



January 2011 Newsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



A Place to Stand

By Todd Hartch, Ph.D.

The liturgy at the Episcopal Church in Greenwich, Connecticut, where I went every Sunday with my family as I was growing up in the 1970s was beautiful. But it confused me because most of the people there, including the ministers, did not seem to me to believe what they were saying.

We said the Nicene Creed every week, yet the sermons amounted to little more than “Be nice to each other.” When a friend of mine once asked our Sunday school teacher what happened when we died, the teacher responded that he was not sure. When the youth group went on a retreat, we had a lot of fun, but we learned little about God. It was almost as if the church were saying, “We love these ancient rituals, but we’re not sure what human beings can ever know about God.”

When it was time for me to get confirmed in 1982 as a fifteen-year-old, I knew that I didn’t believe what I was supposed to believe. But I stood up before the Episcopal bishop and said the words anyway.

Around that time I read a book review of Graham Greene’s autobiography, in which his assertion that he was a “reluctant Catholic” stuck out. I decided that I did believe in God and was perhaps even a Christian, but a reluctant one. The heart of the matter was that I simply had not been taught what

a Christian was or why anyone should believe in Christianity.

Nobody in my liberal theological environment was willing to assert much about God, and nobody had foundations other than reason — certainly not Scripture or Tradition — on which to make strong claims. There were people trying to live a good and holy life in that church, but they had no confidence about the most important issues.

I should mention that throughout my childhood and adolescence I knew many Catholics and took them for granted as part of the religious landscape. But it never occurred to me that the Catholic faith might be qualitatively different from the many Protestant denominations that I also knew.

Meanwhile, I’d been having a difficult time socially at my private boys’ school. By seventh grade my friends were drinking, smoking marijuana, and generally running amuck. Although I lacked strong moral convictions, I feared the wrath of my father enough to decide that I couldn’t afford to get caught up in what my friends were doing. I did well in sports and academics, but I slowly fell out of touch with my friends and became a lonely and introverted boy.

When I was in ninth grade my life changed, largely because of two new students, Bill and Steve. Bill would say “Hi, Todd!” ... continued on page 2

Journeys Home

FEATURED RESOURCES

The Coming Home Network International

Marcus Grodi and Jim Anderson



Marcus Grodi invites you to take a behind-the-scenes

look at the work of the *Coming Home Network International* (CHNI) in this newly released interview with Jim Anderson, the apostolate's Director of Pastoral Care. Marcus and Jim discuss how CHNI grew out of a need to support Protestant ministers who feel called to enter the Catholic Church. Learn more about how the Coming Home Network is sharing in the struggles, fears, hopes and triumphs of non-Catholic clergy who are looking to come into full communion with the Catholic Church.

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Steps to Happiness

By Marcus Grodi



No matter where we live in the world today, we are inundated with opinions about how to achieve happiness. *Steps to Happiness* is a brief guide that summarizes step by step how we can attain true happiness

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...Journeys Home Continued...

whenever he saw me, which took me aback. No one else in school acted friendly or displayed straightforward affection, because such actions were considered “gay.” I couldn’t understand why Bill behaved so strangely.

I was even more intrigued by Steve, who announced his attention of starting a Christian group on campus. During our lunch hour he convened a group of interested boys and began presenting what I would now call apologetics. Unlike the people in my church, Steve seemed to believe that Christianity had a definite content. He made arguments based on reason, but he also used the Bible.

I didn’t quite know what to think. Steve’s ideas were strangely attractive, but could they be right? Was there more to Christianity? Could we really know if there was?

Bill and Steve, I discovered, were members of an evangelical parachurch youth organization. (Parachurch organizations are those that engage in various sorts of Christian ministry but make no claim to constitute a local or denominational “church.”) This organization brought the gospel to private schools and had a summer camp on Martha’s Vineyard, an island off the coast of Massachusetts. Soon staff workers began a Bible study on the Gospel of John at my school.

