



December 2014 CHNewsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



I Was Minding My Own Business

By Deacon Joe Allison

During Christmas vacation in December of 1997, my wife and I were spending the holidays with her family. At one of my sister-in-law’s homes I found a book sitting on the coffee table called *Born Fundamentalist, Born Again Catholic* about a fundamentalist/evangelical Christian who had become Catholic. I thought it was a joke book. I had never heard of anyone who became Catholic. In fact, all the Catholics I knew were now Protestants. While there had been times when I was younger that I would have described myself as anti-Catholic, I had long since gotten over that. I no longer saw the Catholic Church as evil, only irrelevant.

David Currie, the author of the book, described his own life experience which coincided with mine, being born into a fundamentalist Christian home but later moving in a more evangelical direction. I could relate to him. He had a deep love for God and hunger for the truth. He wrote that at one point before becoming Catholic he was of the opinion that, while he didn’t disbelieve that individual Catholics could be saved, there were some Catholic teachings that “saved Catholics” must certainly reject. The rest of the book was a treatment of various Catholic dogmas based on Scripture and history. I kept looking for those Catholic dogmas that clearly went beyond the pale of reason; however, to my amazement, there weren’t any! Using Scripture and Church history, Currie was able to defend topics like purgatory, confes-

sion to a priest, Mary, and on down the list. By the time I finished the book, I was intrigued.

At that time, my wife, Lucy, and I, having been ordained and sent out by our home church, Christian Renewal of Brunswick, GA (an independent charismatic church), were working in the inner-city of Atlanta with an inter-denominational ministry called Youth With a Mission (YWAM). We were ministering in the area of racial reconciliation, working to develop an inner-city youth center in a housing project and taking teams of young people on mission trips.

Coming to ministry

I was raised in the Southern Baptist faith with pastors and missionaries on both sides of my family. One of my father’s cousins [Continued on page 2](#) ►

Journeys Home

...Journeys Home Continued...

had served with the Southern Baptist Mission Board in Israel and Yemen. I remember visiting him when I was a little boy and looking at his slides that showed the work he had done in those countries. I think it was then that I knew that I wanted to be a missionary. Unfortunately, the deep faith that I had as a child suffered a serious shipwreck when I entered my teen years and went through a profound period of rebellion. I came back to Christ as a senior in high school. With the return of my faith, I again experienced that deep desire to serve God as a missionary. Over the next few years I gained more experience through practical training at the Advance Vision Missionary Training School at the Christian Retreat Center in Bradenton, FL, and several mission trips to Haiti.

Lucy's family was Catholic, but in addition to attending Mass every weekend, they attended a Protestant church as well. She also had eight years of Catholic education. Even with that, she did not know or understand Church teaching and definitely wasn't able to defend it to her anti-Catholic, Protestant youth leaders. Over time, most of her family left the Catholic Church, except the one sister in whose house we came across that book.

The two of us met at a YWAM training program called a Discipleship Training School as we were preparing to go into fulltime ministry. After we met, we postponed those plans in order to get married. After another year we returned to another YWAM training program in order to work with children and youth. After a couple of more years of preparation, in addition to welcoming children, we eventually settled in Atlanta, GA.

The origins of "birth control"

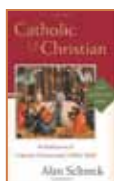
In the inner-city of Atlanta, we were part of a reconciliation movement. There was a saying that the most segregated place in Atlanta was any given church on a Sunday morning. And so as part of our ministry, we alternated every other week between attending two churches: East Gate Congregational Church (a predominately Anglo church in nearby Snellville) and Beulah Heights Church of Christ Holiness (an African-American church near downtown Atlanta). There was a relationship and friendship between the pastors, and so we were part of both.

There was an event that took place probably about a year before we came across Currie's book, which probably prepared us for it. It actually involved another book entitled, *Great People of the Twentieth Century*. One of the people noted was Margaret Sanger. To be honest, I did not know much about her at the time except that she had founded Planned Parenthood. Her biography presented her as one of those people born to have a cause, and she found hers championing birth control. Circa 1920s, there were no actual birth control devices or products of which to speak, and birth control was not only against every Christian church's teaching — it was also against most state and federal laws as well. Sanger began by publishing a magazine extolling the virtues of birth control and what she called "family planning."

She was brought up on charges because she sent her magazine out through the mail, which was a violation of the federal bans on birth control. She fled to Europe to prepare her defense. When she later returned to the U.S. for trial, *Continued on page 5* ➤

FEATURED RESOURCES

These books make excellent Christmas gifts!



Catholic and Christian — By Alan Schreck

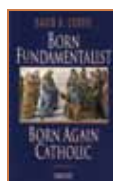
The best-selling book *Catholic and Christian* provides the answers you need to explain and understand various aspects of Catholic beliefs. It is a readable and concise summary of commonly misunderstood Catholic teachings such as: Do you *really* think the Pope is infallible? Why do Catholics pray to Mary? Where do sacraments come from? What do you think of the Bible? Are you saved? This is a book for all those who want to know more about the Catholic Faith.

\$35

For a donation of \$35 receive *Catholic and Christian*.

\$50

For a donation of \$50 receive *Born Fundamentalist, Born Again Catholic*.



