



## February 2011 Newsletter

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# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



## Messianic and Catholic

By Mark Neugebauer

Growing up in a Conservative Jewish home in suburban Toronto, I was a regular attendee at synagogue on Sabbaths and High Holy Days, and I lived a committed Jewish life. My father is a Polish Holocaust survivor from Auschwitz, and my mother's family escaped the organized massacres of Jews in Russia.

My sister and I were raised in Canada in a Jewish, Yiddish-speaking environment where all our friends were Jewish, and Israel was our *raison d'être*. Christianity was the religion of the outsiders, the faith of anti-Semites and Jew-haters, the creed of the Crusaders, Inquisitors, Persecutors, and Nazis. Yet my mother would remind me continually that "Jesus was a Jew."

One day I picked up a volume by the Yiddish writer Sholem Asche called *The Nazarene*. I was awestruck by the Jewish *Yeshua* (that is His Hebrew name), who in no way resembled those who apparently hated us for two thousand years. Watching the film *Jesus of Nazareth* confirmed this discovery, and listening yearly to Handel's *Messiah* began to deepen my awareness of who He was.

As I examined the scriptural libretto of that magnificent oratorio, these words caused me to ponder: "He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was on him, and by his stripes we are healed."

What were these New Testament words (or so I thought) doing in a piece of music? To my surprise, I discovered that they were not from the New Testament at all, but from Isaiah 53:5 in the *Tanakh* — the Hebrew Bible — and were originally written in Hebrew.

### Faith in Messiah

My regular synagogue attendance led me to helping out in Hebrew school, participating in youth groups, and singing in the choir led by a wonderful cantor. In the choir were two Messianic Jews — that is, Jews who believe that Jesus is the Messiah whom God promised to send the Jewish people. They were praying to be able to lead someone to faith in Him.

I was fascinated by their testimony of peace and joy. When I asked them what it was that made them behave that way, ... continued on page 2

Journeys Home

## FEATURED RESOURCES

### Discovering — and Rediscovering — Catholic Traditions

Marcus Grodi and  
Dr. Paul Thigpen



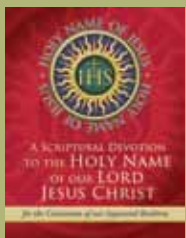
**NEW** Catholics discover a wealth of spiritual traditions in the Church that can sometimes seem

bewildering. Cradle Catholics often find that the meaning of traditions practiced for a lifetime are forgotten or obscured. What challenges do converts face as they seek to make Catholic traditions their own? How can lifelong Catholics rediscover the spiritual power of traditions they have known since childhood? In this newly released interview, Marcus Grodi explores these topics with Dr. Paul Thigpen, director of *CHResources*, with a special focus on Lenten traditions.

Receive 1 CD for a donation of \$35.  
Receive 1 DVD for a donation of \$50.  
Receive 1 DVD, 1 CD and *A Scriptural Novena* for a donation of \$100.

### A Scriptural Novena to the Holy Name of our Lord Jesus Christ

By Marcus Grodi



Our Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples: "If you ask anything in my name, I will do it." This scriptural devotion consists of a series of 15 Scripture readings focused on devotion to the Name of Jesus.



You may also order these and other resources by calling (740) 450-1175 or by going to [www.chresources.com](http://www.chresources.com)

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

they responded, "Jesus." I was shocked and determined to talk them out of that aberration!

They began to expound on the ancient prophecies in the Hebrew Scripture concerning the Messiah, but I didn't hear a word they said. What I did hear was what the Lord spoke to my heart when He revealed Himself to me personally, saying, "Jesus is the Messiah; He is Lord."

They brought me to the fledgling Messianic fellowship that met in our neighborhood, and I confessed to being a believer in Yeshua as Messiah. I brought home a Hebrew New Testament. My parents' discovery of it was the beginning both of an intense time at home and a deepening friendship with Yeshua. Through my parents' tears, cries and anger, I began to pray for them to come to faith as well, while the Lord comforted me with the sweetest of intimacy and love.

