



August 2011 Newsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



A Long Journey Back Home

By Catherine Canino

I am a cradle Catholic, born and raised in the 1960s in Los Angeles among an extended Italian family. Like everyone I knew, I went to Catholic school, but from first grade on, I cannot recall ever hearing there about the love and mercy of God. Instead, the nuns concentrated on filling us with fear: I was taught to the rules of the Church to avoid hell, rather than to please God.

No one, for example, ever explained to me the great miracle of God's love that is the Eucharist. We knew that the Host was the Body and Blood of Christ and that we could not eat or drink anything before receiving it. We came to believe that breaking any of these rules — or the many, many others — would send us straight to hell.

Things changed when I went to a "progressive" and rather intellectual Catholic high school, where Christianity was presented in a much more positive light. Unfortunately, by then I was in the rebellious stage. I was bored with the Mass and was already drifting away.

I went on to a state university, and while there I broke away from the Church completely. I found that atheism and secularism provided a relief to the fear I had felt all my life, and I rejected Christianity as a tool of ignorance and repression.

Fortunately, God did not desert me as I had Him. And my anti-Christian ideas did not last long. God had given me a great interest in other

religions, and that created a desire in me to be part of something larger than myself and to believe.

I went to graduate school in Library Science and found myself suddenly yearning to go to a church. Over the following fifteen years, through my twenties and early thirties, I moved from Presbyterian to "Christian New Age" to Lutheran congregations. My experiences at all of them were similar.

For a few months, I would be enraptured by the "show" — the preaching, the music, the various presentations, the camaraderie of the congregation. I would join the individual congregation and denomination and try to become an active member. Eventually and inevitably, however, I would realize that there wasn't much beyond the "show."

I found in these congregations I attended very little, if any, theological substance or clearly defined standards or codes. And always I found myself disturbed by the fact that the congregations were centered on the preacher, the choir, and keeping the congregation entertained — but not really on God. I recall, for example, how once I attended my niece's church for a Christmas service. It had great music, beautiful videos, and cute kids, but it was fifteen minutes into the service before God was even mentioned.

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Journeys Home

FEATURED RESOURCES

In each issue of this newsletter we feature resources chosen specifically to aid readers in evangelization. We encourage our members to take advantage of this month's **Evangelization Outreach Package**.

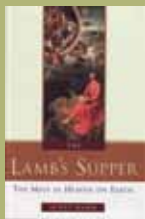
Deep in Scripture Radio Program Special!



Marcus Grodi is joined by Barry Metzentine, a former Mormon, in this insightful *Deep in Scripture* program that will help you understand the wondrous plan God has for each of our lives. *CD*

The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth

By Dr. Scott Hahn



This profound book reveals a long-lost secret of the Church: The early Christians' key to understanding the mysteries of the Mass was the New Testament's Book of Revelation.

With its bizarre imagery, mystic visions of heaven, and end-time prophecies, Revelation mirrors the sacrifice and celebration of the Eucharist. Beautifully written in clear, direct language, this book by bestselling Catholic author Scott Hahn will help readers see the Mass with new eyes, pray the liturgy with a renewed heart, and enter into the Mass more fully, enthusiastically, intelligently, and powerfully than ever before. (*Ignatius*, 1999)

➤ **For a donation of \$35, receive a *Deep in Scripture* CD.**

➤ **For a donation of \$50, receive *The Lamb's Supper*.**

➤ **For a donation of \$75, receive a *Deep in Scripture* CD and *The Lamb's Supper*.**

...Journeys Home Continued...

One night, as I lay in bed, I was hit with what was for me a startling truth: Life *is* really short and moving very quickly. I realized with a shock that this life was a small part of eternity, and that it behooved me to concentrate more on that eternity. I really wanted to belong to something that I could deeply believe in, not just a place to be entertained each Sunday. This is about the time that I became acquainted with Mormons, also known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS).