Born Fundamentalist, Born Again Catholic — By David Currie

Currie presents a lucid, systematic, and intelligible account of the reasons for his conversion to the ancient Church that Christ founded. He gives a detailed discussion of the important theological and doctrinal beliefs Catholic and evangelicals hold in common, as well as the key doctrines that separate us, particularly the Eucharist, the Pope, and Mary.

\$75

For a donation of \$75 receive *Catholic and Christian* and *Born Fundamentalist, Born Again Catholic*.

— THESE PREMIUMS ARE AVAILABLE FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY —

Obtain premiums by returning the envelope included with your newsletter, calling 740-450-1175, or by going online to chnetwork.org/premiums

Join in our **Christmas Challenge** and order a copy of *How Firm a Foundation* for just \$5.
(USA addresses only)

Helping Them Home: Ten Steps of Dialogue

By Marcus Grodi

How can we help our non-Catholic Christian friends and family discover the beauty and truth of the Catholic Faith? This is precisely why the Coming Home Network International exists, and, by grace, we have been able to help many “come Home.” But many who have contacted us have not continued the journey. We aren’t here to “push, pull, or prod” anyone into the Church, but rather to stand beside. In doing so, we have discovered that, even if we are able to clear up misunderstandings about Catholic teachings and practices, there are deep-seated barriers, presuppositions, that prevent the majority of American non-Catholic Christians from even given a moment’s notice to the Church.



For this reason, we would like to propose the following **Ten Steps of Dialogue** as a prudent strategy to help our non-Catholic Christian friends and family discover and, if God so leads, “come home” to the Catholic Church. Each of these steps should include more explanation, but for now just a few thoughts.

STEP ONE:

Reaching out by establishing relationships of love

We believe that all true evangelization must begin here. Certainly, the Holy Spirit can use cold turkey, impersonal methods to open hearts and minds, but generally He works through disciples. Jesus charged His disciples to “Go and make disciples,” and this challenge was passed on from Jesus’ disciples to theirs and on throughout history to you and me.

If, for example, you know someone who is lonely and, out of compassion, you want to connect her with another person, it rarely works unless you have a good relationship with both people. Then they both will be open to your invitation to bring them together, because they trust your friendship. This is why evangelization is most effective when it is relational: when we know both our friend and Jesus. This is why all the Church’s ecumenical pronouncements focus on developing good and lasting relationships with our non-Catholic Christian brothers and sisters. Is this also why the statistics show that Catholics have not been very effective evangelists — we devote most of our time with other Catholics. If we desire to help non-Catholics discover the beauty and truth of the Catholic Church, we need to make every effort to know both: our Catholic Faith — and most importantly our Lord Jesus Christ — and our neighbor.

This first step must be accompanied with the second.

STEP TWO:

Disciplined prayer

Every convert I know recognizes that his or her conversion came about through the work of grace. It wasn’t that they claim to have been especially intelligent, diligent, or wise, but rather that God in His mercy had moved mountains to break down barriers, especially pride, to nudge them slowly toward Christ and His Church. This is why the single most important thing we can do to help anyone discover the beauty and truth of the Church is pray for him or her. We must lay them spiritually be-

fore the Father, and not once, but every day, and if necessary for the rest of our lives, asking Him to open their hearts and minds. Saint Monica is certainly our model, because her patience and long-suffering for her seemingly unreachable son Augustine reminds us that God’s timing is often different than ours. Entrust to Him your friend or family member, believing that He knows them better than they know themselves — and boldly ask Him to move mountains to bring them home.

If we have done steps one and two, then maybe we will be able to do step three.

STEP THREE:

Help them see in you that faithful Catholics are faithful Christians

It’s important that we recognize that in their eyes, few Catholics look or sound like Christians — and we can understand this when it comes to *bad* Catholics. But even *good faithful* Catholics look strange to our Evangelical brothers and sisters. At best they feel sympathy, and at worse, revulsion, when they see what they interpret as a superstitious, idol-worshipping woman wearing a doily (i.e., mantilla) on her head, kneeling before a statue of Mary, fingering a string of beads, and mumbling Latin phrases. Like so many other converts, I can attest that most of my former non-Catholic friends no longer communicate with me because they wonder whether I am any longer a Christian.

Underlying this is that fact that most non-Catholic Christians have a subliminal suspicion that the Catholic Church is hardly a Christian Church — many still suspect that she is the “whore of Babylon” and the Pope the Antichrist. This underlying anti-Catholic prejudice is as much a part of our American experience as the air we breath. The Black Myth of anti-Catholic fear was birthed and bred in Elizabethan England, and came like a disease with all those who planted the American colonies. For 150 years, from the Pilgrims through the American Revolution, there were no Catholic priests in all of New England, due to the enforcement of the English anti-Catholic penal laws. None the less, most of the anti-Catholic bias that still prevails in the hearts and minds of most modern non-Catholic Christians, comes from the preaching and catechisms of New England Puritan ministers — who in their entire lives never met a Catholic, witnessed a Mass, or experienced the “smells and bells” they lam-

pooned! This suspicion has been passed along from generation to generation, feeding the fear that, regardless of how authentic and genuine a Catholic may appear on the outside, down deep the Catholic Church and Catholics are not Christians.

This suspicion can be found almost anywhere in Protestant books and media, internet sites and web-blogs, and shows its face in the relationships we share with non-Catholic friends and family. How many times have we heard the once silent anti-Catholic prejudices rising into hatred and rejection from non-Catholic family members toward those who have the audacity to marry a Catholic?