I studied Hebrew and Greek in my undergraduate years and began to look at the early Church Fathers as well. My first Greek professor at the University of Toronto was a devout Catholic, with whom I struck up a wonderful faith-filled friendship. My major turned out to be one in Hellenistic Near Eastern Studies, specializing in the Jewish writings of the Hellenistic period, which included the New Testament. So this degree program became my "Bible College" for four years. Translating Luke, 1 John, and Psalms in particular taught me the depths of the Scriptures.

During this time, I became quite involved in our growing Messianic Congregation as I began to teach and preach and do other ministries. Conferences in the U.S. bolstered my joy in Yeshua, and connections with international and local Messianic believers were an ongoing experience. I met my wife, Sue, at the Congregation.

Sue and I raised our two sons in the Messianic Jewish faith and lifestyle there. This was a time of growing vision for our people both here in North America and in Israel. We prayed and worked for their salvation and ministered in many ways to those who were coming to faith in Messiah.

Through my parents' tears, cries and anger, I began to pray for them to come to faith as well, while the Lord comforted me with the sweetest of intimacy and love.

### Catholic Encounters

When I was in teacher training over 25 years ago, I decided to take the Catholic Education course in order to allow me to teach in a Catholic school. I didn't end up teaching in a Catholic setting, but I completed a

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...I was strangely attracted to the liturgy and the beauty of the Catholic Church...

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against the Church whenever I could. I was not sure why I took the course, and friends who were former Catholics thought I was foolish. Yet I was strangely attracted to the liturgy and the beauty of the Catholic Church at the same time.

Several Jewish Catholics were attending our Messianic Congregation in Toronto, and I had become friends with them. Although I was dismayed at their choice of connection, I was also dismayed to learn that Hebrew Catholics had been barred from membership in the Hebrew Christian (now Messianic Jewish) Alliance. I tried to dissuade them from continuing in their Catholic connections and encouraged them to remain solely in the Messianic Congregation.

After many years of serving at the Congregation, we felt we needed a rest and began attending a large charismatic church. I led a men's group for many years and became quite involved in the church's intercession department, where I learned much about prayer and hearing from God. We kept our ties with the Messianic movement by leading a monthly intercession meeting for Israel and the Jewish people there. We prayed for the believers, both Jewish and Arab, in that land, and we entertained leaders who spoke at our group.

When very close friends of ours reverted to the Catholic Church, they suggested that we take a look at EWTN. It was there that I discovered both *Mother Angelica* and *The Journey Home*. I was so surprised to discover a beautiful, faith-filled, non-performance-oriented, loving and passionate kind of Christian faith. This faith was Catholic, and I was very much surprised.

I had never seen anything like this before, and I found it attractive, the doctrinal concerns notwithstanding: Mary, the communion of saints and purgatory, to name a few. *The Journey Home* became my constant friend as soon as I began watching EWTN. My heart was being drawn in unexpected ways.

When I saw Jewish Catholics share their stories of faith, I knew I needed to investigate this matter further. So I began an email conversation with many of them.

... continued on page 4



## DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

On EWTN radio with  
**Marcus Grodi & Guests**

Wednesdays **LIVE** at 2:00 PM ET  
 Encores: Thursdays @ 1:00 AM ET  
 Sundays @ 7:00 AM ET

Be sure to check out *Deep in Scripture's* website [www.chnetwork.org/deepinscripture](http://www.chnetwork.org/deepinscripture) where you can:

- **Watch** the program live or anytime afterwards.
- **Join** in a live discussion during each show.
- **Find** more information about the guests and the Scriptures being discussed.
- **Access** archives from previous *Deep in Scripture* shows.







