



February 2010 Newsletter

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

<i>Deep in Scripture</i> Schedule.....	3
EWTN's <i>The Journey Home</i> Schedule.....	4
Speaking Engagements.....	5
Prayer Requests.....	9
<i>Three Steps Closer</i> — Marcus Grodi.....	10



THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



From the Desert to Paradise

by Tom Cabeen

My parents became Jehovah's Witnesses in April 1954, shortly after my fourth birthday. My father had grown up unchurched; my mother was a nominal Methodist. They embraced the Watchtower version of Christianity very enthusiastically. In 1955, believing the end of the world to be imminent, they volunteered to move "where the need is great" and sold their new home in Phoenix, Arizona. Dad was appointed to oversee the Cottonwood, Arizona congregation, which at the time consisted only of our family of three and one other elderly woman. By 1960, it had grown into a small but zealous group of about a dozen families.

Dad brushed up on his high school Spanish and started a small Bible study among a group of Mexicans in the area. In 1961, at the Watchtower Society's request, we moved to El Centro, California, where he served as overseer of a Spanish-speaking congregation. My mother and I started to learn Spanish. I learned it rather easily, but she had much more difficulty. She never learned to speak it fluently. In 1963 we were again asked to move, this time to a small Spanish congregation in Casa Grande, Arizona.

I graduated high school in 1967 and became a full-time door-to-door preacher, or "Pioneer." As a result, I was classified 4-D (Minister of Religion) by my local draft board and exempted

from military service. In the summer of 1968, I applied to serve at the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York. I was invited to serve at "Bethel" starting November 14, 1968. This was the start of a long spiritual pilgrimage.

Shortly after I left home, my parents, encouraged by my example, also began "Pioneering." Dad was invited to become a traveling minister or "Circuit Overseer." He worked with Spanish-speaking congregations in the southwest and northeast of the United States for about a decade.

Success in Brooklyn

At Bethel, I was determined to learn as much as possible about Watchtower teachings. I studied hard and applied myself diligently to my work. That, along with natural aptitude for the duties assigned to me, resulted in my being given much more responsibility than usual for someone my age.

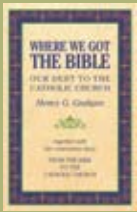
In 1969, I was assigned to the printing department, working on the press which produced *The Watchtower* magazine. Within three years, I was a foreman over several presses. In 1977, I was appointed Pressroom Overseer, with supervision of more than a hundred men and 40 large printing presses. ...continued on page 2

Journeys Home

FEATURED RESOURCES

Where We Got The Bible

By Henry Graham



Since it first appeared in 1911, *Where We Got The Bible* has gone through numerous printings and has been available in print almost continually ever since. The reader will soon discover the popularity

of this book, for it covers the salient facts of the Bible's history in a clear, easily understood manner. Here are discussed the sources for our canon of books of both the Old and New Testaments, along with vital information relative to the Bible in the life of the Church. A book certain to inform and please contemporary readers as it has those in former years. Also included is Graham's conversion story, "From the Kirk to the Catholic Church." Brought up a Calvinist in Scotland, Graham became a minister but found himself irresistibly drawn toward the Catholic faith, eventually becoming a Catholic Bishop.

Why Catholic Bibles Are Bigger

By Gary Michuta



Why do Catholic Bibles have more books in their Old Testaments than Protestant and Jewish Bibles? Did the Catholic Church add books to Scripture or did Protestantism remove them?

What was the Bible of the earliest Christians? Does my Bible have the same books as the historic Christian Bible? In this fascinating book, Gary Michuta takes the reader on a journey through history to find out what happened to these books of Scripture. Michuta traces the path of the Deuterocanon (apocrypha) from its pre-Christian roots through the Protestant Reformation to the nineteenth century and definitively settles the question of whether the Council of Trent added books to Scripture in reaction to Protestantism. Many commonly held myths are exposed while uncovering many little known and surprising information concerning these lost books of the Protestant Bible.

...Journeys Home Continued...

When not working, I cultivated friendships with mature, responsible members of the Bethel staff, many of whom worked in offices where the most respected, loyal, and mature Witnesses were assigned. I had many in-depth discussions with them about the Society's teachings and the functioning of the organization.

Late in 1973, I began dating another Bethelite, a lovely young woman named Gloria, whom I had met shortly after she arrived in 1971. We were married on May 25, 1974. Gloria was also a zealous believer and a hard worker. We had both decided to dedicate our lives full-time to what we believed to be the few remaining years before "Armageddon," the end of this age and the beginning of a new one.