Encountering the Mormons

In my late thirties, I made a major life change and decided to go back to graduate school for my doctorate in English. I moved to Arizona, and there I met my friend Patricia, a devout Mormon. She was one of the nicest people I had ever met, and we became good friends.

My natural curiosity about other religions kicked in, and I started asking her questions about Mormonism. Every one of her responses seemed reasonable, logical, and attractive. It all seemed to fit.

We are destined to be gods just like God the Father, she said. He has created us for this purpose — and what father doesn't want His children to be just like Him? We become gods by entering into an eternal marriage because the godhead needs a male and female component.

We are linked to our families eternally. If we don't have a spouse or children in this life, Patricia told me, we will have them in the next life. I had to admit there was a real fairy tale aspect to it all — a real "happily ever after" marriage.

To me, the most attractive and convincing Mormon belief was that everyone has a chance for salvation and "exaltation" (movement up to godhead). It doesn't matter whether someone is a Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Jew, tree worshipper, or atheist in this life. In the next life they can join the Mormon church and be baptized by proxy by Mormons on earth. This seemed like an incredibly just system.

Finally, I felt that I had found a theology that was solid and made sense. It appeared to be a great combination of Christianity, Judaism, and New Age ideas. In addition, Mormons seemed to be genuinely good people and genuinely "Christian." They were people with strong morals who helped one another and others as well.

Yet even at the beginning, I had some problems with Mormonism. First, when I read the Book of Mormon (which they claim to be another ancient testament of Jesus, written by the lost tribe of Israel who had come to the Americas), I knew immediately that it was not an ancient book. I studied literature for a living, so I knew writing styles pretty well. And the more I read, the more I was convinced it was fraudulent.

The Book of Mormon is supposed to have been translated by Joseph Smith, a nineteenth-century American, directly from ancient Egyptian. But it was written in sixteenth-century style — which was neither the way the ancient Egyptians would write nor the way a nineteenth-century person would write. It was obvious, at least to me, that someone had deliberately used the sixteenth-century style to make it sound "biblical" by resembling the language of the King James Version of the Bible.

Though it claimed to be an ancient text, the Book of Mormon also contained many references from the modern period, including a quote from Shakespeare's

play *Hamlet*. In addition, the words of Christ it contained were copied exactly from the King James Bible — even the questionable translations.

Entire books have been written about the fallacies in the Book of Mormon, and I won't go into them here. Suffice it to say that my "gut" and my brain both told me it was counterfeit. Those who are examining LDS teachings are told to pray and wait for a response from God to "verify" that the Book of Mormon is true. I did, but I received no such verification.

The other problem was with the Sunday service. When I went to my first "ward meeting" (which is what they call that service), I didn't feel any spirituality at all, much less the presence of God. Ward meetings have no preacher. The bishop, or spiritual leader of the ward (the equivalent of a parish), directs the meeting, but people from the congregation give the talks.

On my first visit, I noticed that people in the "audience" were doing all sorts of things: reading, playing with their children, even clipping their nails. But no one was really listening. And certainly no one was praying. I was rather astonished to find that it was the least spiritual setting I had ever visited.

Joining the Mormons

Still, after a lot of soul searching, I decided to join the LDS church. The reason: I really *wanted* it to be true. The theology was just so fascinating and comforting. And I wanted to be part of a church that took care of its own.

I was finally baptized in the LDS church in May, 1999. I will always remember that day. All kinds of things seemed to work against my getting to the ward for the baptism. My mother had medical problems; my dog became suddenly ill and had to go to the emergency vet that morning. When I arrived at the ward to be baptized, they assured me that through these difficulties, Satan was trying to stop me from joining the church.

It was a nice ceremony. I had guest speakers and could pick the hymns I wanted. When they tried to immerse me in the water, though, I could not become fully immersed. They tried three times. Again, this difficulty was attributed to Satan.