It was as if the scales fell from my eyes. On an intellectual level I had doubts about why we should trust the Bible, but on a spiritual level I was soaring. The words of Scripture explained by strong believers and simply taken seriously were giving me a whole new picture of Jesus and of what it meant to follow him.

Peter, the leader of the study and actually the leader of the organization itself, gave me a strong intellectual defense of the authority of Scripture. Yet even more important was the word of God itself. It came alive for me and pulled me into the mystery of Christ. At last I had something I could stand on — the authoritative word of God.

When I was 16 I attended a ski week sponsored by the youth organization and knew it was time to make a decision. I now believed those words that I’d been saying in the creeds all my life: Christ was God; He died for my sins; He rose from the dead; He was calling for my life.

I was afraid of what surrender to Christ might cost me, so I hiked the snow-covered trails around the upstate New York lodge, trying to imagine some way that I could maintain control of my life. But I had to admit that there was no such way. I needed to give my life to Christ, and that’s what I did.

The change in my life was dramatic. I went from being sad and introverted to happy and, well, still introverted, but much more engaged with the people around me. That summer someone called me “Smiley,” and at first I thought he was making fun of me. Then I realized that I was, in fact, smiling all the time.

During my senior year in high school I met weekly with the leader, Peter, to study 1 Corinthians, J.I. Packer’s *Knowing God*, and some other devotional material. When I arrived at Yale University as a freshman in the fall of 1985, I was therefore well prepared for the secular and often anti-Christian environment. I dove into the campus InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and actually found Yale quite conducive to my spiritual life.

As an active member of the fellowship I spent thirty to forty hours per week leading Bible studies, going to various meetings and training sessions, and socializing with other members of the fellowship. We went deep into Scripture, especially on retreats and in InterVarsity’s distinctive “manuscript study” in which

books of the Bible are printed double-spaced with wide margins and studied intensively for hours at a time. The Bible, I understood more and more, was incredibly deep and entirely trustworthy.

I did have a problem in those days, though, with the issue of leadership. Our campus minister had a strong personality and strong opinions about how ministry should be done. At the same time, he insisted that the executive committee of the fellowship should operate on the principle of consensus and that he was just one member of the committee.

The result of his approach was that the executive committee had very long meetings. After all, we had to agree about every single decision we made, and the Bible that we all took as our rule of faith is not exactly explicit about what night to hold meetings or how to plan the fall retreat. In the end, I noticed, we almost always ended up doing what the campus minister wanted in the first place.

I, for one, didn't agree with all his ideas, but I usually let myself be convinced for the sake of ending a meeting. Why couldn't each of us, I wondered, have responsibility for various aspects of the fellowship, subject to approval of the campus minister? Why did we have to pretend that our organization was a perfect democracy? Wouldn't it be more efficient and more true to what we were actually doing to have a more hierarchical system?

Despite technically being an English major, in reality I spent most of my time as an undergraduate doing ministry. After graduation I worked for four years as an InterVarsity campus minister at Yale because it was what I was best prepared to do after devoting more of my college career to InterVarsity than to academics. I had a decent time as a campus minister, but I decided to move on for reasons closely connected to my attendance at the local Vineyard Christian Fellowship (a charismatic denomination).

Our pastor took everyone's opinion seriously and spent a lot of time with his board of elders. But it was clear that, in the end, the big decisions about the direction of our church were his to make. On the other hand, small group leaders had flexibility in how they ran their groups.

To me this was like a breath of fresh air after the endless discussions in InterVarsity. At last I could just relax and do my job in the church without feeling that I had to make or even approve of every decision in the church. I was challenged, though, by the pastor's high view of the local church, which to him was much more important than other Christian organizations.

Organizations such as InterVarsity had their place, he believed. But the real action in God's Kingdom took place in the local church. Missions, for instance, were in his view primarily a matter of church planting.

