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The Coming Home Network International

Membership Letter

February 2002

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“I believe, help my unbelief!”

With the above familiar words, a desperate father once admitted the imperfection of his faith. Jesus had asked whether the man believed he could heal his son. A less honest person might have said, “Yeah, sure, of course, Jesus. I believe, I believe. Just do something, quickly.” But in his humility, this man admitted to the inner spiritual battle. In his heart he wanted to believe that the amazing yet fully human rabbi before him could heal his ailing son, yet in his mind this was impossible to fathom. So goes the life-long battle between the head and the heart.

On Epiphany Sunday, we celebrated the appearance of Christ to the world. *Epiphaneia...appearing, appearance, coming.* Imagine the three kings and their retinue gathered around Mary, Joseph, and, to all appearances, the fully human infant Jesus. Their astrological calculations combined with their study of Hebraic traditions had convinced them that this child cooing before them was the long awaited king and savior of the world. But did they believe that He was also the Creator of the universe, the very God of all being? We have none of their recorded words, but was it not possible that at least one of the kings admitted in the silence of his heart, “I believe, help my unbelief!” Again, the battle between head and heart.

I certainly, though, cannot point fingers at anyone else’s struggle of faith.

Before sunrise, Epiphany Sunday, I was downstairs brewing coffee and stoking the woodstove in preparation for my morning ritual of progressing one more step through our *Read the Bible and Catechism in a Year Guide*. In the warmth of the coffee and the blazing fire, the following readings from the Catechism confronted me—head

The principle fruit of receiving the Eucharist in Holy Communion is an intimate union with Christ Jesus.

CCC, 1391

Communion...preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at baptism.

CCC, 1392

There is nothing new here for life-long Catholics or well read converts, yet at the beginning of this New Year, these truths attacked the shallowness of my belief. Other converts have admitted the same struggle, that of truly *realizing* what we *believe* to be true. Yes, I fully accept Jesus’ words in the Gospel—“This is my body...this is My blood”—as well as the Catholic Church’s literal understanding of these words, but old prejudices die hard. Often when I kneel in mass reciting the centurion’s prayer for Jesus’ merciful and healing touch—“Lord, I am not worthy to receive You...”—I also repeat the words of this desperate, humble father.

However, these statements from the Catechism confronted me in yet another way. Through all my years in Protestant ministry, my primary aim

was to help others *abide* in Jesus Christ. I preached, taught, and counseled my congregations to accept and surrender to Jesus, head and heart; to follow Him fully, and then to tell others the good news. But it wasn’t until I became a Catholic that I discovered the one Scripture that most clearly explains *how* we abide in Jesus: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him” (John 6:56).

Lord Jesus, I believe, please help my unbelief.

But the most unexpected personal revelation of Epiphany morning me. Half way through mass, I felt a tap on my shoulder.

The usher said, “Marcus, the usual Eucharistic ministers are sick. Can you help?”

“But, I’m not commissioned” I replied. He answered, that it was permitted in emergencies.

Now understand, I have nothing against Eucharistic ministers—I’m all for lay ministries! However, the correct title is *Extraordinary* Eucharistic ministers, and having rarely been in a parish where I felt conditions warranted this extraordinary assistance, I’ve resisted becoming involved in this ministry. Given the fact, however, that our

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and heart:

new priest has a physical handicap that necessitates our assistance, the absence of Eucharistic ministers on this particular morning did pose an extraordinary necessity. "Sure, glad to help."

As a result, on Epiphany Sunday, I found myself distributing the Body of Jesus to our small congregation. At first, I was distanced by other thoughts. *Am I doing this right? They didn't have time to give me any instructions. I certainly didn't do it this way in the Presbyterian church!*

Then the first communicant stood before me. I lifted Jesus, looked the communicant straight in the eyes, and proclaimed, "The Body of Christ." She answered, "Amen," and I gave her Jesus, body, blood, soul and divinity.

Not until then did I fully realize that there is no more powerful altar call in all the churches of the world than when we come forward to receive Jesus in communion. When we say "Amen!" we are not only proclaiming, "Yes, I believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist"; we are surrendering to Jesus as our Lord and Savior, head and heart.

