



## December 2013 Newsletter

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# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



## Our Journey Home

By Marcus Grodi

Becoming Catholic was never my dream or intent. It is still an all too vivid memory to me, sitting alone at age 40 in a half-lit basement, having resigned from the pastorate. I ached for having abandoned the weekly privilege of a pulpit from which to proclaim God's truth. *Would I ever have this privilege again? Will I ever again have a pulpit?* Now they estimate that each week from the "pulpit" of *The Journey Home* television program I speak to a potential audience of over a billion viewers and listeners. In one night I speak to more people than I ever could have in my entire career as a Protestant minister. This is the humor of our merciful God. Before I converted I had no idea whatsoever how I would support my family let alone how I would continue in ministry. But this is getting way ahead of myself.

After sharing my conversion story over and boringly over again dozens of times in the past twenty years, I've come to realize shamefully how mechanical it has become in the telling. I've got it all worked out, down to every event, person, place, and thing, with each struggle and motive charted and evaluated, leading with creatively inserted humor to build from despairing confusion to joyful completion upon reception into the Catholic Church. This, though, is only part of the story, for as is the case with the hundreds of converts and reverts I have interviewed on *The Journey Home*, the real journey is usually far more complicated, even embarrassing, to put in a box.

To some extent, I could say that my "journey home" was as equally attributable to personality tendencies as to theological and scriptural apologetics. This is not surprising, since God created each of us uniquely, each with our own set of personality "quirks," all designed as means by which He can draw us closer to Him and by which He can use us uniquely for His purposes.

Most of us don't admit to these personality quirks, but they admittedly had a great part to play in both of my conversions, as an adult to Jesus Christ and then later to His Church. Each person is a complicated mixture of our genetics, our environment, our divinely implanted soul or self, and our will. These four, plus possibly other factors, come together to make each of us truly unique—particularly in the eyes of our Creator. One might place the definitive cause behind the quirks of my character on having been an only child, the only one of eight siblings who survived childbirth, but the inability of modern psychologists as well as theologians to unite on any one theory of the human person bespeaks to the futility of seeking that one cause behind our individual uniqueness.

### Stranger in the Crowd

One of these quirks is that I have always been incurably insecure. Though over the years I have learned to hide this behind an otherwise confident exterior, inside I always feel like a stranger in every crowd. Some write this off to my being an only child; I see this as the unique thorn or cross to bear

"Journeys Home" is continued on page 2 ➡

Journeys Home

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

that God has given me. This quirk always moves me toward isolation—even when all the doors God continually opens for me require an increased involvement with the public. I speak each week to millions of people when, inwardly, I would prefer to be at home on our farm sharing a coffee with my wife, Marilyn, or brush-hogging our twenty-five acre farm, or fishing with my sons.

This introverted insecurity also, however, leans me a bit towards the neurotic, always assuming, at least initially, that whenever anything goes wrong, it must be my fault. I've jokingly said that this is why I have a particular affinity for Saint Joseph. The story goes that one evening the Holy Family was sitting around the dinner table, and for a brief second there was a bit of a row. Joseph looked at Jesus and Mary, and said, with one of his few words, "Sorry, it must be me."

It was another personality quirk, however, that had a more prominent influence on my journey home: an insatiable, often irritable, desire to know "why." If you want me to do something, I want to know why, or I won't want to do it. I certainly must have been a pain in the neck to my parents, because they'd say "do it," and I'd ask, "Why?" or "Why do it this way; why not another way?" If you didn't give me a good reason, I'd either do it my own way or just give in, but I first had to ask the question.

The reason for sharing these quirks is because describing one's conversion to the faith is not all cut and dried. Each person is unique, and admittedly our motives are never pure or pristine. I only pray that in, through, and regardless of the cacophony of voices that fill our lives, we can truly and clearly hear the voice of Jesus calling and beckoning us each home.

### Looking for Answers

As I mentioned earlier, my entire spiritual pilgrimage can be explained as a result of trying to answer the question, "Why?" For example, when I arrived in college, I encountered a culture

and lifestyle radically different than what I grew up with. It wasn't that my Lutheran upbringing hadn't prepared me to say no to this lifestyle; it's just that I hadn't been listening. And so, when faced with the challenges, I asked "Why?" or maybe, more accurately, "Why not?"

Almost immediately, I found myself with both feet into the fraternity drinking and dating scene, to the point where my life became a walking ad for *Bud Lite*, "Why ask why?" Eventually I became the beer chugging champion of my university. I was so caught up in it all that I could no longer see anything wrong with it.

This lifestyle continued until the summer between my junior and senior year. An avalanche of events got my attention and within only a few weeks I was a "born-again Christian" driven to save the world. It began in a genetics class, studying the evolutionary development of our senses of sight and hearing. I was being taught that these amazing senses had happened by chance over millions of years through mutations and natural selection. The Holy Spirit used this to spark a few "why" questions: "Wait a second, how could this be true? Does anyone really believe this? The majority of all higher level living things have two eyes at the same location in the front of their heads: is this merely by chance? Did this arrangement happen over time as a result of natural selection? Is there any evidence of fossils showing humanoids or other animals with eyes at less advantageous locations on their bodies?" I realized that for most of the biologists I was studying under, their God was Time; in other words, given enough time and probability, everything could be explained. All order was a chance result of millions of years of natural selection. Facing the absurdity of this is what drew me back to God.

