



January 2015 CHNewsletter

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

“I Found Jesus in a Graveyard” By Joshua Bowman	1
“Yield to Christ” By Marcus Grodi	3
“From the Vatican” By Marcus Grodi	A
“Epiphany Challenge” By JonMarc Grodi	C

THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



I Found Jesus in a Graveyard

By Joshua Bowman

Joshua Bowman will be a guest on The Journey Home program January 19. Tune into EWTN to learn more about his faith journey.

My journey of faith began in the Cub Scouts at the age of eleven, working towards my religious medal. While the priest was explaining the Episcopalian theory of the Eucharist, I was daydreaming, my fingers doodling in the plush, cream-colored carpet. It would be an understatement to say that my soul did not burn for my faith. During one of these sessions, my father asked the priest a series of increasingly pointed questions about the hereafter. Some years earlier, my father had been rushed to the hospital and experienced a classic out-of-body experience. Both the priest and I had great difficulty understanding what my father was getting at, but I think it was ultimately the question of whether we can see God in the first moments after death. My father was clearly unsatisfied with the priest’s explanation — it was around this time he stopped going to church with our family.

In my early teens, we stopped going to church at all. Perhaps my mother grew tired of dealing with my misbehavior. Perhaps she was weary of explaining to the other parishioners why my father no longer attended services (repeating frequently that, no, they had not divorced). Perhaps it was because of rumors that the newly-appointed female deacon was a lesbian. Or, perhaps it was because the organist had recently installed a rank of trumpets, which were altogether too loud for the

small nave of our church. Whatever the reason, I didn’t complain. As a foolish child, I just thought of church as a boring and annoying interruption to the weekend and I was all too glad to be rid of it.

Expanding my mind

By my junior year of high school, as we studied Greek philosophy, the Crusades, and the Enlightenment, I became more and more skeptical of Christianity.

Continued on page 2 ➤

Journeys Home

...Journeys Home Continued...

I remember shocking my humanities teachers when I theorized that Jesus, the Buddha, and Mohammed were all the same person reincarnated in different places at different times. During this time, while pondering the nature of God, I would stay up late at night visiting Internet chat rooms frequented by Wiccans. They were very accepting people and they seemed to be excited about my theories uniting the mythical Star Wars universe with the life-force of mother earth. In the end though, they found my theories a little too unorthodox — even for neo-Pagans — and I fell away from their conversation circle.

At one point, I got into an argument with my mother about whether miracles could happen. At the time, I believed that God did not interact personally with the day-to-day affairs of mankind. Rather, in the clockwork view of the universe, the impersonal Creator-God has some distant and indirect influence in the world, which might imperceptibly cause certain events to arise over time. Above all, I *knew* with absolute certainty that *we* were masters of our own destiny. My mother was saddened by this, and said, “You may think that now, but when a miracle happens, you’ll know.”

In my last year of high school, I quit the marching band and joined the school choir for my arts elective. Like some latter-day Martin Luther, I taped a list of my grievances with the band director on the door of our classroom for all to see. With nothing to do after school, I would take long solitary walks around the artificial lakes of Fairfax County in the rain and cold without a coat and nearly lost my shoes in the mud many times.

While other kids at my school were experimenting with sex and drugs, I was channeling my inner Thoreau and standing on the precipice looking over the mists of time like Friedrich’s faceless Romantic wanderer or some ascendant *übermensch* conquering Nature and the Universe — or at least the small part of it in the back of a suburban subdivision behind my friend’s house. Like any teenager, I was an invincible individualist, determined to break from the past.

God amidst rebellion

When I matriculated at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, I had become thoroughly anti-Christian. My roommate had attended a Catholic military academy because his parents couldn’t discipline him. He was even more of a troublemaker than I was, and so we pasted pictures of Pope John Paul II and Hitler and the Ayatollah and Chairman Mao on our door. We used to mock the Campus Crusade for Christ volunteers — although never to their faces. Later, I sought out arguments with evangelical Christians and said many terrible things to them. Like any college student, we had thoroughly embraced the culture of secular liberalism, but despite many moments of anger and doubt, I could never renounce the existence of God. There was always a gentle tugging on my soul, which prevented me from going any further astray.

I continued to sing in the choir in college. This was the first time I was exposed to the Catholic Mass — albeit only as St. Paul says, “as through a glass, darkly.” *Continued on page 4* ➤

FEATURED RESOURCES



The Papacy, Pope Francis, and the Coming Home Network International DVD

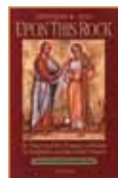
Recent popes have noted that this rock, the papacy, has been a stone of scandal and of solid faith; scandal to those who do not believe, rock to those who do believe. In this video, Marcus Grodi and Dr. Kenneth Howell explore the meaning and significance of the papacy in Scripture and the earliest Church Fathers as well as how Christians and others stumble over the papacy to this day. They also discuss how Pope Francis, as the 266th successor of Peter, has sought to reach out to an ever-wider audience while remaining in firm continuity with Catholic tradition and his predecessors.