Yet, of course, you fellow clergy converts probably can guess what else was going through my mind. It has been nearly ten years since I stood in this position, distributing communion. Then I said it was only symbolic; now...

Like so many other clergy converts, I continue to be haunted by Paul's warning to Timothy: "Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophetic utterance when the council of elders laid their hands upon you." (1 Tim. 4.14). I recognize that my Protestant ordination was not equivalent to ordination to the Catholic priesthood, but, like so many of you who sit in pews on Sunday and ache to be in pastoral-priestly service, I know in my heart, as well as my head, that nearly twenty-five years ago, I received and accepted this call from Jesus.

My prayers for this New Year are that many more doors of service will be opened for you who have given up so much to come home to the Church, and for you who are still on the journey. I also ask your prayers for those of us who are considering whether to pursue the priesthood may God grant us wisdom and guide our bishops as they discern the validity of our callings.

And may our merciful Father, who always hears our prayers and grants us an increase of faith, hope, and love, bless you and your families in this New Year.

Sincerely In Christ,



And if you're not yet a Member of the Coming Home Network. . .

Get Involved!

Become a member of the CHNetwork. Membership gets you on the mailing list to receive *Coming Home Network* related mailings.

To become a member, contact the CHNetwork at 800-664-5110 or info@chnetwork.org



Upcoming guests on the Journey Home Program on EWTN, Mondays live at 8 pm EST

Guest Schedule

***Jan. 28-
Fr. Patrick Rohen***

***Feb. 4-
Fr. Bryan Patterson***

***Feb. 11-
Patty Bonds***

***Feb. 18-
Dan Hadden***

***Feb. 25-
Jeff Ziegler***

Can't catch the show when it is broadcast live?

Tune in for re-airs: (EST)

Tuesdays 10 am

Fridays 1 am

Saturdays 11 pm

Or listen on the internet at www.ewtn.com



An Appeal for Good Advice

The office of the Coming Home Network often receives requests from Protestant clergy for advice on matters of doctrine. However, appeals for information on Sacred Scripture, Church history, or dogmatic theology can seem easy when compared with those related to the heart breaking reality of personal responsibility and impending separation. Below is one of those letters for which I ask your prayers and wise advice.

My husband and I are greatly longing to come into full communion with the Catholic Church. Because of his great concern for the people in our parish, my husband, though, is not yet ready to leave the church here, for which we are responsible. God doesn't seem to be giving us any clues as to where to go from here. And so far we haven't come across anyone

who'd dealt with the emotional aspect of leaving a rural congregation.

Are there any pastor-converts in the Coming Home Network who have served small churches where their leaving could mean the closing of that church? At the very least, it will be a number of years before another permanent pastor is found. The parish had been without a full-time pastor for many years before our arrival. Even finding temporary pulpit fills will be extremely difficult.

On a real good Sunday, our church has about 40 people in attendance. Our area is sparsely populated and drought-stricken. Many people are leaving the area because there's no rain to grow crops and no work. Each time we gain a family, another moves away. Then, often, after a year or so, the new family moves away too.

How do we go about leaving these people? We want to leave with as little damage and heartache to them as possible. They're already discouraged by the economy here (and cancer, rebellious children, divorce, remarriage, etc.). After doing our internship in the city and then spending over seven years here, we know there is a lot of difference between the two. And unless someone's been here, I don't think they'll know what we're talking about. Has anyone else dealt with these issues? How did they handle them? Are there others from rural ministries in Coming Home Network?

If anyone, with a background in rural ministry, has any constructive advice for this couple, please contact Jim Anderson at jim@chnetwork.org.



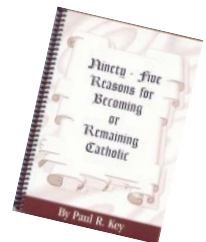
Coming Home Resources

This Month's featured resource: 95 Reasons for Becoming or Remaining Catholic
by : Paul R. Key

During the eighteen years that Paul Key was a Presbyterian pastor, many reasons came to his attention for the Catholic Church being the best and the true church that he had to convert in mid-career. In this book Paul shares with you the "ninety-five" reasons that he identified for becoming or remaining Catholic. They demonstrate that the Catholic Church:

1. is the most accurately Biblical of all Christian groups,
2. is the most intellectually honest and the most historically accurate,
3. exhibits an excellent, practical environment for ministry,
4. maintains the deepest, most profound spirituality,
5. most truly represents the essentials of sin and salvation,
6. has the most coherent doctrine concerning sex, marriage and the family.
7. puts it all together in the Mass, the celebration of the Eucharist.