In my local Brooklyn congregation, Greenpoint Spanish, I was first appointed an elder in 1971, when I was 21. The following year I was appointed a "Bethel Elder." As such, I often spoke as an official Watchtower Society representative at summer conventions in English, Spanish, and French. (I was the featured speaker at a District Assembly in Roanoke, VA, at age 26.) Gloria and I both learned French, and were assigned to a French-speaking congregation, composed mostly of Haitians, in Newark, NJ.

Disturbing Questions

I was baptized as a Witness in 1959, but had never read through the Bible. I was required to do so as a new member of the headquarters staff. The more I read, the more inconsistencies I found between plain statements in Scripture and Witness beliefs. At first I attributed the problem to my youth and inexperience. But in time, as I began to be more respected and trusted, I discussed my Bible questions privately with older, well-placed headquarters staffers, and was surprised to discover how many of them had the same kinds of questions, and how openly they discussed them.

The publication of *Aid to Bible Understanding*, a Bible dictionary, in 1971, initiated major organizational changes for the Watchtower Society. For many, including me, this opened the door to a reexamination of other teachings. I wondered, "If we have been wrong in our understanding of arrangements we formerly thought to be solidly based on Scripture, why couldn't we be wrong about doctrines, too?"

During the 1970s, a growing number of sincere Bethelites began to read other Bible translations in addition to the Watchtower's own *New World Translation*, as well as Bible commentaries. Some gathered in private groups to study and discuss things without the "assistance" of Watchtower publications. By 1979, I was convinced that there could be no reconciling of some key Watchtower teachings with the Bible. I still believed, however, that God was guiding the Watchtower organization and that the end was near, so I expected big changes to come. I awaited them with eager expectation.

Gloria, on the other hand, was unhappy. She wanted us to leave Bethel and start a family. Since I firmly believed the Watchtower chronology upon which their end-times predictions are based, I could not imagine why anyone would want to leave with the end so close. I brought the matter up with a trusted friend on the Watchtower's Governing Body, Raymond Franz. He gave me a copy of a letter sent to the Watchtower Society by Carl Olof Jonsson, a Witness elder from Sweden. Jonsson presented indisputable

historical evidence that Watchtower chronology was seriously flawed. His logic was solid and his documentation scholarly. I read and reread the evidence. Finally, I was convinced. I was also heartsick.

What was hard to accept was not so much the error but its corollary. "Bible chronology" is absolutely essential in establishing the Watchtower Society's claim to be God's "channel of communication" to mankind in the "time of the end," just prior to the end of this wicked world. If the chronology is wrong, so are all the Watchtower claims. I began to seriously consider the possibility that the Watchtower leaders were misled at best; hypocrites and false prophets at worst. At this point, there was no reason to postpone our desire to have a family. Gloria and I resigned from Bethel service effective July 15, 1980, and moved to Lancaster, PA, where Gloria had grown up.

I was not ready to simply walk away entirely from my religious community. Our whole lives were tied up with Jehovah's Witnesses. Still, our lives were to change greatly. We had absolutely no money, for we had spent the previous twelve years working as unpaid volunteers. I had studied hard, and had both extensive job experience and technical expertise, but no college degree. (I could have attended college on a full scholarship, but Witnesses are strongly discouraged from higher education. As a "true believer," I followed their teaching in that matter, too.)

Although I had worked in good conscience and thoroughly enjoyed my service with the Watchtower Society, and loved my Witness brothers and sisters dearly, it appeared virtually certain that there would be an even more significant parting of the ways. I simply lost my desire to actively support a belief system in which I no longer believed. We would have to start over, both spiritually and financially.

Disfellowshipped and Shunned

We had left the headquarters of our own volition, and I was still officially in good standing with the organization. So I was appointed an elder in the Lancaster congregation. Although I had doubts about Watchtower teachings, I did not discuss them openly, and saw no reason to withdraw from Jehovah's Witnesses as long as my association with them did not require me to violate my conscience. However, the main focus of Watchtower publications for many months was warnings against and condemnation of "apostates," defined as those who disagree with Watchtower teachings. I could not support that perspective, but I was often asked to do just that. Early in February 1981, I resigned my eldership. Later that year, on August 9, 1981, our first son Matthew was born.

In the spring of 1982, the elders asked to speak with Gloria and me after one of the regular congregation meetings. I was questioned (in Gloria's presence) for an hour or so about "doubts." The elders asked if I believed the Watchtower Society to be God's exclusive organization (a key Watchtower teaching). I replied that although I thought that God had worked through Jehovah's Witnesses, I was not willing to state that he works through them exclusively. The meeting ended with no action taken. The same elders asked us to attend a second brief meeting a few weeks later. In this meeting, they announced their decision to disfellowship us. This official action meant that every Witness member of our family and friends would ...continued on page 4



DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

On EWTN radio with Marcus Grodi & Guests

Wednesdays **LIVE** at 2:00 PM ET
Encore: Wednesdays @ 9:00 PM ET
Sundays @ 7:00 AM ET



Join Marcus and his weekly guest as they discuss "the verse(s) I never saw."