As a result, even when all other misunderstandings are clarified through apologetic arguments and winsome conversion stories, still, our non-Catholic friends often harbor suspicions.

Therefore, if we have established a friendship, and are faithful in prayer for that person, we may consider turning the tables, by asking how that person *proves* that he or she is a *Christian*? Generally, this includes their pointing to Scripture passages that express their convictions, or to their professions of faith, but also to their lifestyles, what they chose to do or not do, their morality and holiness, and particularly their love.

Hopefully, in our friendship, we have shown them the latter in our words and actions. But by asking them to *prove* that they are Christians, we *earn* the opportunity to do the same: to show them, through the *Catechism* and maybe the Vatican II documents, what the Church expects of her members: that Catholics are *good* because they are living by grace as *good* Christians. We can show them that nearly everything that an Evangelical Christian believes about Christ is identical to what Catholics believe (actually, they *got* what they believe *from* the Catholic Church, and not from Scripture *alone!*). In fact, the Church has affirmed these similarities in her official documents.

They probably will want to deflect our conversation to the doctrines and practices that separate us, but ask them, for now, to set these aside — we'll get to these later!

We can, also, point to those whom the Church has lifted up as confirming this: the saints. We may need to skirt around some hagiography, but we can help them see that the reason the Church declares people saints is because of their Christian lives.

We can admit that *bad* Catholics are often poorly formed Catholics and do not represent the Church — just as *bad* Protestants are not faithful Christians. We can emphasize that the Church has always been concerned with helping *bad* Catholics learn and live their faith — which is precisely why the Church is calling for a New Evangelization of her members.

If, by grace, we can get them to accept that *good* Catholics are Christians, we have truly come a long way (!), and can address the next sticky wicket.

STEP FOUR:

Help them discover that the Catholic Church is a Christian Church

Recognizing that they may silently still question whether the Catholic Church is *Christian*, ask them to *prove* that their denomination is a Christian church? Frankly, many of our evangelical friends might hesitate to unequivocally defend their

denominations as solidly Christian, because of their denomination's modern, progressive stances and actions — and they may not feel the need to do so anyway, since they believe that the true *Church* is an invisible, universal fellowship of believers.

We can stand beside these fellow Christians and affirm their concerns about their wayward denominations, yet still, encouraging them to set these concerns aside for now, again ask: why do they believe that their non-Catholic denomination is *Christian*? Generally, they would point to their creeds, and to the content of their liturgies, hymns, and prayers.

Giving them time to *prove* this, once again earns us the opportunity to show the same to them. With permission to delay any questions and qualms about supposed Catholic teachings and praxis, we can show them the Christianity of the Church through her Creeds, liturgies, hymns, and prayers. We can point out the Christ-centered content of the *Catechism*, of the long stream of official historical Church documents and councils. We can even point to those times in history when the Church has excommunicated and silenced priests, bishops, and theologians for teaching against traditional Christian truth. And we can challenge them to give quotes from the present leaders of their denomination that prove they have as much orthodox faith in Jesus Christ as our Catholic popes and bishops.

In G.K. Chesterton's book, *The Catholic Church and Conversion* he gave three stages of conversion: (1) Patronizing the Church; (2) Discovering the Church; and (3) Running away from the Church. By "patronizing the Church" he basically meant at least accepting the Catholic Church as a Christian Church. He felt once a person accepted this, they were in trouble of becoming a Catholic, mainly because the rejection of the Church is so strong in the consciences of non-Catholic Christians. If we can help them accept that we are Christians, and that the Catholic Church at least appears to be a Christian Church, then we can move to the next step.

STEP FIVE:

All true Catholic doctrines, devotions, and praxis are centered on Jesus Christ

First, we can affirm with them that, as a result of bad catechesis and leadership, there have been many Catholics throughout history who have promoted and practiced less than authentic Catholic Christian doctrines, devotions, and praxis. Often these less than valid instances are what attract the attention of the media. Less than trustworthy and authoritative Catholics in the public sphere too often misrepresent the Church.

But, second, we can point out that this is equally true of non-Catholic Christians — though maybe not as noticed in the media as much as *bad* Catholics.

Third, we can discuss with them the wide array and history of non-Catholic Christian doctrines, devotions, and praxis, with the hope of helping them recognize the diversity and confusion.

Finally, if they can at least agree to these things, we can go on to apologetics: to clarify and defend true Catholic doctrine, devotions, and praxis, demonstrating that these are all Christ-centered, even the most Marian of doctrines and devotions. If, by grace, they can hear and accept these things,

Continued on page 6 ➤

A Christmas Season Challenge!

By JonMarc Grodi

The Christmas season is the opportune time to help our non-Catholic Christian friends and family discover the beauty and truth of our Catholic Faith. As my father describes in this newsletter, the best strategy for reaching them begins with our relationships — and you already have this with them. The next steps, admittedly, get a little more difficult — especially step three: we may not have always been good examples of our faith! *Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa!*



But we mustn't give up, for we have a strong mandate to help them "come home." Listen to what St. James tells us: "*My brothers, if anyone among you should stray from the truth and someone bring him back, he should*

know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins" (Jas 5:19-20). We don't stand in judgment of them as "sinners," for the Church does not do this (cf., CCC, 847). Rather, through their Baptisms and faith in Christ, and their love of Scripture, they are our brothers and sisters; they are a part of the Church, though not perfectly. Sadly, they are separated from us for a great variety of reasons. But we are called to make every effort to restore them to the fold, "that we might be one" (Jn 17:20-21).

