



December 2012 Newsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



Blessed through the Catholic Church

Bob Jepsen, D.Min.

I was born and raised in Los Angeles, California. Growing up in the 1940s and 50s, I was blessed with a happy childhood in a loving family of four, including one older brother. My parents taught us the “old fashioned” values of honesty, goodness, kindness, and viewing all persons with respect. I was baptized as an infant in St. Augustine by-the-Sea Episcopal Church. The only religious instruction in our home was learning the Lord's Prayer. My mother would say this prayer with me almost every night at bedtime. This is a very pleasant memory, as I somehow sensed that my mother possessed a deep belief in God. Even though our family attended Sunday worship services in the Episcopal Church on an inconsistent basis, the beauty of the liturgy, especially such favorite hymns as “Onward Christian Soldiers,” made a deep impression on me. As a sensitive little boy, I intuitively understood the spiritual reality of God the Father's presence, although I could not have explained this.

At age fourteen, I was confirmed at St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Westwood. Looking back, it is not clear what motivated me to take this step. My parents did not encour-

age this decision, but they were supportive. Surely, it was influenced through the prayers of my mother, spoken in the quiet of her heart. I remember participating in some youth group activities in the parish; however, due to extreme shyness I chose to stop attending. Around the age of fifteen, my life became focused on surfing the beaches of the California coast. I loved the ocean and experienced much pleasure engaged with the waves. I completed high school, all the while working part-time.

Personal crisis and conversion

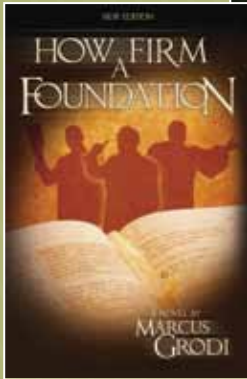
I continued my education at a local community college. My life was still centered on surfing. I had no goals or career plans for the future. When I was eighteen, I began a dating relationship, which led to a premature decision to get married when I was only nineteen. Unfortunately, there was no genuine love in the relationship. It became evident that we lacked the maturity — and faith in God — to enter into Holy Matrimony. The result was a mutual decision to obtain a divorce after less than two years of marriage. Despite the failure of the marriage, we were blessed with a wonderful baby boy, ... *continued on page 2*

Journeys Home

FEATURED RESOURCES

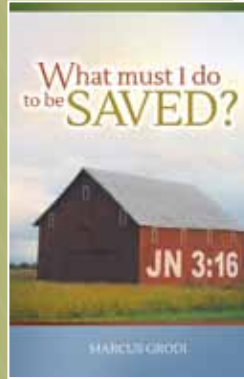
Bring the Coming Home Network International into your home this Christmas with these gift ideas!

Pillar and Bulwark
by Marcus Grodi ▶



◀ How Firm a Foundation
by Marcus Grodi

Journeys Home
by Marcus Grodi ▶



▲ What Must I do to be Saved
by Marcus Grodi



▼ Thoughts for the Journey
Home by Marcus Grodi



\$50

For a donation of \$50 you may receive 1 book.

\$75

For a donation of \$75 you may receive 3 books.

\$150

For a donation of \$150 you may receive 5 books.

...Journeys Home Continued...

named Bruce. By God's grace and mercy, my former wife and I chose to maintain a friendship, forgive the past, and concentrate on loving Bruce and ensuring his well-being. Bruce continues to be a loving son, now married with two beautiful daughters, all of whom love the Lord. I thank God for His grace!

Immediately following my twenty-first birthday, I entered Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles, to undergo an elective surgery on my lower back in order to correct a congenital defect. I did not know at the time that Good Samaritan was an Episcopal hospital. What happened following the surgery would change my life in a way I could never have imagined! Because I was Episcopalian, at least in name, the hospital chaplain came to bring me communion at my bedside. I felt embarrassed since I really did not understand the meaning of partaking of the bread wafer and sipping the wine. Then the chaplain, an Episcopal priest, asked if I would like him to return later for a visit. Feeling trapped, I replied in the affirmative. Now I was really scared. What was he going to say to me?