## 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 & 9:00 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 7

Panel Discussion from 2010 Deep in History  
Conference\*

*Special edition of The Journey Home*

### February 14

Dr. Kevin Vost\*

*Revert, former atheist*

### February 21

*The Journey Home in Canada\**

### February 28

Jeffrey Hendrix\*

*Former United Methodist Pastor*

*\*This schedule is subject to change.*



## ...Journeys Home Continued...

### Changing Attitudes

As many know, the old attitudes and the way my people had been treated by Christians during many centuries had left a deep wound in the hearts of so many Jews, along with a negative attitude toward Christianity and toward those who became believers in Jesus. I still felt hurt by Catholics because of what the Jewish people had suffered in Poland and elsewhere

Yet despite all this, so many times over the years, I had a desire to read the documents of Vatican II. So I was relieved when I learned about *Nostra Aetate* (the council's "Declaration on the Relations of the Church to Non-Christian Religions") and its positive statements about the Jews and Judaism.

The late great Blessed John Paul II did much to heal. This was a step in the right direction. I decided to pick up a copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to ascertain what the Church actually taught.

I discovered that the *Catechism* is extremely honoring of the Jewish people. I felt the deep need to forgive Catholics and also repent of my judgments of them. It was safe to be Jewish and explore the Catholic Church.



St. John of the Cross



St. Teresa of Avila © P. P. Reubens

Through recommendations of friends at church, and through a series of dreams about men in brown robes, I began to explore contemplative prayer and to read about St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. I looked into Henri Nouwen's writings and the lives of the saints. I was overwhelmed by a presence of Jesus I had never experienced before, and I was determined to seek more.

I continued to watch EWTN and Salt and Light TV (here in Canada). Ever since, they have been practically the only TV I watch. In these Catholic network broadcasts I witnessed the power of God's love and the prevalence of honesty and truth.



The Lord met me  
powerfully as I gazed at  
His cross and the Stations  
of the Cross.



When my sister passed away tragically in the fall of 2007, it was to the quiet, restful sanctuary of a Catholic church — St. Timothy's in Toronto — that I turned. Why a Catholic church? I had witnessed and experienced the quiet and loving gentleness of God's love through EWTN;

being desperate for some quiet contemplation in the midst of the grief, I felt that I would find it there.

The Lord met me powerfully as I gazed at His cross and the Stations of the Cross. He began to fill me with His presence, and I began to wonder what it was that the Church had that I had not experienced elsewhere. Did it have something to do with what (or Who) was in the box off to the side of the Sanctuary, where a candle continually burned?

## Moving Closer to the Church

During Lent 2008, my wife and I decided to attend a Tuesday evening course on "The Spiritual Life" taught by the parish priests at St Timothy's, which focused on Ralph Martin's book *The Fulfilment of All Desire*. It was there that I encountered the Mass in person.

I had watched the Mass on EWTN, but now I began to experience the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. I was overwhelmed to say the least. I wanted to partake of Communion, but after talking with a priest, I learned that I could not.

Now I knew I had a choice to make: either leave St. Timothy's or humble myself, honor the rules and stay. I decided to press on, not knowing where it would all lead. (Ever since that time I have loved the Mass, both in Latin and English, and I was delighted to learn that it is said in Hebrew in several Hebrew Catholic Congregations in Israel.)

My wife and I attended the "Lift Jesus Higher Rally," sponsored by Catholic Renewal Ministries, in Toronto in April 2008. The Adoration and Divine Mercy segments touched us deeply. I felt that I needed to explore this "Catholic thing" further.

Continuing to watch Mother Angelica, Marcus Grodi, and now Fr. Benedict Groeschel and others as well, led me on. I met other Hebrew Catholics on TV: Debbie Herbeck, Bob Freedman, Roy Schoeman, and David and Rosalind Moss. I began reading Catholic websites such as Salvation Is from the Jews, The Association for Hebrew Catholics, and especially Catholics for Israel. I began an intermittent correspondence with several Messianic Jewish Catholics and read everything I could find on Jewish people who had become Catholic.