Since we began the work of the Coming Home Network International, we have recognized that the primary evangelizers are you, the members of the apostolate. The staff and helpers of the CHNetwork are here to respond to those who become interested in learning more, but you, through your friendships, are most often the initial evangelizers. You are the primary channels that God can use to help them become "inquirers."

So, this Christmas we offer you a special challenge: We have in inventory **2000 copies of an earlier edition of my dad's novel, *How Firm a Foundation***. This novel is a fictional account of the conversion of a non-Catholic minister to the Catholic Faith. My dad wrote this to help my grandfather understand why my dad gave up his Presbyterian ministry to become Catholic. This book helped

open my grandfather's heart to the Church, and we have received many letters and other personal anecdotes from others who give the same testimony.

We would like to challenge you to **give a copy of this book to a friend or a family member this Christmas** —

and for this purpose, **you can have the book for free!** We only ask that you cover the cost of shipping and handling (a donation of \$5 per copy). We would love to see you, the membership, put all 2000 copies into the hands of non-Catholic Christians — and then we will anxiously wait to hear from you the results, which we will publish in upcoming CHNewsletters.

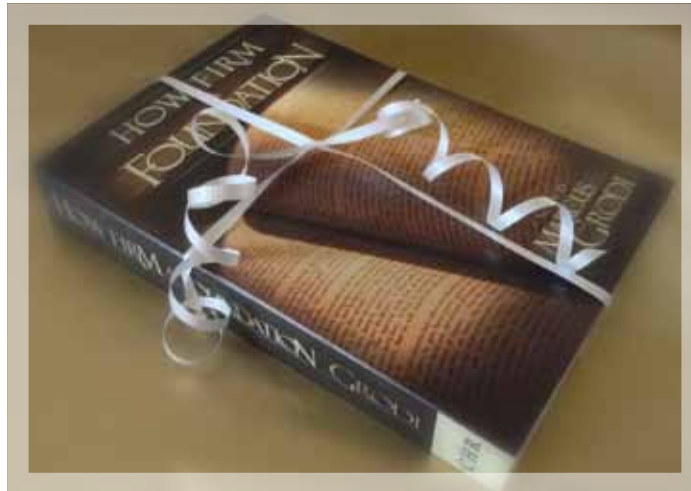
Please consider this opportunity to reach out to your friends and family.

A great saint once said that when we get to heaven, the first thing God will ask is, "Who did you bring with you?" These books sitting in inventory accomplish nothing, but if 2000 of you put them in the hands of friends and family, God can use these — along with your friendship and prayers — to help them discover the beauty of the Church.

If you are interested in this challenge, please use the enclosed return envelope to order your free copy or visit CHNetwork.org/premiums to order online.

Note: unfortunately, due to the high cost of shipping internationally, we can only make the offer of \$5 per copy available within the United States. If you would like to order *How Firm a Foundation* and live outside of the USA, please call our office at 740-450-1175. ■

Sincerely In Christ,
JonMarc Grodi
Manager of Outreach
jmgrodi@chnetwork.org



Member's Section

Member's Section

MARCUS GRODI'S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

January 24, 2015

Midwest Catholic Apologetics Conference
Saints Cyril and Methodius Slovak Catholic Church
Sterling Heights Michigan
midwestapologeticsconference.com
saintcyrilapologetics@hotmail.com

MEMBERS



Visit chnetwork.org/members for resources offered exclusively to CHNetwork members and to view the featured Deep in History video of the month!

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Listen to Marcus Grodi and Dr. Kenneth Howell on the Deep in Scripture radio program on Saturdays at 11:00am ET and Sundays at 2:00pm ET on EWTN Radio Two. Please visit our website www.deepinscripture.com for live feed, archived programs, and further information.

NEWSLETTER DONATION

The 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.

NEWSLETTER COPIES

CHNetwork encourages members to make copies of the newsletter and distribute to family and friend. We do ask that copies of the newsletter not be sold. Unless otherwise indicated, the contents of this newsletter are Copyright © 2014 by the Coming Home Network International. All rights reserved.

STAY CONNECTED BY EMAIL!

We have a number of email lists that may be helpful and spiritually edifying to you: Conversion Story Email Club, The Journey Home Program, Deep in Scripture Radio, Deep in History Videos, and more. Visit www.CHNetwork.org/email to customize your email subscription and stay connected with your favorite CHNetwork content.

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/ or complete this form 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.

Your information

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Email address _____

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

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Bank routing number (9-digit number) _____

Account number _____

Credit card

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Expiration date CVV Code _____

Visa MasterCard

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EWTV'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, Sundays 5 PM ET
The Best of the Journey Home: Monday-Thursday 12 AM ET

December 1 John Robinson* Former Anglican	December 8 Matthew DiMartino* Former Fundamentalist Baptist	December 15 Brendan O'Morchoe* Former Episcopalian	December 22 Rit Leslie* Former Church of Christ minister	December 29 Nicole DeMille* Former Lutheran Re-air from 2/13/2012
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**Schedule is subject to change.*

From the Hermitage

By Br. Rex Anthony Norris | LittlePortionHermitage.org



Hello brothers and sisters.
 The Lord give you peace!