An amazing miracle began to unfold. The surgeon had decided to put me in a body cast and keep me bed-bound

for three months to ensure the healing of my lower back. During this time, the chaplain made frequent visits and brought me books to read which related the story of the Gospel, the great news of God's love, in a manner I could understand. Without a doubt, God was drawing me to Himself. By the time I left the hospital, I believed that the God revealed in sacred Scripture was a loving Father who forgave all of my sin, because of the sacrificial love of Christ and His blood shed on the cross. Not only was my profound sense of guilt over a failed marriage removed, I began to experience freedom from old fears: a deep sense of feeling inferior and having to live without any sense of purpose. My future was filled with hope, because of my newfound faith.

Call to ordained ministry

Fully recovered from the back surgery, I started attending All Saints' Episcopal Church in Beverly Hills. I was living in a new world. Now, worship came alive, because I knew God was there with me. This began the awe-inspiring journey we call the Christian life. I started reading the Bible for the first time. I enjoyed fellowship with other Christian friends. I even taught a second grade, Sunday

...Journeys Home Continued...

school class, mustering every ounce of faith I could! At the same time, I returned to college and chose philosophy as my major. I was told this was the best preparation for seminary training. The “call” to become a priest in the Episcopal Church grew slowly, but surely. It was during a philosophy class in graduate school at UCLA that I received a certainty that I wanted to devote the rest of my life to showing and teaching people about the love of God, the one (and only) thing that changed my life. Anything less than this goal I knew would never bring genuine meaning and fulfillment. Six months later, I was accepted as a candidate for holy orders and began studies at Bloy Episcopal School of Theology in Los Angeles.

My seminary education provided a solid, orthodox theological foundation for future ministry. The dean of “Bloy House” reminded the students every year that at the center of our life together was the celebration of the holy Eucharist. In 1971, I was ordained as a deacon and then made a priest on March 18, 1972. I began serving as the associate pastor of St. George’s Episcopal Church, Laguna Hills, California. An exciting adventure of full-time ministry soon was flourishing.

Blessed through the Catholic Church

Growing up, I understood very little about the Roman Catholic Church. I remember attending Masses and weddings on certain special occasions in the lives of close relatives. The actions of the liturgy seemed quite foreign to me as a young, outside observer. My first real exposure to Catholicism came in seminary as we studied the Second Vatican Council. As Episcopalians, it became evident that our own liturgical renewal was being influenced by that of the Roman Church. As members of the worldwide Anglican Communion, we considered ourselves one of the authentic “branches” of the “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church,” which consisted of the Anglican, Catholic, and Orthodox Churches. Looking back over the past forty years, I am aware that I always viewed the Catholic Church with a respect for its deep roots and

tradition traced directly to the Apostles. I sensed that whenever I heard teaching from Catholic priests and lay leaders, I was getting the truth from the authentic, oldest, and “original” church founded since the time of Christ. Somehow, there was recognition of genuine authority not found anywhere else.

... continued on page 4

“ ... I always viewed the Catholic Church with a respect for its deep roots and tradition traced directly to the Apostles. ”

EWTN’S THE JOURNEY HOME

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

TELEVISION — Mondays at 8 PM ET, Encores: Tuesdays 1 AM ET, Fridays 1 PM ET
The Best of the Journey Home: Monday-Thursday 1 PM ET

RADIO — Mondays at 8:00 PM ET, Encore: Saturdays 7:00 AM ET, Sundays 1:00 AM ET
The Best of the Journey Home: Monday-Friday 12 AM ET

December 3

Chris Zajdzinski, *Former Southern Baptist/Non-denominational**

December 10

Jason Hall, *Former Free Will Baptist**

December 17

The Journey Home International

December 24

Special Christmas Eve programming

December 31

Bishop Frederick Campbell, *Diocese of Columbus, OH**
Re-air from 10/10/11

**Schedule is subject to change.*

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Since 2006, we at the Coming Home Network have been blessed to have our *Deep In Scripture* radio program air weekly on the EWTN Radio Network. By mutual agreement between EWTN and CHNetwork, *Deep In Scripture* will no longer be airing each Wednesday afternoon.

