

The

# Coming Home Network International

SEPTEMBER 2006 NEWSLETTER

## Journeys Home

### Catching Roman Fever

by David Mills

“What beauty was once ours,” I said to my wife as we drove along the coast north of Boston, looking over the waving salt marsh grasses to the ocean just beyond and the blue sky stretching above. My wife and I had lived for thirteen years on this coast, first in a city called Beverly and then in a small town called Ipswich (said to be the real setting of John Updike’s novel *Couples*) before I was called to serve at an Episcopal seminary outside Pittsburgh, which was for me well into the Midwest.



Driving around our old home, we felt a deep, almost painful ache of homesickness. I had loved the salt marshes especially, but almost everything I saw made my heart ache: the clapboard houses, the old barns, the slightly rolling fields, the stone walls running through the woods, the old stone library where my wife had worked, the stream where our firstborn had fed the ducks, even the little seafood restaurant shaped like the paper box, complete with handle, they give you to take home your clams.

We felt that living near Pittsburgh we were not where we should be. We were estranged from something that should have been ours. The feeling passed, of course — we had a home to go back to, and friends, and a job, and a church — but it will come back just as strongly the next time we visit.

Almost everyone has felt this longing to be home (a close friend even feels it for southern California). It is the closest experience I know to that longing for the Catholic Church that Anglicans call “Roman Fever.”

When you suffer this fever, you feel that you are not at home, that you are living in exile, and that you cannot be happy until you go home. You feel a great, aching desire to be a Catholic.

#### **Roman Fever**

Roman Fever was, at least for me, much like malaria. It comes and goes unexpectedly and without warning. When you have it you feel it is going to take you off, but when you get better you can easily forget it. When you do not have it, you will tend to think of it as a chronic illness to be suffered until it goes away and you can get back to doing what you think you are supposed to be doing.

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I would get the fever most often when reading Catholic writers, though it sometimes came apparently unprovoked. J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and Evelyn Waugh's later novels, and Flannery O'Connor's letters, and Graham Greene's "Catholic novels," and almost any of G. K. Chesterton's books could set it off. Sigrid Undset's *Kristin Lavransdatter* could bring it on, as could Walker Percy's essays and Ronald Knox's apologetics. I loved John Henry Newman — he is my hero — but I knew that if I read him I would feel this painful aching desire to do what he had done.

I could get the fever from reading writers who did not believe in Catholicism, and even from writers who hated it. I had read Albert Camus' books from early adolescence, and they had sometimes led me to look wistfully at the Catholic Church long before I had the slightest interest in joining her, perhaps because the faith he did not believe in was the Catholic faith. Several of the most honest and acute analysts of the modern world had the same effect. George Orwell hated the Catholic Church, but almost everything he wrote showed me that she alone was the answer to the questions he (and I) asked.

At times, I carefully avoided anything that might bring on Roman Fever. I would leave Chesterton's books on the shelf and busy myself with something else. I did not want to feel so strongly an urge to do what I did not want to do, and I am not sure, now, if I was not sinning against the light. Like malaria, it kept coming anyway, till one day I realized that if I kept refusing the invitation it might not come again.

I had known several Anglicans, most of them priests, who had told me about their own youthful Roman Fever and who had assured me that it would eventually go away. They looked back on it as you look back on your twelve-year-old passion for baseball cards or the earnest discussions of ultimate questions you had with friends in your dorm room late at night. Though I was an Anglican then, and active in Anglican affairs, I always felt that they had done something wrong, though

I thought, or tried to convince myself I thought, that they had done the right thing.

The malarial kind of Roman Fever may be simply the Anglican form. The Roman Fever most Evangelicals suffer keeps them sweating through sleepless nights, feeling themselves to be out of their senses, afraid that they will get even worse. They suffer for years without a break till it finally takes them off. They do not seem to feel this on again, off again interest in the Catholic Church. Once interested, they usually stay interested, even when they do not want to be.

### The Anglican Form

I suspect Anglicans suffer the malarial type because modern Anglicanism can look so much like Catholicism. In some forms (but not others) it looks and feels and sounds Catholic and it lets you feel Catholic even when you aren't. You have vestments and liturgy and a sacramental life, you have some idea of tradition and some belief in the Anglican Church as a living body going back through its bishops to the Lord himself, you have saintly examples of devotion and theologians of weight. It is mostly a charade, of course, but it inoculates you against the real appeal of the Catholic Church, as a dose of cowpox keeps you from getting smallpox. It is Catholicism Lite.

