

The Coming Home Network NEWSLETTER



The Coming Home Network International
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August 2004

Journeys Home

From Baptist, to Mormon, to Catholic Priest...

by Deacon Steve Seever

If you had told me ten years ago that I would be an ordained deacon in the Catholic Church preparing for priesthood, I would have told you to have your head examined. I was Catholic and went to church, but the priesthood was far from my mind.

Twenty-five years ago, if you had told me that I would one day be a Catholic, I would have considered it as impossible as becoming the highest paid sports star in history. In fact, I would have given you my unhesitant testimony of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon, how Smith was a true prophet, and the Book of Mormon was Scripture superior to the Bible. I would have refused to have anything to do with the Roman Catholic Church, "the Church of the Devil"—which had removed many "plain and precious things" from the Bible and was responsible for the complete disappearance of the Truth from the Earth.

Given the fact that I now wear clerics and a Roman collar, it's obvious that I've had a radical change of heart.

I've been around church for as long as I can remember. As the adopted son of two Southern Baptists who took me to church from the time they could carry me — three times a week: twice on Sundays and once on Wednesday nights — I attended Sunday School from age five until my late teens. Every Sunday, we went to church and the message was always the same — give your heart and life to Jesus.

One Sunday in early 1970, I responded to that message and was baptized just a couple of weeks later. Since I was never good at sports, and as a result had few friends, I retreated into books as a way of escaping and creating my own pleasant world. My mom had taught me to read by the age of three, and I had always read above my age level.



Now that I had a new faith, I started to read about it. On the day of my baptism, my parents gave me a brand new King James Bible, which I devoured along with any other christian books that suited me.

Later, in junior high school, I made the acquaintance of some Mormons. They were only too happy to discuss my interest in religious topics and provided me with all the reading material I could carry. I became enthralled by the story of Joseph Smith's first vision. Like Smith, I had become disenchanted with the church I attended. The cliques in the
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Youth Group and the inability of many members to really live a Christian life had left me vulnerable to anyone whose answers would produce the renewal that I was sure Jesus wanted. Smith was only 15 at the time of his vision — just three years older than I. To me, this proved that a teenager could have a life-changing experience through God. Certainly, the Mormons I knew lived clean lives and seemed to know the Bible better than I.

The more I read, the more convinced I became, and the more I wanted to be baptized as a Mormon. My parents, however, wouldn't hear of it. Still, I would sneak away on my bike on Sunday afternoons to the local Mormon Church just to be around my newly adopted faith. My Baptist friends called Mormonism a cult, which impelled me to learn more so I could defend my faith and prove them wrong. Soon I was able to twist the average Baptist around my little finger in a debate. Eventually I grew tired of studying the Mormon doctrine, so I switched to reading its history. That was the big "mistake". The more I read the history of Mormonism — written by men like Joseph Smith and Brigham Young — the more convinced I became that something was wrong. The history of the Mormon Church that I had been taught was far from the history written by the men who lived it. Someone, somewhere, had lied.

Now I was angry at God for allowing me to be deceived. For several months, I couldn't go to church anywhere, nor could I pray. I did, however, continue reading Mormon history, just to make sure I wasn't missing something that would put it all back together. One day I stumbled on a statement by an early Mormon leader who said that the only possible choices were Mormonism or the Catholic Church. I also met and began a dialogue with Dr. Walter Martin, a Baptist minister and author of the book, "Kingdom of the Cults". Dr. Martin showed me that the beliefs of Mormonism had been held by others in

the early Church, but had been refuted by the early Church Fathers. Immediately I began reading the Fathers, and quickly found out that Walter was right. I also discovered, though, that the Fathers weren't "Baptists". Their beliefs sounded very "Catholic" to me, especially in regards to the Eucharist. One day, I went to Mass with two Catholic friends. Two days later, they took me to the rectory of the church to meet the priest. So began my friendship with Fr. Richard Engle and my journey home to the Catholic Church.

