

The

Coming Home Network International

SEPTEMBER 2007 NEWSLETTER

JOURNEYS HOME

To Whom Shall I Go?

by Robin Peterson-Lund

Master, To Whom Shall I Go?

Then many of his disciples who were listening said, "This saying is hard; who can accept it?" As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him. Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave me?" Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

I had a choice to make. I could either obey by taking a step of faith with unknown consequences or I could be one of those disciples who leaves Jesus because believing was just too hard and asked too much.

Following Jesus into the Catholic Church would mean leaving my husband and my entire multi-generational Episcopalian family behind. It most certainly would disrupt my profession as a Family Nurse Practitioner. I had no assurance of the future. Therefore, I had to be convinced intellectually and spiritually that the Catholic Church was everything it said it was. I could not believe as a Catholic and remain Episcopal. The Church doctrines had to make incontrovertible sense to me. The Heavenly Father thankfully created me and knew how to speak to my heart and mind. He knew what it would take to bring me home. And He brought me specific mentors along the way. Bob Geiger through the *Coming Home Network International* became an invaluable guide and spiritual mentor.

My life before this moment had been one of great stability. Though I was born and raised in California, my family traveled every summer back to my parent's ranches and home places in South Dakota. The summer days were filled with riding horses, swimming creeks, brandings, rodeos, and occasionally pow wows and Sundances. My parents finally moved back bringing my brother and I to

South Dakota. Though we attended college and traveled, we made our homes in western South Dakota as well. It wasn't always easy. This can be a harsh place to live with the vast open spaces and hard cold winters. But the freedom of this life holds our hearts.

After graduating from college as a Registered Nurse, I lived independently. Eventually, I returned home marrying my "best friend" whom I had known for years. I loved being the mother of my two children, Arne III and Skye. I remained at home but it was not without criticism and shaking of heads by my previous professional colleagues. It served to illuminate a defining difference of how I wanted to live. The reality of how contemporary social wisdom attempts to influence one's values was made quite clear to me. We moved to Kadoka, located in the midst of western South Dakota, and settled in. During this time we worked in youth ministry, spending our summers in the Black Hills for 10 years.

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Later, I returned to graduate school to become a Family Nurse Practitioner. In addition, I began teaching graduate school in the College of Nursing at South Dakota State University. My children grew up and went on to college. Our extended family remained close as we enjoyed family holidays, shared triumphs and grief, graduations and weddings. I even dreamt of one day becoming an Episcopal Priest. I was happily married for 25 years and then the unthinkable happened! My life's search for meaning was not over. I was about to embark on a journey that could change everything.

In looking back, I realize that I have always been drawn to the Catholic Church. But being a "High Church" cradle-Episcopalian was very comfortable and deceptively easy to feel that I was all ready home. The motivation to endure any sacrifice to become Catholic is undermined because one is misled into thinking that one is all ready home in the Episcopal church. However, the more I studied, the more I realized, that my assumptions were flawed.

One of the high points drawing me on my journey started when I heard a nun talking on television about Jesus and his sacrifice being outside space and time. I hadn't been paying any attention but the subject matter grabbed my interest. I stopped. What is a nun doing talking about Einstein's theory of space and time and quantum physics? I sat down and listened to what I heard as a profound description of Christ's crucifixion being ever-present at the Mass and why Jesus is not repetitively sacrificed. I was intrigued. That nun was Mother Angelica and the network was EWTN. I found *The Journey Home* program and began watching it. I was intrigued to see why others chose to leave their lives of comfort and convert to Catholicism. It was then that I started to seriously wonder what would happen to my life if I converted.

And so began 18 months of intensive reading on everything I could find about the doctrines of the Catholic Church. What a relief to find out that the Church welcomes reason and faith. My respect for Pope John Paul II blossomed. I felt close to him when I found he became Pope on my birthday. What wonderful surprises were discovered in Pope John Paul II's encyclicals, especially his writings on the meaning of suffering in *Salvifici Doloris*, the creation of the *Luminous Mysteries*, and *Mulieris Dignitatum*, which revealed an abiding respect and dignity of women. What clarity and poetic vision I found in *Veritas Splendor*.

Foundational reassurance continued when I read the Early Church Fathers. This church drew knowledge from Aristotle and natural law to Thomas Aquinas in discussing morality. Patrick Madrid's *Surprised by Truth* series captured my imagination as I related to those who had converted. Scott Hahn, Steven Ray, and Father Groeschel were wonderful apologists and teachers.

But then came the questions. Why not ordain women for the priesthood? Why would I have to accept a fallible leader's decision on anything because he was a Pope? How can I devote my heart to Mary when I had lost my own mother who is dearer than I can explain; whose loss was tragically heartbreaking. How can I accept purgatory? I needed to learn what these doctrines truly meant.