### Following Jesus, but what Church?

Not long after this, at age twenty-one, I experienced a true conversion of faith to Jesus Christ, through the witness of friends,

## 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 — Encores: Saturdays 7 AM ET, Sundays 1 AM ET  
*The Best of the Journey Home*: Monday-Thursday 12 AM ET

#### December 2

Philip Frederick\*  
Former Protestant

#### December 9

Jason Stellman\*  
Former Presbyterian minister

#### December 16

*The Journey Home*  
International

#### December 23

Dr. David Anders\*  
Former Presbyterian  
(re-air from 12/06/10)

#### December 30

Msgr. Michael Magee\*  
Former Methodist minister  
(re-air from 03/01/10)

\*Schedule is subject to change.

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

the reading of Scripture, and the preaching and teaching of an evangelical pastor of a local Congregational church. For the first time in my life, I was actually listening to the Gospel message and it began changing my life. At this point, my pastor taught me a Proverb that has become my “life verse”: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6). Again, though, I began asking “Why?” Why this local Congregational church, or should I return to my Lutheran upbringing? Why belong to a church at all?

So, I visited my childhood Lutheran church, and found two things. The first was positive. As I sat through the familiar Lutheran service, remembering every word of the liturgy, I heard for the first time the Gospel preached there, and I knew that it hadn’t been the church’s fault that I hadn’t grown in my faith; the fault must have been mine. I must not have been listening.

But then I came to another conclusion as I looked down the pew and saw a couple of high school students sitting there, just like I had done, messing around, shooting spit wads, yet at the same time perfectly reciting the liturgy. It struck me that liturgy without an internal change of heart was dead liturgy. Quickly, I turned the blame away from me to the dead, monotonous liturgy of the church, and left the Lutheran Church to become a Congregationalist. I went from one extreme to the other: from a liturgical, creedal church to a non-liturgical, autonomous, democratic church with “No Creed but Christ” and every individual church being free to decide through congregational vote whatever it wants to believe or how it wants to worship.

Not long after this, I graduated college and found myself a plastics engineer for a large chemical company, and another “why” question arose: “Why work?” It wasn’t so much that I was lazy, but my main project as a plastics engineer was to develop a better butter tub. “Why?” I pictured myself sitting on the edge of heaven, with Jesus asking me, “Well, son, what did you do in life?” And my response might be, “Well, I developed a better butter tub!” I asked myself, is this what I want to do with the rest of my life?

### Moving Towards Ministry

At the same time, I was working in my off hours with young people in a ministry called *Young Life*, a powerful ministry in which more than a hundred teens would gather each week in someone’s basement to hear the Gospel. I was a musician who was cutting my teeth on preaching the Gospel message. Over time, I decided that if I were given the choice, I’d rather be in ministry than making better butter tubs, so with the confirmation of my pastor and some of my friends and family (not all!), I sold everything I owned, except my guitar and golf clubs, resigned my engineering job, and went to seminary.

It’s important to understand how different this was than a young Catholic man being sent by his diocese to discern priesthood at a Catholic seminary. No church sent me to seminary; rather, I just decided that God was calling me to go. So, I went

to a non-Denominational, Evangelical Protestant, independent seminary in New England, where the students represented more than 46 different denominations.

When I got to seminary all of a sudden I was inundated with more “why” questions. As a Congregationalist, for whom everything was basically up for grabs—except having anyone tell us what we had to believe—I was confronted by every imaginable theological opinion. After dinner nearly everyday, we would sit around, coffee cups in hand, battling over all the big theological issues: Why do we believe in the divinity of Christ or the Trinity? Or what about predestination: what about the people who lived and died without hearing about the Lord Jesus? If they have never heard, then why are they guilty? Are we indeed in the last days, facing the Second Coming of Christ, or maybe a “rapture,” as some of my classmates insisted?

All of us believed in Jesus Christ and the infallibility of Scripture, yet we would argue and argue and argue, and never come to an agreement. It never crossed my mind that there could be anything wrong with Scripture or even Protestantism per se; I assumed, given my neurotic personality quirk, that the problem, of course, must be me. I hadn’t prayed enough, or studied enough, or listened enough.

### Crisis of Faith

Eventually I faced a crisis of faith. I read my first “Catholic” book in seminary, by a well-known “Catholic” author, who I did not know was a renegade Catholic theologian, Hans Kung. His book was called *On Being a Christian* and one of the reasons he is deemed so dangerous is that he is a superb and convincing writer. As I progressed through the book, I found that he was successfully undercutting the very foundation for my faith, which was the Bible *alone*. As a result of reading this book, I found that I, as a Bible Christian who believed only what was found in Scripture, no longer had a solid basis upon which to believe in the Trinity or the divinity of Christ.