If you are reading this article, chances are better than not that you have a nativity scene on display somewhere in your home during the Advent and Christmas season. Did you know that St. Francis of Assisi is credited with having created the first nativity scene in 1223 AD? Below is an account of the event taken from a longer authorized biography of the life of St. Francis written by St. Bonaventure around 1260 AD.

It happened in the third year before his death, that in order to excite the inhabitants of Greccio to commemorate the nativity of the Infant Jesus with great devotion, [St. Francis] determined to keep it with all possible solemnity; and lest he should be accused of lightness or novelty, he asked and obtained the permission of the sovereign Pontiff. Then he prepared a manger, and brought hay, and an ox and an ass to the place appointed. The brethren were summoned, the people ran together, the forest resounded with their voices, and that venerable night was made glorious by many and brilliant lights and sonorous psalms of praise. The man of God [St. Francis] stood before the manger, full of devotion and piety, bathed in tears and radiant with joy; the Holy Gospel was chanted by Francis, the Levite of Christ. Then he preached to the people around the nativity of the poor King; and being unable to utter His name for the tenderness of His love, He called Him the Babe of Bethlehem. A certain valiant and veracious soldier, Master John of Greccio, who, for the love of Christ, had left the warfare of this world, and become a dear friend of this holy man, affirmed that he beheld an Infant marvellously beautiful, sleeping in the manger,

Whom the blessed Father Francis embraced with both his arms, as if he would awake Him from sleep. This vision of the devout soldier is credible, not only by reason of the sanctity of him that saw it, but by reason of the miracles which afterwards confirmed its truth. For example of Francis, if it be considered by the world, is doubtless sufficient to excite all hearts which are negligent in the faith of Christ; and the hay of that manger, being preserved by the people, miraculously cured all diseases of cattle, and many other pestilences; God thus in all things glorifying his servant, and witnessing to the great efficacy of his holy prayers by manifest prodigies and miracles.¹

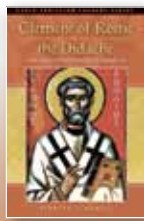
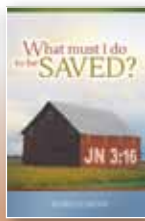
Many homes, mine included, set up the nativity scene at some point during the Advent season, leaving the Holy Family (Jesus, Mary, and Joseph) conspicuously absent from the scene. Early on Christmas Eve, Mary and Joseph are placed on either side of the empty crib. Shortly before or after Midnight Mass or perhaps early Christmas morning the Baby Jesus is placed in His crib.

One tradition, especially fun if there are kids in the house, is to place the Magi figures in a location of the house far removed from the nativity set. As the celebration of Christmas continues and the Feast of the Epiphany draws near, the Magi, with the help of the children, make their sojourn through the house, getting a little closer each day to their destination. When the Feast of Epiphany finally arrives on January 6, the Magi take their place before the Christ Child where they offer their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

If you do not have a nativity set in your home, I would encourage you to get one and continue the tradition of celebrating the Incarnation following the example of St. Francis of Assisi begun in the 13th century.

I pray you peace and all good things ... and a very Merry Christmas! ~Brother Rex Anthony ■

¹ <http://www.ecatholic2000.com/bonaventure/assisi/francis.shtml>



Visit www.chresources.com
or call 740-450-1175 for these and other great resources to learn more about the Catholic Faith.

Prayer List



Clergy

- For Kent, as he seeks instruction in the Catholic Faith in anticipation of entering the Church.
- For a minister in Canada, that his wife would be healed of her bitterness toward Christians in general and so free him to pursue his journey toward the Catholic Church.
- For Jim, a Presbyterian minister, that the Holy Spirit would open his wife's heart to the Catholic Faith.
- For a former Mormon missionary, that God would fill him with the joy of knowing and accepting the fullness of Christ in the Catholic Church.
- For Mark, a Pentecostal minister, that our Lord Jesus would grant him the grace to make the move to come into full communion with the Catholic Church.
- For a couple serving in non-denominational ministry, that their common journey of faith would lead them both home to the Holy, Catholic Church.

- For Mark, a Church of Christ minister, that as he continues to read, study, and pray the Lord would conform his heart to God's will.
- For Jeremiah, a non-denominational minister and his congregation in Liberia, that our Lord Jesus Christ would grant healing and relief from the Ebola epidemic.
- For Jim, a Baptist minister, that the Holy Spirit would enable him to get beyond his dispensationalist stumbling block to the Catholic Church.

Laitiy

- For Jerry to be more open to considering the claims of the Catholic Church.
- For Tony as he goes through RCIA and continues his journey towards the Church.
- For a Pentecostal in the south who feels that there are insurmountable barriers to his becoming Catholic.
- For Ken and his wife as he is continually drawn towards the Catholic Faith.

- For Paul, that the Holy Spirit guide his discernment as he prays about how best to pursue his desire to be Catholic.
- For a woman who is in RCIA and is challenged with making ethical choices in a difficult work environment.
- For Dan, as he continues to learn more about the Catholic Faith.
- For Donna, that she continue to seek the Lord and His guidance for her journey.
- For Patricia, that she finds the answers she needs as she goes forward with her desire to be Catholic.
- For a convert from the Assemblies of God, that her family continue to be open to the Catholic Church.
- For Betsy to have peace about her journey and be able to return to the sacraments.

