



April 2011 Newsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



It's Time to Come Home

By Shannon Kurtz

My return to the Catholic Church after twenty years away as an Evangelical Protestant was my heart's response to Jesus, as He drew me back into full communion with His Church and complete union with Him in the Holy Eucharist.

I was baptized Shannon Mary Kelly, oldest of six children of an Irish-Catholic family in Bay City, Michigan. I made my First Confession and First Communion when I was eight years old. I remember how very close to Jesus I felt as I received Holy Communion for the first time.

I attended Catholic grade school. My grade school years were happy ones. The entire school attended daily Mass and the Stations of the Cross during Lent.

My favorite event was the annual May Crowning. Saturday afternoons usually meant going to Confession. In eighth grade, I was secretary/treasurer of our school's Legion of Mary chapter.

My Catholic high school's required religion class during freshman year was called "Salvation History." Beginning with the creation account in the book of Genesis, we learned that through God's love, the Hebrews became His chosen people, beginning with Abraham. God's

promise to them was fulfilled when He sent His Son Jesus to redeem the world. I really enjoyed that class, and I think that's when my love for the Old Testament began.

During my sophomore year of high school, my mother died of cancer. It all happened very quickly, with just three months between her diagnosis and her death at age forty-four. Her death was a pivotal point of my life.

I had learned in my religion classes over the years that God had a will. To my sixteen-year-old mind, her death must have been His will, or He would never have allowed it to happen. I was afraid to let myself think too much about what was happening.

Mom was buried on a Friday, and by the following Monday morning, we had re-grouped as a motherless family. We just went on and didn't talk much about Mom or her death. Losing my mother was a horrible thing that I could not fully comprehend until I became a mother myself.

The Military and Marriage

After high school, I attended college for two years. During that time I began to consider joining the military. Whenever I would think about it, I had a sense of God ... continued on page 2

Journeys Home

FEATURED RESOURCES

Young Adults and the Catholic Church

**NEW
ITEM**



What keeps kids Catholic?

Why would young adults choose to remain Catholic when they have so many other options? What challenges and joys do Catholic young adults encounter as they strive to live holy lives in a secular world? In this newly released interview, Marcus Grodi is joined by three young adults who address these questions and share how they are striving to follow Christ as faithful Catholics.

Jesus Gives Himself To Us: Transubstantiation

By Fr. Ray Ryland



Christ left His Church with His Body and Blood in the Eucharist, the most precious of all gifts. In this booklet, Fr. Ryland invites us to take a closer look at the miracle of Transubstantiation so we may gain a greater devotion to our Eucharistic Lord Jesus.



TO RECEIVE 1 CD for a donation of \$35, 1 DVD for a donation of \$50, or 1 DVD, 1 CD, and *Jesus Gives Himself*

to Us: Transubstantiation for a donation of \$100, please return the envelope provided inside this newsletter. You may also order these and other resources by calling 740-450-1175 or by going to www.chresources.com

NEWSLETTER COPIES

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...Journeys Home Continued...

nudging me along. I believed that if joining the Navy wasn't meant to be, He wouldn't allow it to go much further. I pursued my dream and in October, 1973, entered the Women's Naval Recruit Training Center, Orlando, Florida.

We weren't allowed to keep much with us in boot camp, but I kept my rosary. Many nights I fell asleep while clutching it to ease my homesickness, wondering if I had made the biggest mistake of my life. Each Sunday we were allowed to attend chapel, so I never missed Mass.

After further training in San Diego, California, I was assigned to the Naval Hospital in Portsmouth, Virginia. As time went on, I became acclimated to my new life in the Navy. I worked hard and was content. I considered myself a devout Catholic. I could not see myself being anything else.

Early in 1976 I met the man who would become my husband. God used a kidney stone to bring us together. My husband remembers being helped off his ship into the ambulance in terrible pain, when a Scripture verse he learned as a child came to mind: "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose" (Rom 8:28). Still, he wondered how anything good could possibly come from all that pain!

He didn't know that while he, an Evangelical Protestant guy from Minnesota, was in the Portsmouth Naval Hospital with a kidney stone, he would meet me, a Catholic girl from Michigan. We were married at my home parish, Saint Boniface Church in Bay City, Michigan. My husband's uncle, a Baptist pastor, also took part, praying a special blessing over us.

Our first few years of marriage were spent in the Norfolk, Virginia, area. We attended Mass together at the base chapel. After my enlistment ended in 1977, I worked towards completing my bachelor's degree in history until our daughter was born in 1979.