For three days I argued with my professors and fellow students, as they tried unsuccessfully to bring me back. I dropped everything and spent literally an entire night combing the New Testament to find proof for the Trinity, but couldn’t because, for one thing, the word “Trinity” is not there.

Then a theology professor pulled me aside and said, “You have to understand: the reason we believe these things is because they are the quasi-unanimous conclusions of the Church throughout the ages. In other words, this is what the majority of Christians, everywhere and all places, since the beginning of Christianity have believed; so, therefore, we believe it to be true.” At this point, it started to become apparent that most of our doctrines in the Protestant church were based on democratic theology: most of us believe it, so it must be true.

“Journeys Home” is continued on page 4 ►



## ...Journeys Home Continued...

This assumption held me through seminary, until I graduated and was ordained, and pastored my first church. Then came a host of new “why” questions. For example, should I wear a clerical collar? As a Congregationalist I was free to decide for myself, and because none of my fellow clergymen could give me a good reason, I didn’t, unless it was advantageous for me, like when I wanted respect while visiting the hospital or when I wanted reduced rates at the local golf course. Or I asked, “Why do we worship this way? Why this music? Why this order of the worship? Why do we do the Lord’s Supper this way?” In time I tried everything and changed everything, all with the hope of bringing renewal to everything.

### What is Truth?

With all these changes, and as a Congregationalist with everything up for grabs, I began to question, “Why do we believe what we do?” In essence, could I be certain that what I was teaching was true? This led me to a long study of the Creeds and the history of the Church, and, as a result, I became a Presbyterian. I could no longer remain a pastor in a denomination in which every individual church, every individual Christian, could decide for himself what was true; to me this was institutionalized Narcissism. So I left this to become a Presbyterian because the Presbyterian Church had two things Congregationalists did not: a Book of Confessions, which contained all the major confessions of the history of the Presbyterian Church, and a Book of Order, which is similar to the Catholic Code of Canon Law.

I considered this a good trustworthy foundation for my pastoral ministry, so in time I became an assistant pastor in a medium sized urban church, then the solo pastor of a small rural church, and finally the senior pastor of a large urban church, with a full-time staff of nine, a burgeoning membership, and an ample budget. As I took on these responsibilities, however, another “why” question arose: “Why was I single?” In Protestant culture, there really is no place for the “gift of celibacy”—it was a gift that nobody wanted. Generally (at least when I was a pastor), if a minister wasn’t married or dating someone, the assumption was that there was something wrong with him. Well, it wasn’t that I had to succumb to the pressure; rather, I knew deep in my heart that I needed this special partner, not merely to share life with, but to help me see the blind sides of my character. In the midst of this discerning, the Lord brought Marilyn, the woman whom I married, into my life, which immediately

doubled all the “why” questions—particularly because it had never been her dream to be a pastor’s wife.

Becoming a Presbyterian far from answered all of my theological and pastoral “why” questions. On Monday mornings, as I had been taught in seminary, I would begin preparation for my upcoming Sunday sermon. I first would make a fresh personal translation of the text from Greek or Hebrew, and then fill pages of exegetical study and reflections. Once I had arrived at a tentative conclusion of the meaning of the passage, and a rough outline of my thoughts, only then would I consult with the row of biblical commentaries on my shelf, to make sure my conclusions were on track.

One day it struck me that every commentary on my shelf had been hand-picked from scholars I liked, with whose theologies I agreed. I, therefore, was checking my conclusions only against people I already agreed with, so, in essence, I was only checking

myself against myself! I had protected myself from any way of knowing whether I—or they—were wrong.

Then one Sunday morning as I was preaching, it struck me that within a thirty mile radius of my pulpit, there were probably thirty other pastors in thirty other churches, all who considered the Bible as the sole authority for our faith, yet we were all teaching different if not contradictory things, possibly on the same text. Which one of us was correct?

### Once Saved, Always Saved

As an evangelically minded Presbyterian Calvinist, I believed and preached “once saved-always saved”: that once a person accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior, they have arrived; they are saved by grace through faith alone, and because they have done

nothing to earn salvation, there is likewise nothing they can do to lose it. As a pastor, I knew many people who needed to break from debilitating sin, and even more of them who needed to live their faith more radically, but I had no theological grounds to challenge anyone—let alone any real authority to do so.

What really hit the fan for Marilyn and me, however, were the pro-life issues. Marilyn was the director of a crisis pregnancy center, and more often than not she found herself working beside Catholics. Our Presbyterian denomination had democratically decided to lean more and more pro-choice. Then, I discovered that the dues my congregation were paying to the head office of our denomination were funding abortions—for the daughters and wives of ministers to have abortions—and there was nothing we could do to stop this.

*“Journeys Home” is continued on page 5 ➡*

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## CHNETWORK CELEBRATES 20 YEARS

This year, 2013, marks the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Coming Home Network International. To commemorate this event, in the coming months we will be featuring material from some of our earliest newsletters in an effort to give our membership a glimpse into our past.