I was challenged also by the Vineyard's emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit. In the Vineyard, healing, prophecy, speaking in tongues, dreams, and visions were everyday occurrences. God was active in people's lives, not just in some interior way, but in powerful physical ways.

Ultimately I accepted what the pastor and the Vineyard were teaching: Christ had come to start churches, not parachurch organizations. Churches ran best when there was a clear leader and lines of authority. And the Holy Spirit longed to work today as He did in the Book of Acts.

The more I internalized these lessons, the less comfortable I felt, not just with InterVarsity, but with the whole parachurch model. The ... *continued on page 4*



DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

On EWTN radio with Marcus Grodi & Guests

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

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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

January 3

Drake & Crystal McCalister*
Former Pentecostal Ministers

January 10

Denise Bossert*
Former Presbyterian

January 17

*The Journey Home in Scandinavia**

January 24

Marie Joseph*
Revert

January 31

Eben Emerson
Former Church of Christ Minister

**This schedule is subject to change.*



...Journeys Home Continued...

Catholic Church was still hardly on my radar screen. But I was more and more committed to the idea of “the church,” which was hierarchical and powerfully infused with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

In 1993 I married Kathline Richardson, whom I had met in the Vineyard, and entered Yale Divinity School (YDS). Marriage to Kathline was and continues to be a nonstop source of blessing, but YDS was more of a challenge than I expected.

I was prepared intellectually for the liberal theology for which YDS is famous. Peter, InterVarsity, and my long immersion in the Bible had insulated me from the classic temptation of Protestant liberalism, the elevation of human reason over and even against the Bible. I was not ready, however, for the spiritual desolation that results when the Bible is cast aside and the most “progressive” nostrums are presented as the agenda of the church.

When seminary professors, for example, support homosexual behavior, they are not just expressing a personal opinion; they are leading their students and those students’ future parishioners into untold depths of misery. My YDS years, therefore, confirmed to me that human reason could not be the ultimate authority. Unaided by Scripture and Tradition, we are simply too weak to recognize or hold fast to the truth.

YDS was not all negative, however. It was there that I developed a great interest in Church history, especially in the classes taught by Lamin Sanneh, a convert from Islam to Christianity. Sanneh’s brilliant work on missions and culture opened my eyes to the great importance of Bible translation — it often leads to cultural renewal — and to the amazing phenomenon of World Christianity.

As he made clear, most Christians now live outside Europe and North America. The “average Christian” of today is not a European male, but rather an African woman. During my undergraduate days I had become interested in Latin American Protestantism, which was growing by leaps and bounds; I decided to continue this interest by pursuing a doctorate in Latin American history and by applying Sanneh’s ideas to Latin American Protestantism.

I didn’t know it at the time, but Sanneh would soon be received into the Catholic Church. He is now a member of the Pontifical Council on the Historical Sciences and the Pontifical Council on Relations with Muslims.

The boisterous paganism of Yale’s graduate school of arts and sciences was a relief to me after the solemn theological liberalism of YDS. Although none of my new classmates were Christians of any type, and most of them had a decidedly negative view of Christianity, I felt much more at home among them than I ever had at YDS because our identities were clear.

I was a Christian; they were not Christians. I disagreed with their deepest beliefs; they disagreed with mine. We knew these basic facts about each other, but we could still relate to each other and develop friendships.

Human reason could not be the ultimate authority. Unaided by Scripture and Tradition, we are simply too weak to recognize or hold fast to the truth.



For my dissertation I chose to apply Sanneh's ideas to the work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL, also known as the Wycliffe Bible Translators) in Mexico. The SIL had started in Mexico in the 1930s and gone on to become the largest independent Protestant missionary organization in the world, with thousands of Bible translators working in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. So my wife and young son, Trevor, moved with me to Oaxaca, Mexico, for 18 months of research starting in 1998.