Drifting Away

We had her baptized into the Catholic faith, but in my mind it was also somewhat of a child dedication ceremony, like those I had seen in some Evangelical Protestant settings. In fact, I was becoming more comfortable with the Evangelical Protestant way of looking at things, as this was the faith and culture in which my husband had been raised. My mother-in-law was one of the godliest women I'd ever known. Even though I had the Mass and Holy Eucharist, it seemed she was close to Jesus in a way I was not. Her faith was very appealing to me.

In 1980 we were transferred to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, which was considered then to be hardship duty. Remote and desolate, the base had no way off except by plane. I had an eight-month-old infant and was far away from family and friends.

In that setting, I believe God was drawing me closer to Him by allowing me to need Him in an even deeper way. As a new mother, I was becoming more aware of the tremendous responsibility my husband and I shared for the spiritual nurture of our daughter.

In Guantanamo I joined a Protestant ladies' Bible study. Sometimes the Bible verses I read seemed to be written just for me. I had tried at other times in my life to read the Bible, but I'd never gotten very far with it. Now I found

myself enjoying and looking forward to spending time in God's Word. Even so, I was still attending Mass each week and serving as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion.

Some of the new friends I made were staunchly anti-Catholic Protestants. I was told repeatedly that I had to believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sins and then ask Him to be my personal Savior. My husband's family believed the same thing.

I had no problem believing that Jesus died on the cross. It was an historical fact. There was a crucifix in every Catholic Church. We had a crucifix hanging on the wall in our home, and there was a crucifix on my rosary. As Catholics we were always being reminded of His suffering and death in the Stations of the Cross during Lent and the Gospel readings of Jesus' Passion during Holy Week.

Still, I thought of Jesus' death not so much in a personal way but in a general "for the whole world" way. As I read and studied more, I began to see that Jesus really had died for me personally — that He would have died for me even if I had been the only person in the world. That was how much He loved me. The personal aspect of His love made a deep impression on me.

I also began to get a tiny glimpse of the holiness of God. I had gone to sacramental Confession for all those years, yet now I started to feel a sorrow for my sins that was new, profound, and real. One night I knelt next to my bed and prayed what Evangelical Protestants often call "the sinner's prayer," confessing my sin and guilt.

I asked Jesus to come into my heart and be my personal Savior. I don't remember it being a terribly emotional experience, but I had the sense that something significant had taken place. My Evangelical Protestant friends told me I was now "saved" or "born again." Of course, I didn't realize at the time that salvation is actually a lifelong process, and that I had already been "born again" through my baptism as a child.

Even so, I remained in the Catholic Church. I saw no conflict between attending Mass and being "born again." I felt so close to Jesus. At that point, being "saved" meant for me a deepening of my love and need for Jesus and His grace. In hindsight, however, I can see that my Catholic beliefs were continuing to erode.

Leaving the Church

One Sunday at Mass as I was distributing Holy Communion, I wondered for the first time whether it were truly the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ! That thought rattled me, along with the realization that I could even have had such a thought. Some of my deeply held and, up to that time, unquestioned beliefs and practices were being challenged and belittled by my anti-Catholic friends, many of whom were former Catholics.

I was in no position to argue. I may have considered myself a devout Catholic, but even with twelve years of Catholic school, I didn't know my faith well. I didn't know the Bible the way they did. I decided that since they knew the Bible better than I did, they must be right. They believed that the Bible alone was the sole basis of faith.

... continued on page 4



DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

On EWTN radio with
Marcus Grodi & Guests

Wednesdays **LIVE** at 2:00 PM ET
Encores: Thursdays @ 1:00 AM ET
Sundays @ 7:00 AM ET

Be sure to check out *Deep in Scripture's* website, deepinscripture.com, where you can:

- **Watch** the program live or anytime afterwards.
- **Join** in a live discussion during each show.
- **Find** more information about the guests and the Scriptures being discussed.
- **Access** archives from previous *Deep in Scripture* shows.





EWTN'S THE JOURNEY HOME

on television and radio, hosted by
Marcus Grodi, president of CHNI

TELEVISION

Mondays **LIVE** at 8:00 PM ET

Encores: Tuesdays 1:00 & 9:00 AM ET

Thursdays 2:00 PM ET

Saturdays 11:00 PM ET

RADIO

Mondays **LIVE** at 8:00 PM ET

Encore: Saturdays 7:00 AM ET

April 4

Michael Matthews*

Former Baptist minister

April 11

Brian Robbins*

Convert from Judaism

April 18

Fr. Brad Sweet*

Former Baptist

The Journey Home in Canada

April 25

Joshua Johnson*

Former United Methodist minister

**This schedule is subject to change.*



This year *The Journey Home* again goes international to bring you stories of men and women who have come home to the Catholic Church. Be sure to tune in the third Monday of each month to view all-new episodes of *The Journey Home* taped in Canada.