## Go, Sell, Give, and Follow

By Marcus Grodi

**FROM THE ARCHIVES** *An earlier version of his article was originally published in the November-December 1994 newsletter and it also is included in Thoughts for the Journey Home by Marcus Grodi.*



I recall how, not long after I had resigned from the pastorate and had been received into the Catholic Church, I was sitting in a beautiful chapel one day during Mass, awaiting the proclamation of the Gospel. I must admit that at the time I was not feeling the joy that Jesus had promised would accompany my walk with him. Instead, I was overwhelmed by anxiety over decisions and situations piling up in my life.

Drastic changes had occurred in the direction of projects and programs for which I was responsible. New plans made new demands for my moving ahead into new areas and projects for which I had no previous personal experience to prepare me. Countless details and red tape were involved in moving out of our home and into a new one. Through all this, I felt frustrated because I missed being actively involved in the pastoral ministry.

As I watched the priest lead us in worship, I felt strangely disconnected and isolated. In my dreamlike distraction, as I reflected on my past experiences leading worship, I began focusing on things the priest was doing that I thought could be done differently or better.

Awaiting the Gospel reading, I heard in my mind the cry of the psalmist: "Why are you cast down, O my soul?" (Ps 42:5) or even more strongly, to God, "Why have you forgotten me?" (Ps 42:9). Then I stood for the Gospel, blessed myself with the triple signs of the cross, and heard, not coincidentally but providentially, my favorite story from the life of Christ: that powerful incident when Jesus is confronted by the rich young man (see Mk 10:17-27).

This account has always spoken to me, challenging me to reexamine what is the center of my life. At different places along the journey of faith, this story has confronted

me to cast off various spiritual impediments. When I was an engineer considering a fulltime ministry, this passage encouraged me to lean not on the financial security of my engineering career, but to be willing to let it go to follow Christ.

Years later, this story challenged me to be willing to let go of the security and familiarity of my Protestant ministry so I could again follow the words of Jesus: "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give it to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven and come, follow me" (Mk 10:21).

As I heard those words again, I asked, "What is the thing that I lack this time? What is it, besides Christ, that I'm tightly clinging to, that I must be willing to let go, sell, give away, in order to follow with abandon my Lord Jesus?" As I considered this question, it struck me that maybe it was time for me to quit being a Catholic convert, and instead be just a Catholic.

In those days, I still tended to view and portray myself primarily as a convert, an ex-Protestant pastor, rather than moving on and accepting the fact that I was now a Catholic. Yes, I will always be a convert, and I may never lose the perspective that my forty years as a Protestant, including nine years as a Protestant pastor, have given me. But I must not forget that every Catholic is a convert from sin to a new creation in Christ.

As I sat there repeating the words from the Mass, "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you," I sensed Christ challenging me to embrace that place, where He had me at that time, at that moment, as the place exactly where He wanted me to be. He wanted me to be doing those projects, emphasizing those priorities, drafting and implementing those plans, that He had given me, even though they may have had little connection whatsoever with the Protestant pastoral ministry I had been doing five years before.

The Lord had merely, by His wisdom, placed me in a new place with a new assignment in the ministry of His kingdom. I might have brought to that assignment more

than forty years of a great variety of experiences from the past. Nevertheless, it was to that assignment, at that point in my life, in that place in my life, in those relationships, and in this wonderful Church that He had called me to “go, sell, give, and follow.”

The stress I was feeling was mostly worry about tomorrow. But He had called me to “go, sell, give, and follow” today. My wife, Marilyn, and I had recently moved into a beautiful new home. If I allowed myself to become anxious about how I would finance it and support my family in the future, I would again find my soul growing weary.

But Jesus’ words reminded me that all the resources, even the very job I had found, were gifts of God’s grace that only a few years before I could never have dreamed of having. Once again I needed to remember that the future rests completely in His hands.

Many clergy on the journey, for whom conversion will mean resignation from their pastoral positions, and thus the loss of their means of supporting their families, express their concern over such matters. How will they handle the financial needs of the future? How will they fulfill the ministerial calling they once heard and followed? How will they faithfully fulfill Paul’s exhortation to Timothy?

Do not neglect the gift you have, which was conferred on you through the prophetic word with the imposition of hands of the presbyterate. Be diligent in these matters, be absorbed in them, so that your progress may be evident to everyone. (1 Tm 4:14–15 NAB)

From my own family experience, all I can say is to “go, sell, give, and follow.” Where you are right now, and all that you

have accomplished up to this point, have come through the grace of Jesus Christ. Where you will be tomorrow and all that you will accomplish then will come from the same source. To follow Jesus means being willing to carry whatever cross He gives.

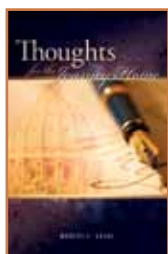
I suppose Jesus could have told that rich young man, “You have done a superb job in your diligence at keeping the commandments; keep up the good work,” and then let him go. The young man had probably been more faithful than most.