Living in another culture has its challenges, but we had wonderful neighbors, a friendly charismatic church, and a beautiful city to live in. I spent time in the archives of Oaxaca and Mexico City and in Mixtec, Otomí, and Huave indigenous villages. I also got to know some impressive SIL translators.

A typical Bible translation project, I learned, could take twenty years: six or seven years to learn a new language, a few more years to create a grammar and orthography (alphabet) from scratch, then as much as a decade to translate every book of the New Testament. Since most indigenous villages are located in the most remote parts of Mexico, these translators, some with children, spend much of their lives living without electricity, running water, and the other common aids to modern life.

I couldn't help, at this point, thinking seriously about the Catholic Church. I was surrounded by Catholics and Catholic churches wherever I went. Although the Protestant movement in Mexico was vibrant, I had to admit that it was constantly defining itself against the Catholic Church.

I don't think our pastor in Oaxaca, for example, could give a sermon without criticizing some aspect of Catholic faith. Up to that point, Protestant faith had not been for me a protest; it was simply the biblical form of Christianity. In Latin America, however, this ahistorical notion simply did not make sense.

Almost all Protestants there are either converts from the Catholic faith or the children of converts. They all have their stories of the pain and even persecution occasioned by their choice to become Protestants.

Also, the history I was writing was the story of indigenous Mexicans leaving the Catholic Church as they encountered the word of God in their own languages. Without in any way condoning the violence that many early Protestant converts encountered, I recognized that the violence was a sign of how seriously Indian communities objected to the destruction of their Catholic or Catholic/syncretistic way of life when community members became Protestants.

It wasn't as if I were thinking about Catholic faith as a personal spiritual matter. I simply felt that I had to take the Catholic Church more seriously as a professional issue. I had investigated the minority phenomenon of Latin American Protestants; perhaps it was time to do some research on the mainstream religion in Latin America.

My first full-time teaching position at Teikyo Post University in Waterbury, Connecticut, seemed like a dream job since it allowed Kathline and me to stay involved in the Vineyard Fellowship and allowed us to see my family and Kathline's family on a regular basis. But I soon found out that the college was being sold to a for-profit company that probably would not see history as a profit center. Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) offered me a job, so Kathline and I, now with sons Trevor and Peter, moved to Richmond, Kentucky, in 2003.

... continued on page 6

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MARCUS GRODI'S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

February 5, 2011

Saint Brigid Catholic Church
3400 Old Alabama Road
Johns Creek, GA 30022
(678) 393-0060

...Journeys Home Continued...

At ECU I began my next research project, an investigation of radical priest Ivan Illich and his think tank in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Looking back, I cannot help but see the hand of God in my choice of research topic.

Initially Illich had appealed to me because the center he ran in Mexico during the 1960s and 1970s was frequented by a wide range of secular “progressives” and leftists. My field of Latin American history tends to attract mostly secular progressives and leftists as professors and students. Though I’m politically conservative, I thought I could cater to the heart of the field by writing about people popular with my colleagues.

My plan was to focus on radical politics, with the Catholic faith as a secondary issue. But once I started my research, I found that I was actually in the familiar territory of missions, this time of the Catholic variety. Illich, an Austrian who had become an American citizen, pioneered New York City’s Catholic outreach to Puerto Rican migrants in the 1950s, with great support from Cardinal Francis Joseph Spellman.

This period, the 1950s, was also a time when the Vatican became increasingly worried about Latin America. There simply were not enough priests to minister to the rapidly growing population. To make matters worse, the Protestant and Marxist movements were pulling more and more Catholics from the fold.

A solution, Pope John XXIII became convinced, was to send thousands of priests and religious sisters from the wealthy Church in the United States to help the struggling Church in Latin America. Because of his success working with Puerto Ricans, Ivan Illich was named as the director of one of the main training centers for these American missionaries to Latin America.