I had told God several times in anger that if He wanted me to trust Him, He'd have to provide answers to my questions so that I'd never be deceived again. I believed that if I could just get past the different interpretations of the Bible, I would be OK. In the conversations that followed with Fr. Engle, he encouraged my reading of the Early Church Fathers. What a sneaky priest! Fr. Engle wasn't afraid of an ex-Mormon challenging him and was very warm in his presentation of the faith, letting me proceed at my own pace. I think now that if anyone other than Fr. Engle had answered that door, I might not be Catholic today.

After about six months, he called and asked if I was interested in becoming Catholic. By that time, I had become convinced that the early Church was Catholic. I was drawn to the beauty of the Eucharist and impressed by the witness of the early martyrs. So, in October of 1981, I took the plunge and became Catholic.

In 1985, I met a girl who was an ex-Catholic and was attending a Methodist Church. A year later we were married in her church. Due in part to this hasty marriage that began to fall apart in the second year, I grew lax in the practice of my faith. For six more years, we tried to keep the marriage together. I even attended church with her, though I knew that there were glaring differences. In 1994, the marriage fell apart and we divorced. For several weeks, I just hung

around, licking my wounds, getting more and more depressed. Then one day, I felt the urge to go pray at St. Teresa's Retreat Center as I was driving past. I don't remember how long I was there, but when I got up, I knew I needed to go back to church. That next Sunday, I returned and began to fall in love all over again — this time, with the Mass. It quieted my soul. This was what had been missing — a personal encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist. The more I went to Mass, the more I fell in love with it, and the more I desired to know about the Catholic Faith.

In 1995, I got involved in RCIA at my parish. This program fueled not only my intellect but also my desire to pray, resulting in an authentic and rich conversion. In 1997, I entered Ohio Dominican University to study theology and philosophy, with the hopes of becoming a pastoral minister at a parish. Eventually my studies and devotions nurtured an attraction to the priesthood, but I simply chalked this up to too much misguided zeal. But so many people, including my pastor, kept encouraging me to the priesthood that eventually I could no longer ignore the thoughts. I finally opened myself to the possibility, and for a year and a half I sought advice and counsel, prayed and met with the Vocations Director. In August of 2001, I entered the seminary, and on March 4, 2004, I was ordained a transitional deacon by Bishop James Griffin of the Diocese of Columbus, Ohio. It's truly been an amazing "journey home" — one that I never thought I'd take, and one which proves the truth of the old saying, "God writes straight with crooked lines." In my case, very crooked lines.



Hold True

by Marcus Grodi



Rushing through the Birmingham airport to catch a plane home from EWTN, I caught the headlines of a national newspaper: “Hundreds of gay couples married in Massachusetts.” (Who’d of ever thought it!) I remembered a book I once read about the establishment of the Massachusetts Colony in 1628. The Puritan founding fathers, led by John Winthrop, were motivated by the ideal to establish a New Jerusalem, “a light on a hill,” a new pristine experiment to establish a true Christian colony of religious freedom. Sadly, shame-faced, the act by the modern Massachusetts’ high court, nearly four-hundred years later, is the trajectory of this independent Protestant spirit, driven by high ideals but unregulated by the trustworthy authority established by Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit in His Church.

I remember my first trip to Europe. We flew into Amsterdam. After the long overnight flight, Marilyn wanted to nap, but being too anxious to get my first glimpse of Europe, I went for a — naïve — stroll. Not following any map, I merely took off, and within two blocks, I was shocked into reality — the reality of the trajectory where the independent Protestant spirit had taken this once holy country. I stood blank faced staring down a street, like a fly gazing into a web, where every window and door contained a scantily clad prostitute vying for customers.

Trajectory. Think about it. Read today’s papers as denomination after denomination fidgets over whether to hold true to traditional morality

— based on Scripture or Tradition — or buckle under the constant pressure of our relativistic, liberal culture.

As I considered writing this article, the message of Philippians 3:13-16 came to mind:

“...forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.”

St. Paul referred to a trajectory of life that calls for resisting and rejecting the deleterious distractions of our past and present, keeping the eyes of our heart focused God-ward, holding fast to the truth to which we have attained by grace.