I have always felt the closeness of God, and His presence has been made known to me experientially throughout my life. I felt drawn to find out more about the Catholic doctrine. I contemplated for months before sending an inquiry to the *Coming Home Network International* to ask questions about what I was reading. I fought the inclination and talked myself out of it many times. My hesitation came from the fact that I knew deep in my heart that I may be at the point of no return all ready but I didn't want to acknowledge it yet. I didn't want to lose my hope that I may become a priest. I didn't want to find out that there were actual rational answers to my questions.

I began visiting with my family. We are a close family of grandparents, spouses, siblings, nieces, nephews, sons, and daughters. We all worshipped in the Episcopal Church for many generations, and can trace our ancestors back to the American Revolution and the Mayflower. (Some members of my extended family, however, are Catholic.) Living in a small, remote South Dakota town, my husband and I drove 200 miles to baptize and confirm our children in our "home" Episcopal parish.

Therefore, my announcement that I was studying Catholic doctrine was received with interest but not alarm. My husband thought this would be a subject that I would enjoy studying but didn't initially think that it would compel me onward to conversion. Initially, no one really worried that I would actually become Catholic. But as time went on, he recognized that I was becoming more serious and I became worried as well.

What was I doing disrupting my family's faith? What would happen between my husband and I? Would this

continued on page 4 . . .

What Does it Mean to Believe?

That dangerously loaded section of that even more dangerous chapter six of John (dangerous only for those who wish to avoid any discussion of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist) all began because some groupies, drawn by the signs performed by Jesus, asked, “What must we do to be doing the works of God?” (v. 28).

Jesus answered, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent” (v. 29). In the rest of chapter six, we essentially witness a winnowing process by which Jesus sifts through his audience, the wheat from the chaff, based upon their willingness to believe him at his word. He starts with the multitudes, but soon there are only the Jewish religious leaders. Before long only his disciples are staying around, and in the end, only the Twelve are left.

So Jesus asks the Twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?” (v. 67). Simon Peter responds with a profound expression of true belief: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the holy One of God” (vs. 68-69).

Recently two men, from radically different spiritual backgrounds, came up to me privately and asked essentially the same question. The first was a Baptist minister on the journey towards the Catholic Church. He had already breached the walls of his former anti-Catholic prejudice, examined afresh the Church’s teachings and found them convincing, accepted the authority and authenticity of the Catholic Church, realized that he could no longer remain a Protestant let alone a Baptist minister.

And yet ... here is where his question arose: “I understand and accept the Church’s teaching on the Eucharist, but I just can’t seem to get myself to believe it. I kneel before the Blessed Sacrament and all I do is argue within myself about what is there before me. How can I come to believe it to be real?”

The second man to ask the same question was a lifelong Catholic. He said, “All my life I’ve known and accepted the Church’s teaching; I’ve never intentionally missed Mass. Everyone who knows me presumes I am a faithful Catholic, and yet ... I’ve never really been able to believe that Jesus is truly physically there, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

“I know all the arguments and can even defend the Church’s teaching with the best of them. But down deep, in the privacy of my heart and mind, I just can’t get myself to truly believe. What must I do to get beyond this impasse?”

Usually my knee-jerk suggestion to questions like this is to encourage them to pray the prayer offered by the father who wanted Jesus to heal his son: “I believe; help my unbelief”

(Mk 9:24). Faith is a gift of grace, so if we are struggling with faith, we need to pray for more grace. This may not help, though, if we have an inadequate understanding of what it means to believe.

Too often, people wrongly think that believing in something requires emotional acceptance: that eventually we must feel “in our gut” that something is true to really believe in it. We sometimes make the same mistakes about loving and forgiving: We don’t really love someone or forgive someone unless we feel we love or forgive them. This, however, is not what Jesus means by loving, forgiving, or believing. These, all three, consist primarily of works of the conscience, intellect, and will, and only secondarily the emotions or even the understanding.

Our conscience is essentially the hidden depository of how and what we ought to love, forgive, and believe. Contrary to many modern views, however, our consciences are not infallible or penultimate voices of authority: They must be formed by infallible, authoritative voices so they can be deemed reliable. For this reason, Christ gave us the Church, guided by the Spirit, to preach, preserve, and pass on the truth.

With our intellect, we must examine our conscience—along with all the other voices in our lives—and decide what is true. Then with our will, we act: We choose what and how to believe, to love, and to forgive. Given all the data of our conscience and the decisions of our intellect, our emotions may not agree with what our will decides to do, nor may we yet fully understand, either. Nevertheless, we are still called to believe, for “this is the work of God.”

I remember once while hiking in a national park coming upon a three-rope bridge traversing a deep, rocky river gorge. It was the only way across. My emotions did not want to trust that precarious bridge! But the posted notice indicated that the bridge had recently been tested and approved as totally reliable by park management, with their stamp of authority.