...Journeys Home Continued...

They told me that Catholics believe they have to earn their salvation through good works. I felt a great sense of relief that I no longer had to do that to get into heaven. All my Catholic teaching had said that we could hope to attain heaven, but nobody knew for sure. I liked the certainty of the Evangelical Protestant beliefs better.

I was also told that because I had trusted Jesus as my personal Savior, I could know for certain that I would go straight to heaven, skipping the “layover” in purgatory. For them, purgatory wasn’t found in the Bible; it was an idea made up by the Catholic Church.

Within a few months I began seriously to consider leaving the Catholic Church. I didn’t leave out of anger or frustration, but because of what I considered the next step in my growing faith. It just seemed right somehow to join my husband as an Evangelical Protestant. One Sunday I was attending Mass; the next Sunday I was attending the Protestant service at the base chapel.

In 1982 we were transferred to the Washington, D.C., area. We joined a Southern Baptist Church. When our son was born the following year, we did not baptize him. Instead, we dedicated him to the Lord, committing ourselves to raise him with biblical values, so that he would grow up to accept Jesus someday as his personal Savior. It was in this context of Evangelical Protestant beliefs that our children were raised.

Four years later, we packed up again. My husband’s new duty station was Great Lakes Naval Base in Illinois. We were members of two different Evangelical Protestant churches over the following fifteen years. The first was an Evangelical Free Church; the second, a congregation of the Missionary Church of North America, a denomination headquartered in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Misgivings

The reasons we left one denomination and searched for another were important to us at the time. I think one of them was really a search for authority. The lack of it in my Evangelical world was starting to concern me.

I remember thinking at various times, Who is in charge here? Which pastor has the correct interpretation of the Scriptures? How can so many godly pastors, elder board members and parachurch organizations (such as Christian Women’s Club, in which I was deeply involved) have so many different opinions?

The answer I heard most often was that as Christians we could agree on the essentials, disagree on the nonessentials, with charity in all things. In my mind this only complicated things more. Who decided which were the essentials and which were the nonessentials?

Despite my occasional ruminations on such matters, our family flourished spiritually in those years. We enjoyed youth groups, small group ministries, musical productions, powerful Bible preaching, and deep friendships. Being Evangelical Protestant was all our children knew.

Sometimes they would ask me about Catholics or what they believed. I found myself defending the Catholic Church, hoping they would keep an open mind. When they heard untruths and misconceptions about Catholics



in youth group, I tried to balance those out as best I could, despite my having been away from the Church for over a decade.

Once in a while, I would hear something in a sermon that would be a not-so-subtle dig at the Catholic Church. It would really irk me, and my reaction surprised me. After one such episode, I had to admit to myself that deep down inside, I would always be Catholic. I realized that I wouldn't be where I was spiritually as an Evangelical without my solid Catholic foundation of faith.

The Way Back Home

In 1996 a series of events began to unfold that would bring me back home to the Catholic Church. While I was recuperating from surgery, a dear Catholic friend sent me Scott and Kimberly Hahn's book *Rome Sweet Home*. I was absolutely stunned after reading it.

They really knew the Scriptures, and yet they had come into the Catholic Church! What was I to do with that book? I didn't dare throw it away: I speculated that my friend had asked a priest to bless it before she mailed it to me! So I shoved it in a drawer, hoping never again to have to think about all the things that the Hahns might be right about.

To put to rest what I still considered "stray thoughts" about the Catholic Church, I read *Born Fundamentalist, Born Again Catholic* by David Currie. I didn't want to admit that all his arguments might be valid either. But I knew the author had to be credible.

He was coming from where I was. He had in his background studies at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. Many of the pastors I knew and respected had received their training at one or both of those institutions.

It was about that time as well that I discovered the writings of a Catholic priest named Henri Nouwen, particularly his book *The Return of the Prodigal*. In this book, Nouwen used the famous Rembrandt painting "The Prodigal" to describe and enlarge on the wonder of God's forgiveness and love in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son.

While channel surfing a few months later, in a flash I saw that Rembrandt painting! I had landed on *The Journey Home* on EWTN, hosted by Marcus Grodi. The Rembrandt painting was the backdrop on the set.

Marcus was a former Protestant pastor, now a Catholic, interviewing another Evangelical Protestant who had come home to the Catholic Church. I was so fascinated by the program that I continued to watch it secretly as often as I could, gripping the remote so I could quickly switch the channel if I heard anyone coming into the room!