It was so, however, only in the versions usually called "high church" or "Anglo-Catholic."

The Anglo-Catholic claimed to be fully Catholic without what he would tactfully call "the Roman additions." His was the faith of the primitive Church, Roman Catholicism the faith of the late medieval Church (a sort of code for "corrupt"), to which had been added a few unfortunate developments like the declaration of papal infallibility. The Anglo-Catholic's was a cleaner, sparer, truer Catholicism.

He explained the Protestant origin of his own church, and the decisive Protestantism of its doctrinal statements, by saying that the Reformers naturally went too far in trying to purify the Catholic Church.

*continued on page 4...*



# The Verses I Never Saw

by Marcus Grodi

One of the more commonly shared experiences of Protestant converts to the Catholic Church is the discovery of verses “we never saw.” Even after years of studying, preaching, and teaching the Bible, sometimes from cover to cover, all of a sudden a verse “we never saw” appears as if by magic and becomes an “Aha!” mind-opening, life-altering messenger of spiritual “doom”! Sometimes it’s just recognizing an alternate, clearer meaning of a familiar verse, but often, as with some of the verses mentioned below, it literally seems as if some Catholic had snuck in during the night and somehow put that verse there in the text!

The list of these surprise verses is endless, depending especially on a convert’s former religious tradition, but the following are a few key verses that turned my heart toward home. This article is a reprint from the topic I covered on the July 31 broadcast of The Journey Home on EWTN

## 1. Proverbs 3:5-6

**Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.**

Ever since my adult re-awakening (read “born-again experience”) at age 21, this Proverb has been my “life verse.” It rang true as a guide for all aspects of my life and ministry, but then during my nine years as a Presbyterian minister, I became desperately frustrated by the confusion of Protestantism. I loved Jesus and believed that the Word of God was the one trustworthy, infallible rule of faith. But so did lots of the non-Presbyterian ministers and laymen I knew: Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, Pentecostals, Congregationalists, etc., etc., etc . . . The problem was that we all came up with different conclusions, sometimes radically different, from the same verses. How does one “trust in the Lord with all your heart”? How can you make sure your not “leaning on your own understanding”? We all had different opinions and lists of requirements. A verse I had always trusted suddenly became nebulous, immeasurable, and unreachable.

## 2. 1 Timothy 3: 14-15

**I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.**

Scott Hahn pulled this one on me. “So, Marc, what is the

pillar and foundation of truth?” I answered, “The Bible, of course.” “Oh yeah? But what does the Bible say?” “What do you mean?” When he told me to look up this verse, I suspected nothing. I had taught and preached through First Timothy many times. But when I read this verse, it was as if it had suddenly appeared from nowhere, and my jaw dropped. The Church!? Not the Bible? This alone sent my mind and essentially my whole life reeling; the question of *which* Church was one I was not ready to broach.

## 3. 2 Timothy 3:14-17

**But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

Verses 16-17 were the texts I and others had always turned to buttress our belief in sola Scriptura, so to this I quickly turned my attention. Among many things, three important things became very clear, for the first time: (1) when Paul used the term “scripture” in this verse, he could only have meant when we call the Old Testament. The New Testament canon would not be established for another 300 years! (2) “All” scripture does not mean “only” scripture nor specifically what we have in our modern bibles. And (3), the emphasis in the context of this verse (verses 14-15) is the trustworthiness of the oral tradition Timothy had received from his mother and others—not sola Scriptura!

## 4. 2 Thessalonians 2:15

**So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter.**

This was another “too-hot-to-handle” verse Scott threw in my lap. The traditions (Dare I say, traditions) that these early Christian were to hold fast to were not just the written letters and Gospels that would eventually make up the New Testament, but the oral tradition.

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And even more significant, the context of Paul's letters indicates that his normal, preferred way of passing along "what he had received" was orally; his written letters were an accidental, sometimes unplanned add-on, dealing with immediate problems—leaving unsaid so much of what they had learned through oral teaching.

### 5. Matthew 16:13-19

**Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesare'a Philip'pi, he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Eli'jah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."**

There is so much to discuss in this verse, so much I never

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*continued from conversion story by D Mills on page 2*

They had thrown out the baby with the bathwater, and the Anglo-Catholic claimed to have rescued the baby, and by implication to have left Rome with the dirty bathwater.

