, I tried to focus the things of the Kingdom. Still, through all of the struggles and growth, I knew in my heart that something was missing. Something I could not understand.

I grew up and went to college. Life went on, and I remained firmly entrenched in my walk of faith. Toward the end of my schooling, I met, and then married, my wonderful husband, Dave. He had already shown me that he was a man of faith. He impressed me with his insightfulness and desire to search for the Truth, no matter what the cost. Despite having grown up outside of church, he felt that he was called into vocational ministry. So after we were married, we took our first step by packing up and moving to Louisville, Kentucky. Dave enrolled in Seminary, and I shared in his ministry as it began to take root. During this time, we both did a great deal of growing.

God also began opening my eyes to things that I had never seen before. I was growing in many ways, and being challenged in others, yet there was still something that was missing in my life. I discussed it with Dave — who, due to his incorrigible knack for never being satisfied with pat answers, was also beginning to question many of our Baptist beliefs — and pondered it, but could not ultimately identify the source of this yearning.

Over the next several years, we continued in ministry, Dave enrolled in graduate school, we joyfully welcomed our three beautiful boys — Charlie, Davey, and Phillip — into the changing world. Throughout these times, I sought refuge in God and the church. And while I could not claim to be without blemish or in any way infallible in my own faith walk, I began to notice that the church appeared to be changing,

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Conversion Means Sacrifice.....page A
Featured Resources..... page B
Bulletin Board page C
Prayer List page D

too. Perhaps it was never as bad as the world around it, but the directions seemed to be strangely similar. Dave noted that the world was leading the church, not the church leading the world. At this point my search for finding the Truth began in earnest. Dave's growing struggles with many issues both theological and spiritual regarding Scripture and Baptist belief, the Church, and the way things were going only added fuel to the fire of my discontent. Our search for the fullest expression of the Faith took a baby step that turned into a leap; a leap into the unknown.

After years of such struggles and changes, we decided it was time to take a serious look at the faith that we claimed was central to our lives and the lives of our children. We looked at where we had been, where the church had been, and where it was going. By now I was beginning to see that, despite my lifelong anchor in the Baptist Church, Dave had several good points about the problems with various teachings and practices. We started at the first place we could, we started at home. Looking at ourselves, we could see that our faith had changed drastically and had reshaped itself over the many years of learning and growing. In looking at ourselves, we could see that we were not where we had started. We had come to see that other denominations also contained elements of the truth. And we saw that the problems in our own denominational tradition were more than simple trivialities that didn't impact the faith; in many ways they cut to the core of what we were about.

Why were there no sacraments in Baptist life? Why such a disconnect between the sacred and the physical? And what about the role and unity of the Church? I could not deny that the constant divisions, repackaging, and myriad versions of Protestantism was a far cry from the biblical mandate of One Body. I also looked at the issue of life. On one January Sunday, Dave told our congregation that in life issues, only the Catholic Church was truly consistent. I was as offended as several of the members (our piano player even left because of it). But the more I thought about it, the more I understood what he was saying. There was something constant, something continual, based on what I understood about the Catholics, even if I knew virtually no details of their beliefs.

From here, we looked at the Southern Baptist denomination. As I looked, I noticed a disconnect. I noticed that there were issues in the Bible that appeared distant from the piety of my surroundings, and other things we did — such as 'child dedication' — echoed infant baptism, something Baptist firmly opposed. Then there was the Lord's Supper, which we were taught was merely symbolic, but I came to see that the Bible indicated it could mean a little bit more.

I also noticed that Baptists, and even Evangelicals, seemed to be morphing. A new wave of mega-preachers had arisen, dismissing old doctrinal commitments for new priorities, merging what sounded like news headlines fused with Oprah-like sensitivity, and an emphasis on self — or at least that's what

came across. The overall Southern Baptist denomination, if not all of Protestantism, was changing, and we couldn't find a reason, based on our belief in the liberty of the believer and the believer's personal guidance by the Holy Spirit, to see how this side for change could challenge that side for tradition.

It was no longer the faith that I had grown up in, or even the one that Dave had first encountered all those years ago. The problems appeared to be deep rooted, doctrinal, striking near the foundations of what Southern Baptists were at their core. It had become political, success focused in a material way. It wasn't as if either of us thought that other denominations were devoid of problems, but for the first time, I came to realize that Southern Baptists could no longer stake a claim to being above others. Nor could they make singular claims on the Truth. I realized that problems in a denomination or tradition may have no bearing on its claims to the Truth at all. Therefore, we took our first step into the unknown, leaving what we knew and going forth toward an unknown end.