... continued on page 6

## SUPPORTING CHNI JUST GOT EASIER!

For your convenience, CHNI 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 complete the form below and mail to:

### CHNI

Attention: Ann Moore

PO Box 8290

Zanesville, OH 43702

Please contact Ann at 740-450-1175 or [ann@chnetwork.org](mailto:ann@chnetwork.org) if you have any questions or concerns.

Yes! I wish to make a monthly donation of  
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☐ MasterCard

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### Your information

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Signature

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Phone number

Email address



## THE SPOUSES NETWORK

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

The *Spouses Network* aids and provides fellowship for the spouses of clergy on the journey to the Catholic Church as well as those who are new Catholics. Through the *Spouses Network*, spouses of clergy who have embraced the Catholic faith provide one-on-one assistance to clergy spouses who are still on the journey or have recently become Catholic. In this way they offer a source of friendship, support, and increased love of Jesus Christ and His Church. If you feel called to be part of the *Spouses Network*, whether as the spouse of a clergy person who has made the journey home and would like to assist someone, or as a spouse of a minister who is either on the journey or a new Catholic, we invite you to contact *CHNI* to assist us in the development of this network.

For more information, please contact Mary Clare Pieczynski by e-mail at [maryp@chnetwork.org](mailto:maryp@chnetwork.org) or by phone at 740-450-1175 ext. 105.

We ask all members of *The Coming Home Network International* please to 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.

## NEWSLETTER COPIES

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

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

Meanwhile, we were still attending our Evangelical congregation and leading our “Intercession for Israel” meeting there.

It was then that my friends suggested I look into RCIA just for interest, with no pressure. Because I had been a Christian believer for over 30 years at this point, with experience in ministry and Bible teaching, they suggested I receive private RCIA classes. I met with the parish priest and then began RCIA studies with a very learned man at St. Timothy’s.

Providentially, in the summer of 2008 we came in contact with Christ the King Catholic Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan, when our son went to Bowling Green State University in Ohio for a semester. It was there that we got to know Father Ed Fride of that parish. Neither my wife nor I were Catholic, but we needed to know the truth.

On the Christ the King website, we found the RCIA study sheets they use. These are question-and-answer lessons with the *Catechism* and the Bible as the only textbooks. I used these study sheets with my teacher in my RCIA classes at St. Timothy’s, and the experience was a delight for both of us.

Each time we studied together, I was convinced by the Lord of the truth of these Catholic doctrines, and they become part of me. I came to appreciate St. Augustine’s statement: “I believed, and then I understood.” I came to see why St. Thomas Aquinas insisted that we need both faith and reason.

### Coming Home

I began to ask God in earnest whether I was to become Catholic. I wanted to do the right thing in light of my Jewish background, my Messianic connections and the work I had been doing with “Intercession for Israel.” During the prayer at Mass that begins, “Lord, I am not worthy to receive You,” I would finish by saying, “Only say the word, and I shall become Catholic.”

I had felt no pressure to come into the Church from anyone. I had been encouraged by friends at St. Timothy’s who said they were praying that God would show me His will — whatever it was. I began to wonder if I *could* now walk away and leave the Catholic world after such a wonderful, faith-enriching experience, and after having learned so much.

I read the biography of St. Teresa Benedicta (Edith Stein). Then I asked the Lord at the feast of Epiphany to please send me some Hebrew Catholics to speak with me to confirm that it was okay for a Messianic



© Thomas Haseloff



## QUO VADIS NEWS

### [www.quovadis youth.org](http://www.quovadis youth.org)

The Coming Home Network International's youth apostolate Quo Vadis was established to provide peer support for the children of clergy of other faiths who are either on the journey to the Catholic Church or have already been received into the Church. If you are a young person who is interested in the Catholic faith, or a young person who would like to share your Catholic faith with others, we invite you to discover Quo Vadis.