What was I to do? Was I to believe? I willfully and safely traversed the gorge because my intellect chose to believe the park management and not my emotions.

Do you believe in the Trinity and the Divinity of Jesus Christ? Why? Don’t say “because the Bible tells me so,” because it does not “tell” either of these doctrines specifically or clearly.

You believe these to be true (whether you realize it or not) because the bishops of the Church in the early councils declared these doctrines and then consequently explained the scriptural data accordingly. We personally believe these doctrines because, from a variety of sources, our intellect was faced with the data and we chose to believe it.

continued on next page . . .

I know personally that I didn't believe in the Trinity or in the Divinity of Christ because I *felt* this to be true nor because I claim to understand it fully. Rather, I first believed, as an Evangelical Protestant, because people I trusted convinced me that this is what the Bible taught, and then later, as a Catholic, I continued to believe because I recognized that it was originally the authority of the Church that had both determined these truths and confirmed the authority of Scripture.

The issue of the Eucharist, with which the two men I previously mentioned struggled, is a bit more difficult because the physical data before us, as measured by our senses, contradicts what our conscience and intellect are being called to believe. Transubstantiation explains this contradiction, but this doesn't guarantee that our emotions will ever feel convinced or that, this side of heaven, we'll ever fully understand.

No, as Simon Peter exclaimed, outside of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Church He established in those first believing apostles, we have nowhere else to go. The Church (the Body of Christ, the pillar and bulwark of the truth) has "the words of eternal life," and by grace "we have believed, and have come to know" that Jesus Christ is "the holy One of God."

Saint Peter never fully explains what he means by the phrase "have come to know." It may imply a deepening sense of believing, possibly a resultant emotional assurance that what he has accepted intellectually is true, even against the witness of his senses or understanding. We also know, though, that when the going got tough, when faced with the arrest, trial, and execution of the one Saint Peter "had come to know" was the very "holy One of God," the apostle denied him, and the rest (except John) abandoned him. Believing is never a one-time decision—especially, never a one-time emotional decision. It is life-time of obedience by means of the intellect and will.

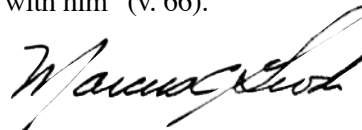
Recently, I was told that a Protestant pastor revert (as a child,

he had been baptized Catholic, then left the Church, was eventually ordained a Protestant pastor, but then recently resigned from his pastorate and returned to the Church) was strongly leaning backwards. He says he was shocked by what he found. He had anticipated unity amongst Catholics, but instead found what appeared to be as many divisions as he had left behind.

We, of course, are doing all we can to help him determine where God is calling him to recognize that though faithful Catholics may differ over social and political issues, they ought not be divided over issues of faith. Unlike Protestants, who are hopelessly divided, the Church has final answers. In the process of helping him, we have come to realize that he may have come home to the Church for the wrong reasons, partly because he may have been poorly catechized. He had been led to convert less by an intellectual conviction and acceptance of the Church as the one, holy, apostolic, and Catholic Church, and more by feelings—of disgust at the disunity amongst Protestants and the liberalism of his own denomination, and the expectation that none of this would be present in the Catholic Church.

In the end, our attitude toward the Church must be like that of Saint Peter's toward Christ. If in the process, we experience feelings of warmth, satisfaction, and contentment in the Church—even with all her "warts" (i.e., us)—then we have been blessed by God's mercy and grace.

On the other hand, if we react to what we find, like those other disciples who exclaimed, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" (v. 60), then we are destined to the same plight: "After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him" (v. 66).



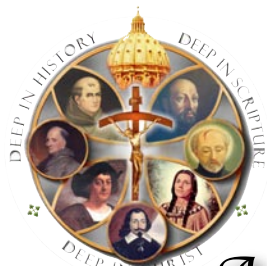
continued from conversion story by M. Umberger on page 2

weaken my college-aged children's faith? Would anyone come into the church with me?

The *Coming Home Network International* supported me with a dynamically wonderful apologist and mentor, Bob Geiger. He immediately began answering all the questions I could assemble. I received answers from him that reflected deep respect even when I had to delve deeper, when my questions challenged Catholic doctrine, and when I had to repeat my questions from a different angle. His patience was infinite. Scripture verses that were mysterious before became absolutely clear to me when viewed with Catholic doctrine. Here it all was, right out in the open.