He expresses that these reasons as a whole exhibit a compelling vision for a whole-hearted, full time commitment to the service of Christ in the Roman Catholic Church, either for single or those who are married, for clergy, religious, or laity. Paul believes that such involvement is the key not only to personal spiritual growth, but also to the health and stability of the entire social order.



Yours free with a \$35 or more donation. Please indicate on order form.



Please pray for...

- ✦ Please pray for Tim, a Presbyterian minister who wants to “come home.”
- ✦ Pray for Terri’s sister & family: Wendy & Wayne & their children: Michael, Sarah, Ethan & Joseph that they return to the Catholic Church.
- ✦ Please pray that Margaret’s grandchildren are baptized and become Catholic and that their mother returns to The Church. Also, that Margaret’s son returns to the Catholic Church.
- ✦ Please pray for the return of Mary Lou’s brother back into the Catholic Church.
- ✦ Please pray that Paul receives the guidance he needs for his conversion.
- ✦ Please pray that Annette breaks free from the Jehovah’s Witness chains that have bound her for 41 yrs.
- ✦ Please pray for Fr. Ward who is in the process of converting to the Catholic Church.
- ✦ Please pray for Jennifer and her family that the Lord draw them into the Church.
- ✦ Please pray for Nancy, a new convert, whose husband is very resistant to the Church. Pray that someday his heart will be open to the Faith.
- ✦ Please pray for strength & wisdom for Shirley whose faith is being challenged by the New Age Movement.
- ✦ Please pray that Deacon Michael is always faithful to his ministry and for the needs of those whom he serves especially those in need of coming back to the Church and the Sacraments.
- ✦ Pray for Jim, a Baptist minister seeking the fullness of God’s truth.
- ✦ For the conversion of David.
- ✦ Please pray for Mary’s daughter Bethany, will remain Catholic and work for Him.
- ✦ Please pray for the Return of Helen’s son to the Catholic Faith.
- ✦ Please pray for the return of Joan’s children and grandchildren.
- ✦ For Bonnie that she returns to the Church.
- ✦ That Angela, a college student returns to the Church and has her questions answered.
- ✦ For Linda that she may be inspired to join the Church.
- ✦ Please pray for the return of Lisa and her family to The Catholic Church
- ✦ For the conversion of Charlotte’s husband and the return to the Church of her parents.
- ✦ Please pray for Kathleen that she continue to grow stronger in her Faith and that her husband and children will return to The Church.
- ✦ For the children of Thomas that they may return home to the Catholic Church.
- ✦ For Earl’s wife’s acceptance of Catholic teaching and above all her conversion.
- ✦ Please pray for Linda and her daughter as they continue their journey to the Catholic Church.
- ✦ For Miriam’s daughter Angela that she will go to confession and will return to the Church.
- ✦ For Gladys’s oldest son, that he may regain his faith, for her youngest son, that he may be able to accept confession, and for her daughter, that her faith may be deepened.
- ✦ For Mercedes’ children, that they may return to the Catholic Church, and for her daughter and husband.
- ✦ For Jacqueline’s brother and his fiancée, that they turn away from religious distractions and come back to the Catholic Church.
- ✦ For Lawrence’s friend that he will return to the Church.
- ✦ Jerry, cousin of Dan & Colleen, that he will want to become Catholic.
- ✦ For Patty’s husband Richard, daughter Sarah, her brother, & parents that they may journey home to the Catholic Church.
- ✦ For Anthony’s daughter that she will study the facts about the Catholic Church; and not just join a church because it appeals to younger people but base her conversion by a historical journey.
- ✦ Please pray for Katie & Spencer that they may find the Truth.
- ✦ For Vivian’s pastor, that he may have a more accepting attitude.
- ✦ Please pray for Craig who is in the process of discerning a calling to priesthood.
- ✦ Please pray for Robert, Dustin, Mary Katherine, & Linde that they return to the Catholic Church.