But Jesus wanted more for him, and of him. Our Lord probably saw that through this young man’s personal sacrifice not only he, but many others as well, would be drawn to the kingdom. So Jesus placed before him a demanding choice, and then let the young man choose freely. I sense that God is challenging many of you with the same kind of choice.

In this Advent season, we are reminded of other difficult decisions that involved great sacrifice: the decision of Mary to be willing to do whatever God called her to do and the willingness of the very Son of God, who as Paul says in Philippians “although he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”

My prayer for you during this Advent and Christmas season is that you will be encouraged by these models as you struggle in your decisions along your pilgrimage to the Catholic Church. There is great joy to be found here, and an assuring sense of freedom on the rock foundation of Catholic truth. May this season be the time when the spirit of Christ empowers many of you to boldly take the step to “go, sell, give, and follow” Jesus Christ into the Catholic Church. ■

## FEATURED RESOURCES

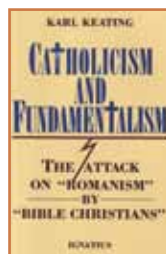


### Thoughts for the Journey Home — Marcus Grodi

This collection of essays is drawn from Marcus Grodi’s published columns in the Coming Home Network International’s newsletter and in *The Catholic Answer* magazine. His thoughts provide wisdom and strength for those who are exploring the claims of the Catholic Church, those who are on the path to the Church, and those who have already entered the Church yet need encouragement. Lifelong Catholics will also find the book useful in helping friends and family members they hope will someday “come home.”

\$35

For a donation of \$35, receive *Thoughts for the Journey Home*.



### Catholicism and Fundamentalism — Karl Keating

Karl Keating defends Catholicism from fundamentalist attacks and explains why fundamentalism has been so successful in converting “Romanists.” After showing the origins of fundamentalism, he examines representative anti-Catholic groups and presents their arguments in their own words. His rebuttals are clear, detailed, and charitable. Special emphasis is given to the scriptural basis for Catholic doctrines and beliefs.

\$50

For a donation of \$50, receive *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*.

\$75

For a donation of \$75, receive *Thoughts for the Journey Home* and *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*.

— THESE PREMIUMS ARE AVAILABLE FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY —



## CHNETWORK PRIMARY MEMBERS

Primary members are those who would sacrifice their vocations and occupations upon conversion to the Catholic Church.



Map from  
**1993**

Map of  
**2013**



## FORUM!

Check out CHNetwork's online forum. The forum is a wonderful place to connect with other CHNetwork members, ask questions about the Catholic Faith, and browse through archived discussions on a wide variety of topics related to the Catholic Church. Go to <http://forum.chnetwork.org>.

## SUPPORT CHNETWORK

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/](http://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](mailto:ann@chnetwork.org) if you have any questions or concerns.

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## NEWSLETTER DONATION

Our monthly CHNewsletter is our primary means of outreach and communication. We request a yearly tax-deductible gift in the amount of \$35 or more to continue receiving the newsletter and remain a supporting member of the CHNetwork. These donations support all aspects of our small non-profit apostolate, making it possible for our staff to be available to help others on the journey, manage our studio and internet outreach, as well as the production and distribution of the CHNewsletter. Thank you for your support!

## 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 © 2013 by the Coming Home Network International. All rights reserved. Back issues of the newsletter can be accessed online at [www.chnetwork.org/newsletter-archive](http://www.chnetwork.org/newsletter-archive).



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☐ Discover

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# Prayer List



## Clergy

■ For Luke, a former Southern Baptist minister, that the Holy Spirit would guide both his wife and him as they explore the truths of the Catholic Faith.

■ For Timothy, a United Methodist minister in Texas, that God will use his devotion to the rosary and his desire for holiness to bring him home to Rome.

■ For Michael, a Lutheran minister in the Midwest, that our Lord Jesus would grant him the grace to cross the threshold into the Catholic Church.

■ For an Eastern Orthodox priest in Kentucky, that he may discover the joy of full-communion with the successor of St. Peter.

■ For Nicholas, a Baptist minister in Alabama, that his commitment to the truth of the Gospel of Christ would one day lead him to the Holy Eucharist.

■ For Chris, a former Non-denominational youth minister in Indiana, that in prayer, study, and contemplation he would receive a hunger that can only find fulfillment in the Catholic Faith.

■ For a Church of Christ minister in Colorado, that his pursuit for the fullness of the Truth would bring both him and his wife into the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Jesus.

■ For David, an Episcopal priest in Texas, that the Lord may soon clear the path for him to enter into full-communion with the Catholic Church.

■ For Doug, a United Methodist minister in Ohio, that our Lord Jesus may guide his path as he explores the teaching of the Catholic Faith.

■ For a United Methodist minister in Wisconsin, that the Holy Spirit may clear a way financially to enable him to become a Catholic Christian.

## Laity

■ For Brenda and her family who are in RCIA, that they be comforted by the Holy Spirit's guidance as they learn more about the Catholic Faith.

■ For Deanne, that she will have clarity and peace as to what direction to pursue in attending a church.