Within my initial email letters, I asked Bob, my *CHNI* volunteer mentor, if according to the Catholic Church doctrine, whether or not the rest of my family would go to heaven if they were not Catholic. I did not warn him that his answer to this question would either drive me away or draw me closer to want to know more. It was a test question of great magnitude. His answer had a prophetic outcome. I was told by him that no one could dare to judge another person's heart. That was God's domain. I researched in the Catholic teachings, I found the same answer. The lack of condemnation was surprising to me. Bob continued to provide straight answers that were uncompromising regarding the tenets of the Catholic faith. I was struck with the

continued on page 5 . . .



The Catholic Church in the New World

Another look at this year's conference speakers



Dr. Richard Chacon holds a PhD from the University of California, and is an associate professor of Anthropology at Winthrop University, SC. He has conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, the Andes, and the Indians of Highland Ecuador. His research interests include violence, warfare, belief systems, the evolution of complex societies, ethnohistory and the effects of globalization. Additionally, Chacon has worked as a U.S. Forest Service. His publications include *The Taking and Displaying of Human Body Parts as Trophies by Amerindians*, *North American Indigenous Warfare and Ritual Violence*, and *Latin American Indigenous Warfare and Ritual Violence*.

Msr. Stuart W. Swetland, STD., was ordained a priest in 1991 for the Diocese of Peoria, IL. He received his undergraduate degree in Physics from the United States Naval Academy. Elected Rhodes Scholar in 1981, he entered the Catholic Church while studying at Oxford. He has a B.A. and M.A. in Politics, Philosophy and Economics from Oxford; a M.Div. and M.A. from Mt. Saint Mary's Seminary; and his S.T.L. and S.T.D. from the Pontifical Lateran University where he studied at the John Paul II Institute in Washington, DC. He currently serves as Director of Homiletics and Pre-Theology at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Msr. Swetland was named a Prelate of Honor in 2000 by His Holiness John Paul II.



Carlos Caso-Rosendi was born in Esquel, Argentina. He emigrated to the U.S. in the early 1980's where he started a Database Design business. At thirteen, his family became involved with the Jehovah's Witnesses. Carlos eventually grew disillusioned with religion; though he remained fascinated by the person of Jesus Christ. His interest in symbolic systems and semiotics sent him back to see anew the Gospel of John. He then began a ten year period reading the Bible and such works as *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis, *Born Fundamentalist*, *Born Again Catholic* by David Currie and *Catholicism and Fundamentalism* by Karl Keating, convinced him of the theological and historical solidity of the Catholic Church. He now works for the Coming Home Network International as Coordinator for the Spanish Apostolate.

Fr. Charles Connor is a graduate of the University of Scranton, where he received his Master's Degree in United States History. He also received his PH.D. in United States History from Fordham University, New York City. Fr. Connor serves as the Historian of the Diocese of Scranton and has co-produced several series for EWTN, including: *The History of the Catholic Church in the United States*, *Historic Catholic Converts*, *Defenders of Faith in Word and Deed*, *Doctors of the Church*, and most recently, *The Sacraments through the Ages*.



Helen Hull Hitchcock is founding director of Women for Faith & Family and editor of its journal, *Voices*; editor of the *Adoremus Bulletin*, a monthly publication of Adoremus Society for the Renewal of the Sacred Liturgy, of which she is a co-founder. She received an AB in Art History and English from the University of Kansas, and did post-graduate studies in philosophy at the University of California at Berkeley. She is the author/editor of *The Politics of Prayer: Feminist language and the worship of God*, and a regular contributor to such publications as *Crisis*, *National Catholic Register*, *Catholic World Report*, and *Touchstone*. Mrs. Hitchcock served on the board of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, and received its "Cardinal O'Boyle Award" in 2004. She is a member of the board of directors of EWTN, and has appeared on several EWTN programs.



Dr. Paul Thigpen, a former Assembly of God pastor, is the editor of *The Catholic Answer* magazine and the founder/executive director of The Stella Maris Center for Faith and Culture in Savannah, Ga. A best-selling author, award-winning journalist, and scholar of Church history, he has published thirty-three books in a wide variety of genres and subjects. Dr. Thigpen graduated from Yale University in 1977 summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa, with Distinction in the Major of Religious Studies. He was later awarded the

Robert W. Woodruff Fellowship at Emory University in Atlanta, where he earned an M.A. and a Ph.D. in historical theology. Dr. Thigpen is on the Board of The Coming Home Network International.



Dr. James Hitchcock is Professor of History at St. Louis University. He received a PhD in History from Princeton University, and taught at St. John's University in New York. A founding member and past President of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars and was the first editor of the American edition of *Communio: International Catholic Review* and chairman of its editorial board. Dr. Hitchcock is the author of nine books, including *Catholicism and Modernity*, *Recovery of the Sacred*, and *The Supreme Court and Religion in American Life*. He has just completed an intellectual biography of Christopher Dawson. His contributions appear in a wide range of publications, both Catholic and secular. He writes a regular column for the Catholic press, and serves on the editorial boards of the *Human Life Review* and *Touchstone*.