Other converts to Mormonism had told me of their joy at their baptism. I felt nothing of this, but I was determined to make it work. I was tired of church shopping.

That night as I was getting ready for bed, I heard a voice distinctly say, "I'm proud of you." I took that as a clear sign that I had made the right decision. I just figured that the joy would come later.

During my first three years in the Mormon church, I worked very hard to attain that joy. Shortly after I was baptized, I moved to South Carolina. Since few Mormons lived nearby, it was easy to become involved in that small ward.

I went to the ward meetings every Sunday and to Wednesday night events. I also taught Sunday school and visited other members once a week.

Sometimes I felt satisfied with the church. The theology was logical and encouraging, and I did have some religious experiences. For example, I once had an infection in my breast that produced a cyst. I called on some Mormon missionaries, who gave me a blessing. The next day the cyst was gone.

... continued on page 4



DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

On EWTN radio with Marcus Grodi & Guests

Airs: Wednesdays @ 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.

Deep in Scripture Guests

August 3

David Currie*

August 10

Richard Smith*

August 17

TBD*

August 24

Brent Stubbs*

August 31

Keith Major*



*This schedule is subject to change.



EWTN'S THE JOURNEY HOME

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

TELEVISION

Mondays 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 at 8:00 PM ET

Encore: Saturdays 7:00 AM ET

August 1

David Currie*

Former Bible church missionary

August 8

Dr. Richard Smith*

Former Episcopal priest

August 15

Vernon Robertson*

The Journey Home in Canada

August 22

Brent Stubbs*

Former Pentecostal Holiness pastor

August 29

Keith Major*

Revert

**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...

Disturbing Discoveries

After baptism, however, I learned disturbing things about the Mormon theology that were not openly discussed with inquirers about the religion. For example, I was told Mormons believe that the God we worship is one of many gods. Jesus is considered the Savior of mankind but is not equal to God the Father. He is the oldest son, a brother to Satan and to all of mankind.

I was told that God has a wife (probably more than one) who is not prayed to because God wants to “keep her private.” Despite the fact that God has a wife, He literally had sex with the Virgin Mary to conceive Jesus, which in my mind made him an adulterer. In heaven, He continues to have sex with “Mother God” to produce spirit babies who are sent to earth to become people.

LDS members speak of themselves as “embryo gods” or “mother gods.” At the end of the world, they believe women will be called from their graves by their husbands — not by God. Those without husbands will have to wait.

You can get into heaven, I was told, only if you give your secret name (which you receive at the temple) to the angel at the gate. This makes it seem as if God isn’t omniscient. Otherwise, wouldn’t He know who deserves to be in heaven? Gradually, the theology seemed less logical and comforting.

Then there were the inconsistencies. An interesting thing about Mormonism is that you can ask as many questions as you want when you’re investigating the church. After you join, you’re not encouraged to question anything; you’re expected to take everything exactly as it’s told to you.

The “prophet” of the church issues short directives that you must believe and follow — no questions asked. The only discussion that occurs within the church is to parrot what you have been told and to “give your testimony” that the church is true. But I had an inquiring mind, and the deeper I looked, the more contradictions and problems I found.

I found a basic inconsistency within the idea of eternal marriage. Before I joined the church, I had asked several Mormon “bishops” about the Scripture passages in which Christ specifically states to the Sadducees that there is no marriage in heaven (see Mt 22:23–33; Mk 12:18–27, Lk 20:27–40). I was told several answers to that question: that Christ was speaking only of the Sadducees; that He was speaking of marriages after the end of the world; or the most popular answer, that those lines had been added to the Bible by the Catholic Church.

Another problem for which there was no solution: If marriage was the only way to become a god, why wasn’t Jesus married? I was given two contradictory answers to this question.

Some said that Jesus was a special case. Others said that Jesus was actually married, but the Catholic Church kept that truth hidden. This latter approach was in fact the “solution” offered for many inconsistencies between the Christian and Mormon theologies: The Catholic Church had deliberately mistranslated the Scriptures.