### Interested in learning more?

Quo Vadis has a website, [www.quovadis youth.org](http://www.quovadis youth.org), with information about the network and ways to become involved. If you would like to learn more about Quo Vadis, or you have a question about the Catholic faith, please contact Mary Clare Piecynski.

### Mary Clare Piecynski

[maryp@chnetwork.org](mailto:maryp@chnetwork.org) 740-450-1175 ext. 105

“

I had sensed that St. Teresa Benedicta, a Jewish believer in Jesus, had been interceding for me, as had St. Teresa of Avila, who had a Jewish heritage through her grandfather.

”

Jew to become a Messianic Jewish Catholic. The Lord said to me, “I have sent you one already [Edith Stein]. What more do you want?”

I knew then that this was it. I had sensed that St. Teresa Benedicta, a Jewish believer in Jesus, had been interceding for me, as had St. Teresa of

Avila, who had a Jewish heritage through her grandfather. Now I felt them urging me to go forward into the Catholic Church, along with Our Lady, whom I now call *Miriam Eemainu* (Hebrew for “Mary our Mother”). I could not walk away; I had to proceed where the Lord was leading me.

There were other interesting events along the way. Perhaps because Lent was almost upon us, the Sacrament of Reconciliation was on people's minds. I had just finished preparing for my class on this rite when I turned on EWTN, and there was Fr. John Trigilio speaking about the very same thing. My wife took me to Mass at our Cathedral on Valentine's Day as a gift, and what did the homilist speak about? Reconciliation!

We had our RCIA class on Reconciliation on the following Sunday, and the Archbishop of Toronto was the homilist Sunday evening. What did he talk about? He talked about a fifty-year-old man coming into the Catholic Church and experiencing the freedom and joy of Reconciliation for the first time.

Well, I was 51 and was about to experience that very same freedom and joy. To top it off, the scripture reading was from the Gospel of Mark, and my name is Mark. Coincidence? I think not. Thank you, St. Teresa!

One Saturday evening in February 2009 I experienced the Rite of Welcoming at a vigil Mass. The following Saturday was my first Confession. I had to confess 32 years of sin and guilt since my baptism, and for the first time I felt truly forgiven and free of guilt and shame.

At the Easter vigil I was confirmed and received my first Communion. Having listened to priests say to others so many times, “the Body of Christ,” those words had become music to my ears. So when I was able for the first time to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord, I felt like dancing!

## The Jewishness of It All

Meanwhile, I see the Jewishness of it all. For example, the synagogue has an eternal light hanging over the Ark where the Torahs (Scripture scrolls) are kept; the Catholic Church has a similar light near ... *continued on page 8*



## TAX LETTERS

If you need a record of your 2010 contributions for tax purposes, please contact Wendy Hart.

### Wendy Hart

[wendy@chnetwork.org](mailto:wendy@chnetwork.org)  
740-450-1175 ext. 102

## UNSOLICITED MAIL

The Coming Home Network International would like to remind our members that we are unable to send unsolicited mail. Since our ministry exclusively responds to non-Catholic clergy and laity who initiate contact with us, we cannot add anyone to our mailing list or send materials unless they themselves first make a request. However, if you would like to have CHNI send materials with a gift card in your name, or if you have any questions about this policy, please contact our office at 740-450-1175.

# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INT'L

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## ...Journeys Home Continued...

the Tabernacle where the “Word made flesh” is kept. The synagogue has a long table for the Torah; the Church has an altar for the Eucharist. Scripture and prayers are chanted in the synagogue; Scripture and prayers are read, chanted and sung in the Church.

When I became a believer in Yeshua in the Messianic congregation, I didn’t cease to be Jewish or to love Israel. When I joined the Evangelical congregation, I didn’t cease to be Messianic Jewish. Now, when I joined the Catholic Church, I didn’t cease to be any of the above; it was a matter of addition and multiplication, not subtraction or division: the fullness of Messianic Jewish faith!