Msr. Frank Peter Lane is the Pastor of St. Margaret of Cortona Parish in Columbus, OH. From 1997-2002, he served as Vice-Rector of the Pontifical College Josephinum, as well as head administrator of the College of Liberal Arts and interim Academic Dean and Director of Recruitment. His degrees include a Masters of European History from The Ohio State University, a Ph.D. in European History also from OSU, a Masters in Theology from Leopold-Franzens University, Innsbruck, Austria, his pre-Theologate from St. Charles College University, and B.A. from Ohio Northern University.



Rev. Mr. Alex Jones is a graduate from Wayne State University in 1965 with a Bachelor's Degree in Art Education, he taught in the Detroit school system for twenty-seven years. He was the senior minister of Detroit's Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ and Maranatha Christian Church. In 1998, while preparing for a Bible study, he discovered the historic and biblical roots of the Early Church. He then began a two-year journey into the Catholic

Church that culminated in fifty-four members of his previous congregation, including fourteen members of his family, entering the Catholic Church. He is currently in his fourth year at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in the MAPS program, and employed by the Archdiocese of Detroit as the Associate Director of Sign Me Up!, an evangelization project for the inner city of Detroit.



Marcus Grodi, a "cradle" Protestant and former Presbyterian Pastor, is the Founder/President of the *Coming Home Network International*. He and his wife, Marilyn, entered the Church in 1992, and together with their three sons live on a small farm in Central Ohio. He hosts a weekly television program called *The Journey Home* and a weekly Scripture radio program called *Deep In Scripture*, both broadcast on EWTN. Marcus is the author of the novel, *How Firm a Foundation*, and also the author/editor of our revised and updated book, *Journeys Home*. His articles appear regularly in *The Catholic Answer* magazine and other Catholic publications.

Fall for History

Hard to believe, but it's that time of year again. The mistletoe, the holly, the carols, the wrapping paper; it must mean a new school year is getting under way! September always brings out that Christmas magic, but some of us like to remember that there are other things that happen between July 4th and December 25th. Here at the *Coming Home Network International*, one big fall event is our annual *Deep in History* Conference. This year it is being held in the very comfortable Hilton at Easton hotel in Columbus, Ohio, and will be as exciting and informative as ever.

Many things have happened in the Catholic Church since last year's conference. Only recently, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith shook the branches by reminding everyone that Catholics are justified in being Catholic. While some felt the Pope threw up a wall between Catholics and our Protestant brethren, nothing could be further from the truth. The world was merely

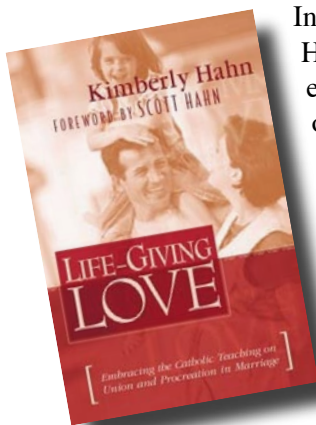
being reminded that, in so many words, it's fine to say you're Catholic. Just as Protestants feel their respective traditions are the true expression of the Christian faith, so Catholics should affirm the one true expression of Christian faith and tradition, traceable back to the very bedrock of the Church founded by Jesus Christ and given to His apostles.

The *Deep in History* Conference is a wonderful exposition of the history behind this tradition. Every tradition has a beginning to its story. But for Catholics, we know from that all-important paper trail that our beginning is at the feet of Jesus. This year we will look at one more historical chapter in the unfolding story of Christ's Church, as the One Faith begins to make its way to lands theretofore-unknown in Europe. It was a volatile and exciting time in history, and as we will see, a time when the Church was at the forefront of movements that would eventually shape and change the world.

This Month's Featured Resources

Life-Giving Love

by Kimberly Hahn

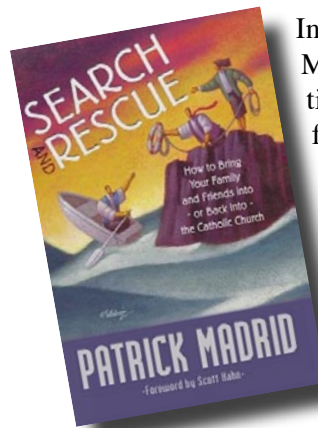


In *Life-Giving Love*, Kimberly Hahn invites all families to embrace Catholic teaching on life issues. Interweaving personal testimony with sound, practical advice, she shows that God's design for union and procreation in marriage is far from being a rigid, burdensome law. Rather, it is really a truth that allows us to be all we were created to be. *Life-Giving*

Love is a book that opens readers to a deeper appreciation for the beauty and wonder of God's plan for married life so often lacking in our modern world's approach to the subject.