I felt such camaraderie with these new and returned Catholics. I knew I wasn't alone in my "stray thoughts" of returning to the Catholic Church. Others had made the journey and survived. That encouragement was tremendous, reassuring me that I wasn't crazy after all.

The National Shrine of St. Maximilian Kolbe is at Marytown in Libertyville, Illinois. In the fall of 1999, after driving past it for years, I got up the courage to enter the perpetual adoration chapel there.

... continued on page 6

SUPPORTING CHNI JUST GOT EASIER!

For your convenience, CHNI is able to automatically deduct monthly donations directly from your credit card, checking, or savings account. If you would like to set up an automatic monthly donation, please complete the form below and mail to:

CHNI

Attention: Ann Moore

PO Box 8290

Zanesville, OH 43702

Please contact Ann at 740-450-1175 or ann@chnetwork.org if you have any questions or concerns.

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MARCUS GRODI'S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

July 23-24, 2011

EWTN Family Celebration
Birmingham, AL
www.ewtn.com/familycelebration
205-271-2989

July 29-31, 2011

Defending the Faith
Steubenville, Ohio
www.franciscanconferences.com
800-437-8368

August 5-7, 2011

International Bible Conference
Catholic Scripture Study
Charlotte, NC
www.cssconference.com
conference@cssprogram.net
877-228-7830

August 20, 2011

"We Walk by Faith"
OKC Catholic Women's Conference
Oklahoma City, OK
405-306-5187
thomaschrisL@sbcglobal.net



...Journeys Home Continued...

When I opened the door to peek in, the fragrance and warmth from the many candles in the entryway lured me in for a closer look. It was beautiful in the way that Catholic churches had been beautiful in my childhood. And it was quiet.

I lit a candle. I sat in quiet contentment before Jesus exposed in the Blessed Sacrament. I was nourishing my starving Evangelical Protestant soul with Catholic richness and beauty.

I had done all there was to do as an Evangelical Protestant, and I was not satisfied. I knew God was calling me to something more, and I now know that something I longed for was Someone, Jesus Christ, truly present in the Holy Eucharist.

Several years went by in which I continued to study, read, and watch EWTN. Because I had been Catholic, many of the issues that might dog those coming into the Church for the first time weren't foreign to me. For example, I learned to my surprise that purgatory has a biblical basis in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, and especially in one of the books not included in the Protestant versions of the Bible (see 2 Mc 12:46).

One term I do remember hearing for the first time (from Mother Angelica on EWTN) was "Magisterium of the Church." This is the teaching office of the Church, whose authority was given by Jesus Christ to Saint Peter (see Mt 16:15-20), his successors, and the bishops in union with them. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they lead and protect the Church that Jesus founded.

God Opens a Door

One beautiful Sunday afternoon, through a series of circumstances that only God could have orchestrated, my husband and I found ourselves at the Bellarmine Jesuit Retreat House in Barrington, Illinois. We were both ill at ease, since my husband was a lifelong Protestant and I had drifted away from the Church. I was sure there must be some sort of label, visible only to priests, that would flash "LAPSED CATHOLIC" across my forehead.

That day a wonderful priest, Father Bob, welcomed us. My husband was there in a professional capacity, so while he was occupied, Father Bob and I had a wonderful visit. There was an immediate spiritual connection between us.

He and I must have talked for over an hour about the Lord's love and His goodness. I told him all about our family. But I didn't tell him I was a former Catholic or that I was feeling drawn back to the Church.

As we were preparing to leave the retreat house, I decided I should "fess up." So I asked Father Bob if non-practicing Catholics could make retreats there. He grinned and said, "Ah, that's just the kind of folks we like!" I knew that someday I would return to Bellarmine.

Two days later was September 11, 2001. When our nation was attacked that day, needing comfort and reassurance, I went to noon Mass at Marytown. I was reminded again of the universality of the Catholic Church as I saw people of many ethnic backgrounds and of all ages at Mass.

That was a very significant point on my journey. On that day I knew for certain this was where I really belonged. And with each time I attended Mass, my longing to be united with Christ in the Holy Eucharist deepened.



UNSOLICITED MAIL

The Coming Home Network International would like to remind our members that we are unable to send unsolicited mail. Since our ministry exclusively responds to non-Catholic clergy and laity who initiate contact with us, we cannot add anyone to our mailing list or send materials unless they themselves first make a request. However, if you would like to have CHNI send materials with a gift card in your name, or if you have any questions about this policy, please contact our office at 740-450-1175.

As the weeks went by, I was feeling torn apart inside. I knew on the one hand that I was no longer truly an Evangelical Protestant. But I still couldn't see how I could ever leave my congregation.