As I reread these verses, however, I was struck by the importance of the entire context. Please read the following verses, Philippians 3:8-20, and prayerfully consider how much they not only apply to the conditions that surround us today, but to the decisions made by those of us who late in our Protestant ministries discovered the essential, authentic witness of the Catholic Church. In this we discovered the mandate to come home to the fullness of faith, and as I look at the craziness of where

our culture is luring so many of our separated brethren and their churches, I am eternally grateful to be home:

Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like him in His death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own.

Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Let those of us who are mature be thus minded;
and if in anything you are otherwise minded,
God will reveal that also to you.
Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Brethren, join in imitating me,
and mark those who so live as you have an example in us.

For many,
of whom I have often told you
and now tell you even with tears,
live as enemies of the cross of Christ.
Their end is destruction,
their god is the belly,
and they glory in their shame,
with minds set on earthly things.

But our commonwealth is in heaven,
and from it we await a Savior,
the Lord Jesus Christ.

Please pray for fellow Catholics — especially Catholic men and women seeking or serving in public office — that together we can hold true in word and deed to our Catholic Faith, resisting the temptation to cave in and bow down to our relativistic culture.

And also pray for the CHNetwork staff, the Helpers Network, our donors and prayer partners, and particularly for the increasing number of Protestant clergy whose hearts are being drawn home to the Catholic Faith.

Sincerely In Christ,

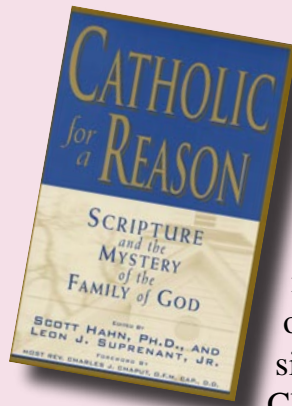


Marcus Grodi

Featured Coming Home Resources

Catholic For A Reason

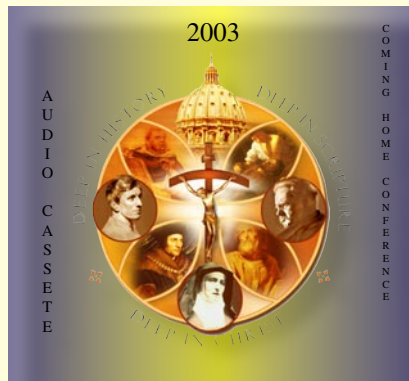
by **Scott Hahn & Leon J. Suprenant**



Catholic for a Reason, edited by Dr. Scott Hahn and Leon J. Suprenant, with the foreword by Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, will help Catholics and non-Catholics alike develop a better understanding of the Church. Each chapter goes to the heart of its topic, be it Mary, the Eucharist, Baptism, or Purgatory and in a clear, concise and insightful way, presents the teachings of the Church.

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Clergy on the Journey

The Clergy Convert/Inquirer Report for August 2004

Certainly, every convert is a gift to the Church and represents a serious responsibility for her ... especially in the case of adults, such converts bring with them a kind of new energy, an enthusiasm for the faith, and a desire to see the Gospel lived out in the Church. They would be greatly disappointed if, having entered the ecclesial community, they were to find a life lacking fervor and without signs of renewal! We cannot preach conversion unless we ourselves are converted anew every day.

— John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 47

The Turning of the Tide

One day recently, at the office of the *Coming Home Network*, an e-mail arrived stating:

“I am a Lutheran pastor serving a small congregation. Over the past few years, through study of holy Scripture, the Church Fathers, the writings of Church councils, and the popes, I have been brought to a firm conviction that the Catholic Church is the One, Holy and Apostolic Church of Christ Jesus the Lord. I now know that I am serving in a false ‘ministry’ in a false ‘church.’ Needless to say, this has placed me in a rather difficult situation.”

This man is in a moral crisis: how does he follow his conscience and leave behind the only profession for which he has been trained and educated, and at the same time support his wife and children, to whom he has a responsibility as their breadwinner?