He had also to explain how he could be a Catholic and hold to his church's Protestant statements at the same time. The Anglo-Catholic might love Benediction and Corpus Christi processions, but he had in Anglican's Articles of Religion the order that "The sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about," which seemed to rule out Benediction and Corpus Christi processions without appeal. He solved this problem by claiming that of course the Articles were correct, but that did not mean they could not be gazed upon or carried about as long as they were also used properly. This was not an honest reading, but the sort of thing he had to do to be a Catholic in a Protestant Church.

The Anglo-Catholic was, in other words, committed by his theology to the idea that he was more Catholic than the pope. The pope believed things (so the Anglo-Catholic thought) that were not true, not least the claim that a Christian ought to be in communion with him, and that the life and faith of Christians who were not in

saw. I always knew that Catholics used this to argue Petrine authority but I wasn't convinced. To the naively ignorant, the English words "Peter" and "rock" are so different that it's obvious that Jesus was referring to the faith Simon Peter received as a gift from the Father. For the more informed seminary educated Bible students, like myself, I knew that behind the English was the Greek, where one discovered that Peter is the translation of *petros*, meaning little pebble, and rock is the translation of *petra*, large boulder. Again an obvious disconnect, so so for years I believed and taught specifically against Petrine authority. Then, through the reading of Karl Keating's wonderful book, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*, I realized the implications of something I knew all along: behind the Greek was the Aramaic which Jesus originally spoke, in which the word for Peter and rock are identical—*kepha*. Once I saw that Jesus had said essentially "You are *kepha* and on this *kepha* I will build my Church," I knew I was in trouble.

*Look for the second half of Marcus Grodi's article "The Verses I Never Saw" in next month's newsletter.*

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full communion with the holy see (including the Anglo-Catholic) were somehow defective.

Anglo-Catholics of 100 and 150 years ago would say this, but most modern Anglo-Catholics could not bring themselves to say it unless pressed very hard. They could not escape the reality of the Catholic Church, which made such claims look foolish. Their grandfathers had lived in a much smaller and more self-protective world, in which the Catholic Church in England or America could be dismissed as "the Italian mission." They had before them the Catholic Church in its size and range, the witness of its popes, its intellectual breadth and subtlety, its doctrinal coherence. Faced with the Catholic Church, they naturally avoided saying aloud "We are the truer Catholics."

This was a hard way to live, being committed by your position to the belief that yours was the true Catholicism, but knowing how absurd this sounds even to yourself. Perhaps that is the reason Anglicans suffer from the malarial form of Roman Fever, as first one side and then the other takes control.

It is the style, I know, for converts to say how much they loved their old churches and how much they learned from them.

*continued on page 5 . . .*





# Please pray...

## ✦ Clergy ✦

- ✦ For Neil, a Presbyterian minister in Pennsylvania, that he be able to find employment and support his family as a Catholic.
- ✦ For Don and his family, a Non-denominational chaplain in Maine, that the transition for him and his family to full communion with the Catholic Church would be a joyful experience.
- ✦ For an Episcopal priest in New Jersey who asks for prayers for his guidance as he explores how God will use him in the Catholic Church.
- ✦ For Michael, a prison chaplain in Michigan, that he get over the wall he has found himself against. He asks that God move because he is afraid to move on his 'knowledge' because he has been wrong so many times that he is stuck!.
- ✦ For Pam and Randy former United Methodist ministers and their family, especially for their teenage daughter that she return to faith in Jesus from Buddhism.
- ✦ For the wife of an Anglican priest who wants, more than anything, to be a Catholic.
- ✦ For Matt, a Lutheran pastor who is seeking to be able to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church and still be able to support and feed his wife and children.
- ✦ For Michael, an Anglican priest in Tennessee, as he and many of his brother priests seek to restore communion with the See of Peter.

## ✦ Laity ✦

- ✦ For a Southern Baptist minister and his wife, who has informed him, "that even if Jesus and the Blessed Mother appeared to her she would never become a Catholic." Also, if he becomes a Catholic she will divorce him.
- ✦ For Alan, a former Assemblies of God minister, who is feeling the pull to the Catholic Church and asks for guidance.