Nevertheless, Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, had supposedly received a divine “revelation” to retranslate the Gospel of Matthew “correctly.” If that were true, then why would Smith still keep the story of the Sadducees in it? And why would he make no mention of Jesus’ wife?



Neither did Jesus Himself mention His wife — or the importance of marriage — when He supposedly appeared to the people of the Americas as alleged in the Book of Mormon. Yet *that* record was supposedly pristine.

Other Problems

There were also inconsistencies about the story of Joseph Smith that I learned from Mormons themselves, although they seemed to have no problem with them. For example, Joseph Smith changed his own story about how God had appeared to him, how he had found the “Golden Plates” that contained the book of Mormon, how he had translated them, and more.

Smith also claimed that the book he wrote called *Word of Wisdom*, which contains restrictions on alcohol and tobacco use, was a divine revelation. In fact, it was taken from a brochure by the man who invented Graham crackers.

I became friends with a Mormon man whose father and grandfather had been part of the leadership of the church in Salt Lake City. He said I would be amazed at how much the Mormon church was keeping secret from its people — that there are actually documents that refute Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon that are kept hidden.

This man was not an anti-Mormon. He was actually a bishop of his ward! He knew the truth about Mormonism, but he remained a Mormon because he liked the people and the culture.

I agreed with him about the people, but the culture left me cold. My first instinct about the Sunday services was correct. I never felt a spiritual presence at them.

Mormons brag about being a church for the people and by the people. It’s run by the lay members, who receive no money for their service. This sounds wonderful, but the problem is that the services center on the people themselves, not on God.

The majority of the “sacrament” service consists of lay members coming up and giving talks. They thank God for their lives and then describe the problems or good things that happened to them during the week. And they always end with their testimony that the LDS church is true. Nevertheless, the focus is on themselves — not on God.

After the “sacrament service” there are Bible studies and classes. But the intent of these is proving that the LDS church is true. In my experience, God is not really worshipped there; He is only mentioned in passing.

Once a month, on “Testimony Sundays,” people get up at random and say why they know the LDS church is true. These are often emotional testimonies. But again, the focus is always on the person and his or her problems.

I found that the typical Mormon prayers are not focused on God. People begin with thanking God for what they have, and then ask God for what they want. They never acknowledge sin, never ask forgiveness, never praise God or ask to be closer to Him. The only mention of Jesus is when they close the prayer: “I ask this in Jesus’ name, Amen.” I left every ward meeting (typically three hours long) not spiritually revived, but spiritually exhausted.

Rediscovering the Catholic Church

My disillusionment with Mormonism grew. It reached a climax when I went to Patricia’s wedding at the temple in South Carolina.

... continued on page 6



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CHNetwork

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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☐ Discover

☐ AmericanExpress

Your information

Name

Signature

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone number

Email address



MARCUS GRODI'S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

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 Not by Sight"

Women of Faith, Women of Action Conference

Oklahoma City, OK

405-306-5187

thomaschrisL@sbcglobal.net

October 1, 2011

**Catholics Come Home...How to Keep Your
Family Catholic!**

Saint Gregory the Great Parish

Hamilton Square, NJ

www.stgregorythegreatchurch.org

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newsletters from our online
archive.

Visit www.chnetwork.org/newsletter-archive.

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.

...Journeys Home Continued...

I had resisted two things in the church. First, I had never given my testimony. I had never said I believed the church was true, because deep in my heart, I couldn't. I had "fudged" when I taught Sunday school by saying, "I believe these things are true" — and then I never taught things that I believed to be untrue.

The other thing I resisted was going through the Mormon temple in Salt Lake City. This experience is usually the most important one in a Mormon's life. The temple allegedly contains secret information that will help members get to the "celestial" kingdom (the highest level of heaven). The temple is also where the baptisms of the dead take place.