We are in correspondence with a number of Episcopal priests who are in the midst of “the Battle”. Their bishop is attempting to force the “new morality” down the throats of his priests. He tells *CHN* that there is a growing number of Episcopal priests entering into a state of crisis. They are realizing that all semblance of moral authority is being abandoned by their



denomination. Their communion is crumbling away around them. Because of this moral crisis they are becoming increasingly attracted to the Truth, which has been, and continues to be, faithfully proclaimed by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

The rapidly growing groundswell, inspired by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of these clergymen, is not confined to a few Episcopalians and Lutherans. In record numbers, men and women from across the theological spectrum, from over 25 denominations ranging from Jehovah’s Witnesses to Anglo-Catholics, have contacted the *Coming Home Network* in the past few months. They are asking for advice, assistance, or just an ear willing to listen, to express their fear and uncertainties as well

as their joy in discovering the Truth of the Catholic faith. At this writing, in early June, sixty-five new clergy have contacted us since January! This brings the total membership of Primary members (clergy and academics) to nearly 920! Often non-catholic clergy who contact us are under the impression that they are alone, that they are the crazy “odd man out” to be taking the claims of the Catholic Church seriously. As can be seen by the numbers, this is far from the truth. The tide is truly turning! God is calling his scattered sheep home to the one Fold, pastored by the one Shepherd in His One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Please pray that he continues to guide His people.


 Jim Anderson

Helping 'em Home

The Laity Convert/Inquirer Report for August 2004

By Robert Rodgers

In life may we always be reminded of Saint Paul's words in 1 Timothy 1:12, "I am grateful to Him who has strengthened me, Christ Jesus our Lord..." Our witness of Christ to others is only possible through our surrender, and the graces of strength thereby received. To those who have swam the Tiber, Paul's words resound to remind us of the strength we have been given to follow the calling to the Truth, even against all we once believed.

My thanks to all who continually offer their time in witnessing the Truth of our Catholic faith to those who stand outside the walls of Rome. This springtime has truly been a time of growth for us in *The Helpers Network*. We have seen a large increase in the numbers of convert helpers: twenty new Helpers have been added in the past two months.

During this time, the Holy Spirit has continued to bring us many seeking His ultimate truth. Seventeen contacts have been paired with Helpers over this period, with eight still praying about this offer. In your prayers, please remember Scott & Lisa, Elizabeth, Ruth, Jeff, Carol, Jennifer & Diane. Though each has different needs, they are all the same in the eyes of God.

The article link and your additional thoughts were very helpful. I've actually covered a lot of other theological and historical ground since then, and I'm becoming more and more convinced that our Lord Jesus is calling me to His "holy catholic and apostolic" church. My family background and training is primarily Fundamentalist/ Evangelical.

— **CHNetwork Helpee**

Yes, Kitty is wonderful! I am so grateful for her and for your ministry.

— **CHNetwork Helpee, CA**



Thanks for your response to my question. It was nice to be able to explain the Catholic faith in a manner that gives Glory to God. It was interesting because the one person said that he had never heard the Catholic faith explained that way. Maybe he now has a different outlook and not so misdirected.

— **CHNetwork Helper, WA**

Although some people have assumed that my conversion was job related, it is not. I began my serious journey to conversion long before I entered into this position. I believe that anyone who seriously studies the teachings of the Catholic Church will want to become part of it.

— **CHNetwork Helpee convert, PA**

My most profound conversion came about when I learned that my wife had conceived our first child. From that point until today, my journey can be described as a series of conversions. It's almost like a series of waves that are washing me closer and closer to shore.

— **CHNetwork Helper, TX**

My love for Mary came years after I joined the church. We were led to say a daily family rosary and after a while, as I read more (having to analyze it all) I realized she was my heavenly Mother. After all, what is a family without a mother, and Mary is the Mother of the Church! God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and Mother Mary. It makes so much sense to me now.

— **CHNetwork Helpee convert, AZ**

Thank you for your kind words of compassion and encouragement this morning and also yesterday on the phone. I appreciate your willingness to extend the gifts of your time, your story, and your aid.

— **CHNetwork Helpee, WI**

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The Turning of the Tide