Illich, I discovered, hated the idea of sending thousands of Americans to Latin America because he believed that they would preach “the American way of life” rather than the Gospel and would do more harm than good. So he turned his missionary training center into a sort of deprogramming center that would convince the missionaries to go home. By the time the American bishops and the Vatican figured out what Illich was doing, it was too late.

Illich almost singlehandedly derailed the American Catholic missionary initiative in Latin America. The radical secular think tank that had initially brought me into the project, I eventually realized, was just the program he developed to continue spreading his radical ideas when the American bishops and the Vatican were no longer sending him American missionaries.

All of the above story about Illich took me years of research to piece together. During that time I grew increasingly familiar with Catholic thought, partially through reading Illich and his critics, and partially through *First Things* magazine, a journal on faith and politics founded by the late Father Richard John Neuhaus, a Lutheran convert to the Catholic faith. Through Neuhaus and other Catholic writers such as George Weigel, I gained a great appreciation for the Catholic mind.

Over and over again, Catholic writers would present Christian views of contemporary issues such as abortion, marriage, and the public square that resonated with my deepest sense of what was right and true. These writers used reason and the Bible, but they also referred to the teaching of the Church’s Magisterium, which I came to respect.

Illich’s impact on me was more complex because his writing sometimes resonated with me and sometimes infuriated me. But I could see something of

the same deep truth in his work as well. That Illich could reach me was startling, since I disagreed both with his political views and with his underhanded sabotage of the missionary initiative.

Telling myself it was still a strictly academic endeavor, I began investigating the Catholic faith in a more general sense. I had read a lot of history, but now I was interested in doctrine and practice. Every night as I did the dishes I found myself, for instance, listening to a podcast by a Catholic named Phil Krill who liked to ask converts to the Catholic faith why they had made the jump.

Then I started listening to *The Journey Home* on EWTN and to the *Catholic Answers* broadcast. Pretty soon I had to admit to myself that my interest was personal. I still didn't think that the Catholic faith was true, but I began to wish that it was.

In the summer of 2008 I started to investigate the Catholic faith seriously. I emailed a former Methodist pastor and convert named Mike Allen whom I had heard on *The Journey Home*, and I met with him a few times. He answered my questions and gave me some good books to read.

I bought the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and read the sections on all the difficult issues for Protestants. Hardest of all, I told Kathline about my interest in the Catholic faith. She was surprised and made me promise that I would not convert for at least a year.

I began RCIA in the fall and continued to investigate issues such as justification, Mary, infant baptism, and the sacraments. My conclusion on each issue was the same. After researching an issue I would decide that the Catholic position was

a legitimate interpretation of Scripture, but that it was not the only possible such interpretation.

I liked the Catholic faith enough at this point to be encouraged by this development, but I was also somewhat frustrated. How could I tell what was right? Catholic doctrines were not obviously against the Bible, but how could I finally decide what the Bible really meant?

The key issue, I came to see, was authority. If the pope was who Catholic teaching said he was, and if the Magisterium really did have authority, the Catholic faith is the true form of Christianity. If Peter

is not the rock on which Christ built the Church, and if the Petrine ministry does not continue to this day, then the Catholic Church is just one church among many.

The Coming Home Network's *Deep In History* conference in October 2009, which focused on the issue of authority, seemed designed specifically for me. I entered with anxiety and left with peace in my soul. ... continued on page 8

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 (or drawn back) to the Catholic Church. If you feel called to share your story, please feel free to email a written conversion story of approximately either 1700 or 4000 words, along with your name and contact information, to:

Mary Clare Piecynski
maryp@chnetwork.org

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.

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...Journeys Home Continued...

The talks by Steve Ray and Brant Pitre, especially, made clear to me that Jesus established the papacy as an ongoing office.

From that point on I knew that the Catholic Church was the true Church of Christ. I had believed before that Christ had established local churches with hierarchical structures and the powerful ministry of the Holy Spirit. Now I knew that Christ had established one Church, with the Holy Father at the top of a hierarchical structure that is more filled with the Holy Spirit than I ever could have imagined.