EWTN radio is excited to announce that the “*At Home with Jim & Joy (Pinto)*” program will now air Monday-Thursday at 2:00pm (Eastern) instead of only on Mondays.

Here at the CHNetwork, we will be using our studio time reserved for *Deep In Scripture* to produce **NEW** programs exclusively for our CHN members. Stay tuned for details!

MARCUS GRODI'S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

March 2, 2013

Columbus Catholic Men's Conference

Lausche Building, Ohio State Expo Center
Columbus, Ohio

www.columbuscatholicmen.com

March 11, 2013

Annual Bishop Lucker Lecture 7pm

Diocese of New Ulm, Minnesota

www.dnu.org

1400 6th St. N. New Ulm, MN 56073

SPOUSE'S NETWORK

Are you the spouse of a Protestant minister interested in becoming Catholic?

The Spouse's Network exists to aid and provide fellowship for the spouses of ministers on the journey to the Catholic Church as well as those who are new Catholics. The mission of the Spouse's Network is that through one-on-one assistance given by the wives of former Protestant clergy who have embraced the Catholic faith, those who are on the journey to Catholicism or have recently become Catholic will find a source of friendship, support, and increased love of Jesus Christ and His Church.

If the Spouses Network is something you feel called to, whether you are a spouse of a clergy who has become Catholic and would like to assist someone, or if you are the wife of a pastor who is in need of support on the journey home, we would like to invite you to contact Mary Clare at maryp@chnetwork.org or by phone at 740-450-1175 ext 105.

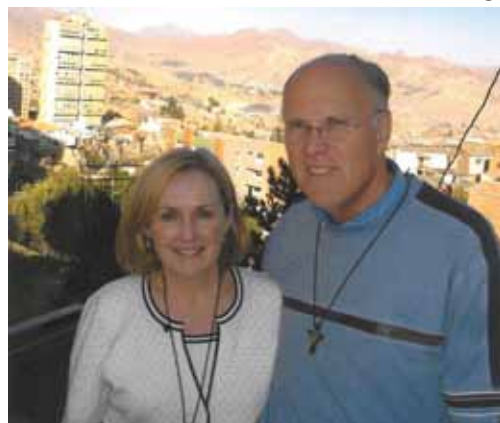
We ask all the Coming Home Network International's members to please keep the Spouse's Network in your prayers as we seek to answer the needs of those spouses of clergy on the journey home and those who are new converts.

...Journeys Home Continued...

At the time of my ordination, I was drawn into the exploding charismatic renewal. I began to attend renewal events in both the Episcopal and Catholic charismatic movements. As an Episcopal priest, I was invited to attend a Catholic men's Cursillo, a Life in the Spirit seminar, and numerous workshops on the healing ministry sponsored by the renewal in the Catholic Church. Through each of these events, God was pouring out His Spirit upon me — and in me — bringing the blessings of inner healing and opening new doors of opportunity to minister to other people in the power of the Spirit. I must add, as well, that the Christ-like witness of so many men and women, humbly living out their Catholic Faith, made a very great and favorable impression on me.

Fast-forward about twenty years: circa 1995-96, someone suggested that I meet and talk with a Catholic priest, Fr. Ray Ryland. Fr. Ryland had been an Episcopal priest and was married with a family. At the time, Fr. Ryland was teaching at the University of San Diego. I wanted to meet this Catholic priest, because I was curious to learn how he became a priest as a married man. By this time I had married my wife, Meg, and had two sons. I learned of the Pastoral Provision, permitting married Anglican clergy the opportunity to apply for a special dispensation from the Pope, following being received into the Roman Catholic Church. In addition, Fr. Ryland gave me a number of books to help me in the discernment process to determine whether God was calling Meg and me into the Catholic Church. Studying these books led me toward a clearer conviction that the essential dogmas of the Catholic Church are grounded in the correct interpretation of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.