■ For Kym, that, as she continues to develop a Catholic devotional life, the Lord Jesus bring her ever closer to His Sacred Heart.

■ For Teresa, who hasn't found support for her needs within her faith community.

■ For a recent convert from the Assemblies of God who loves being Catholic and is hoping that her husband will join her in the Church.

■ For a woman from Ontario who is having some struggles and doubts as she considers becoming Catholic.

■ For Larry, a convert, who is having a hard time connecting in his local parish and is discouraged by cradle Catholics who don't seem to be on fire for the Faith.

■ For Jackie, that she is able to continue to find support and friendship in her parish.

■ For a woman who is juggling the duties of being a minister's wife and a Catholic convert.

■ For Katherine, who was recently confirmed, that her faith continue to grow and deepen.

■ For Marilyn's husband to be more open to Catholicism.

■ For Chuck, a recent convert, as he looks to use his gifts and talents for the Church.

■ For Mary, that our Lord Jesus comfort her in her numerous health and financial difficulties.

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](mailto:prayers@chnetwork.org).

We use only first names to preserve privacy.

**Please also pray for the Coming Home Network International's staff and Board of Directors.**

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## ...Journeys Home Continued...

► “Journeys Home” continued from page 4

### Where to Now?

With this, I knew I could no longer be a Presbyterian. How could I stand before my congregation when I knew what their donations were funding—when I knew their mixed views on abortion—and yet, at the same time, enable their complacency because of some decision they had made years before that guaranteed their salvation?

So I began admitting to close pastor friends that I could no longer remain in our particular Presbyterian denomination, and began exploring more conservative Presbyterian churches. At the time there were nine Presbyterian denominations in the USA, each of which believed they were the truer interpreter of Scripture (I think there are more now). This is what Scott Hahn calls the “split P’s.” Examining each, I determined that none of them were exactly what I wanted, so I found a book of Christian denominations, 300 pages of all the different Christian traditions in America. I carefully examined each, rejecting them one by one because something in their theology didn’t fit with mine, until I stopped myself, wondering who I arrogantly thought I was to stand in judgment of these churches? I was playing God, placing myself over all of them!

I received a phone call from a Presbyterian pastor friend out in Kansas City who, in a panic, exclaimed, “Marcus, you can’t leave the church! You must remain loyal, even if all the leaders have become heretics and the church is going down in flames: we need the faithful to remain loyal!” And I answered in words that, at the time, I did not understand—with another “why” question: “If that is true, then why did we leave our last denomination to form this one? And the division before that, and before that, and before that? Why does loyalty to truth require that I stand firm here in this denomination? Why not move on and form a more true church? Because in time, we both know that we would have to move on and form another one and another one, and on into infinity.”

You see, our heritage as Protestants was “Reformed and always reforming.” The way we reformed was always through re-forming, starting one new church after another. Even a Protestant source admits that there are over 30,000 individual denominations in the world today, growing at the rate of one new denomination every five days!

Essentially, though I had no thought about becoming Roman Catholic, I found myself back at the Reformation asking the big “why” question, and frankly this was a bigger can of worms than I wanted to open.

Realizing that if I could not answer the “why” questions about even the least important issues of our faith, let alone the more crucial ones—like what is necessary for salvation—then I had no business standing in the pulpit before anyone. So, I resigned from the pastorate.

I entered a graduate program in molecular biology with the hope of combining my science and theology backgrounds into

a career in medical ethics. Soon, I found myself in a research lab assisting in genetic research as a part of the human genome project. This was exciting work, but after a brief time, I found myself asking God, “Why have You brought me here?” And He answered.

One morning after the long drive to campus, I did something I never did: I bought a copy of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* newspaper. Sipping coffee, I came across a small ad on the bottom right of the religion page: “Theologian will speak at local Catholic parish: Scott Hahn.” Scott and his wife, Kimberly, had been my classmates at seminary. We had known each other for over fifteen years, but had lost contact since graduation. I had heard through the grapevine that they had become Catholics, but I didn’t believe a word of it. They had been two of the most outspoken, vehement Calvinists on campus, and I had no mental file-folder for them becoming Catholics—for any Protestant minister becoming Catholic! I knew Protestant laity who had become Catholics through marriage, but always presumed they had not known their Protestant faith well enough, or they surely would never have converted.

So when I saw this ad, it peaked my interest: “Was this my old friend Scott Hahn? Did he really become a papist?” and, if so, the big question, “Why?” Or, was it possible, and more probable, that he had clandestinely converted so he could rescue lost souls from the Catholic Church?

The next Sunday afternoon, I drove alone up to Cleveland to hear him. From my experience with visiting theologians, I envisioned a small clutch of people in a small church basement, eating coffee and donuts, listening glass-eyed to a droning professor speaking far over their heads. Instead, I found an immense church, a full parking lot, a standing-room only sanctuary, all focused—cameras and stage lights—on my old friend from seminary. I felt myself a complete, maybe unwanted, stranger in my very first visit to a Catholic church, and was astounded as Scott gave an invigorating talk on the “Fourth Cup,” or the Last Supper as the fulfillment of the Jewish Passover meal.