For more information and a link to watch the program LIVE online go to
www.deepinscripture.com

Deep in Scripture Guests for February:

February 3

Sheila Liaugminas*

February 10

Ronda Chervin*

February 17

Kevin O'Brien*

February 24

TBD*

**This schedule is subject to change*

SHARE YOUR STORY!

The Coming Home Network International always welcomes those of our members who are converts or reverts to share their written conversion stories of how they were drawn (back) to the Catholic Church. If you feel called to share your story please feel free to e-mail a written conversion story of either around 1700 or 4000 words, along with your name and contact information to Mary Clare Piecynski maryp@chnetwork.org.



EWTN'S THE JOURNEY HOME

on television and radio, hosted by
Marcus Grodi, president of CHNI.

TELEVISION

Mondays **LIVE** at 8:00 PM ET

Encores: Tuesdays 1:00 & 10:00 AM ET

Thursdays 2:00 PM ET

Saturdays 11:00 PM ET

RADIO

Mondays **LIVE** at 8:00 PM ET

Encore: Saturdays 7:00 AM ET

February 1

Open line with Jim and Joy Pinto*

Jim-Former Charismatic Episcopal Minister

Joy-Former Episcopalian

February 8

Dr. David Anders*

Former Presbyterian

February 15

*The Journey Home in Scandinavia**

February 22

TBD*

**This schedule is subject to change*



...Journeys Home Continued...

be required to completely shun us or face the same consequences. Nearly three decades of association with Jehovah's Witnesses were over. Our families and our religious community had rejected us. We were on our own.

Does God Work Through an Organization?

What I needed was some reliable way to determine which Watchtower teachings were true and which were false. I had discovered error, but what I needed was truth. Because of the centrality of the Witness idea that God uses the Watchtower organization as an exclusive channel to communicate with his people, that was the first focus of my study. Using a concordance and Bible dictionary, I began to carefully search the Scriptures for evidence as to whether or not God had consistently worked through an organization as an official instrument to communicate with or direct humans. I concluded that he did not, and published my research in an article entitled "*Does God Work Through an Organization?*" It was eventually translated into several languages and became popular among exiting Witnesses, particularly after the Internet came into wide use.

Although I wrote in good conscience, I am somewhat sad now at the degree of success I had. I had "thrown the baby out with the bath water," concluding that all religious structures are basically alike. A few years later, I revised my article to show that Christ was joined organically with his body, that it is not like human organizations. But I did not yet grasp the significance of that truth. I had much to learn about the visible Church.

"Organized Religion" Revisited

For several years, Gloria and I did not join any organized Christian fellowship. We read and studied the Bible only on our own or with other former Witnesses in a small support group. We formed strong social bonds with these dear friends, but our spiritual growth was slow. Usually our discussions were negative, centered on things we once believed but now rejected. We covered much the same ground every time we met. Finally Gloria said, "I am tired of going over and over these same old things. I want to learn something *new* and *true* about Jesus Christ!"

Our second son, James, was born November 22, 1986. As our two boys began to get older, we felt a growing need to find Bible-believing Christians with whose children ours could associate. We visited a local Christian and Missionary Alliance fellowship and became friends with the pastor and his wife. When I told him about my background, he asked me to teach an adult Bible class. He did not ask me for details of my actual beliefs, but I always taught "orthodoxy" as I understood it. I always supported my teaching from passages of Scripture and respected Protestant commentaries. Neither Gloria nor I ever officially joined that fellowship. We were still reluctant to become associated with "organized religion." After about a year, the pastor reluctantly asked me to step down as a teacher, since I had still not officially joined. I didn't blame him.

We looked for a place to worship that was "kid friendly" and eventually settled into an independent evangelical Baptist fellowship. There we met many fine Christian people, and quickly got involved in religious activities.



A few months after we began attending there, I was again asked to teach an adult Bible class, which I did almost continuously for nearly fourteen years.

History Lessons

In 1998, I started working on another article, entitled “*Where is the Body of Christ?*” My intention was to help former JW’s find and associate with other believers in the community. I wanted to highlight the similarity between evangelical worship and that of first-century disciples. I wanted to show that practical Christian living rather than uniformity of structure and doctrine is what matters most, and encouraged my readers to find and join a “Bible-believing” Christian fellowship of their choice.