However, questions still remained, including a fierce wrestling in my soul and spirit regarding whether God was calling me to be in the Catholic Church, or remain outside of it. I have always sought to be where God was calling me and I clearly saw Him very active in the lives, healing, and renewal of many persons outside of the Catholic Church. My own sense of call in ministry was leading me into the missions (which Meg and I had considered the whole length of our marriage), as well as the healing ministry. I did seek spiritual direction from a Catholic priest as I was facing these options but at the time did not pursue entering into full communion with the Catholic Church.



Bob and his wife, Meg, in La Paz, Bolivia.

...Journeys Home Continued...

Entering the Catholic Church

In many ways the concluding years of my ministry within the Anglican Church were among the most exciting and fruitful ones. In the year 2000, doors of opportunity began to open. I was able to travel to South America and Africa, where I did teaching, training, and equipping pas-



Bob's missionary locations

tors and other leaders in how to pray for the sick in body, as well as those in need of emotional healing. It was a great privilege to minister in Brazil, Uganda, Peru, and Bolivia. My wife and I had the privilege of living and serving in Bolivia for two and a half years. This, too, was an important time in my movement toward the Catholic Church. Although I was living in a Catholic culture, it was a very poorly catechized one, with much intermingling of indigenous religion. Countering that was the evangelical culture, which had “intermingling” of its own misunderstandings of Catholicism, as well errors in doctrine, going back to the Reformation. Shortly before leaving Bolivia, the long-standing attraction for the richness and depth of the Catholic Church now came to the forefront of my thinking.

If asked to name the singularly most persistent factor of this attraction, the answer would be the holy Eucharist. As an Anglican priest, I held the belief that Christ is truly present in the sacrament of His Body and Blood. I have always held, as well, that the celebration of the holy Eucharist is intended to be the very center of our Christian lives and worship. However, through an in-depth study of the teaching of the Roman Catholic understanding of the “Real Presence,” including that of the earliest Fathers (theologians) of the Church, I came to acknowledge that my understanding of the sacrament did not embrace the full meaning of what it means for Jesus to be present ... continued on page 6

SUPPORTING CHNETWORK JUST GOT EASIER!

For your convenience, CHNetwork 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 go to **chnetwork.org/donate/** or complete the form below and mail to:

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.

Yes! I wish to make a monthly donation of \$_____ on auto-payment from my:

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Bank routing number (9-digit number)

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☐ Visa

☐ MasterCard

☐ Discover

☐ AmericanExpress

Your information

Name

Signature

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone number

Email address

KEEP IN TOUCH!

The CHNetwork would like to keep in touch with you via e-mail. Please go to www.chnetwork.org/update to ensure the CHNetwork has your e-mail address on file. We especially ask non-Catholic clergy and converts to provide us with your e-mail to allow us to keep in contact.

SHARE YOUR STORY!

The CHNetwork always welcomes those of our members who are converts or reverts to share their written conversion stories of how they were drawn (or drawn back) to the Catholic Church. If you feel called to share your story, please feel free to go to <http://chnetwork.org/converts> to review our writer's guidelines, see sample stories, and upload your testimony.

UNSOLICITED MAIL

The CHNetwork 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 CHNetwork 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.

NEWSLETTER COPIES

CHNetwork encourages members to make copies of the newsletter and distribute to family, friends, and church groups. We do ask that copies of the newsletter not be sold. Unless otherwise indicated, the contents of this newsletter are Copyright © 2012 by the Coming Home Network International. All rights reserved.

...Journeys Home Continued...

in “Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.” Through a great deal of reasoned reflection (especially prayer), the unique understanding of the Mass as a re-presentation of Christ’s sacrifice, the “Pascal Mystery” of His suffering, death, Resurrection, and Ascension, was revealed as the true meaning found in Sacred Scripture. For the first time, the words of Jesus in the “Bread of Life” discourse of St. John’s Gospel, chapter 6, came to life. My soul had been hungering for this “living Bread.” I felt Jesus was saying, “Come and worship Me in the Eucharist.” To partake of Holy Communion now as a Catholic is a continual source of strength, peace, forgiveness, and healing, which always draws me closer to the risen Lord.