The Search Begins

After deciding that we were no longer anchored in the Southern Baptist tradition, we began looking at information about the different denominations within the umbrella of the Christian faith. If we no longer felt the fullness of truth was to be found in our tradition, then we better find the tradition where it was located.

Meanwhile, realizing that we had to make a living once we stepped out of our comfort zone as pastor of a Southern Baptist church, we thought about what we could do to survive. We had already served in an American Baptist church during our seminary years, and concluded this would be a good first step. Not only would it provide for our family, but it might show that "Baptist" wasn't the problem as much as "southern" Baptist was.

We began to work with the local American Baptist church and its pastor, a friend of Dave's, but we still found no comfort in many of the biblical and theological issues that had arisen in our lives. Perhaps our problems needed solved outside a Baptist circle. In any event, we had to get into the work force to keep ourselves afloat while we took more time to think, and think hard.

We had served one non-Baptist church in Seminary, and had felt very uplifted by the experience — by its more sacramental understanding of doctrine, and by a more reverent approach to liturgical worship. So knowing that we could find our rest in a non-Baptist denomination, we continued looking closely at the beliefs of a wide array of churches; focusing on their core beliefs, on where they were on various key issues, and how they lived the faith in this changing world. As we did so, we gradually began to narrow our search for the Truth.

continued on page 3...

Conversion Means Sacrifice

by Marcus Grodi

Conversion to Jesus Christ always requires sacrifice, and this of course includes conversion to his Church, because true conversion to Jesus requires acceptance of all that He taught (Matthew 28:19), not just those things that make life comfortable. In Mark 8:34ff, after Jesus had described the suffering he must go through for his disciples, he turned the tables: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the sake of the gospel will save it."

Following Jesus requires sacrifice. This is not a requirement just for the few but for all. When St. Paul strongly asserted in Romans 8:17 that "we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ," he said this conditionally. This isn't merely some trump card we now can flash whenever our sins put us in danger of "going to Jail." Rather our reception of this inheritance is only true "provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." Conversion from being a child of the world to being a child of God requires sacrifice.

In the recent book revealing the private correspondence of Mother Teresa, the author relates a vow Mother Teresa had made soon after her final profession to become a nun: "I made a vow to God, binding under [pain of] mortal sin, to give to God anything that he may ask, 'Not to refuse him anything'" (quoted in "Come be My Light," pg. 28). The author treats this vow as if it is extraordinary, but isn't this vow precisely what every Christian is expected to make? What was extraordinary about Mother Teresa was not that she made this vow, but how by the grace of God she was able to live it out in obedience under such extraordinary circumstances: serving Jesus selflessly by caring for the poorest of the poor.

You and I, if we desire to follow Jesus as one of his disciples, are called "... to give to God anything that he may ask, 'Not to refuse him anything.'" Thanks be to Jesus that he fully recognizes that apart from him we can do nothing (John 15:5) and gives us the necessary graces: we just need to abide in him. And this is one of the primary reasons we work towards visible unity in the Church, calling all to come home: because for salvation everyone needs the graces that can only be received with certainty through the Sacraments of the Catholic Church.

One of the primary purposes of the *Coming Home Network International* is to help inquirers and converts, especially former clergy and their families, deal with the sacrifices that come with conversion. We aren't to alleviate all suffering, but to lessen it to the extent that grace allows. From the

beginning of the Church, conversion has brought with it unexpected sacrifices.

Imagine yourself the "man lame from birth" in Acts 3. Every day for as long as you can remember, a family member has carried you out to the gate called Beautiful where you begged for alms from those passing by going into the Temple. Your infirmity prevented you from any education or from learning anything else except begging, so this is how you support yourself and your family.

Then one morning like all mornings you ask two gentlemen from Galilee for alms. Unexpectedly, one of them says, "I have no silver and gold." You are about to turn your gaze away to beg from others passing by, but the gentleman continues speaking: "But I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." You are about to utter an expletive, when instead he takes you by the right hand, raises you up, and suddenly your feet and ankles feel strong for the first time in your life. Before you can even think, you are leaping up and walking around praising God. You then enter into the temple with them where everyone, from whom you have been begging alms for years, sees you and becomes filled with wonder and amazement!