I started my research using only the Scriptures, but soon discovered how little I actually knew about the early Christians. I realized that I was “reading into” the Scriptures what I wanted to find. I honestly could not reconstruct the early church in much detail simply from what is written in the New Testament. So I ended up buying history books—dozens, eventually, and started reading. I published the article. But my research had raised a whole new set of interesting questions.

During my research, I kept running across references to the “Early Church Fathers.” Practically every scholarly source I knew of respected them highly. But I knew very little about these writers, so I bought a set of the ten-volume Ante-Nicene Fathers and began to read, starting with the writings of those who had known and conversed with the apostles.

What first surprised me is how they applied the Scriptures. There was no official collection of Christian Scripture when these writers put pen to parchment, but they did quote from writings which later became part of the Christian canon. Often they applied a familiar passage in a way that was completely new to me. I was intrigued by the implications of this fact.

I began to see that the Bible is not self-interpreting. Most passages can be understood in more than one way. The problem is not resolved even if one is familiar with the original languages, as were all the ancient writers. Clearly, some parts of the sacred writings are to be taken literally, some metaphorically, others allegorically or figuratively. How do we sort out which is which? I had paid a lot of money for excellent commentaries, yet often I was surprised at the variety of explanations of a given passage I found among respected commentators from differing Christian traditions or denominations.

Slowly, I came to understand that there is simply no reliable way to determine if a particular Christian teaching is true based only on whether or not it is logical, reasonable, and seems to be supported by “proof texts” from Scripture. Some other source of authoritative interpretation is needed. Some Christians expect to receive individual interpretational guidance from the Holy Spirit; others rely on scholarship, historical sources, or reason. But none of these methods produces general consensus among all commentators or interpreters.

I finally realized that this is why every single denomination uses written materials in addition to the Bible, whether a catechism, commentaries, books, tracts, or other publications. No one just hands a Bible to a potential convert and says, “Read the book and you will understand the Christian message completely and clearly.” *Every Christian teacher ...continued on page 6*



MARCUS GRODI'S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

February 27, 2010

St. James Family Retreat
St. James Catholic Church
622 Chestnut St
Gadsden, AL 35902
256-546-2975

March 27, 2010

Sr. Elise Benefit
Holy Angels Academy
12201 Old Henry Rd
Louisville, KY 40223
502-254-9440

April 8, 2010

Catholic Radio Indy Annual Dinner
Indianapolis, IN
317-870-8400
jim@catholicradioindy.org

April 10, 2010

Divine Mercy Conference 2010
Cajundome Convention Center
444 Cajundome Blvd
Lafayette, LA 70506
337-654-8682
mbergeron@gmail.com

April 24, 2010

Lift Jesus Higher Rally
Catholic Renewal Ministries
Toronto, ON CANADA
763-662-1730
jmasherwood@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER COPIES



CHNI encourages members to make copies of the newsletter and distribute to friends, family, church groups, etc. We do ask that copies of the newsletter not be sold. CHNI and the authors reserve all rights and permissions.



SPOUSES NETWORK

Are you the spouse of a clergy interested in becoming Catholic?

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

If the *Spouses Network* is something you feel called to, whether you are a spouse of a clergy who has made the journey home and would like to assist someone, or if you are a spouse of a minister and are either on the journey or a new Catholic, we would like to invite you to contact *CHNI* to assist us in the development of this network.

If you would like more information or if you feel called to become a part of this apostolate please contact Mary Clare Pieczynski by e-mail at marycp@chnetwork.org or by phone at 740-450-1175 ext 105.

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



...Journeys Home Continued...

must add explanation to Scripture in order to communicate the full Christian message.

About this time, we began attending the Episcopal Church. We loved the Anglican liturgy, music, and overall approach to worship and theology. Although widespread liberalism was a problem in many parishes, our parish was warm, friendly, and quite orthodox.

A Great Apostasy?

Nearly twenty years had passed since I had left the Watchtower Society, but I still believed that, sometime shortly after the end of the first century, the faithful early apostolic church had become the corrupt Roman Catholic Church. Most Protestants, I later learned, have a somewhat similar view, except that they date the falling away from orthodoxy into the fourth or fifth century or even later. Both Luther and Calvin, however, believed that the ante-Nicene church taught authentic Christianity.

I began to think about the implications of the “great apostasy” idea. If true, one corollary is that for some period of time, Jesus had no authentic congregation of faithful followers, no visible body of believers, or church, on earth. But if that is true, and if the Bible is not self-interpreting, once the correct interpretation gets lost, it can never be restored.