“My soul had been hungering for this “living Bread.” ... To partake of Holy Communion now as a Catholic is a continual source of strength, peace, forgiveness, and healing, which always draws me closer to the risen Lord.”

The second most compelling “pull” toward Catholicism had to do with church government and authority. As a priest in the Episcopal Church in the United States, I witnessed the unfolding of an aggressive secularism infiltrating the life of the church, especially at the leadership level. Gradually, the biblical and orthodox beliefs and values of the Christian Faith, once delivered by the saints, were replaced with the diabolical ideologies of the current culture of death. Abortion, or so-called “reproductive rights,” replaced the Christian ethic of protection for the unborn and the preservation of the sanctity of life. Then, the decisive factor which led to the tearing apart of the fabric of the Anglican Communion worldwide took place when the leaders of the Episcopal denomination voted to ordain a priest living with a same sex partner. To the dismay of faithful followers of Christ everywhere, the Episcopal Church has helped lead the way to promote the radical and unholy agenda of so-called “gay marriage.” As an international communion, clearly absent during the development of these aberrations from the Faith was the existence of any ecclesiastical authority to guard and preserve these essential matters of sacred truth and morals. While many faithful Christians are refusing to cave into anti-Christian ideologies, only the Roman Catholic Church is speaking the truth clearly and authoritatively as the largest Christian institution in the world. Surely,

...Journeys Home Continued...

Christ understood the absolute necessity of preserving and passing on the Gospel, by His Church, through the appointment of leaders given apostolic authority. The “keys” given to Peter in Matthew 16:19 unarguably demonstrate this passing on of authoritative leadership. Without the governing authority of the Pope and the Magisterium (all the bishops), the truth of the Gospel could well be annihilated.

In November of 2009, Pope Benedict XVI announced a most gracious and generous invitation to those of us in the Anglican Communion who were being called by the Holy Spirit to seriously consider coming home to the Roman Catholic Church. I read this announcement of the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* on my computer in Bolivia. Two months later my wife and I decided our mission in Bolivia was complete and we returned to Oregon. We both knew our first priority, besides finding a new home, was to explore the call to become fully Catholic.

As someone once told me, “You are a new, old Catholic,” referring to the many times and places that I have interacted with the Church and its people. Throughout my life, for example, I have attended countless retreats, mostly in Benedictine abbeys. Since seminary days I developed an attraction to the lives of the saints, the practice of contemplative prayer, and maintaining a life of daily prayer. Today, the fervent call to live a holy life is just as urgent as in any period of history.

Therefore, when we landed in Stayton, Oregon, in June of 2010, we began attending our hometown parish, Church of the Immaculate Conception. We enrolled in the RCIA course and on April 7, 2012, we became full members of the Catholic Church (my first marriage was annulled in the Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon). We have made many good friends, participate in a small church community, and worship with a Pontifical lay community on a regular basis. I have had the opportunity to teach a Lenten class on healing prayer and have led two retreats. My wife and I enjoy participating in some of the Masses in Spanish, as well as attending the lively Hispanic prayer group. We are waiting for what God has in store for us for the next chapter of ministry! ■



Bob and his wife, Meg, are currently living in Stayton, Oregon, and attend the Church of the Immaculate Conception. They participate in various worship, fellowship, and ministry activities. Bob has three sons and two granddaughters.

BLOG

Please visit www.chnetwork.org/blog to comment on and discuss this story!

TAX LETTERS

If you need a record of your 2012 contributions for tax purposes, please contact Wendy Hart.

wendy@chnetwork.org
740-450-1175 ext. 100

THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

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

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Prayer List



Clergy

■ For Jerry, a former Presbyterian minister, that our Lord Jesus would continue to guide him as he makes his transition to the Catholic Church.

■ For a Nazarene student and lay minister in Ohio, that his prayer and study would draw him into an ever richer love of God through the sacraments of His Catholic Church.

■ For Jim, a former Wesleyan minister in Oklahoma, that God would show him the path to full-communion with the Catholic Church and also guide him to perceive and accept his vocation.

■ For a missionary in the Reformed Church, that the Christ would grant the graces needed to bring him and his wife back home to the Church of their youth.