But I could never go. Something always kept me from it. (I know now that it was God who kept me from it.) When I walked into the vestibule of the temple for Patricia's wedding (I couldn't see the wedding ceremony itself because I had not been initiated), I knew immediately — as soon as I saw the spotlight on the greeter who was all dressed in white — that this was a false church, a church of man and not of God.

After that experience, I never went back to the Mormon church.

As I became disillusioned with the Mormons, I became nostalgic for, and then attracted to, the Catholic Church. The lack of passion or spirituality in the ward meetings made me think of the saints, such as Teresa of Ávila and Thérèse of Lisieux, who actually went into a spiritual ecstasy just thinking about Christ. You would never find that in the Mormon church, nor in any Protestant church that I attended. There is simply not that connection to Christ.

I missed the saints, too. For the first time in my life, I appreciated the communion of saints. I liked the idea of asking saints for help. I yearned for that interconnection with them.

I missed the Mass as well. I came to realize that the Mass is the only worship service that is entirely an act of worship. And I missed being able to attend Mass every day. The Catholic Church provides opportunities to worship God every day, or just to sit with Him and pray. But the Protestant and Mormon churches I knew about were closed every day except Sunday.

After I left the Mormon church for good, I started seriously to investigate the Catholic Church. The Catholic spirituality I had felt was great, but I needed my intellectual side to be satisfied as well. Then I discovered EWTN, and I watched it "religiously."

When I did, I found, to my shock, that what I had initially liked about the Mormon church had been present in the Catholic Church all along. For example, Mormons pride themselves on being the only church that allows the possibility of salvation for people outside their church. But as I soon learned, Catholic teaching allowed for that possibility as well.

I had liked the idea of eternal marriage and of living an essentially supernatural version of life on earth. But that notion now seemed incredibly simplistic and worldly. It was reducing heaven to earthly terms.

Catholic teaching about heaven showed me more profound realities. I came to realize that being loved and in the presence of God and our extended family of saints is far more desirable than some kind of eternal marriage with a spouse. I learned that heaven is so much more than we can imagine, and so much more than life on earth.

I studied the Bible and realized that the Catholic Church is the church of the Bible. The Protestant churches, including the Mormons, were reading Scripture that had been designated as such by the Catholic Church! It was the Catholic Church that had structured the canon still used by almost all Christian churches today.

In addition, the Mormons had claimed that Christ's true Church had fallen into apostasy when the Apostles died, to be restored eighteen centuries later by Joseph Smith. Yet when Christ said that the Church would prevail against the gates of hell, and that He would never leave it, He was making a promise that it would never fall into apostasy (see Mt 16:18).

This passage also helped me come to grips with the occasional corruption that had occurred among members of the Catholic Church in the past two millennia. It was apparent that hell had really tried again and again to take down the Church. But Satan never has been able to succeed in that ambition.

Then, when I read the early Church Fathers, I discovered that the early Church had a Mass with the Eucharist much the same as the Mass with the Eucharist today. The Church had not fallen in apostasy; it was the same as it had always been. It was man who had fallen into apostasy by leaving or abusing the Church.

The most astonishing thing I learned from my Bible and historical study was the truth of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It amazed me that so many Protestants take nearly everything in the Bible literally except for Jesus' words that the Eucharist is truly His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. And that's even though this fact is stated as clearly as can be in several places in the New Testament: John chapter 6, 1 Corinthians 11:23–31, and in the descriptions of the Last Supper in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Christ went out of his way, in John 6, to say that this was not a symbol or a memorial, but was to be taken literally. As I read more about it, I recognized that the Eucharist was the greatest Gift that we could have been given. Instead of God just giving us His words in the Scripture, He gave us Himself to partake of every day.

I had been taught as a child that the Eucharist was the Body and Blood of Christ. But I had not been told how it was the ultimate expression of Christ's love. Now I came to know that He left us a way so that He can become part of us and we can be physically connected to Him.