Scripture says that Christ revealed many things to his disciples which were not written down (Jn 21:25). It also says that “the church” (not the holy writings) is the “pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). The teachings Jesus taught his disciples orally were not “added to Scripture” by the apostles. They were taught orally to the new disciples they made. The writings that later became Scripture were composed *within a fully functioning church setting in which every member had been taught orally for decades*. When the apostle Paul wrote epistles to congregations, he had usually spent much time with them prior to that, teaching them orally. So, his letters often left many things unstated. They primarily dealt with exceptions, not normal teachings and practices everyone already knew.

An Invisible Church?

For many years after I left the Witnesses, even as an evangelical Protestant, I believed that the members of the “true church” were scattered among all the world’s Christian denominations. This “invisible church” was composed of believers in any Christian community who take their faith seriously and attempt to live by the Scriptures. They were the “wheat” of Jesus’ “wheat and weeds” parable (Matt 13:24-30). I began, however, to see problems with that perspective.

An invisible church composed of scattered individuals who are not in contact with each other, and who are not under any common leadership, in fact, has no outward, visible characteristics at all, for it is *invisible*! We can never know anything for sure about such a church: where it is, what its members believe, or how they worship. It looks like whatever we want it to look like, for there is nothing real with which to compare it. It is, *and will always remain*, a “church” of our own construction.

More importantly, it doesn’t look at all like the Church described in the New Testament, which was full of real people, saints and sinners alike, a living

structured community, under the leadership and tutelage of bishops, elders or presbyters, and deacons, to whom the believers submitted. Every Christian congregation of God's people described in Scripture is not only visible, it is human, with all the problems which exist in any family, group, or community of humans anywhere. How can an invisible church be "salt and light" in the community? How can unbelievers see its good works and give glory to God? Even the reformers, though they rejected the authority of Rome, recognized the need for and existence of leadership and structure within the body of believers. I rejected the idea of an invisible church once and for all.

Sacraments

I continued reading history books, along with the early Christian writings. I was surprised that so many concepts and teachings I had once rejected had been presented incorrectly, even dishonestly, in both Watchtower and evangelical Protestant literature, then explained away as illogical or unscriptural. The early Christians' presentation of these concepts usually made more sense and fit the Scriptures better than the explanations of Christian teaching I had read in Protestant commentaries. As I became convinced of their validity, gradually my understanding of Christianity began to change. "Problem passages" of Scripture with which I had struggled for years slowly began to disappear. A new "big picture" was starting to fit together for me. I was learning things that were entirely new to me. They were to completely transform my understanding of how Christ reconciles sinners to a righteous God.

A prime example is the early Christian belief that bread and wine, when blessed by the Christian presbyter officiating at a Eucharist celebration, actually *become* the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Of course, this is exactly what Jesus actually says in the narratives of the Last Supper, but the idea was still startling. Most Protestants take Jesus' words to be symbolic. (There's that interpretation problem again!)

I knew that Christians, in some mysterious way, actually *are* the body of Christ. I once took that to be merely a metaphor. But I learned that Christ's disciples are joined in a very literal way to Christ when they consume his body and blood. This action corresponds with the ancient Jews consuming the Passover lamb, and is intimately connected with salvation. In fact, "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you" (John 6:53). What a concept!

This was my introduction to the "sacraments" or "mysteries" of the Christian faith. God extends graces to his people *through* and in connection with material objects or actions: the water of baptism, the oil of consecration, and hands laid on in ordination. I had never heard these things from Witnesses or evangelical Christians. At first I thought the idea to be totally unscriptural, but I began to see it everywhere. I noticed how many powerful works done by Jesus and the apostles involved physical acts like touching or breathing on the recipients, or objects like bread, fish, oil, or wine.

Material objects, when blessed and used by the apostles and their successors as Jesus taught, become both signs of and instruments *through* which God's grace is given to humans. They play an important role in healing and restoring sinners to full fellowship with him. God works through his creation, not around or in spite of it.

...continued on page 8

2010 DEEP IN HISTORY CONFERENCE

Marcus Grodi and *The Coming Home Network International* invite you to join us next fall for our 8th annual *Deep in History* conference.



How Firm A Foundation: Authority Through the Scriptures Oct 22-24, 2010

With the *Deep in History* conferences standing on the *Pillar and Bulwark of Truth*, in October 2010, we will turn the focus to the Word of God, as we look to the authority and history of the Sacred Writ.

Join us in the fall of 2010 as we bring together another exciting group of speakers to discuss the authority of the Scriptures. We will look at the inspired Word of God, from the penning of its books, to its binding into the Bible we hold today, so as Catholics, we might better profess our faith through His inspired Word.