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.

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

President/Founder , Marcus Grodi <i>(former Presbyterian pastor)</i>	Senior Advisor: History & Theology , Jim Anderson <i>(former Lutheran)</i>	Financial Coordinator , Ann Moore	Manager of Outreach , JonMarc Grodi	Board of Directors: Marcus Grodi (President), Msgr. Frank Lane (Chaplain), Dr. Robert Geiger (Vice President), Dr. Charles Feicht (Secretary), Bruce Sullivan (Treasurer), Dr. Marian Schuda (Director), Donald Brey (Director)
Resident Theologian , Dr. Kenneth Howell <i>(former Presbyterian pastor)</i>	Director of Studio/Media , Scott Scholten <i>(former Presbyterian)</i>	IT/Facilities Coordinator , Bill Bateson <i>(former Mormon)</i>	Financial Assistant , Wendy Hart <i>(former United Methodist)</i>	
		Publications and Laity Coordinator , Mary Clare Pieczynski		

...Journeys Home Continued...

► “Journeys Home” continued from page 2

the case was eventually dropped as state and federal laws were rewritten to remove the bans on birth control. Then in 1930, the Episcopal Church was the first to cave, allowing its members to use birth control. It was not long before all Christian churches followed suit. All but one that is: the Roman Catholic Church.

The Protestant world in which I had grown up had no trouble whatsoever with birth control. My parents used it as well as every other married couple I knew. When Lucy and I went for premarital counseling at our Protestant church, one of the questions the pastor asked us was whether we had agreed on what type of birth control we would use. I had heard all of two sermons in my life during which Protestants ministers questioned the use of birth control. Both pastors were older men, well past child-bearing years. As a young married man, I did not even seriously consider their points. As a Protestant, after all, I was my own magisterium.

But something happened when I read Margaret Sanger’s biography. The name of her magazine, the one that got her in trouble in the first place, was *No Gods No Masters*. I came face to face with the reality that the modern acceptance of birth control began when a woman shook her fist in the face of God and said, “We will have none of You!” Lucy and I took a hard look at something we had always taken for granted and realized we were wrong. If the root of birth control began in an evil rejection of God, then the fruit of birth control could only be evil as well. We cleaned out the medicine cabinet and began to learn Natural Family Planning.

Excitement not for sharing

The realization that I could be wrong about something I had always taken for granted stayed with me for a long time and, I believe, was instrumental to what happened on our Christmas vacation in 1997. As I said, we were very happy and content in our ministry. I was just minding my own business when I came across *Born Fundamentalist, Born Again Catholic*. I wasn’t looking for an argument or a fight. Still, I loved God and I wanted to be where He was. After reading the book, I was intrigued. Could I be wrong about the Catholic Church? Maybe it wasn’t as irrelevant as I had come to believe. This thought brought with it a sense of responsibility to know more.

And so began a year of prayer and study for both Lucy and me. We were excited, but it was not an excitement we felt we could share. Right after we started into this period of exploration I was talking to two friends, independently of each other, and told them about a crazy book I was reading about this guy who became Catholic. I thought they would laugh and then be as intrigued as I was, but instead both of them responded warily, “What are you reading that for?” Their disapproving responses shook me. I quickly realized that people might look at this new interest as something threatening.

I quietly began frequenting a Catholic book store and getting whatever the people there recommended. Books and tapes by

other Catholic apologists, such as Karl Keating’s *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*, and Alan Schrecks’ *Catholic and Christian*, began to fill our shelves, along with a Catholic Bible and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. My fundamental interest (and concern) was whether or not the Catholic Church really was the Church that Jesus had started. And, if so, had anything happened to change that? And, if not, what did that mean for me personally? What was God calling Lucy and me to do?

After a month or so of speaking with the people at the Catholic book store, someone there suggested that I contact a Catholic church and ask to speak to a priest or deacon. It took a few more weeks to get up the nerve. One morning, I went into work at the YWAM office early, before anyone else got there and called a nearby Catholic church, asking to speak to someone about the Catholic Faith. The receptionist told me that she would have the deacon call me back when he got in.

An hour or so passed and, by that time, the office was full of people and activity. The phone rang and someone yelled out “Joe, you’ve got a call from Deacon Tom.” I sheepishly said that I would take it in another room. When I got to the phone I whispered into it, “I’d like to talk to you about the Catholic Church.” Deacon Tom, a very perceptive man, asked me if it was a bad time to talk. I quickly affirmed his hunch and made an appointment to come meet him at the church.

Wanting both worlds

Driving into the parish parking lot that day was quite an experience. It felt as if I was taking a long plunge on a very tall roller coaster with my stomach turning somersaults all the way.

Fortunately, the man waiting for me was devoutly orthodox. At the time I had no idea what a blessing this was. As we talked about the Catholic Faith, he mentioned that we were approaching the Easter Vigil, during which people who had spent the previous year preparing would be received into the Church. “In for a penny, in for a pound,” I thought and said that I guessed I would go ahead and come in at that time too.

Deacon Tom quickly reassured me that there was no reason to hurry. In his words, “The Catholic Church never does anything fast.” He suggested we simply wait and meet over the coming months through the summer and that I begin attending the Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA) sessions in the fall.