■ For the wife of an Episcopal priest in California, that her witness in returning to the Catholic Church would inspire her husband to also come home.

■ For a Lutheran minister in Minnesota, that his deep interest in the Catholic Faith would blossom and mature to the full fruit of his becoming a Catholic.

■ For Jim, a Methodist seminarian in Georgia, that he may fall in love with the richness and depth of the teachings of the Catholic Church.

■ For Nadia, a former lay minister, that our Lord would provide her answers to the questions that arise as she attends RCIA.

Laitie

■ For Joe, that he come to understand the scriptural basis for Catholic beliefs and come home to the ancient Church.

■ For a woman who wishes to become Catholic, that her husband understand the need to undergo an annulment process so she can receive the graces of the sacraments.

■ For James, that the struggles and trials he is having after his conversion be made lighter by the strength given by the Eucharistic Jesus.

■ For Zeke, that he be blessed beyond measure in his new life as a Catholic.

■ For Matt, that his reading and search for truth bring him into full communion with the one, holy, Church.

■ For Janet and her husband as they wait on God's timing in removing the barriers preventing them from entering the Catholic Church.

■ For Brent, that the merciful heart of Jesus give him comfort and quiet his angst about his faith journey.

■ For Christina, that her desire to pursue her interest in Catholicism be met with understanding and openness on the part of her family.

■ For Missie, that her love for God's creation lead her towards the beauty of the fullness of the Faith.

■ For Vicky, that our Lord truly present in the Eucharist bring her ever deeper into a relationship with His Church.

■ For Edward, that he will find a way to share his love of the Catholic Faith.

■ For Gloria's children and grandchildren who have fallen away from the Catholic Church.

■ For Joe who is a fallen away Catholic, that he comes to appreciate the beauty the Catholic Church offers.

■ For Donna's three children to return to the Church and in turn pass the Faith along to their children.

■ For Sherry and her intentions, especially that her family will return to the Lord.

■ For Albert, that God guides him towards full communion with the successor of St Peter.

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.



Marcus Grodi

ST. PAUL'S ADVICE

to Two Converts: Timothy and Titus

As we approach the end of the year, the election is behind us while a horrendous economic crisis still looms ahead—especially for our children and grandchildren! I'm writing this article primarily to fellow former clergy who are Catholic converts or still somewhere along the journey, but also to you who support and pray for our work, for hearing this helps you understand why your support and prayers are necessary.

Over the nineteen years of our work, responding to the needs of more than 2100 non-Catholic clergy from over 100 different traditions, it has become clear that the majority of non-Catholic clergy converts do not find the door open for them to pursue Catholic priesthood.

Some few do have this Call, but other than those former Anglicans called to the Anglican Ordinariate, the Church is trying to limit the number of married priests, regardless of religious background, to two per diocese. This decisively closes this door to the married priesthood for most clergy converts—especially when one realizes that there are over 550,000 non-Catholic ministers in America! If we prayerfully hope these non-Catholic leaders find their way home to the Church, we have to recognize that God must be providing alternate ways for them to use their gifts!

Some few may also have a call to the diaconate, but again there are restrictions on numbers and funding. Plus, the diaconate must not be viewed as a "second place" alternative to the priesthood, but rather a unique specific call unto itself—again not automatically the right choice for a majority of clergy converts.

The majority of clergy converts, consequently, like myself, must recognize that their specific and unique calling is to the lay state. They must seek ways to support their families through non-Church employment, and yet never give up their "call to ministry." The Church has said much about the authentic and supernatural call of the laity to their unique apostolate of evangelization, and this has especially been emphasized in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the writings of Blessed John Paul II, and most recently in the Synod of Bishops gathered to study the New Evangelization.

Using Our Gifts for His Glory

But how then, given the above, can we better prepare inquiring non-Catholic clergy to continue using their gifts and training after they "come home" to the Catholic Church? I be-

lieve there are no greater instructions than those given by Saint Paul to his two convert assistants, Saints Timothy and Titus.