The first semester of 2010 was a glorious time for me. I was on sabbatical to finish up my Illich project, which involved thinking about the Catholic faith all day, every day. I especially enjoyed reading the Vatican II documents and the papal encyclicals of Paul VI that applied to Illich's work.

For instance, in *Ad Gentes*, the council document on missions, and *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Paul VI's letter on missions, I found clear and obvious truth that spoke to the depths of my soul. As I immersed myself in the documents of the Church's Magisterium, I came to a new vision of the beauty of truth. I felt that the Catholic Church gave me a place to stand, a way of viewing the world that was not just one way among many, but *the* true and right way to look at all of life.

I found an ECU Catholic economics professor, Bob Houston, and we began to study the Vatican II documents together. It became apparent to both of us that these documents were not the minutes of a sort of ecclesiastical committee meeting; rather, they were the key to understanding today's world. In them, the Church has spoken on her own nature, on her relationship to the world, and on the most important issues of the day, and her words give us both the proper perspective on reality and a plan of action.

In the summer of 2010, the year that I had promised my wife was up. I met with an outstanding priest in Berea, Kentucky, to go over some of my final questions. On September 12, I was received into the Catholic Church.

I am very much a work in progress. There is so much that I have to learn and so much that I need to do. I have great joy, though, because I have a place to stand.

My search for the proper divine authority, which led me from liberal Protestant faith to evangelical Protestant faith and then to charismatic Protestant faith, has finally led me home to the Catholic Church. For my confirmation name I took Peter, in honor of the papacy that I honor with all my being. I see my vocation now as bringing truth to the university campus: simple historical truth about Latin America; truth about the human person and human society; and most importantly, truth about our Lord Jesus Christ and His one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church. ■



Todd Hartch, Ph.D., teaches Latin American history and is the coordinator of the history graduate program at Eastern Kentucky University. He is the author of *Missionaries of the State: The Summer Institute of Linguistics, State Formation, and Indigenous Mexico, 1935–1985* (University of Alabama Press, 2006).

Prayer List



Clergy

■ For Chad, an Evangelical Free theology teacher in Nebraska, that the Holy Spirit would guide his and his wife's studies during their time preparing to be received into the Catholic Church.

■ For David, a Lutheran minister in Michigan, that the Lord would use his negative experiences with his denomination to draw him ever closer to God's perfect will for him.

■ For a Presbyterian minister in California, that our Lord Jesus would heal all wounds and misunderstandings and draw him back to the Catholic faith of his youth.

■ For Tim, a Methodist music minister in Oklahoma, that as he draws ever closer to full communion with the Catholic Church he may discover new ways to use his gifts to the greater glory of God.

■ For John, a United Church of Christ minister in Kansas, that God may use his concern about the doctrinal drift of his denomination to draw him home to the fullness of truth in the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church.

■ For Patricia, a nondenominational minister in Connecticut, that the Holy Spirit would guide her in her reading so that all her doctrinal concerns about the Catholic faith may be dispelled, allowing her to enter the Church with joy.

■ For Joshua, a Lutheran minister in Illinois, that he may have the courage to face the hard questions of faith.

■ For Mike, a Presbyterian minister in North Carolina, that as he reads the Catechism and prays the rosary, Jesus would give him the heart as well as the mind of a Catholic Christian.

■ For a Lutheran minister in Ohio, that the Holy Spirit would give him a desire to reclaim for

himself all that was lost through the Reformation, and that he may experience the peace of living as a Christian under the apostolic authority intended for him by Christ.

■ For Philip, an Episcopal minister in Texas, that he may soon be able to follow the path that God has set before him and that all the details of that transition may speedily be worked through.

■ For Julia, a former Anglican minister in England, that the example she has set by coming into full communion with the Catholic Church would inspire many to follow home.