Afterwards, Scott was rushed by a crowd of enthusiastic fans and I went over to say hello. He recognized me immediately, with a “Hey, what are you doing here? I hope I didn’t offend you!” We couldn’t talk then, but he encouraged me to listen to the (now famous) tape of his conversion, and then call him.

### Verses I Never Saw

So I bought the tape, mainly to discover on the long drive home how he had gotten so messed up, plus an interesting sounding book by Karl Keating entitled *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*. About a half-hour into the tape, I had to pull my car over to the side of the road, because, in just that short period, Scott essentially had provided the answers to most of my most disturbing foundational “why” questions. The first of these answers was the first of what I came to call “the verses I never saw.” He told the story of being asked by a friend, “What is the pillar and bulwark of the truth?”

“*Journeys Home*” is continued on page 6 ►

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

Scott had answered, as I would have answered, “the Bible.” His friend responded, “But the Bible says in 1 Timothy 3:15, that the pillar and bulwark of the truth is the Church.” As I listened, I couldn’t recall seeing this in my Bible, so that is why I pulled my car over to the side of the road. I had studied and taught series of sermons on First Timothy and didn’t remember seeing this verse; however, when I looked it was there!

St. Paul wrote that “the household of God, which is the church of the living God, [is] the pillar and bulwark of the truth.” Which church? The Presbyterian church? Which Presbyterian denomination? My individual congregation? Or Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Episcopal, Pentecostal, etc., etc., denominations? Or which branch of these? But surely not the Catholic Church! And besides, as a Calvinist Protestant, I believed that the true Church was invisible, consisting of true believers all over the world, the membership of which was known only to God.

And at that moment, it struck me: how could an invisible church, known only to God, be the pillar and bulwark of anything?

This didn’t make me Catholic; it made me more confused and ungrounded.

As I listened, Scott clearly demonstrated how the key foundation of our Protestant faith, *sola Scriptura*, was not biblical, nor theologically or philosophically sound; in fact, the very Scripture text we used to defend the foundational doctrine, in 2 Timothy 3:14-17, did not actually teach it. St Paul said that all Scripture is profitable for equipping us for good works, but not that it was the sole authority of our faith! In essence, I really had never “seen” this verse either, because I had always read it through the lenses of my hidden assumptions.

He pointed out a third verse I had never “seen,” 2 Thessalonians 2:15, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle” (NKJV). *Traditions*? This verse spoke of the importance of passing on faithfully the apostolic tradition, which was received primarily through the spoken word, and only secondarily through epistles when an apostle could not get to his people to speak to them orally!

Even as I sat there in that car, I realized that there was no church in the world that actually lived out *sola Scriptura*, because every denomination interpreted Scripture through the lenses of their own passed-on tradition, as they interpreted the tradition of the founder of their movements. It was this nearly limitless assortment of traditions that had spawned the cacophony of opinions coming from pulpits every Sunday, including my own.

After listening to Scott’s tape, the Protestant foundation of *sola fide* also began to topple. I never questioned, from the time of my Lutheran catechetical formation, that we are saved by

faith *alone*, but Scott drew my attention to another verse I had never “seen,” James 2:24, which states, “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only” (NKJV). This revelation concurred with what I had always known in my conscience to be true: we are not merely “once saved, always saved” through some one-time surrendering statement of faith in Christ; we must live this out by grace in love for the rest of our lives! Again, as St. James wrote, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (1:22 NKJV). Scott pointed out that Luther had added the word “alone” to Romans 3:28, and when challenged, Luther refused to back down, claiming it was assumed in the text!

When I returned home, I didn’t reveal any of this to Marilyn. She already was a bit concerned about my leaving the pastorate to return to school; I didn’t think she would be keen about these new revelations. I closed myself away in my study, but instead of reading my biology assignments, I read Karl Keating’s book

from cover to cover and he provided even more answers to my many “why” questions. He particularly pointed out that the many “fundamentalist” assumptions, to which I had long held, owe their formation not to clear biblical foundations but to the “traditions” or opinions of the founders of evangelical fundamentalism.

None of this, however, was making me “Catholic”; just more confused. So I called Scott, and met with him and others, posing every “why” question that rose to the surface, and debating all aspects of Catholic doctrine, practice, and devotions that ran cross-grain to my Protestant sensibilities.

Then I read a book by John Henry Cardinal Newman, entitled *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. I had never heard of this famous nineteenth century Anglican clergy convert priest until well on into my journey, but once I heard about this universally respected autobiography of his conversion, I had to read it. Although his journey was completely different than mine, it was mine. His testimony convinced me that I could no longer be a Protestant, because he helped me to realize that, even though the sixteenth century Catholic Church and culture desperately needed renewal, the schismatic reaction of the Reformation was not the answer, for it had only led to a myriad of more splinters, leading only to confusion.