- ✦ For Julie, and Terry in the needs of their lives
- ✦ John and his continued struggles with addiction, and all those who suffer from such a Cross
  - ✦ For Carol, Nancy, Jack, and his family as they face the trials of conversion
- ✦ For Dave and Linda as they look to understand God's calling for them to enter the Catholic Church.
- ✦ For the needs of all our Helpers and contacts, their families and those dear to their hearts.
- ✦ For the upcoming Deep in History Conference
- ✦ Baby Ambrose, and all those children and their parents, families and friends, bearing the cross for the fight of life for a child.

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 *CHNetwork*, 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 will use only first names to preserve anonymity.

## ✦ Quo Vadis Youth ✦

- ✦ For John & Debra, a former Charismatic Episcopal priest and his wife, who are on the journey to full communion with the Catholic Church.
- ✦ For a former Catholic priest, who is now a Lutheran minister who wants to come Home.
- ✦ For all youth seeking to discover a deeper faith in Jesus Christ
- ✦ For all youth discerning their vocations.
- ✦ For Alysia who will be starting RCIA this fall
- ✦ For all members of Quo Vadis.



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Upcoming guests of *The Journey Home*:

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*Labor Day, Pre-Tape*  
 September 11  
*Robert Evans (aka. The Donut Man)*  
*Former Non-Denominational*  
 September 18  
*Guy R. Doud*  
*Former Evangelical Free Youth Pastor*  
 September 25  
*Daivd Griffey*  
*Former Southern Baptist Pastor*

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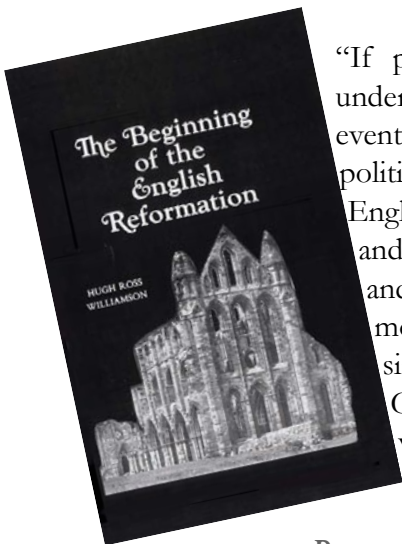


- September 6 Guest: . . . JIM ANDERSON. . . . . Text: Matt. 6:16-18  
 September 13 Guest: . . . JIM ANDERSON . . . . . Text: Matt. 6:19-24  
 September 20 Guest: . . . JIM ANDERSON . . . . . Text: Matt. 6:25-34  
 September 27 Guest: . . . JIM ANDERSON. . . . . Text: Matt. 7:1-6

*You can listen to both programs on the Internet at: [www.ewtn.com](http://www.ewtn.com),  
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 by Hugh Ross Williamson



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I am sure this is true for me, but I feel now, a year after becoming a Catholic, that Anglicanism's main effect upon my life was to help me avoid becoming a Catholic. Anglicanism allowed me to suffer Roman Fever without seeking the obvious cure.

I look back at my life as an Anglo-Catholic and marvel at the degree of self-deception it required. You called yourself a Catholic, but you made up your Catholicism, taking what bits and pieces you thought genuine and rejecting the rest. (Most Anglo-Catholics I knew thought contraception a good thing.) You might believe in the Assumption, or you might not, but the matter was left to you. If you believed it, you would probably call it "a matter of personal devotion" and be perfectly happy with a fellow Anglo-Catholic who rejected it because he did not find it taught explicitly in Scripture or the early Church.

And further, you asserted your Catholicism as a personal choice, against the body in which you lived. Your church was founded as a Protestant church, and all its documents were Protestant documents, and the great majority of its members were Protestants by conviction, but you would claim to be as Catholic a Christian as your Roman neighbor solely because you believed something you called the Catholic Faith. When away from home, you would happily take communion from an Anglican pastor who believed that the bread he was holding was only bread, but in your own parish you would believe that your priest, who was ordained in the same church as that pastor, who had been given the same authority as he (and perhaps by the same bishop), was holding the Body of Christ.

It was a world with many godly people doing godly work, who were as far as I know as sincere in their devotion as any Christian, but it was not the Catholic Church. I always knew this, I think, though I would repress the obvious questions when they came to mind. Perhaps having a bad conscience about your claim to being a Catholic leaves you vulnerable to Roman Fever.