Search and Rescue

by Patrick Madrid



In *Search and Rescue*, Patrick Madrid explains the most effective, time-tested methods for bringing family and friends into—or back to—the Church. As the publisher of *Envoy* magazine, the author of many apologetics books, and a veteran defender of the Faith, Madrid himself has used these methods successfully for years. For Catholics who know someone who is

looking at the truths of the Catholic Faith, or maybe someone who has forgotten the beauty and grace contained within its Sacraments, *Search and Rescue* can be a wonderful help in praying that person home to the arms of Christ in His Church.

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\$50.⁰⁰ OR MORE!



CHNI Bulletin Board



on EWTN television and radio
Mondays live at 8 PM EST
Tues 1 & 10 AM, Wed 1 PM, Sat 11 PM

September 3

Pre-tape
Mother Angelica

September 10

Open-line
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former Episcopalian

September 17

Marcus Grodi
former Presbyterian minister

September 24

Dr. Francis Beckwith
former Evangelical Protestant

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DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

LIVE RADIO PROGRAM

HOSTED BY MARCUS GRODI

AND GUESTS

WEDNESDAYS

AT 2:00 PM

REBROADCAST ON

FRIDAYS AT 9:00 PM EST AND SUNDAYS AT 6:00 AM EST

VISIT US AT:

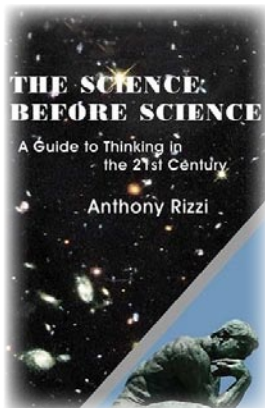
WWW.DEEPINSCRIPTURE.COM

Mr. Grodi and Dr. Anthony Rizzi
co-host a new EWTN series titled:

*The Science Before Science: A
Guide to Thinking and Believing.*

September 24-28

6:30pm EST/3:00am EST.



Come and hear Marcus Grodi in person

September 14-15, 2007

San Clemente Church

244 Luna Avenue

Los Lunas, NM 87031

Contact: Beverly Israel

505-865-7385

bisrael01@qwest.net

November 9-10, 2007

Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul

30 Fenner Street

Providence, RI 02903

Sponsored by Morning Star Christian Center

401-231-0074





Please pray ...

✠ Clergy ✠

✠ For Garry and Connie, that the Lord Jesus would guide them to faithful sons and daughters of the Catholic Church so that they may accept and live the fullness of the true Church God has called them to experience.

✠ For Claudette, a Pentecostal minister, that the Lord Jesus would bless her with the fullness of his gifts and graces which are found in his Catholic Church.

✠ For Michael, a former Episcopal priest, and his wife Wendy, that the Lord Jesus would richly bless them in their faithfulness to his call for them to come Home.

✠ For Bennett, a Lutheran minister in the South, that his employment concerns may be addressed in a way that will make it obvious to him that now is the time God is calling him to enter into the Church.

✠ For Asa, an independent Charismatic minister in Kentucky, that God would fill him with every grace needed for him to successfully travel the journey to full communion with the Catholic Church.

✠ For Evelyn, a Salvation Army officer, that the Lord would shower her with his graces and that he would open the eyes of the hearts of her family to the truth of the Catholic faith.

✠ For Carrie, that the Lord would guide her in her journey.

✠ For Harry, a United Church of Christ minister, who is discerning

God's call to the Melkite Catholic Church.

✠ For Michael and Allison in Kansas, former Pentecostal lay ministers, that God would richly fill them with every gift and blessing as they continue to learn the wonders of their new-found Catholic faith.

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@chnetwork.org

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

(QV) Quo Vadis Requests

✠ For Ken, an Episcopal priest in North Carolina, that he would find his true home in his Father's house, the Catholic Church.

✠ For Ronnie, a former Baptist preacher in North Carolina, that the Lord Jesus would open doors for him to use the gifts God has given him to build up the Body of Christ in the Catholic Church.

✠ Laity ✠

✠ For Mike and Linda Smith who are getting married on Saturday July 21st. (*sp)

✠ For Roberto and his family in Montevideo, Uruguay (*sp).

✠ Greg Oatis' book soon to be published in Spanish (*sp).

✠ For Geny and Lon (and family) for a successful trip to Central America to help the pro-life cause. (*sp)

✠ For the Lord's blessings of our helpers throughout Latin America and Spain. (*sp)

✠ For our Censor Librorum and all of those working to provide ecclesiastical approval for our work. (*sp)

✠ For Andrea who has decided she no longer wants to be Catholic.

✠ For the family in Cincinnati who lost their child.

✠ For Jeff and Carol to find resolve and peace in their lives together

✠ For all coming to the 2008 Deep in History Conference.