At this time, Lucy and I were finishing the preparations for a youth outreach to Perm, Russia. We had been working with a team of people on this for over a year. We were afraid that if we talked openly about what we were thinking regarding the Catholic Church, it would possibly make a lot of people nervous and even jeopardize the trip. So we continued to pray and study, but we kept it quiet.

Later that summer, after the trip to Russia was over, we finally sat down with our leadership, which consisted of our colleagues in YWAM and the pastors of the churches we attended in Atlanta and our home church which had ordained us and sent us out. We told them that we were seriously considering becoming

...Journeys Home Continued...

ing Catholic. All of them responded by asking us not to talk to anyone else about what we were thinking and that they would get back to us.

As we waited for their response, we realized that we were asking them to make a decision for us. We wanted to continue on in the ministry we were doing, but to do so as Catholics. We were basically asking them to decide for us if that would be acceptable. We quickly realized how unfair this was. And so, just as fall was beginning, we submitted our resignations effective for the end of the year.

Death, resurrection, and an explosion of life in Christ

Meanwhile, I had started attending RCIA. It was then, as we began attending Mass that we saw all races, not just Anglo and African-American, but Hispanic and Asian and absolutely everyone else gathering and worshipping together. This sight was revolutionary for me. It seemed that the work we had been involved in of racial reconciliation in the Protestant churches was really just reinventing the wheel. I came to realize that the Catholic Church truly was the fulfillment of Jesus' desire that all of His disciples be one.

At that time Lucy and I thought that all ministry in the Church was only done by priests and nuns and, therefore, our work in ministry would be over. I began to explore the option of going back to college in order to forge a new career path. On a lark, I called Franciscan University of Steubenville. As I spoke to people there, I found out that there were many opportunities for lay people to serve in the Church. The Lord opened door after door, and soon we were making plans to move.

In early December, our marriage was convalidated by the Catholic Church and Lucy returned to the sacraments. Then, on December 27, 1998, on the Feast of the Holy Family, my children were baptized and I was confirmed and received my first Holy Communion. The next day we loaded everything we owned into a truck and moved to Steubenville, Ohio where we began our new lives as Catholics.

We arrived there in the middle of an ice storm, which was a whole new experience for someone who grew up in Florida. Everything was frozen and barren. I didn't see any neighbors until the end of March when things began to thaw out.

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then they have accepted truths that have changed them, and they may never be the same in their views of Catholicism or Protestantism. Then they might also proceed to the next step.

STEP SIX:

Sacred Scripture was never intended to be interpreted alone

Up until this point, it will have been likely that our non-Catholic Christian friends have been insisting that we show everything we claim "in the Bible!" In the same way that nearly all non-Catholic Christians suspect, at least subliminally, that

We were only there a short time when I realized that the ice storm was reflective of our lives. Everything we had been working on for over five years, both ministries and relationships, were gone. Many friends and family members did not know what to do with us. Being in a new place, there was no one to turn to as the loneliness set in. Our lives seemed as frozen and barren as the landscape around us. At times, I wondered if we had done the right thing.

This was basically my state of mind until we came to the Easter Vigil. Franciscan University celebrates the Vigil in a large gym called Finnegan's Fieldhouse — and they pack it out! Growing up Christian, I had been to Easter services all of my life — even sunrise services on the beach — but until that night, I had never experienced the power of Easter and Jesus' Resurrection. After sitting in darkness as the Scriptures were proclaimed, suddenly the lights came on as the Gloria was sung with joy. I felt then, for the first time, the explosion of life that took place on that first Easter as Christ triumphantly walked out of the tomb as victor and king. That night I felt the sense of peace that we really were at home.

After leaving Steubenville, my family relocated to Lehigh Acres, FL where I was offered the position of Director of Religious Education at St. Raphael Catholic Church. I later entered the diaconal formation program in the Diocese of Venice and was ordained in 2009. As I look back over my life as both a Protestant and a Catholic I think of Jesus' words, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (Matthew 13:22). Old treasure and new. That is the glory, and joy, of my journey into the Catholic Church. I would never want to be anywhere else. ■



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BLOG

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the Catholic Church is not truly Christian, they generally all assume that the Bible is the only true foundation for faith, the "pillar and bulwark" of the faith, even though the Bible itself claims that this is the Church (1 Tim 3:15).

Once again, we can address this by turning the tables. We can ask *them* to show where *in the Bible* we need show it in the Bible? We can ask *them* to prove their belief in *sola Scriptura*. Where is this in the Bible? Where did the Bible come from? Who determined the canon of books that make up the Bible? Most non-Catholic Christians can't answer any of these

questions. Through a little personal study of the *Catechism* and Catholic apologetics, we can help them discover that the Bible was truly a product of the Catholic Church.

STEP SEVEN:

Jesus intended the Church as the community of salvation.

Following the lead of the Reformers, particularly Luther and Calvin, few non-Catholic Christians believe that membership in *any* church, let alone the Catholic Church, is necessary for salvation. Many don't even believe attending a church worship on any sort of regularity is necessary — it is good and proper, but not necessary. Most believe that only faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is necessary for salvation.