Specifically to Saint Timothy, Saint Paul wrote: *"Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophetic utterance when the council of elders laid their hands upon you" (1 Tim 4:14), and "Hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control" (2 Tim 1:6-7).* Most clergy converts remember and cherish the moment of their ordination, but, now as Catholics and no longer non-Catholic ministers, they sometimes wonder what, if anything, that "laying on of hands" meant? Those who ordained us may not have had any sacramental apostolic authority to do so, yet the vows of our own hearts to serve Him were authentic and real.

We in the *Coming Home Network International* believe, in union with the many bishops who have encouraged our work, that this vow of service, and the response of the Holy Spirit, continues as our call to serve Him faithfully now as Catholic lay men and women. This, in fact, may have been why God originally called us, why He gave us seminary training and pastoral experience: so that, now that we are "home," we have unique gifts to share and use for His glory!

Sound Doctrine

The entirety of Saint Paul's Letters to Titus and Timothy are worthy of this study, but here are a few pertinent texts and reflections:

But as for you, teach what befits sound doctrine. (Titus 1:2)

A big struggle for new converts is that they are chomping at the bit to get quickly into service, not merely because they need a source of income, but because they still have the desire to serve. Yet, it is crucial to recognize how blind we might be to the theological baggage we bring with us and how long it takes to become fully Catholic: it involves far more than learning and memorizing facts; it's a lifestyle aiming at holiness that often means a complete overhaul of all that we are from the ground up. And if we plan to teach, even small group Bible studies, which we may have been doing for years, we patiently need to learn "what befits sound doctrine."

Show yourself in all respects a model of good deeds, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that

... continued on page 10

cannot be censured, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us. (Titus 2:7-8)

Again this reminds converts how much we need to imitate and practice good, faithful Catholic models of devotion and piety so that we ourselves can become faithful models and teachers, especially to our children who may not have been "cradle Catholics."

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for any honest work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all men. (Titus 3:1-2)

Admittedly, many converts report that "the Church they find" at the local parish, the diocesan office, or the church nationwide may not line up with what they read on paper or with what they expected. However, as the old saying goes, "If ya' think the church is bad, it just got worse when you and I become members!" Seriously, though, it is important that converts understand and respect the authority of the apostolic, God-ordained Magisterium of the Church. It's always easy to point out flaws, but especially today it's important that we model obedient trust in the leaders God has placed over us.

Be Steeped in Prayer

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. (1 Tim 2:1-2)

Before a convert becomes a teacher, he needs to understand, from experience and under the tutelage of a good faithful spiritual guide, authentic Catholic prayer and devotions. New converts can often be inundated and bewildered by the sincere yet poorly formed advice of many well-meaning Catholics. It is important, therefore, that all new Catholics listen to the teaching of the Church, especially in the *Catechism*, on how one is to authentically grow closer to God through prayer—and especially the value of sacrificial redemptive prayer.

End Times?

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, through the pretensions of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and enjoin abstinence from

foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. (1 Tim 4:1-3)

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it. Avoid such people. (2 Tim 3:1-5)

We are indeed living in difficult times, with all the signs that this is the End! *But is it?* There are many opinions out there: many we brought with us, and many we encountered as we met Catholics with dire apocalyptic views of the future—many of which they learned from non-Catholic sources! For these reasons, it is

important that we listen to the Church, before we unwittingly fan the flames of unwarranted apocalyptic fear. We are called by Jesus to always be ready, in holiness, to stand before Him without embarrassment at His coming.

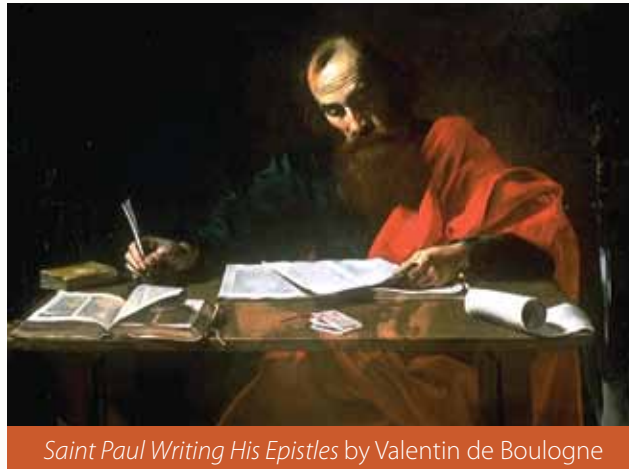
Take heed to yourself and to your teaching; hold to that, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Tim 4:16)

Patiently making sure that how we live and what we teach are faithful is eternally important both for ourselves as well as for our audience.