### **My Fever**

Someone who knows more about converts will have to decide how many people suffer this form of Roman Fever. My story, which is that of many other Anglicans I know, is a different story than many converts can tell.

They were dragged into the Church with their arms flailing and their heels dug in, while I walked quite happily at the edge of the Church, occasionally looking

in a door or window but mostly living happily outside and telling myself that the outside was as good, and in some ways rather better, than the inside. My Roman Fever was of course a good thing, in reminding me that I was not where I ought to be, but it was also a bad thing in that I knew I had only to wait it out and then I could go back to my life without having to change anything. And in a perverse sort of way, which I can't explain, the fact that I felt it made me feel that I didn't have to do anything else, and made me feel slightly superior to my poor Protestant friends who never felt it at all.

The Anglican suffering from Roman Fever does not struggle with the Catholic claims as his Evangelical brethren do. When the Evangelical finds the path to Rome covered with stumbling blocks, the Anglican finds it smooth. He will often think (I certainly did) that the Evangelical is stumbling over pebbles.

I knew saintly Evangelicals who were horrified by the idea of liturgical worship, but also horrified by how much they liked it. They would trot out, with an urgency that betrayed a guilty conscience, all the usual arguments: mainly that such services were insincere and bound the Spirit in human forms. They were quite insistent that a formal and regular service was a bad thing.

I had spent enough time in Protestant churches to know that their worship was as liturgical as anyone else's. Move the prayers in a Baptist service, and half the congregation will revolt. And not from mere conservatism, either. The prayers, they would say, are there for a reason. The service has a logic to it. There are reasons that it begins with a hymn and that the Bible readings come before the sermon. I have been told that Pentecostal services are equally formal, in the sense of have a regular and predictable form. The Holy Spirit is allowed to move at certain times but not others. One had best not interrupt the sermon with a "word of knowledge."

Given this, I never understood why written liturgies upset my Evangelical friends, unless they disliked them because they were "Catholic" and therefore bad. I thought that the Catholic Church worshipped liturgically because people were liturgical creatures. This was not, as people say now, rocket science.

### **Saints and Sanctity**

My Evangelical friends were even more horrified by the idea of saints, not just by the idea of praying to the saints, but of having anyone set off from the rest of us

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as a superior kind of Christian. Two very sweet little old ladies, hearing me refer to St. Paul, gently reprimanded me by saying, “We’re saints too.” The only answer, which I did not make, having been taught to respect my elders, was “No you’re not.” It struck me then — I was a barely Christianized high school student — that they were presuming to a status they did not have and had not earned.

The same Evangelicals lived on biographies of great Protestant heroes, especially missionaries. Their magazines were filled with stories of great men and women doing great things for God. If anything, they tended to hero-worship. And yet they would sometimes get quite angry to hear anyone from the past called “St.” They gave Mary no special place in their systems, and when they did mention her, put her far down the list of Evangelical heroes, behind Hudson Taylor and Billy Graham and any Christians among the NFL’s active quarterbacks.

Nor was I bothered by the scandals Evangelicals described with horror. Having grown up in a New England college town, and having absorbed in high school what was then called “humanistic Marxism,” I had some sense of history, and thought it obvious that an institution as old and as big as the Catholic Church would be full of bad members and good members who made bad mistakes. When one of her critics would shriek “Galileo!” I would answer, “Yes. And . . . ?”

They thought that because important Catholics had lied or murdered or slandered or cheated, had hated black people or women or the poor, had preached celibacy while having mistresses, or had committed some horrifying crime in the name of the Church, the Church was a sham. I thought the stories showed yet more evidence that God works in mysterious ways. Once you admit that God has given his authority to fallen men, as the Evangelicals did, you had to expect the scandals.

What moved me, however, was finding that among all the horrors sinful Catholics had committed, sign after sign of sanctity, which could not be explained except as the special work of grace. There were Catholic Nazis, of course, but there were also Edith Stein and Franz Jagerstaetter. Rapacious Catholic businessmen cheated

the poor, but Mother Theresa and Dorothy Day lived in poverty to serve them. Catholics in central Europe shot their neighbors, but the Holy Father forgave the man who shot him.