The last weekend in October, 2001, we attended parents' weekend at our son's college. He took us to the morning service of his Presbyterian congregation (Presbyterian Church of America). The congregation was commemorating Reformation Day, October 31, 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his "Ninety-Five Theses" to the door of the church in Wittenburg, Germany. That act set in motion the Protestant movement.

As I sat in that little congregation, seeing the irony and God's sense of humor, I secretly hoped I could return to the very Church Martin Luther had set out to reform. It was beginning to dawn on me that all the things my soul was craving — deeper intimacy with Jesus, liturgical worship, silence and solitude — I had had as a Catholic, and I had left them behind. Each week I would worship in my Evangelical congregation and be homesick for the Catholic Church.

One day as I was praying and worrying over the whole situation, I decided to state my case to the Lord. I laid out for Him the reasons I couldn't possibly return to the Catholic Church, even though I really wanted to.

"What about our marriage of nearly twenty-five years, Lord?"

"And what about my relationships with my children, Lord?"

"And Lord, I know for sure that I'll lose all my friends!"

Then the Lord spoke to my soul: "Shannon, do you love Me more than these?"

I slumped back in my chair. At that point, I was finally able to say, "O Lord, You know I love You. You are God, I am not. I will trust You."

Then I actually became excited at the prospect of returning to the Church, because I knew He would make the way, and it would be perfect.

By early December I had received the blessings of my husband and children to do what I believed God was calling me to do. They trusted me. What a gift!

As the weeks went by, God was preparing me. I just had to be ready. I needed to go to Confession, but that was turning out to be the biggest hurdle. I discovered that most parishes had confessions only on Saturdays, which conflicted with my work schedule. A few parishes added some special times for the sacrament in preparation for Christmas, but work prevented me from those as well.

One morning, I happened to think about meeting Father Bob on our visit to the retreat house. When I called, he remembered me and was able to see me that very afternoon. God had made the way, and it was perfect.

Father Bob took the time to listen to the story of how I had come to that point in my spiritual journey. I told him how much I desired to receive Jesus — Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity — in the Eucharist. During our time together, Father Bob would quote a Scripture text or give an example from the Old Testament that he couldn't possibly have known were particular favorites of mine. But the Holy Spirit knew! His Presence ... continued on page 8



THE SPOUSES NETWORK

Are you the spouse of a clergy person interested in becoming Catholic?

The *Spouses Network* aids and provides fellowship for the spouses of clergy on the journey to the Catholic Church as well as those who are new Catholics. Through the *Spouses Network*, spouses of clergy who have embraced the Catholic faith provide one-on-one assistance to clergy spouses who are still on the journey or have recently become Catholic. In this way they offer a source of friendship, support, and increased love of Jesus Christ and His Church.

If you feel called to be part of the *Spouses Network*, whether as the spouse of a clergy person who has made the journey home and would like to assist someone, or as a spouse of a minister who is either on the journey or a new Catholic, we invite you to contact *CHNI* to assist us in the development of this network.

For more information, please contact Mary Clare Piecynski by e-mail at maryp@chnetwork.org or by phone at 740-450-1175 ext. 105.

We ask all members of *The Coming Home Network International* please to keep the *Spouses Network* in your prayers as we seek to answer the needs of those spouses of clergy on the journey home and those who are new converts.

THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

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...Journeys Home Continued...

there was so apparent to me, urging me on as I made my first Confession in over twenty years on December 20, 2001.

My Blessed Mother's Call

Through the wondrous Sacrament of Reconciliation, I was once again in full communion with the Catholic Church. I was at peace, with the deep knowing that I was loved. For my penance, Father Bob asked me to say one Hail Mary. "As you are driving home," he added, "think about how much your Blessed Mother loves you."

A few days later, I received my "second" First Communion at Midnight Mass, in the wee hours of December 25, 2001.

Despite Father Bob's admonition to think about Mary and her love for me, I wasn't really too interested in Mary when I returned. I just wanted Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. I still had the residual distrust of Mary that I had absorbed while an Evangelical Protestant.

I had feared that giving any honor to Mary somehow took away honor from Jesus. Yet even in a few instances as an Evangelical, while I was trying not to honor her too much, I had found myself defending her. I had even taken her role in several dramatic productions, when I portrayed her standing at the foot of the Cross!

With Father Bob as my spiritual director, I started praying the rosary again, especially the new Luminous Mysteries. I was seeing for the first time that Mary always points to Jesus. I really can't have Him without His Mother.

She says to me and to all of us, "Do whatever He tells you." Jesus was telling me to love and trust His mother.

On September 19, 2005, at Marytown, I made my consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Almost as soon as I said the words of consecration, it was as if a cloud lifted and I saw that I had not been motherless all those years. My heavenly mother had never abandoned me, even when I had turned my back on her.