You cling to these two unknown gentlemen in amazement and with everyone gathered around they preach a sermon about this man Jesus in whose name you were healed. Your life has been changed radically for ever!!

When the crowd thins out and the gentlemen leave, you do something you've never done before: you walk home on your own two feet. You wave at everyone along the way and the wonder and amazement continues, until sometime in the night, when you begin considering what you are going to do in the morning. How will you now get money to provide food and clothing for yourself and your family? Sure you can walk, but now you no longer can beg, and you have no skills for anything else! Maybe a friend will have pity on you and give you some kind of work, but in the end this healing and conversion, which you did not seek, has radically changed your life for ever.

There's another interesting episode in Acts, with little details, but yet with amazing similarities to the sacrifices required of today's clergy converts: "And the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, AND A GREAT MANY OF THE PRIESTS WERE OBEDIENT TO THE FAITH" (Acts 6:7). We never again hear of the plight of these early clergy converts to Christianity, but we can imagine their sacrifices. They probably were disowned by their non-converted Jewish friends and family, but also, in abandoning their positions as priests of the



temple, they lost their livelihood, their shares of the sacrifices. They became "unemployed" and needed to subsist under the merciful benevolence of the growing Christian community.

Today's clergy convert has to make the same sacrifices whenever he or she contemplates leaving the Christian community in which they were nurtured, educated, ordained, and employed. Entering into the Church, they receive no guarantees that there will be opportunities within the Church to use their training, gifts, and experiences to support themselves or their families. Many of them feel a bit like the healed beggar must have felt: grateful to be home, but now what?

Today's clergy converts also face complications that the clergy converts of yesteryear never faced, for we live in a much more complicated economy that requires, besides room and board, the funding of expensive health plans and provisions for the future. It's much easier to quote Jesus when he said "do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink...do not be anxious about tomorrow...let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day" (Matthew 6:25 -34) than to *live* it when you're in your fifties or sixties, a husband and a father, contemplating abandoning your pastoral ministry, your salary, and your denomination's health and pension plan—especially if this is all you have ever done. Some may consider these concerns worldly, and those who resist "coming home" because of them weak in faith, even in danger of damnation since "knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as

necessary by God through Christ, [they] refuse either to enter it or to remain in it" (CCC, 846; *Lumen Gentium*, 14)!

But we are called not to stand in judgement, or to push, pull, or prod anyone into making such a drastic, life-altering decision to enter into the fullness of the Catholic faith. This, of course, is what we want them to do, following the teaching of the Church, but this must be a decision freely made, and one for which we, who either have already come home or have always been home, must offer our understanding prayers and patient support.

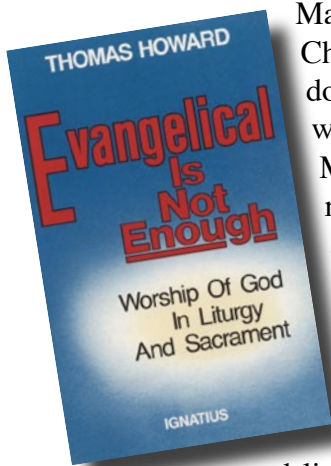
This is why the *Coming Home Network International* exists and what you share in if your are in partnership with us. Last year we were contacted by a record number of non-Catholic clergy: 160 from over 40 different denominations. We continue to assist nearly 1500 Primaries (clergy, missionaries, academics, seminarians, etc.), half of whom are still on the journey, facing all the problems I mentioned earlier. Each month we list some of these in the Prayer List for your consideration. Please pray for them, that the Lord would continue to give them wisdom, courage, and grace to face whatever sacrifices he is calling them to make as they seek to follow him faithfully.

Sincerely in Christ,



Featured Resources

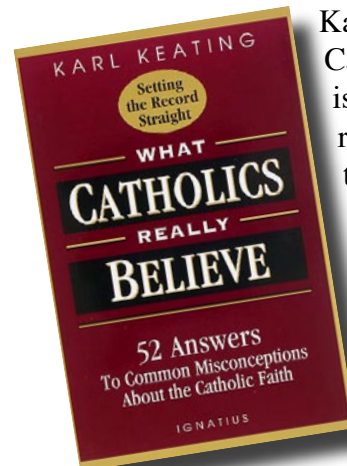
Evangelical is Not Enough by Thomas Howard



Many who enter the Catholic Church from other traditions, do so by way of the liturgical worship of the Catholic Mass. Many Evangelicals yearn for rich spiritual experiences, and as they search, they begin a process that invariably leads them to the doors of Rome. In a deeply moving narrative, Thomas Howard explains how his journey toward liturgical Christianity brought him into full communion with the One Church.