I am not a *convert* from Messianic Judaism via Evangelical Protestantism to the Catholic Church. My *conversion* is daily to the Lord, and He has led me into a deepening of relationship with Him that grows daily, too. Yet we continue to pray for our Jewish people and for the nation of Israel.

If anyone had ever said to me years ago that all this would happen, I would have told them they were dreaming. Yet it is a dream come true. The Lord has given me many more mercies, favors, great friends, and opportunities to share the Jewish roots of the faith.

Jesus is a real Person to me at Mass and not just a theory or an experience. The richness in history, writings, tradition, and the manifold “colors” of the Catholic tradition are so beautiful and so wise. Our Holy Father is a real friend to us and our people.

Bringing with me the rich heritage of my Jewish roots and all I have learned over the years in various places, I feel as if a whole new, yet ancient, world has opened up for me to explore, enjoy, and serve. And it’s all for the glory of God the Father, through the love of Messiah Yeshua, and in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. I can truly say with St. Paul, who was also a Jewish believer: “Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!” (2 Cor 9:15). ■



**Mark Neugebauer** was raised in a Conservative Jewish home and is a child of a survivor of Auschwitz. He came to faith in the Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) over thirty years ago, and served extensively in the Messianic Jewish Congregational movement in Canada and abroad. Mark was President of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Canada and an elder and interim pastor of a large Messianic Jewish Congregation. Later, while attending a large charismatic Evangelical church, Mark and his wife, Sue, directed a monthly ministry called “Intercession for Israel,” which focused on prayer for Israel, the Middle East, and the Jewish people. Mark was drawn into full communion with the Catholic Church in 2009. An elementary school teacher, he has degrees in Education and in Hellenistic Near Eastern Studies Education. Currently, he teaches seminars on the Jewish background of the Mass and of Catholic faith.



# Prayer List



## Clergy

■ For Jim, a Baptist minister in New York, that the Holy Spirit would guide him to find the answers to his many questions and difficulties concerning the Catholic faith and give him the heart to accept the Truth when it is presented to him.

■ For an Orthodox Presbyterian minister in Pennsylvania, that God would guide his every step as he leads his family into full communion with the holy Catholic Church.

■ For a Nazarene minister in Texas, that he may be granted the grace, and experience the joy, of being in full communion with the Church of Saints Augustine and Aquinas.

■ For Niles, an Evangelical youth minister in West Virginia, that those who in ignorance are telling him that he is falling away from the Lord, be granted the grace to come closer to Jesus, by following his example of receiving the Holy Eucharist in full communion with the successor of St. Peter!

■ For a Church of Christ Air Force chaplain, that as he prays and contemplates the true teachings concerning the Holy Eucharist and the apostolic authority of the Magisterium, he may be led to return to the Catholic faith of his youth.

■ For a United Methodist minister in Ohio, that he may come to love and embrace the Catholic Church's positions on the truths revealed by God as he learns that She is actually right and is the true Church of God.

■ For Robert, an Episcopal priest in the Midwest, that his journey of Catholic studies and prayer life may bear rich fruit as the Holy Spirit guides him into full communion with the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

■ For Aaron, a former United Methodist minister in Pennsylvania, that his whole family may soon embrace all that Jesus is soon to offer them as they approach the Paschal Feast.

■ For an Evangelical pastor in Puerto Rico, that God would open his heart to understand that the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus is found only in the Catholic Church that He founded.

## Laitie

■ For Sheila, who was recently received into the Catholic Church, that her love of Jesus Christ and His Church will continually deepen.

■ For Allen, as he learns more about the ancient Church through his RCIA studies, that the Holy Spirit will guide his heart and mind.

■ For Deb, as she finds her place in the Catholic Church and juggles responsibilities with her husband's ministry.