Returning Home

For all these reasons, I became completely convinced that the Catholic Church is the true and everlasting Church of Christ. But it took me awhile to get up the nerve to go back home.

I went to my first Mass with these new convictions in Italy, at the famous Santa Croce church in Florence. I was incredibly moved by the experience. The beauty and universality of the Mass, the devotion of the people, and the True Presence in the Eucharist made me comprehend that I had found the truth I had been looking all my life.

After I got home, worldly things made me put off actually returning to the Church — although I knew now that I would do so some day. Then one day I was diagnosed with cancer. It was curable, and they considered me cured after treatment, but I considered it a wake up call from God. ... 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 Piccynski 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.

NEWSLETTER COPIES

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

PO Box 8290
Zanesville, OH 43702
740-450-1175
www.chnetwork.org

President/Founder

Marcus Grodi (*former Presbyterian pastor*)

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Fr. Ray Ryland (*former Anglican priest*)

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...Journeys Home Continued...

I made an appointment with a local priest. He was so warm, compassionate, and understanding about my spiritual journey that I could not wait to become immersed again in the Catholic faith.

That was three years ago. Since then, I have found the Catholic Church to be a well of blessings that never runs dry. The more I receive, the more there is to receive. It's a never-ending source of spiritual nourishment.

I now attend Mass not only on Sundays, but as often as I can during the week. I'm an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist and I teach RCIA. I can truthfully say that I love the Church more now than I did when I first returned.

This is one way that I know the Catholic faith is true: In all the other religions I tried, I became bored and disillusioned very quickly. But I have only grown in my passion and desire for the Catholic Church.

The Church satisfies me intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. She gives me the food for my soul I've been longing for all my life. Not only do I know the Catholic Church is the true Church of Christ; she offers so many blessings, graces, and benefits that I can't understand why others would want to be anywhere else.

My guess is that if they knew the truth, they wouldn't be. ■

For Further Reading

I learned about the inconsistencies of Mormonism from the Mormons I knew personally. But you can learn more about the problems in LDS teaching and practice through a number of resources, especially Isaiah Bennett, *Inside Mormonism: What Mormons Really Believe* (Catholic Answers, 1999). Citing the Book of Mormon and other LDS texts, this volume provides good information from a former Catholic priest who became Mormon and then later came back to the Catholic faith.

The following are some helpful websites, both Protestant and Catholic. The last one also provides links to many additional relevant sites.

http://www.catholic.com/library/Gods_of_the_Mormon_Church.asp

<http://contenderministries.org/mormonism/comparison.php>

<http://www.pamphlets.org.au/australia/acts1495.html>

<http://www.exmormon.org/tract2.htm>



CATHERINE CANINO is Professor of Shakespeare and Renaissance Studies at the University of South Carolina Upstate, in Spartanburg, South Carolina. In addition to Shakespeare, Dr. Canino teaches World Literature, Greek and Roman Mythology, and Biblical Backgrounds in Literature. Every year, she takes students to Italy and other parts of Europe and is active in promoting Italian culture within the international community in Spartanburg.

Dr. Canino is a parishioner of Jesus Our Risen Savior Catholic Church in Spartanburg, where she teaches RCIA, serves as a Eucharistic minister, and is helping to implement an adult education program in the parish.



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Prayer List



Clergy

■ For Joe, a former Baptist minister in Michigan, that all obstacles preventing him and his wife from receiving our Lord at the altar may quickly disappear.

■ For a Presbyterian minister in Iowa, that he may soon obtain alternative employment so that he may gain the freedom to become fully a Catholic Christian.

■ For Eric, an Anglican minister in the Midwest, that God would guide him on the path to become a true "Anglo-Catholic," just as St. Thomas à Becket and St Thomas More were.

■ For a Disciples of Christ minister in North Carolina, that she may soon enjoy the blessings of the ideas and practices of the "first Church" in communion with the successor of St. Peter.