The Sacred Writ is inerrant; however, through man's individual interpretation of God's inspired Word, division tears through Christianity like a jagged edge. As we look to answer, "How firm is your foundation?" we will respond to the errors of today and yesterday as we continue our journey into the teachings of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

We invite you to come and be a part of another inspiring weekend, with an aim to end ignorance, and enlighten the heart, mind, and soul, as we dive into the history of the Sacred Word of God, that we might with confidence ask and respond to each other, "How firm is your foundation?"

Confirmed speakers include:

- Marcus Grodi
- Dr. Paul Thigpen
- Dr. Scott Hahn
- Richard Lane
- Patrick Madrid
- Kimberly Hahn
- Dr. Kenneth Howell
- Bruce Sullivan
- Fr. Mitch Pacwa

For more information go to www.deepinhistory.com or to register call 740-450-1175.

THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTL'

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...Journeys Home Continued...

At that time, I still knew virtually nothing about the Catholic Church. So when I noticed a copy of the *Catholic Catechism* at a used book sale, I bought it and started reading. I was shocked at what I found! The Catholic explanation of Christian faith and morals, including salvation, baptism, and redemption, and my investigation into the historical early Church had allowed me to adopt a Catholic perspective without my strong anti-Catholic prejudice getting in the way.

Point of Decision

I began to read Catholic writings enthusiastically. Catholic explanations of Christianity fit the Scriptures, the real world, and the human heart. I still had much to learn, but every single teaching I investigated rang true. The deeper I looked, the better they looked. At some point, the evidence became conclusive for me. I shared the things I was learning with Gloria, who is deeply spiritual. (She had been baptized Catholic as an infant, but raised as a Witness.) She read, reflected, and prayed. We discussed some issues, but I did not pressure her into a decision. I just prayed and waited. She did the same, reading and praying, then one day she simply said, "We should become Catholics." Her openness to the Holy Spirit's guidance confirmed to her that the Catholic Church is what we had been searching for.

What we have found Catholic teaching to be is astounding: deep, scriptural, historically supportable, elegant, logical, and coherent. I honestly believe that anyone who follows these teachings faithfully will become a godly man or woman. This is where we have belonged all these years. We were received into the Roman Catholic Church on Friday, June 9, 2006 and are completely happy within the ancient church of Jesus Christ. Most importantly, we are home. ■



Tom Cabeen was raised as a devout Jehovah's Witness. In 1968 he joined the headquarters staff of the Watchtower Society in Brooklyn, NY. While there, he served as an elder and department overseer, and also met and married his wife, Gloria. In 1980, after biblical and historical studies convinced him that Watchtower theology had fatal flaws, Tom and Gloria resigned from the headquarters staff and moved to Lancaster, PA. Later, when questioned by local Witness elders, they admitted to having doubts about Watchtower doctrine. As a result, they were officially "disfellowshipped," which subjected them to being shunned: completely cut off from all Witnesses, even family and close friends.

Although they remained devout, they became agnostics. A sincere search for reliable information about God and the authentic Christian faith led them into evangelical Christianity, where Tom taught adult Bible classes for over fifteen years. An historical investigation of early Christian teaching and practice led them into the Anglican communion, then to a thorough study of the Roman Catholic Church. Tom and Gloria and their son Matt were received into the Roman Catholic Church in 2006. Their son James entered the Church in 2009. Tom is currently an aspirant in the diaconate formation program in the diocese of Hartford, CT.

Prayer List



Clergy

- For Kathleen, the wife of a Lutheran minister in New York, that God may richly bless her and turn her husband's heart to the fullness of the Christian faith found in the Catholic Church.
- For Bobby, a Reformed minister, that the Holy Spirit would anoint his reading and study of the true teachings of the Catholic Church.
- For Sigurd, a former Lutheran minister in Belgium, that the Holy Spirit would guide his heart to the vocation God has in store for him.
- For Tim, a Baptist minister in Indiana, that he will know and do God's will and that the Holy Spirit will direct his path into the Catholic Church and also grant him employment.
- For Paul and Carol, former Lutherans in Canada, that God would guide them to an apostolate in which their training, gifts, and talents may be utilized to strengthen Christian families.
- For Jonathan, a former Southern Baptist minister in Texas, that the Holy Spirit would grant him the grace to see where God is leading him.
- For George, an Episcopal priest in the upper Midwest, that he may be able to see that true and valid holy apostolic orders are found in the Catholic Church.
- For Samuel, a Pentecostal minister in Ghana, that he may receive each and every gift of the Holy Spirit which God has in store for him through the holy Sacrament of Confirmation and then be given food for the journey in the holy Eucharist.