Just as my mom used to stand on our front porch and call her kids home for supper, I picture our Blessed Mother on a huge celestial veranda, calling her children home to her Son and to the fullness of faith that's found in His Church. My deep desire for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, my longing for the ritual, depth, and beauty of the Catholic faith, were all calls that my soul heard and heeded. They were my Mother Mary's voice, saying: "Shannon, it's time to come home!" ■



Since her return to the Catholic Church in 2001, Shannon Kurtz has shared the story of her faith journey at parishes and conferences and as a guest on Relevant Radio's Drew Mariani Show. She published a book of spiritual poetry, Peony in Adoration, Reflections at the Feet of Jesus (AuthorHouse), in 2007. She and her husband live in Northern Illinois; they have two grown children and a granddaughter. Shannon is a member of Prince of Peace Parish in Lake Villa, Illinois, where she serves as a cantor and choir member.

Prayer List



Clergy

■ For Mike, a Baptist minister in Virginia, that the grace of the Lord Jesus will be a light to his path as he journeys toward full communion with the ancient Church Jesus founded.

■ For Matt, an Evangelical Protestant missionary in Minnesota, that as he prays and studies in preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation at Easter, God will guide his discernment.

■ For a candidate for the diaconate in the Anglo-Lutheran Catholic Church, that the Holy Spirit will guide his vocational discernment and continue to guide us to full communion with one another.

■ For Robert, a Baptist minister in Florida, that the grace and power he sees in the Catholic Church will draw him ever closer to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

■ For a Lutheran seminarian in North Dakota, that she will take the decisive plunge into the Tiber.

■ For a Mennonite pastor in Pennsylvania, that as he guides the Catholics in his congregation to return to the Catholic Church he will receive the grace and joy of being able to join them in coming home.

■ For a Lutheran deaconess in Wisconsin, that the Lutheran evangelical catholic tradition will become a path for her to return to the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church of her youth.

■ For Blaine, a United Methodist lay minister, that his longing for the fullness of the Catholic Church will be fulfilled through being granted the grace of receiving Jesus' Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the one Holy Eucharist instituted by God.

■ For Hal, a United Methodist minister in Iowa, that his many years of prayer, study, and contemplation will soon bear rich fruit in his life as a Catholic Christian.

Laity

■ For Gina, who has questions about the papacy, and for her husband, who does not share her interest in the Catholic Church.

■ For Angela, who is discovering the beauty of Catholic teaching, that God will continue pouring His grace upon her.

■ For all those who are struggling financially, that they will be able to meet their financial obligations.

■ For a man who is suffering from a mental illness, that the Holy Spirit will give him and his family the fortitude to carry this cross while experiencing God's abiding love in a powerful way.

■ For Allison, who wants to become Catholic but is encountering difficulties because of her husband's hesitancy to go through the annulment process.

■ For Robert, that he will soon be able to receive the manifold graces from the sacraments.

■ For Carolyn, who is drawn to the Catholic Church while her husband is not, that they will find unity and peace in Christ.

■ For Brenda, that she will find clarity as she seeks God's will.

■ For Caroline, that the Holy Spirit will give her guidance and peace regarding where God is leading her.

■ For Juli, who is studying the Catholic faith, that the Lord will reveal Himself to her in the Eucharist.

■ For Kristi, who is discerning whether to enter the Church at Easter.

■ For Karen, that all concerns and difficulties surrounding her reception into the Catholic Church will give way to the joy of the Lord.

■ For John, who is going through a difficult transition in his life, that God will bring him to where he should be.

■ For a married couple contemplating leaving the Catholic Church for the Orthodox faith, that God will give them the necessary grace to know His will for them.

■ For Ali, a wife and mother of two children who is battling cancer.

■ For Annette, as she discerns God's calling for her life.

■ For Mike, that his heart will be open to the truth and beauty of the Church that his wife desires him to share in.

■ For Brigid, to know how best to share with her family and friends her interest in the Catholic Church.

■ For Allison, who is struggling with adjusting to being a Catholic, that the Body of Christ present in her parish will make her feel welcome and at home.

■ For Libby and her husband, who are entering the Church, that they will find ways to serve in their local parish and be blessed beyond measure in their new life as Catholic Christians.

■ For Kitty, who is torn between her desire to become Catholic and her family obligations, that the Lord will open a way for her that will fulfill the longings of her heart.

■ For a college student who has entered an intense period of spiritual warfare after her decision to begin exploring the Catholic faith, that God will protect her and help her persevere.