✠ For Ambrose and his heart surgery.

✠ For Fr Darling for an enjoyable trip and safe return.

✠ For continued good health for Fr Emmitt and Fr Brady.

✠ For a Lutheran convert's son who has said he no longer believes in God

✠ For the victims of the earthquake in Peru.

continued from page 4...

encompassing depth of Catholicism. This Catholic faith, I was discovering, not only welcomed scientific reasoning; it was also impressive with its spirituality and love.

Meanwhile, I began attending the local Catholic Church; trying to sit in the back pew and not be noticed. In a small town where I live that was an unrealistic expectation for sure! Father Bryan Sorensen would not allow that. He greeted me and welcomed me with warmth and love. I came to admire his leadership and service to the Parish. The first time I slipped into church, I sat stunned by the power of how he said Mass. The power of the Eucharist was palpable and resonated within me. I wanted to come back again and again. The people of the parish were warm and welcoming. I knew that my worship and experience of God had found a home even if I could not have Communion.

Not being able to participate in the Eucharist was a deep sorrow that only those who have been kept away from Christ can know. I felt like I was in the desert on my personal Exodus from my past life, wandering in the wilderness until I could find my way home. But Father Bryan's joy and laughter gave me encouragement. He too answered my questions and his teachings were admirable in their spiritual depth and knowledge.

Many months passed full of hard work and deep questions, and Bob's patience continued. He continued to walk patiently by my side in companionship. He revealed the depth of his knowledge and his faith with great humility when answering the multitude of diverse questions that I threw at him. As a mentor he gave me straight answers without equivocating and wisely allowed the promptings of the Holy Spirit to direct me in yielding to the gospel of truth.

Until one day, the circle became complete. It all became crystal clear in focus. I experienced the death of a dear patient for whom I had cared for years. I decided that day while driving 25 miles home from my clinic and hospital, that I could not live another day without becoming Catholic. I pondered about the truths in life. I knew that life is too precious and is far too short to not experience God completely. My heart cried out for more. I was Catholic in my heart. I wanted to be completely Catholic in my soul. I prayed deeply not knowing where this would take me.

I knew it could be very hard. I faced unknown consequences and I was breaking away from a family tradition of

worship. But as Peter answered Jesus when He asked His Apostles if they were going to leave Him with the other disciples, I knew I must follow Jesus. As in Peter's plaintive statement of faith,

"Master, to whom shall I go? You have the words of eternal life."

I knew I had come full circle in my search. There was only one person and place that I could go—that was Jesus Christ and His Church.

I arrived home and immediately called Father Bryan and asked him to help me come into the Catholic Church. He quickly came to my aid and through his leadership he brought me into the Holy Catholic Church with great ceremonial and traditional meaning. I was surprised by the joy expressed by him, the parish, and my mentor, Bob Geiger. Their joy made mine complete.

I sat stunned by the power of how he said Mass. The power of the Eucharist was palpable and resonated within me. I wanted to come back again and again.

To my delight, my clan all rallied around me with great support and much celebration for my choice. My husband fully supported me and my children also. I was changing the way we worshipped, breaking with family tradition, but they gave me their gift of acceptance. My aunt and uncle who are exemplary Catholics became my sponsors along with Bob Geiger.

The Lenten season remained my Exodus until Holy Week to bring me home into the Catholic Church on Easter 2006. My joy has not ceased. The depth and faithfulness of Christ's one, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church has given me all that my heart has yearned for in my life. My faith is like the Sacred Circle, a path woven together into unity, harmony and balance. I am most grateful.

For more on Robin's story, and her reflections on Catholicism's implications for her life, see the accompanying article.



My Story Continues...

A New Catholic Encounters *Humanae Vitae*

(continued from Robin Peterson-Lund's story)

So now my heart felt closer to the heart of God. I felt I stepped into the ocean of God's love and my soul rested there for awhile. However, a stronger battle awaited me. My profession that I loved had now become a thorn. My profession became the battle ground.

I still prescribed contraceptives. This was the one teaching I did not resolve before coming into the Church. I thought to myself that I would find the answer or just let it go. I didn't have a plan. I just followed. Was some part of me hoping it wouldn't provoke my conscience? Probably. I didn't totally understand the rationale for it. I had plenty of rational reasons why contraception could and should be acceptable. My heart loved the Church for its clarity. My heart had trusted the Church for its truth. But did I really? My soul was divided and I knew it.

I wanted to enjoy my new found path. I wanted to just rest my head on the heart of God. But I was in conflict. I was back in the struggle about contraception and it would not let me go.

I read *Humane Vitae* and admired the wise prophetic voice of the ramifications of contraception. I knew about Natural Family Planning years ago and found it a credible method. Yet, I had seen women struggle for respect and dignity. Equality was important to me. This was a means of ensuring this in my mind.