- For Kevin, a Presbyterian minister in Texas, that his journey may lead, in his quest for truth, to the Church founded by Jesus on the Apostles.
- For Joshua, a Non-denominational lay minister in New York, that he may come to the joy of abiding in our Lord Jesus in the holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.
- For Walter, a Lutheran minister in Canada, that he may find a way to become Catholic and support his family at the same time.

Laity

- For a gentleman to receive the graces to surrender and be obedient to God and for his family.
- For the repose of the soul of Sister Mary Agnes.
- For Randall and his family to embrace the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- For Jeff, Gail, and Louise to return to the Catholic Church.
- For Kathleen, her family, and their intentions.
- For Michael to have peace of mind and contentment, especially in his place of employment.
- For Ann and Micah's marriage.
- For Alexander who is discerning a call to the diaconate.
- For Joe, Ruth, and their family.
- For Frank, and that his family will return to the Church with a strong faith.
- For Lyle and his struggles with Catholic ways & beliefs in RCIA.
- For Jeanne and her family's needs.
- For Frances, that God bless her with abundant health.
- For Sister Lucy's healing and health as she continues serving the Lord.
- For Mary's children, may they return to the Catholic Church.
- For Jerry, his health, and his intentions.
- For Albin and his intentions.
- For the parishioners of All Souls parish.
- For Woodrow's health and complete recovery from illness.

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 in general and specific of the *CHNetwork*, its members, and supporters.

Please submit all prayer requests & answers to:
CHN Prayer List
P. O. Box 8290
Zanesville, OH 43702

You may also email your prayer requests to:
prayers@chnetwork.org

We use only first names to preserve anonymity.

Three Steps Closer

Excuse me if I've covered this topic before in one of our *CHNewsletters*. More often than not I find myself writing these articles on planes, and usually as a result of something I've experienced while rushing through these busy hotspots of humanity. Such is the case with these thoughts on three steps to grow closer to Jesus.

What brought this to mind this morning was not so much what I was seeing in the actions and attitudes of others, but what I was experiencing within myself—and what I saw, I didn't like.

One of the greatest reasons for being a Catholic—safely and actively ensconced in the bosom of the Church established by Jesus Christ in his Apostles—is the reception of the graces of the Sacraments. As I mentioned in the last *CHNewsletter*, Jesus warned his disciples that “apart from [him] we can do nothing,” and it is in and through the Sacraments that we most intimately receive and remain in him.

The reception of these sacramental graces, which is essentially the reception of the Divine life and, therefore, akin to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, is specifically to empower us to change, or as Saint Paul wrote in Ephesians, “to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:1-3); so that we can “[p]ut off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (4:22-24).

My guess is that I'm just preaching to the choir. We all know this. In fact, I bet many of you have even preached on this, either from Protestant or Catholic pulpits or Bible study podiums. We know all this stuff, so why can't I do it?!

I suppose I may be the only one with this problem, but I've known the importance of this for years, and have been receiving Catholic sacramental graces for nigh on 17 years, yet I am NOT leading “a life worthy of the calling,” nor have I successfully eradicated myself of my “old nature” and “put on the new.” Actually, I know I'm not the only one with this problem, not just because I continue to encounter schlums in the airport, but more specifically because we know that Church history is riddled with sacramental Christians who have failed to live up to their calling. In fact, the

worst scandals, schisms, and heresies in the Church's history were often caused by those who had received the most Sacraments!

Unless there's something wrong with the Sacraments (which by faith I do not accept), there must be something constantly wrong with me. This, of course, is “sin,” as Saint Paul so clearly described with his own struggle in Romans chapter seven, or more specifically, as we have come to understand over the centuries, “concupiscence.” It's that constant battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

But all this having been said hundreds of times before, what can a man do to utilize and not squander those graces we receive every time we encounter Jesus in the Sacraments? As I walked through the long corridors of the airport today, mourning over my own shortcomings, it seemed that all this merely comes down to three steps that I need to take to get closer to Jesus. These are reflected in the writings of Saint John of the Cross, Saint Theresa of Avila, and other Catholic spiritual writers, though maybe in a different way: outward, and then inward, and then outward.

Doing what Saint Paul exhorted begins with cleaning up our outside, how our actions and attitudes affect the lives of others. I'm convinced that what is mostly wrong with our sinful actions is not just that they are sinful, breaking one of God's or his Church's laws, but that they affect the lives and hearts of others. The first step is to eradicate our lives from murder, lying, stealing, wrath, gossip, vengeance, etc., etc., all those external expressions of our less than perfect nature, and the graces of the Sacraments are there to help us.

My guess is that any of us who have lived Christian lives for any length of time have become quite successful at this first step; in fact, most of us look like pretty dang good Christians; some of us might even be mistaken as Saints! But we could still be, to use Jesus' terminology, nothing more than “whitewashed tombs.”