■ For a Lutheran minister in South Dakota, that the Holy Spirit would guide him to discover a way to support his family so that he may enter the Catholic Church.

■ For Peter, a nondenominational minister in Northern Ireland, that he may fall in love with the Church founded by Jesus on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, ever ancient and ever young.

■ For a Charismatic Episcopal priest, that as he knocks on the door of the Church our Lord Jesus would guide him to the fullness of the Faith.

Laity

■ For Bill's health, and for grace in his struggles with family.

■ For the three sons of a CHNetwork member who have fallen away from the Catholic faith.

■ For Matt's health and return to the Catholic faith.

■ For Grant, as he continues to struggle with fellowship as he looks to return to the Catholic faith.

■ For Jeremy, that his current struggle with Catholic teaching and history will result in a strong faith and belief in the Church that Christ founded, and that he will come home to it.

■ For John's family members, who are sick, and for the repose of the souls of his family and friends who have passed away.

■ For Doleen and her family, who are experiencing numerous struggles.

■ For Brigid, who is continuing to learn more about the Catholic Church and to move forward in her faith journey.

■ For Danielle, who is discerning God's leading in her faith journey.

■ For Elizabeth, who desires to become a part of the Catholic Church but is finding the path to full communion strewn with difficulties; may God remove all barriers to her becoming Catholic.

■ For Matt and Joe to return to practicing their faith, and for their wives to embrace the fullness God has to offer them in His Church.

■ For Dan, who is recovering from a lung transplant, and for his wife, Ellen, who is a newly confirmed Catholic.

■ For a wife who is blessed in her new life as a Catholic, but whose marriage is struggling because of her conversion.

■ For Anthony, as he seeks to find God through the many trials he is encountering.

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 CHNetwork 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.

Why Did Pius XII Proclaim the Dogma of MARY'S ASSUMPTION?

The month of August is for most Americans a time of enjoying the last days of summer fun before preparing for the return of another school year. It's a relaxing season to be with family and friends, hosting barbecues, picnics, and swimming parties. For Catholics, as for their fellow Americans, August represents the transition from summer heat to the cool air of autumn.

But there's one important difference between the way Catholics and others observe this month. Catholics celebrate an important mystery in the history of salvation on August 15: the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary.

This solemnity marks the most recent dogma proclaimed as such by the Catholic Church. But its historical roots run deep: Like every dogma, the Assumption of Mary is first and foremost a mystery, in the biblical and Catholic sense of an event of salvation history that embodies the saving power of God. That means it's important for us to understand what it's about.

We may take it for granted that the Church doesn't proclaim dogmas without good reason. All the major doctrinal decisions in the history of the Church were motivated by a pastoral concern for the health of the faithful. After all, the first and last responsibility of the bishops and priests of the Church is the spiritual welfare of the faithful.

So why is Mary's assumption into heaven an important truth for our spiritual well-being? What's the spiritual benefit of the dogma of the Assumption? To find out, we must first understand what the Catholic Church teaches about it.

Pope Pius XII formally defined and promulgated this dogma in his encyclical *Munificentissimus Deus* (November 1, 1950). The *fact* of the Assumption was stated this way: "It is a dogma revealed by God that the Immaculate Mother of God, Mary ever Virgin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul

into the glory of heaven." But we must also ask what the Holy Father hoped would be the *pastoral* benefit for the people of God.

The Historical Setting

Why did Pius think this was an important moment to proclaim Mary's assumption? Most Catholics rarely connect the proclamation of this dogma with the world events during Pius's pontificate. But in the year 1950 the world was still reeling from the devastating effects of World War II. The inhumanity of the National Socialists (Nazis) in Germany had decimated European Jewry, as well as slaughtering millions of Christians and other Gentiles who attempted to resist their demonic policies.