In every issue we include timely prayer concerns from the membership. All members are encouraged to pray at least one hour each month before the Blessed Sacrament for the needs, both general and specific, of the CHNetwork and its members and supporters.

Please submit all prayer requests and answers to CHNI Prayer List, PO Box 8290, Zanesville, OH 43702. Or email prayer requests to prayers@chnetwork.org.

We use only first names to preserve privacy.



By Kenneth J. Howell, Ph.D.

Entering the *Mysteries* of *Salvation*

Every year the Church grants us the privilege of celebrating Holy Week, a time of prayer, reflection, and communion that centers on the passion, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the high point of the Church year. For forty days, from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday, we prepare for this celebration by prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

These outward observances are designed to effect an inward cleansing of our hearts so that we may be open to the graces God wishes to give us during this week. The conclusion of the week, the *Triduum* (meaning “three days”), prepares us to exalt with joyful gratitude in the resurrection of Christ. In short, this week represents a privileged moment of entering into the mysteries of salvation.

What Are Mysteries?

The word *mysteries* is misunderstood by many Christians, both within the Catholic Church and outside it. *Mysteries* in a Catholic context typically has one of three meanings.

First, it may refer to the very Being of God. That is why we speak of the *mystery* of the Holy Trinity or the *mystery* of the Incarnation.

Second, the term may refer to the sacraments. In fact, in the Eastern Catholic Churches, the word *mysteries* is normally used instead of the word *sacraments*. We see this usage reflected in the West as well when a priest chooses to begin the Mass with the words, “As we prepare to celebrate the sacred *mysteries*, let us call to mind our sins.”

Finally, mysteries can refer to the events of Christ’s life. This last use is what we mean when we speak of meditating on the *mysteries* of the Triduum.

Jesus’ life on earth was not just a life in the ordinary sense of the term. Because Jesus is fully God and fully Man, the events in His life carry an eternal significance.

When He taught, He did so “with authority” (Mt 7:29) because His teaching originated in heaven. When He healed the sick and opened the eyes of the blind, it was the

divine life in Him that came through His humanity, bringing healing and grace to those whose lives He touched. When He suffered indignities at the hands of His adversaries, He bore the shame of their taunts for our sins.

When Jesus died on the Cross, He paid for the sins of all humanity. When He lay in the tomb, He experienced real death in His humanity. When He rose again from the tomb, He came back with heavenly life radiating from His person. It is the fullness of that earthly life that we celebrate and experience in Holy Week.

When Jesus returned to heaven in the Ascension (see Acts 1:9–11), He brought back to heaven with Him all that He accomplished on earth. As the author of Hebrews says, “He always lives to make intercession” for us (Heb 7:25). In other words, the events of His earthly life are resident in heaven, in eternity, in His person.

Because of this reality, all that happened to Jesus on earth is in fact present to us in time through the liturgy of the Church. The consummation of His entire life, consisting of His passion, death, and resurrection, are now present in time again through the ministry of the altar where His ordained priests preside.

Entering Into the Mysteries

What does it mean to say that we must enter into the mysteries of Christ’s life? It means that we should remember these events, but also much more. By remembering them, we actually begin to experience again in our individual lives His passion, death, and resurrection.

Holy Week presents us with the objective realities of Jesus’ life so that we can enter into those events with a well-prepared heart. If we do so, we can benefit from this holy time in an unprecedented way.

We can enter into Jesus’ passion, into the final events of His life that led up to His death on the Cross. We can be there at the Last Supper with the Apostles as He speaks the words, “This is my Body ... this is my Blood.” In fact, every Mass presents us with this opportunity, but the Masses of

the Triduum bring together these realities in a focused and unforgettable way.

Holy Thursday is the Mass of the Lord's Supper, where we observe Jesus washing His disciples' feet. During that night we keep vigil with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. On Good Friday, we stand by the cross with the faithful women and the beloved disciple (see Jn 19:25–27) as we contemplate our Savior's love in His dying. At the Easter Vigil, we wait in hope for the resurrection. We look back to His bodily resurrection, and to the future for our own resurrection in the likeness of His (see 1 Cor 15:20–23).

The best preparation for the Triduum and for the joy of the Resurrection is to experience a good Lent. Lent allows the opportunity to know what it is to lack so that we can appreciate the joy of being filled with God's grace during Holy Week. The grace of Holy Week that we should seek is expressed in the final prayer of the Angelus:

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, thy grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may by His passion and cross be brought to the glory of His resurrection through the same Christ our Lord. Amen. ■

CHNI FORUM

The Coming Home Network International offers an online forum as a welcoming community dedicated to serving inquirers into the Catholic faith. The forum presents the Catholic Church's doctrine and practice in a way that's faithful to the authoritative teaching of the Church.