The next necessary step is harder and even more important: cleaning up the inside. God sees the inside. He might even be more interested in what is going on inside of us, inside our minds and our hearts. Saint Paul quoted a Psalm when he warned the Ephesians, “Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger” (4:26). Now anger generally is not something we can prevent. It rises up within us as an emotional response to all kinds of things that happen in our lives. The question, of course, is what do we do with it? In managing our outsides, we might

have progressed pretty far in making sure that the rising demon within does not express itself in words or actions towards others, but does this mean that we have not allowed this anger to fester, spoil, rot, and contaminate our very being from within? We may have been successful in controlling ourselves so that the sun finally set without us lashing out in wrath, but has the mental rehearsing of “how could that person have been so shallow, mean, inconsiderate, or selfish” poisoned us from within, for days into the future? I half wonder whether the primary cause of the Church’s scandals have come from people, who otherwise had their externals quite cleaned up but their insides had grown rotten and then exploded from bitterness, anger, and self-interest. Maybe the most important reason for the gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is the confession of this internal pollution that ruins our lives from the inside out.

The final step, however, is probably the most difficult. We may have successfully cleaned up our external lives so that no one can find fault with us, and maybe by grace we have come to grips with our internal struggles, at least to the extent that no one (other than God) knows we are having them, but as a result it’s possible to come across to others as cold, heartless, detached, even self-focused. We’re not acting out our internal turmoil, but we’re also not acting in love. Love—which is the other name of the third step—involves actively expressing, through words, actions, and even body language (i.e., a smile), not necessarily what’s going on inside, but how Christ is calling us to love the other person.

Aided by grace, we clean up the outside, we work on the inside, and show Christ on the outside—not just as a life-long process of stages, though in many ways this is exactly what this requires—but every instant of our day.

And when we fail? Ask for Saint Paul’s intercession, for he knew well of this struggle! Many years after his conversion to Christ he wrote, “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate ... Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 7:15, 24,25)!

Then in Philippians he wrote, “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Brethren, join in imitating me, and mark those who so live as you have an example in us” (Phil 3:12-17).

We are not alone in the struggle for holiness, and thanks be to God that the Church not only provides the graces to help us, but has surrounded us with “a cloud of witnesses,” the Saints, to give us examples to live by. —Sincerely In Christ, Marcus Grodi



Helper’s Network Update

The Coming Home Network Intl’ is updating its information for the *Helpers Network*. If you have not already responded to the survey by e-mail, *CHNI* would deeply appreciate if current helpers would fill out the survey so we can verify and/or update our current information and better serve our members.

If you are currently a Catholic and would like to be part of the *Helpers Network* and assist someone who is interested in the Catholic Church please contact Mary Clare Pieczynski.

Please return survey information to:

Mary Clare Pieczynski
PO Box 8290
Zanesville OH 43702
maryp@chnetwork.org
740-450-1175 ext. 105

Name: _____

Do you still wish to be considered a Helper? Yes ☐ No ☐

Street Address: _____

City/State/Zip Code: _____

Phone number 1 — Cell ☐ Home ☐ Work ☐ : _____

Phone number 2 — Cell ☐ Home ☐ Work ☐ : _____

E-mail address you prefer: _____

Are you a convert to Catholicism? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, from what denomination did you convert? _____

Do you currently have a helpee (a person interested in the Catholic faith)? Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, would you like a helpee? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, would you be willing to have another helpee? Yes ☐ No ☐

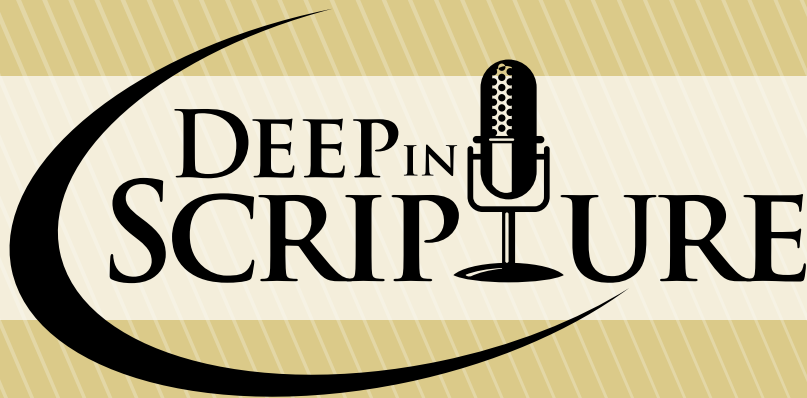
Comments: _____

The Coming Home Network International

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