I could no longer be Protestant, but I couldn’t be Catholic! Even though I had to turn from (*metanoia*) my Protestant assumptions and background, I was not yet comfortable turning toward the pervasive strangeness of Catholicism: not just the unfamiliar and uncomfortable doctrines concerning purgatory and Mary, or the unappealing statues and artwork, or the seemingly bizarre devotions to supposed apparitions, or the “superstitious”

...how could an invisible church, known only to God, be the pillar and bulwark of anything?



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## ...Journeys Home Continued...

use of sacramentals, like sticking green scapulars between mattresses to convert family members or the burying of St. Joseph Statues to sell homes, but mostly the trusting of the Church's Magisterium in union with a pope in Rome. All of this ran cross-current to both my Protestant and my "American" sensibilities!

### Upon This Rock

I realized that everything came down to one basic doctrine; even the validity of our belief in the Trinity and the divinity of Christ, which cannot be proved through *sola Scriptura*, all came down to a belief in the trustworthy authority of Peter, the Bishop of Rome. It became obvious to me, the more I studied history, that it was to the authority, and often the courage, of the Bishop of Rome as the successor of Peter that we owe all that we now have and believe in Christendom. Certainly behind him was the protection, guidance, and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, yet at the center of all historic Christianity was the pope. Not the Scriptures, as I previously assumed, for if it wasn't for the historical union of the bishops of the Church in union with the Bishop of Rome, there would be no Canon of Scriptures that we now call the Bible, no doctrines of the Trinity or divinity of Christ, and there would be no Christendom, for if it wasn't for the Crusades, we would all have long been Muslims.

Realizing this, I read every single book I could find on the authority of the pope, but it wasn't until I read one other book by John Henry Cardinal Newman that I was finally convinced. He himself had been desperately trying to find an alternative to becoming Catholic, to prove from history that Anglicanism was the true "middle way" between Protestantism and Catholicism, and his book *An Essay on the Development of Doctrine* was the result, the conclusion of which in the end convinced him to become Catholic. And, likewise, it did me.

There is far too much in the book to summarize here, but basically there were twelve pages in the middle of the book, about the development of the papacy, that brought me "home." It is not so amazing that the authority of the papacy didn't become clear until the third century, given the constant persecutions of the first three centuries in which all the bishops of Rome were martyred. There are lots of things we will never know about the first centuries of the Church because it was mostly underground, in hiding. Once the persecutions ceased under Constantine, the structure of the Church, as recorded in the writings of the early

Church Fathers, was clearly there, under the authority of the Bishop of Rome. Most significantly, however, the authority of the pope was clearly recognized across the Church before the Canon of the Scriptures and the Trinity were finally defined in the fourth century, and before the divinity of Christ was formally defined in the fifth century! The acceptance of the pope as the authoritative predecessor of the Apostle Peter predated our unified beliefs in the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, and the Bible, and without the unifying presence of the pope overseeing the early councils, Christendom would have had none of these doctrines!

With this, I was ready to become Catholic and, fortunately by that time, so was Marilyn. At first she was reticent to accept all that I was discovering, but her heart had already been so opened to the Catholic Church through her pro-life convictions and work that it didn't take long for her to become as excited as I was about what we were discovering together. Her reading of two particular books—Tom Howard's *Evangelical Is Not Enough* and Thomas Merton's *Seven Storey Mountain*—had particularly closed the deal for her, as well as the amazingly convincing truth of Juan Diego and our Lady of Guadalupe.

So, as a result of God's mercy and grace, Marilyn and I entered the Catholic Church together with our two oldest sons in December, 1992 and it was then that I fully realized that the Proverb I had memorized years before was indeed true: by grace, I had trusted Him, and also by grace, I had been open to challenging the ways I had always "leaned on my own understanding." In the end God has proven that He will indeed, "direct our paths," for through His mercy and love, He has brought us home to the Catholic Church. ■



MARCUS GRODI is the founder and president of the *Coming Home Network International*, a lay Catholic apostolate whose mission is helping Protestant clergy and laity come home to the Catholic Church. Marcus is also the host of *The Journey Home* program on EWTN. Marcus's blog is <http://www.fromourbackporch.com>.

### BLOG

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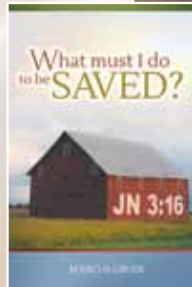


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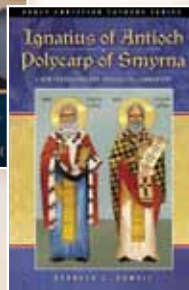


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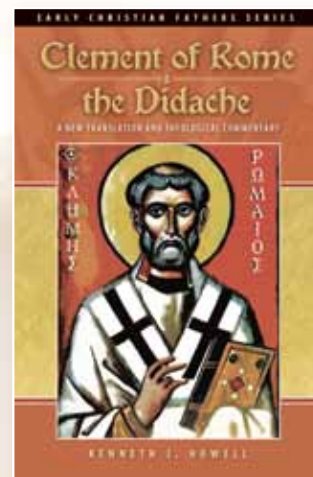
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