Selective learning was a part of the process with which I rationalized the use of contraception as a good. Oh sure, the birth control pill may allow conception but not implantation. But does one really believe that? I didn't. And as I went through my years of education I never once heard it addressed. Not once. So my position seemed supported and this issue faded away from my consciousness. There were too many pressing issues in surviving the studying and clinical internships in school.

The only time I heard that oral contraception may be an abortifacient was during a symposium and the expert presenter, with anger driving his words, denounced that premise. I waited for this specialist to provide the scientific reasons in answer. But no further explanation

came. It stood as an unsupported statement. My curiosity was stirred. It was there for a moment and was gone.

So I settled into my family practice that included women's health with the accompanying contraceptive expectations. Real answers are needed for real-life problems in the healing profession. Contraception seemed like a very good answer for people.

But now I was Catholic. And I became Catholic because I found Truth in the teachings and doctrines. I found an intrinsic consistency that was beautifully expressed in Scripture and the life of Jesus Christ.

My path became tangled; it was no longer in balance. My harmony was lost. I wanted to rest but I couldn't ignore it. I would awaken with it on my mind. It followed me through my days. So with great rebellion, I wearily turned back to look at this issue of contraception. I entered the season of Lent and I was back in the desert wandering in the wilderness again!

Bob Geiger stepped in once more to help me. Our discussions were strong, and emails flew fast and furious between us as I reflected and argued and tried to shake the Church's teachings. Father Bryan Sorensen encountered numerous discussions with me giving his time generously. I am sure I wore both of them out with my endless reflections on this subject. But they remained with me.

My struggles with this issue became centered upon three significant domains for consideration: the physiological, ethical, and moral effects upon humankind. Historically, strong proponents allegedly promoted contraception because of racism, disrespect, and disregard toward the poor and minorities in American society.

The history of oral contraception development in the 1950's was initially designed in studying men, as reported by Dr. Janet Smith in her well-received discourse in 1994 on *Contraception: Why Not?*. In Great Britain, during the investigations, one male subject was found to have a possible side effect that was not life-threatening. The study was immediately stopped because of the risks to the male research subjects. The research with women

was not without danger. Three women died from adverse effects but the research for contraception continued. The obvious lack of equality in applying the ethical concerns of risks between the genders is documented.

The promise of contraception has proven fallacious and empty. Contraception has not dropped the divorce rate. It has not rendered abortions as rare. Unplanned pregnancies continue to rise. Sexually transmitted diseases are not prevented. Contraception is more available now than ever before but women and children remain highly vulnerable to poverty and disease.

Breast cancer is now reported to have dropped significantly since the advent of restricted use of hormonal replacement therapy (HRT). Researchers propose that it is due to the drop in HRT use. These doses are much lower than what is found with oral contraception.

And then I found recent articles from the Mayo Clinic Proceedings, John Hopkins University researchers, the World Health Organization, and the New England Journal of Medicine discussing the significantly increased risk of breast cancer rates with the use of oral contraception.

I sat back and despite some unanswered questions, I had read enough. My misplaced advocacy was actually harmful to those I wanted to help. I came to the final conclusion that while there were no real easy answers to some situations, I could no longer prescribe contraception.

The words of Pope John Paul the Great in *Veritatis Splendor* ring even clearer to me.

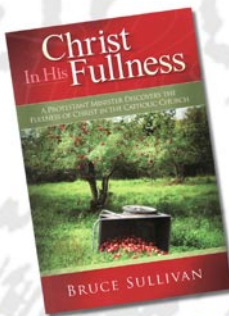
But no darkness of error or of sin can totally take away from man the light of God the Creator. In the depths of his heart there always remains a yearning for absolute truth and a thirst to attain full knowledge of it. This is eloquently proved by man's tireless search for knowledge in all fields. It is proved even more by his search for the meaning of life. The development of science and technology, this splendid testimony of the human capacity for understanding and for perseverance, does not free humanity from the obligation to ask the ultimate religious questions. Rather, it spurs us on to face the most painful and decisive of struggles, those of the heart and of the moral conscience. *Veritatis Splendor, Ioannes Paulus PP. II, 1993 08 06*

I have changed my practice. I feel like I am out of the wilderness—at least for now! The consequences still evolve from my choice. But I am at peace and I love being Catholic!

Thank you for allowing me to tell the story of my journey. It continues to be quite an adventure!

Robin Peterson-Lund

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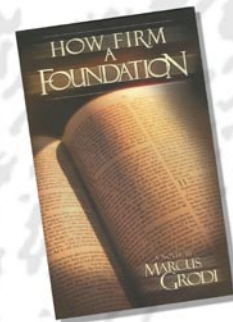
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