Step seven is a little more precarious because there are many verses that seem to imply that all that is necessary for salvation is faith in Christ. However, with a little homework, we can be prepared to use Scripture, history, and even philosophy to demonstrate that Jesus intended that union with Him means being adopted into the Family of God, the Church. We can explain that the New Testament Church is the continuity of the Old Testament People of God; and that salvation was never intended as an individualistic act of faith, but as a faithful member of the community of faith. Then we can show how this was the clear teaching and underlying assumptions of the New Testament writers and that of the earliest Church writers. (I summarize this in my book, *What Must I do to be Saved?*)

It is particularly in this step when the significance of 1 Timothy 3:14-15 is pointed out, which builds on the discussion of the flaws of *sola Scriptura*.

If they can accept this, and what has preceded this, it will become more and more difficult for them to remain comfortable as a non-Catholic Christian, and they may be ready for the next step.

STEP EIGHT:

This Church subsists in the Catholic Church

If Christ intended a church as the means of salvation, then which church? Which denomination? Which mega-church? Their local congregation? We can help them recognize that an invisible universal church of believers, known only to God, can hardly fit the bill of a “pillar and bulwark of truth.” We can particularly show them how the Vatican II documents deal with this, and how the Church understands her mission to protect, preserve, and proclaim the teachings of Christ, as guided and protected by the promised Holy Spirit.

We can discuss the sensitivity and love expressed by the Church when she uses the word “subsists”: she recognizes the mercy and love of God, and how God honors and accepts the faith, hope, and love of every single person — redeemed by Christ — when they turn to Him. There are truths and aspects of the historic Catholic Faith in all Christian traditions, at different levels, but, by the mercy, grace, and protection of the Holy Spirit, the fullness of the Church established by Christ *subsists* or *continues, remains, abides* in the Catholic Church. The Church does not condemn anyone outside her visible boundaries; rather she reaches out in love and mercy, standing beside especially those who through Baptism share as brothers and sisters in the family of God.

If a person accepts the truth of this step, they may not be ready to join the Catholic Church, but they will never be the same; they may even feel they are no longer either Protestant or Catholic; they love Jesus and His written Word, the Scriptures, but beyond that, they may now question everything. We can then help them see the significance and importance of the next step.

STEP NINE:

The sacraments are the ordinary means of receiving grace.

This is, in essence, the missing link, extracted by the Reformers, that affirms why membership in a church is necessary for salvation. It is not merely some kind of rule of membership established by God. Rather, it's because, from the beginning, the sacraments were intended and given as the ordinary means of receiving the graces necessary to believe, obey, and follow Christ — and to love. Certainly apart from the sacraments God can convey grace; His love, mercy, and generosity are not limited. However, we can show how, through the teachings of Christ, the writings of the New Testament and the early Church Fathers, the sacraments from the beginning were understood as this ordinary means of receiving grace. We can also show how, through the writings of St. Augustine, Newman, and others, this understanding developed as Christians challenged this historical view; why apart from the gift of the sacraments, the trajectory was always chaos, indifferentism, and libertarianism.

If they can at least see the truth of this stage, we can point out the ultimate significance of the next.

STEP TEN:

The Eucharist is the ordinary means of abiding in Christ.

Here we draw them to the most divisive and yet most important of stages. Most non-Catholic Christians believe that Christ *abides in us and we in Him* (cf., Jn 15) through *faith alone*. However, if they have at least been open to the previous stages, they will more openly follow the apologetics behind the Catholic belief in the Real Presence. Pointing out the clear interpretations of John 6 and 1 Corinthians 10-11 at least demonstrates that the Church has always taken these statements from Scripture seriously, and the historic consistency of the early Church Fathers on this doctrine is often something they have never seen. What is particularly eye opening is how before the Reformation, Christians universally believed that this mutually abiding relationship occurs through the sacraments, particularly through the reception of the Eucharist.

If the Holy Spirit helps them understand and accept this truth, He may also give them a hunger for the Eucharist. If so, they are at the door, ready to *come home*.

I certainly don't mean to imply that this is a sure-win process of evangelization, like some kind of sales strategy. But from my personal experience, from our shared experience, from hearing years of *Journey Home* conversion stories and reading our *CHNewsletter* stories, I believe, like Chesterton, that if, through our relationships of love, girded by prayer, we can help them to at least patronize the Church (step four), they are almost home. ■

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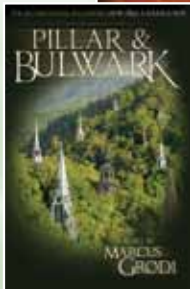
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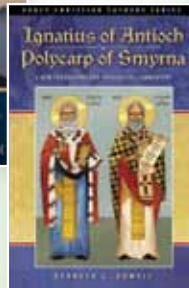
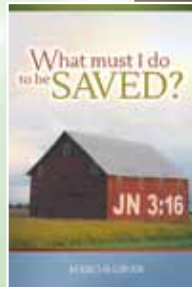


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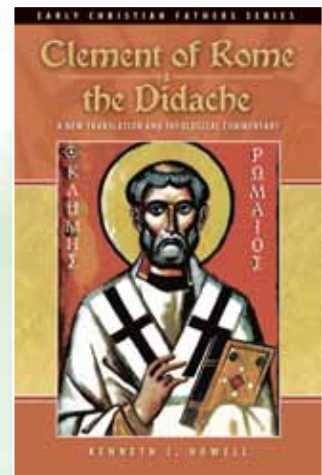


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