■ For Melissa and her husband, as they journey towards full communion with the See of Saint Peter.

■ For Chris, who feels called to the Catholic Church, that he will find local support for his faith journey and that his wife will be drawn toward the Church as well.

■ For Patti's needs, and that her husband will be open to the Catholic faith.

■ For Terry, who is journeying towards the Catholic Church through RCIA, that the coming months will bring him ever closer to the Eucharist, which is the source and summit of our faith.

■ For Dessi, that she will find the fellowship within the Catholic Church that she longs for.

■ For Brad, to discover God's calling for him.

■ For a man who is encountering numerous difficulties in his desire to enter the Catholic Church, that all barriers to his reception will be speedily removed.

■ For Ralph and his family, as they experience a new life of grace as Catholics.

■ For Mandy, who is in RCIA and is hoping to enter the Church at Easter.

■ For Ron, who is in RCIA, that the Holy Spirit will continue working wonders in his faith journey.

■ For the needs of DuWayne's children, and that they will deepen or reawaken their relationship with Christ's Church.

■ For Elisa, who is suffering from brain damage.

■ For James' prayer intentions to be answered in accord with God's providential plan.

■ For Robert, that God will give him healing and strength.

■ For Joseph and his intentions, that the Lord Jesus will hear and grant his requests.

■ For Markus and his wife, that God will meet their needs and give them unity in their faith.

■ For Cole and Julie, as Cole battles Lyme disease.

■ For Vince; may his soul rest in peace and his family find comfort in their grief.

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 CHNI Prayer List, P. O. Box 8290, Zanesville, OH 43702. Or email prayer requests to [prayers@chnetwork.org](mailto:prayers@chnetwork.org).

We use only first names to preserve privacy.

# Three Questions to Consider

by Marcus Grodi



**E**arlier in this newsletter, in Mark Neugebauer's account of becoming Catholic (see p. 8), he observed:

*When I became a believer in Yeshua in the Messianic congregation, I didn't cease to be Jewish or to love Israel. When I joined the Evangelical congregation, I didn't cease to be Messianic Jewish. Now, when I joined the Catholic Church, I didn't cease to be any of the above; it was a matter of addition and multiplication, not subtraction or division: the fullness of Messianic Jewish faith!*

*I am not a convert from Messianic Judaism via Evangelical Protestantism to the Catholic Church. My conversion is daily to the Lord, and He has led me into a deepening of relationship with Him that grows daily, too. Yet we continue to pray for our Jewish people and for the nation of Israel.*

These remarks reminded me of a reality that we have always affirmed as an essential part of our work here in the CHNetwork. Conversion to Jesus Christ and His Church are not a one-time event, nor even two events: first a turn to Jesus then later a turn to His Church. Rather, conversion is a lifelong process.

We may view our lives in stages: BC (before Christ), BCC (before the Catholic Church), and now WCC (within the Catholic Church). And at each crossroads, we may follow St. Paul's instructions in Philippians 3:13 ("Forgetting what lies behind, [I] press on") and in Ephesians 4:22, 24 ("Put off the old ... put on the new").

But we must not pursue this goal of detachment in a way that ignores what St. Paul wrote elsewhere: "In everything God works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28). In everything God works for good — even in our past.

At least three questions confront us continually along this journey of conversion: Who am I? What have I been given? What am I to do?



Saint Paul Writing His Epistles

## Who Am I?

Much could be said in answer to this common philosophical question. But in the context of our apostolate, consider how many of us think of ourselves as lay or clergy converts to the Catholic faith from the Protestant faith, or as reverts or cradle Catholics. All these categories, however, define us in relation to the divisions in the Church. In truth, in the big picture, either we have been members of the Body of Christ, or we have not.

By baptism we became members of His Body, however imperfectly, saved from our former way of life by grace through faith (see Eph 2:8). The question, then, is how faithfully we are living this membership by faith.