The German military invaded almost every European country; Italy was one of the last to be invaded. During the entire war, Pius XII spoke out against the inhumanity perpetrated by the German juggernaut. From the beginning of his pontificate in 1939 to the end of the war in 1945, Pius had defended the weak by speaking out against man's inhumanity to man and by covertly arranging the protection of thousands of Jews in Italy.

With the memory of this human devastation still fresh in his mind, Pius XII encouraged a detailed study of Marian doctrine in the late 1940s in anticipation of proclaiming a new dogma for the benefit of humanity. The actual language used in the encyclical *Munificentissimus Deus* actually alludes to those events:

It is to be hoped that from meditation on the glorious example of Mary men may come to realize more and more the value of a human life entirely dedicated to fulfilling the will of the Heavenly Father and to caring for the welfare of others. We also hope that while materialistic theories [such as Communism] and the moral corruption arising from them are threatening to extinguish the light of virtue, and by stirring up strife, to destroy the

lives of men, the exalted destiny of both our soul and body may in this striking manner be brought clearly to the notice of all men.

Pius XII clearly expresses his hope that meditation on Mary's assumption will lead the faithful to a greater awareness of our common dignity as the human family. The Pope here reflects a truly Catholic perspective that has characterized those pontiffs who were and are great teachers, such as John Paul II and Benedict XVI. He, like his successors, thought that the real cause of such inhuman brutality could be found in the false ideas and sentiments that motivated the aggressors during the war.

Inner Transformation

Knowing that oppression is an ever-present danger, Pius was convinced that only inner transformation of the person could bring about the social results that lead to "caring for the welfare of others." Without such a transformation, the systems of government and power would



The Assumption of the Virgin — Titian c1488-1576

threaten "to extinguish the light of virtue" and eclipse "the exalted destiny of both our soul and body" so that men would forget their heavenly end.

What would impel human beings to keep their eyes fixed on their supernatural end and to desire the salvation of their fellow human beings? Mary's assumption was a reminder of, and impetus toward, greater respect for humanity because the Assumption cannot be separated from the rest of Mary's earthly life. Pius XII connected the Assumption explicitly to her Immaculate Conception:

The august Mother of God, mysteriously united from all eternity with Jesus Christ in the one and the same decree of predestination, immaculate in her conception, a virgin inviolate in her divine motherhood, the wholehearted companion of the divine Redeemer who won complete victory over sin and its consequences, gained at last the supreme crown of her privileges — to be preserved immune from the corruption of the tomb, and like her Son, when death has been conquered, to be carried up body and soul to the exalted glory of heaven, there to sit in splendor at the right hand of her Son, the immortal King of the ages.

By meditating on Mary's participation in the redemptive work of her Son, the faithful would grow in their ability and desire to participate in God's plan of salvation.

This goal was, and is, what the world needs. It needs a process of transformation in becoming the agents of salvation who honor and promote human welfare. That's the meaning of Mary's life, death, and assumption into heaven, both body and soul. After a decade of unprecedented destruction, Pius XII knew that the Church's acknowledgment of Mary's assumption would be a compelling boon to a greater sense of humanity. ■

Dr. Kenneth J. Howell is the Senior Fellow of the School of Catholic Thought of the John Paul II Newman Center at the University of Illinois, Chicago. He also serves as theological advisor to The Coming Home Network International.

The Coming Home Network International

PO Box 8290

Zanesville, OH 43702

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BE INVOLVED!

The Coming Home Network International encourages members to assist in our mission this month to help non-Catholic clergy and laity come home to the Catholic Church in the following ways:

1

Get the August 2011 "Evangelization Outreach Package," specifically designed to provide our members with excellent material to deepen their understanding of the Faith and in turn pass it along to non-Catholic family and friends. For more information, see page 2 of this newsletter.

2

Go to www.chnetwork.org/enewsletter and help reduce our mailing costs by *signing up to receive this newsletter by email.*



3

Pray this month specifically for one of the people on our prayer list. For the list, see page 9 of this newsletter.