RECEIVE EITHER RESOURCE WITH ANY DONATION OF
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What Catholics Really Believe by Karl Keating



Karl Keating's "What Catholics Really Believe" is a wonderfully compact resource for those looking at the Catholic Church for the first time. Many outside the Church are not always well informed about the true teachings of Catholicism. With clear and concise explanations, Keating allows the inquirer a fair and easy understanding of the Church's teachings from a Catholic Point of view.

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former Non-denominational

February 11
Sheila Liaugminas
former Secularist

February 18
Fr. Erik Richtsteig
former Mormon

February 25
Amy Young
A revert to Catholicism

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Come and hear *Marcus Grodi in person*

February 15, 2008

Discovering the Catholic Church

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic

Church - Raleigh, NC

2718 Overbrook Drive

Raleigh, NC 27601

March 1, 2008

Holy Trinity Church

219 NW Third Street

Evansville, IN 47708

March 15, 2008

24th Annual Spirituality Convocation

Of the Archdiocese of NY

Archbishop Stepinac High School

950 Mamaroneck Avenue

White Plains, NY 10605





Please pray ...

✠ CLERGY ✠

✠ For Paul, an Anglican priest in England, that God would guide him as to what next to do and that the Holy Spirit would put him in contact with strong Catholic friends.

✠ For Antonio, a Non-denominational minister in the Philippines, that God would open his heart and mind to all the truths of the Church founded by the Lord Jesus.

✠ For Brad, a Reformed Episcopal priest, that opportunities would open before him to guide him in his journey to full communion with the Catholic Church.

✠ For William, a Presbyterian theology student in Scotland, that his God would enrich and guide studies through his love and grace.

✠ For Diana, an Evangelical missionary in the Far East, that now that she is convinced of the holiness of the Catholic Church and believes in the blessed Sacrament, that God would guide her on the path to lead her to be able to partake of the Holy Eucharist.

✠ For Cynthia, a Non-denominational minister, that God would inspire her as to how best to inform the leaders of her denomination that she intends to become a Catholic.

✠ For John, a United Church of Christ minister, that the Lord Jesus would speak to him through the Blessed Sacrament that he should be attentive to the Catholic witness of his wife.

✠ For Brother Kevin, an Anglican monk, that God would lead him out of no-man's-land and home to the Holy Catholic Church.

In every issue we include timely prayer concerns from the membership. Each person mentioned has contacted us and is somewhere along their journey home. All members are encouraged to pray at least one hour each month before the Blessed Sacrament for the needs in general and specific of the *CHNnetwork*, its members and supporters.

Please submit all prayer requests and answers to :

CHN Prayer List
P. O. Box 8290
Zanesville, OH 43702

You may also email your prayer requests to:

prayers@chnnetwork.org

We use only first names to preserve anonymity, and the following codes:

(QV) Quo Vadis Requests

(SP) Spanish Network Requests

✠ For Jim, a Baptist minister, that as he reads the true teachings of the Catholic faith God would free his heart and mind of the untruths previously taught to him by anti-catholic literature.

✠ For Willard, a Lutheran minister, that the Holy Spirit would enliven and guide his studies of the Catholic faith through his RCIA program.

✠ For Mario, an Old Catholic priest in Colombia, that he may find his true Home in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

✠ For David, a Lutheran minister, that as he responds to God's tug to come back to the Catholic Church, the Lord Jesus would guide him through all the difficulties that he and his family encounter along the way.

✠ For Augustine, a Church of Christ minister, that the Holy Spirit would open doors for him to be able to benefit from all the gifts and graces of the Catholic Church..

✠ LAITY ✠

✠ For the Conversion of Randy and his wife, and Ginny, and the members of her Church.

. ✠ For Tammy, who is having difficulties in her marriage right now, and would appreciate prayers for her, her husband, and their children.

✠ For Matt, Jason, Betty, Sara, and Justin in their journey home to the Catholic Church

✠ For the needs of Fr Emmett, Fr Darling, and thanksgiving for Fr Brady's health

✠ For Ambrose and his continued health.

✠ For planning of the 2008 Deep in History conference; and for all those looking to attend, and those who will help us in the coming year.

✠ For Gustavo and José in Mexico. Both are suffering from depression, and pray that the Holy Spirit will heal them and give them fortitude and joy. (*SP*)

continued from page 2...