Even in high school, I always looked for these inexplicable signs of God’s grace — the saints, the ordinary godly people, the Pope, the counter-cultural teaching, the wisdom, etc., etc. — rising above the general indifference and turpitude, like peaks above the smog, and these I found in the Catholic Church in abundance. The fact that the fall does not have the last word, when every human consideration says that it should, reassured me.

At any rate, it seemed to me that the Evangelicals were winning the argument by sleight of hand. (Liberals and secularists did this as well.) A bad Catholic is still a Catholic, and every other Catholic is stuck with him, but an Evangelical simply disowns any one in his crowd

who goes bad, by claiming that he is no longer an Evangelical. (Some years later, when I got to know something of the inside of Evangelicalism, I found that they in fact had no right to point fingers at the Catholic Church — and I was not then even thinking of their approval of contraception and remarriage after divorce, but only of the usual moral scandals.)

As I said, none of the things that bothered my Evangelical friends ever bothered me. Not the mass, not the invocation of the saints, not Purgatory, not the Pope, not indulgences. All of them seemed to me true. I had a few questions about the Pope’s universal jurisdiction, but even these were more academic than personal. Why then did I not become a Catholic?

### Why Not Catholic?

I can give four reasons, in descending order of defensibility: a genuine conviction that the church in which I lived was a Catholic one if not the fully Catholic one; a feeling that I had a work to do where I was; the need to support my family; and sloth.

I could explain each of these at length, but I think most readers will understand them. I will admit to having never felt entirely convinced of the first three, and admit that the fourth was a greater hindrance than

I then realized. As a friend wrote me, in her family's move to the Catholic Church, "For eight years it was just a flirtation; the last two were serious courtship." It is embarrassing to have been a flirt, and to have flirted with something as noble and dignified as the Catholic Church, but I have to confess to not having been so truly serious as I ought to have been. Now I think: how, oh how, could you have thought being an Episcopalian worth not being a Catholic, when becoming a Catholic was so easy to do?

In the end, two insights brought me over the line I had been unwilling to cross. The first was the simple realization that I had to fish or cut bait, lest (to mix metaphors) I harden my heart one too many times and never get Roman Fever again. I became a Catholic in part because one day I realized that

God might stop giving me such times when my heart and mind were so well allied that I could more easily overcome the inertia that kept me where I was. This insight was, as far as I can tell, the work of the Spirit.

If the first insight pulled me into the church, the second insight pushed me in. About a year before we began instruction, I sat for several days in a conversation about divorce and remarriage with twelve Evangelicals, all learned, all biblically conservative, all holding more or less the same hermeneutic, who came to (I think) nine different and to some extent deeply opposed positions.

The decision they came to was a now familiar appeal to a shared ideal (lifelong marriage) with a range of views on the acceptable ways to fail to reach the ideal. Most of them would have said the Bible is on the question of divorce not clear or can be read in different ways, at which point one has to ask quite what use is it, if it fails to teach clearly on this matter?

This diversity bothered me, but what bothered me more was that no one but me found it a problem. Here were learned and godly men who read the Bible the same way, who could not agree on what it said about a matter crucial to the Church's life and to human happiness, but thought God had left the issue open, the sole evidence of which was that they did not agree with each other.

I thought that God could not have meant us to live in such confusion and with such an effectively minimalistic

doctrine — which had already grown and would grow ever more minimal as the self-identified Evangelical party broadened in theology. But this minimalism, I suddenly realized, was one of the principles of the church to which I belonged, as held by its finest servants. This, I realized, was not the Catholic Church. I had known this for years, but only with the earnest discussion of my friends, showing that those with the highest view of the authority of Scripture could not tell you authoritatively what it said, did the insight become a reason to move.

### The Deeper Reason

I do not want to give the wrong impression in explaining the seductions of Roman Fever. If it kept me from becoming a Catholic when I should have done, then I

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had it in the first place because I began to love the Catholic Church. I began to love her saints, and great men like John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger; and saw that she alone fought for the things I was fighting for, like the lives of the unborn; and found in her leading minds a commitment to reason found nowhere else; and found in her also a pastoral wisdom which understood human frailty without giving up the call to sanctity; and so on, and so on.

But in the end, I began to love the Catholic Church for the Mass, because in her my Lord and God came to me. My Roman Fever finally broke when I could no longer stay outside the place where God could be touched and tasted.

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