■ For Rachael, a Protestant seminarian in Pennsylvania, that the Holy Spirit will lead her and her family into full communion with the Catholic Church.

Laity

■ For the living and deceased members of Mary's family.

■ For Dawn, that she will be drawn to the beauty and truth of the Catholic faith.

■ For Kevin, who is unemployed, that he will speedily find a means to support his young family.

■ For Eden, who recently had a seizure, that she will experience complete healing.

■ For Rose Mary's nieces and nephews to return to the sacraments.

■ For Mark and Sheila's marriage to be restored and healed.

■ For Herman's family to return to the faith.

■ For Christian to experience a conversion of heart and mind.

■ For Travis and Tyler, that God will surround them with His protection and grace.

■ For Lee and Janet's health and intentions.

■ For Arlene, that her search for truth will lead her back into the waiting arms of Jesus and His Church.

■ For Nora Ann, that she will have a speedy and complete recovery from surgery.

■ For Shelly to find a job well suited to her gifts and talents.

■ For John's intentions, that God will grant them according to His perfect will.

■ For Melanie and her family.

■ For Renee, that God will answer her intentions and give her peace.

■ For the conversion of Alisa and her family, that they will come to know and love the Church founded on the rock of Saint Peter.

■ For Joseph, that God will guide his mind and heart into the fullness of truth.

■ For Melissa and Trevor, that they will encounter God's love and truth in every aspect of their lives.

■ For Anthony, a Jehovah's Witness, to discover the manifold blessings awaiting him within the Catholic Church.

■ For Nathan, that his careful examination of the claims of the Catholic Church will lead him home to the fullness of truth.

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.

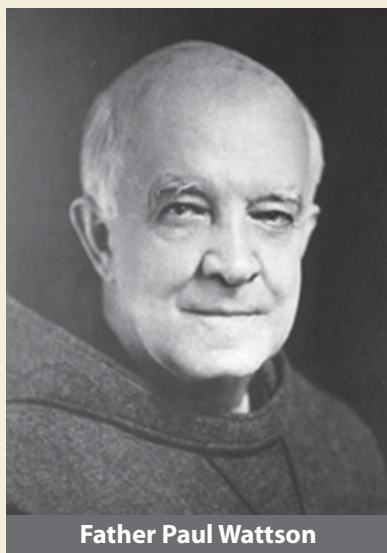
Please submit all prayer requests and answers to CHN Prayer List, P.O. Box 8290, Zanesville, OH 43702. Or email prayer requests to prayers@chnetwork.org.

We use only first names to preserve privacy.

THE QUEST FOR *Christian Unity*

By Kenneth Howell, Ph.D.

**WEEK OF
PRAYER FOR**
Christian Unity
January 18th – 25th



Father Paul Wattson

One thing is obvious to Christians living in the early years of the third millennium since the birth of the Christian faith: Christian unity, in its fullest sense, is not yet a reality. Or it may be better to say that Christian unity has yet to be reestablished.

Painting in broad strokes, we can say that the first millennium of the Church was characterized by a unified witness to the Christian gospel. The fateful year of 1054 witnessed a fissure between the Sees of Rome and Constantinople, a division that endures to this day. Then, in the 1500s, the western Church was torn apart by the Protestant Reformation, resulting in the traumatic fragmentation of Christian Europe.

Whatever their theological perspective, all concerned Christians ought to be disturbed by the contrast between these historical realities and Jesus' desire "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21).

After two thousand years, we Christians have as much need for unity as ever. So for over a century, the Catholic Church has been committed to praying and working toward greater Christian unity in every way that is consistent with the demands of truth and charity. One expression of that goal is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, celebrated each year in January (this year, January 18 through 25).

More than a century ago, Father Paul Wattson proposed the setting aside of a week devoted to prayer for unity. Father Wattson, a convert from the Anglican tradition to the Catholic faith, sought ways to encourage the union of non-Catholic Christians with the See of Peter in Rome. After his proposal was made in 1908, two popes (Pius X and Benedict XV) endorsed the idea almost immediately.