From the beginning, there was only one thing I could not consider: the Catholic Church. Not that I believed all Catholics were going to Hell, but in many ways the Catholic Church embodied all that I had been taught was wrong in Christianity. Yet, as one denomination after another fell under the weight of this or that theological problem, the pickings seemed to diminish. Finally, I reasoned that I had thought the Catholic Church was a problem on almost every level. But maybe, just maybe, it might be right on every level instead. Perhaps the reason for its complete otherness was its roots in the Truth rather than apostasy. We discussed this possibility; after all I knew Dave had been looking at the Catholic Church for several years.

With that, Dave raided his extensive library, we spread books and articles out in our living room, and we began to read. As we looked at what the Catholic Church taught about the Eucharist, or about Baptism, or about Mary, and compared it to where we had come from, a light began to shine. Somehow, what was once unthinkable began to make sense.

Some Outside Influences

During this time two key events happened that had a profound impact on me. The first was the death of a man that I had grown to see as truly an evangelical light in the world. Pope John Paul II had passed away. I saw him as a shining example of Christ-like love in a world of compromise, cynicism, and moral collapse. The thought that the Pope — the Pope! — could be such a light of Christian truth and love was an amazing revelation in my own mind.

The other event happened in the Baptist school in which I taught. Our son Charlie, who was 9 years old at the time, asked me a question in front of the class that literally brought me to a standstill. He asked, “Isn’t there only supposed to be one church?” I was not sure how to answer him, mostly because I knew he was right. He did not want the pat answer of “we are all one in the Kingdom.” He meant a church body acting in one accord. Dave and I had talked about this many times before, and Dave frequently told our churches that the New Testament says more about unity and harmony and oneness in the Church than it does about homosexuality. God meant for there to be one Church. A single body.

Christianity today, unfortunately, looks nothing of the kind. Divisions are everywhere. Everywhere we look there are more divisions and splits. This quickly turned my floundering into something that I could finally begin to sharpen my focus upon. I now began to have a clear grasp of the direction I should go.

The Journey Begins

Being Catholic was so far from my experience that I could not even bring myself to consider it at first. The Eucharist,

the Pope, Purgatory, Communion of the Saints, Mary — how could I ever enter a Church that had such things? And what did they mean? Unlike so many I have met, I didn’t ‘discover the Eucharist’, or even decide the Pope was the Vicar of Christ. I had looked for an answer, and found it in the Church. The Catholic Church worked, based on everything I had come to see was called for in a Scriptural context. It was one, it was historical, and it was true. As I learned from Dave’s studies, the way ‘church was done’ in the earliest of days was like the Catholic Church did it today.

But by this time, I learned that there was much more to the Catholic Church than I had ever heard about, and some things that just weren’t true. Since I have seen our culture say things about Evangelicals and Baptists that aren’t true, I know how that feels. So I resolved not to condemn the Catholics on things that they claimed were not true. I also began looking at the lives of their leaders, like Pope John Paul II, Fulton Sheen, Mother Theresa, St. Francis (a big hero of Dave’s), and others like them. They were great Christians, and great witnesses, and were as good in their walk as the great witnesses of the Protestant traditions.

As I studied, and as I began attending Mass at a local Catholic Parish, the beauty of the liturgy, the deep sacramental theology that we had only barely experienced early in our ministry, the spiritual breadth and depth, all began to pull me in. Sitting in

the Mass, all of my questions and spiritual longings began to be satisfied. I realized that this was the Christian faith as my heart knew it was supposed to be.

At this point it did not take long before we both realized what we needed to do. We needed to become a part the One Church — the one expression of the Faith that held all that we had desired for so long to see. Yes, this meant leaving everything we knew, losing our careers, and even our friends — in fact, I lost my job teaching in the Baptist school as a result — but it was also the completion of everything we knew. Where there had been an empty spot in the faith it was now filled. Where there had been division, there was now unity. One Church that could be traced back to the foundation of the Church begun by Jesus.

Sure there were problems and still are. There are things that I haven’t quite grasped. Dave says it’s like football, you just don’t buy a football and suddenly know how to play. But there is enough spiritual satisfaction right now to help me as I grow and learn the fullness of Christ in the Church.

Dee Dee is currently employed with a major educational publishing company. David works in the CHRresources department of the Coming Home Network International. They attend St. Mary parish in Delaware, Ohio.

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