Blessed are the Poor...

There is great gain in godliness with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world; but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs. (1 Tim 6:6-10)

One of the most important and often difficult things for converts to accept and adapt to is the Catholic understanding of "poverty of spirit." Many non-Catholic traditions, famous for the "Protestant work ethic" and the "health and wealth gospel," have equated success with faithfulness. But even apart from this, many of us had risen to influential levels of leadership as well as success, which upon conversion may need to be



Saint Paul Writing His Epistles by Valentin de Boulogne

re-examined. In many non-Catholic traditions, the Sermon on the Mount, and particularly the Beatitudes, are relegated to the old dispensation and therefore not relevant to life in Jesus after the Cross. For Catholics, however, the Sermon on the Mount is the most important of Jesus's instructions, and the Beatitudes the "new Law" in how to live, by grace through faith, in obedience to Him.

But as for you, man of God, shun all this; aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Tim 6:11-12)

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. (2 Tim 2:15)

So shun youthful passions and aim at righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with stupid, senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. (2 Tim 2:22-23)

As Jesus summarized in His Sermon, we are called to be "perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). Our aim should not be to gain recognition, or influence, or power, or to make sure our life continues "to make sense" out of our past. Rather our lives are to aim forward toward and in imitation of Him, as Saint Paul wrote elsewhere (Phil 3:7-17).

Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. (2 Tim 1:13-14)

To "guard the truth" is one of the primary calls that God has given to the Church, and if we hope to be faithful teachers in the Church, whether as laity, deacons, or priests, we need to accept a portion of this responsibility, especially in a world where too many poorly formed Catholic leaders are misrepresenting the Faith by their teaching and lives.

Sharing in His Suffering

Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. (2 Tim 2:3)

Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for re-

proof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:12-17)

We learn as Catholics that, contrary to the manner in which many of us interpreted Scripture, suffering is a necessary part of being a child of God (Rom 8:17) and God's way of "training" us "in righteousness."

I charge you ... preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths. (2 Tim 4:1-4)

It is important to understand that the Church rightfully controls and guards the preaching of the Word, delegating this to bishops, priests, and deacons, and it only takes a quick skim of Church history to understand why! However, as laymen, we too have an important responsibility for the proclamation of the Word, but we must submit ourselves and our teaching to the authority of the Church.

Faithful to His Call

This charge I commit to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophetic utterances which pointed to you, that in-

spired by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith, among them Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. (1 Tim 1:18-20)

As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Tim 4:5)

With the urgent call from the Church for the New Evangelization, we need to accept the powerful and important calling we each have received from our baptisms, which far outweighs any "ordination" we may have received outside the Church, to "do the work of an evangelist." This is specifically and ultimately how we fulfill our ministries.

Imagine having your name in Scripture, for all time, as an example of someone who rejected conscience and made a shipwreck of your faith! Lord help us, and may we pray for each other that we may "always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, [and therefore] fulfill your ministry." ■

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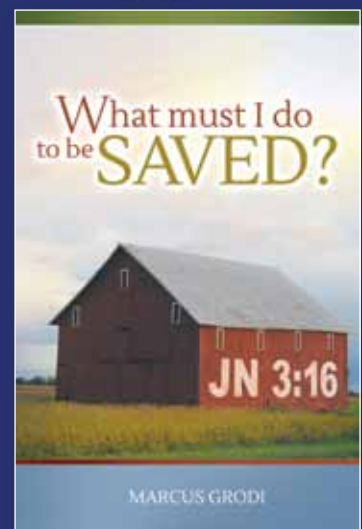
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