Our goal is to make the CHNI Forum a helpful place to find answers to questions about the Catholic faith and to experience fellowship with other inquirers, along with Catholics who desire to share their faith. We invite you to discover the forum at www.chnetwork.org/forum.

David Emery and Becky Mayhew are two friends of the CHNetwork who serve as forum moderators. We want to take this opportunity to introduce them to you.

DAVID W. EMERY As a young man, David Emery grew dissatisfied with the inconsistencies he saw in the Methodist tradition in which he'd been raised. He heard the Lord's call, sought out the truth, and entered the Catholic Church against his parent's wishes.



It was an unsettled time in the Church, during and immediately after the Second Vatican Council. The hastily implemented changes were disturbing, and many were leaving the Church, but David stayed the course. In 1974, his ongoing search for inner peace led him to leave his home in Oregon and settle in the Mexican border region of Texas. With his marriage to Gloria in 1978, life finally reached equilibrium.

In 1998, Gloria was stricken with Alzheimer's disease. Her entry into a distant care facility in 2001 left them both devastated, but the Lord's grace sustained them. David was later able to transfer her to a Catholic facility closer to home, where she remains today.

Not long afterward, David once again heard the Lord's call. Unsure of where he was headed, he encountered the Coming Home Network Forum on the Internet in 2002 and began to answer inquirers' questions about the faith. His confessor encouraged him to pursue the apostolate as a vocation. Soon after, the forum acquired a new moderator who invited David to

join him in the work. This association led to an appointment as a forum moderator.

Recently retired from a long career in the publishing industry, David is now in his ninth year of Internet evangelization, his fifth as a forum moderator.

BECKY MAYHEW After a Southern Baptist tent revival, Becky Mayhew was baptized by her father in the Mississippi River. Performing frequently as a soloist before his sermons, she taught vacation Bible school at age sixteen and began teaching Sunday school at age nineteen.



After marrying Larry Mayhew, the son of Free Will Baptist missionaries, Becky finished college while he served in Vietnam. After his return, she completed a Master's degree, and he eventually earned a doctorate in philosophy. For many years, they enjoyed the quiet lifestyle of a philosophy professor and an English teacher, rearing their son and serving in a Baptist church, where he was ordained as a deacon.

Sadly, Larry developed liver disease, which gradually limited his capabilities. Becky completed her first year as a school administrator before his death in 2002. In retirement, she supervised an adult discipleship program, made hospital visitations, and taught a Sunday School class. But she could not shake a growing restlessness, a longing for more formal worship, and a sense that something was missing in the Lord's Supper.

When her son married a Catholic, Becky began studying the Catholic faith in hopes of converting her daughter-in-law to the Baptist faith. Instead, she found herself becoming Catholic instead. She discovered the CHNI Forum and, after being received into the Church, consulted moderator David Emery about whether the Lord might be calling her to work with the forum.

Becky was a guest on the *Journey Home* in 2010. She worships with the Fathers of Mercy in Kentucky and conducts a Bible study in her home. She relinquished responsibilities with Hospice and the diocesan Marian Shrine Committee to accept a position as moderator with the CHNI Forum.

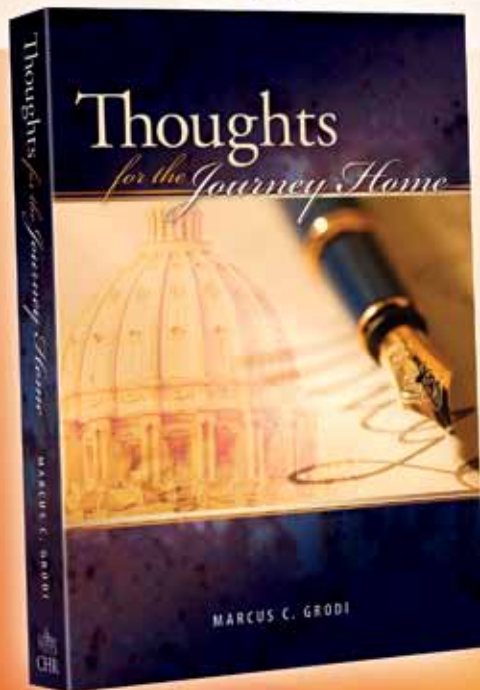
The Coming Home Network International

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This collection of essays is drawn from Marcus Grodi's published columns in the *Coming Home Network International's* newsletter and in *The Catholic Answer* magazine. His thoughts provide wisdom and strength for those who are exploring the claims of the Catholic Church, those who are on the path to the Church, and those who have already entered the Church yet need encouragement.

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