Later, the French Abbot Paul Couturier suggested renaming the week "Universal Week of Prayer for Christian Unity" to encourage Christians of all stripes to enter into the observance. The Catholic Church adopted this title in 1966, just after the Second Vatican Council. Since the 1960s, the Church has been vigorously urging Christians to observe this time of prayer as a way to achieve a greater level of awareness of Christ's desire for unity.

During his long pontificate, John Paul II sought to promote this week as a renewed call to all the baptized to align their hearts and minds with the desire of our Lord Jesus expressed in His high priestly prayer, recorded in John 17. His famous encyclical on Christian unity, *Ut Unum Sint* (1995), drew on Jesus' prayer, "May they be brought to complete unity" (see Jn 17:23).

In that encyclical, the Holy Father noted that all Christians have the duty to pray for Christian unity. He recalled:



Blessed Maria Gabriella



Pope John Paul II



Pope Benedict XVI

It was in order to reaffirm this duty that I set before the faithful of the Catholic Church a model which I consider exemplary, the model of a Trappistine Sister, Blessed Maria Gabriella of Unity, whom I beatified on 25 January 1983. Sister Maria Gabriella, called by her vocation to be apart from the world, devoted her life to meditation and prayer centered on chapter seventeen of Saint John's Gospel, and offered her life for Christian unity. ... The example of Sister Maria Gabriella is instructive; it helps us to understand that there are no special times, situations or places of prayer for unity. Christ's prayer to the Father is offered as a model for everyone, always and everywhere (no. 27).

John Paul recognized in his encyclical all the good signs of unity already present among Christians, such as common trinitarian baptism, love of Sacred Scripture, joyful service of Christ in worship and social justice. At the same time, however, the Polish pontiff noted that such common achievements do not measure up to the fullness of unity that St. Paul had spoken about in Ephesians 4:1–6. In this classic text, the Apostle had urged unity not only in “one Spirit,” but also in “one faith.”

John Paul realized that all Christians are not yet professing one Christian faith. The doctrinal differences between Christians are as obvious as they are painful. John Paul urged all believers to work continually for a unified understanding of the deposit of faith. To profess that Jesus Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6) means that His gift of the faith to the Church must be embraced, professed, and lived.

This emphasis upon unity in truth lies close to the heart of our current pope, Benedict XVI. His many speeches and writings since 2005, when he took the Chair of Peter, have demonstrated his overriding concern that the world grapple with truth.

Benedict's struggle to know truth and to follow it began long before he knew he would ever be pope. His theological training took place in Germany, where no one can avoid studying both Catholic and Protestant theological traditions. I suspect, in fact, that this was one reason why the College of Cardinals chose Benedict: They knew he was the person among them most knowledgeable about Protestant traditions.

Benedict realized that a united witness to the faith will strengthen immensely the effectiveness of the gospel message in our increasingly secular world. So the day after his election to the papacy, he made a promise: “Peter's current Successor takes on as his primary task the duty to work tirelessly to rebuild the full and visible unity of all Christ's followers. This is his ambition, his impelling duty.”

On January 28, 2008, at the vespers service concluding that year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Benedict echoed the words of his predecessor by recalling again the life of Sister Maria Gabriella of Unity. As John Paul had observed many years before, the Holy Father noted how her life displayed the “three elements on which the search for unity is built: conversion, the Cross and prayer.”

From the highest leaders of the Church to its most invisible members, Christian unity must be our prayer, our sacrifice, our life. And that is especially true for those of us who are converts to the Catholic faith from other Christian traditions, or who are seeking to help others make the journey home. ■

The Coming Home Network International

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Zanesville, OH 43702

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SPECIAL EDITION
OF



February 7th, 2011

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*.