Is our baptism all that connects us to the Body? Or have we to some extent surrendered our selves, our will, to Jesus by the power of other sacramental graces? If by baptism we are imperfectly a member of the Body because we are still outside the fold of the Catholic Church, we have a calling to come fully into union with the Church.

Cardinal Walter Kasper, former President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, once expressed this truth in his letter *"Unitatis Redintegratio: A New Interpretation After 40 Years."* In this document, he wrote:

*Baptism is fundamental in all of this. It is the sacrament of faith through which the baptized are incorporated into Christ's one Body, which is the Church. Non-Catholic Christians are therefore not outside the one Church, but on the contrary, belong to it already in a rudimentary way (cf. Lumen Gentium, nn. 11; 14; Unitatis Redintegratio, n. 22).*

Yet even if we are in the Catholic Church, our journey has certainly not ceased. It's very possible that we are a less perfect member of the Body than many outside the fold, through our sinfulness, our pride, and our self-centeredness. Each one of us is somewhere along the continuum of our conversion journey.

As I've noted many times in this newsletter, quoting Father Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, "In the ways of God, he who does not progress, loses ground." Mark Neugebauer reminds us as well in his story that we are right now on a "daily" conversion "to the Lord," being led on into "a deepening of [our] relationship with Him."

## What Have I Been Given?

Thinking particularly in the context of clergy converts, it's important to view our journey less in stages than as a continuum. All we have received by grace is for our use now in His service, whether as spouses, parents, lay, clergy, or religious.

We may have thought that the ultimate purpose of our seminary training was service as ordained ministers in our Protestant denominations. Yet God was actually preparing us for something more, giving us trial-and-error opportunities to hone our gifts for service now in His Church.

## What Am I to Do?

Most of us assume that the answer to this question will lie somewhere along the same trajectory of how we served the Lord in our previous denominational ministries. I believe it's essential, however, to recognize that our primary calling has always been, and now remains, to abide in Him, to grow in holiness, and to be His witness wherever He calls us.

Based on our experience working with more than 1,400 non-Catholic clergy on their way into the Catholic Church, I believe it's important for everyone on that journey to relinquish all expectations of fulltime service on the payroll of the Church. Such paid employment certainly may happen, and we at the CHNetwork continue to commit ourselves to do all we can to help those who sense this call from the Lord.

Nevertheless, 70 percent of all clergy converts do not find employment in Church-sponsored ministries! And even those who do may find that Church-sponsored employment comes only years after their entrance into the Church.

For this reason, we strongly recommend that those who anticipate losing their livelihood upon entering the Church should do all they can beforehand to discern how they will continue providing for the financial needs of their families. None should presume that the Church will provide them a livelihood anytime soon after coming home! Even when a well-intentioned bishop, diocesan official, or parish priest offers high hopes, our experience shows that rarely do these offers provide immediate support for families.

I advise clergy converts, then, to assume that the support of their family will be on their shoulders, not the responsibility of the Church. God certainly can provide, and will — remember Romans 8:28! But His timing is often different from ours.

One more thing we are called to do, which Mark also emphasized in his story: We need to pray continually for our families, for those who have not come into full union with the Church. Yes, they may be (imperfectly) united to the Body of Christ through their baptisms. But apart from the sacramental graces, they may be striving on their own power to abide in Christ, to grow in holiness, and to discern how to serve Him. ■

—Sincerely In Christ,  
Marcus Grodi



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OF



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**MARCUS GRODI** and the **COMING HOME NETWORK**

**INTERNATIONAL** are pleased to announce that the panel discussion taped live at our 2010 *Deep in History* conference will be broadcast as a special *Journey Home* episode February 7, 2011. Mark your calendars and tune into EWTN to watch this exceptional episode in which five converts — Dr. Scott Hahn, Dr. Paul Thigpen, Dr. Kenneth Howell, Bruce Sullivan and Richard Lane — discuss *Sola Scriptura*.