\$35

For a donation of \$35 receive *The Papacy* DVD.

\$50

For a donation of \$50 receive *Upon This Rock*.



Upon This Rock — By Steve Ray

As an Evangelical Protestant, Stephen Ray realized that the real issue dividing Catholics and Protestants was authority. Everything else was secondary to the issue of authority. Protestants accept the authority of the Bible alone, whereas Catholics understand the authority to be residing in the Magisterium, the Scriptures, and the Sacred Tradition. Ray goes through the Scriptures and writings from the first five centuries of the Church to demonstrate that the early Christians had a clear understanding of the primacy of Peter in the See of Rome. He tackles the tough issues in an attempt to expose how the opposition is misunderstanding the Scriptures and history. This book contains the most complete compilation of scriptural and patristic quotations on the primacy of Peter and the papal office of any book currently available.

\$75

For a donation of \$75 receive *The Papacy* DVD and *Upon This Rock*.

— THESE PREMIUMS ARE AVAILABLE FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY —

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

Join in our **Epiphany Challenge** and order a copy of *How Firm a Foundation* for just \$5.

(USA addresses only)

Yield to Christ

By Marcus Grodi

The new year, like so many other occasions in life, offers the opportunity to begin again, which has always been an essential aspect of our Christian Faith. Each Confession, each Mass, each reception of the Eucharist, each morning or evening prayer, every time we set aside our pride and tell someone we're sorry is an opportunity to "put off the old and put on the new."



Presently, Dr. Kenneth Howell and I are studying through the book of Romans in the CHNetwork's weekly radio program, *Deep In Scripture* (go to chnetwork.org/media/deep-in-scripture to learn more). When we recently examined chapter 6, it seemed a perfect reflection to consider as together you and I face this opportunity to start anew.

It's essential to remember that St. Paul was writing to Christians "who have been baptized into Christ Jesus" (3). As a result of Baptism, St. Paul reminds them that they "were baptized into his death" (3) and, therefore, their "old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed" (6). This has happened that they "too might walk in newness of Life" (4) and "no longer be enslaved to sin" (6). Looking far ahead, St. Paul reminded them that "if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (5), for "we believe that we shall also live with him" (8). All this is based upon a foundational truth of the "standard of teaching to which you were committed" (17):

For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. (9-10)

Given all that we have received as a result of the Death and Resurrection of Christ and the new life of our baptisms, yet we can still sin, still fail, or turn away. Some in St. Paul's day thought that they were free to "continue in sin that grace may abound" (1) or that they were free "to sin because we are not under law but under grace" (15). Rather, St. Paul warned these Christians, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness" (12-13). Before being baptized, Christians are enslaved to sin and "free with regards to righteousness" (20). Now, they are free from the reign of sin in their lives, and free to choose righteousness, the return of which "is sanctification and its end, eternal life" (22).

What is particularly key here is that St. Paul does not say that this new life of righteousness, sanctification, and eternal life

comes automatically through Baptism, as if baptismal regeneration is a magical, automatic, "once saved — always saved" rite of passage. Rather, Christians have been "set free from sin" and have "become slaves of righteousness" (18) because they "have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed" (17, Emphasis mine).

What is this "standard of teaching to which [they] were committed"? Dr. Howell pointed out in our study that behind the phrase "to which you were committed" is the one Greek term, *paredothete*, which has the same root as *paradoxeis*, which is normally translated as "Traditions." They have become (by grace) "obedient from the heart" to "the standard of teaching... to which they have been traditioned."

In other words, "obedience from the heart" is not merely obeying one's conscience, or what we might *feel* is right or good, or what a group of us might *vote* is true. Rather, it is precisely as St. Paul has said elsewhere: "So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter" (2 Thess 2:15). Or to the Christians in Corinth: "I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain

the traditions even as I have delivered them to you" (11:2).

Because St. Paul wanted to make sure that all future disciples remained "obedient from the heart" to the traditions, he instructed his fledgling bishop friend, Timothy, "Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; *guard the truth* that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us" (1:13-14; Emphasis mine). A few verses later, he then tells Timothy, "and what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2:2).

In other words, all baptized and believing Christians, of all ages and for all time, are called to remain "obedient from the heart" to the "sound words" of the apostolic deposit of faith. This is what St. John Paul II said was the purpose of the Church in his opening words of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "Guarding the Deposit of Faith is the Mission which the Lord entrusted to His Church, and which she fulfills in every age" (Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum*, CCC, p. 1).

As we enter the new year, we must recognize the trajectories of our choices: if we once again yield our members to impurity, obeying our passions, we will only fall into

Continued on page 4 ➤

“Given all that we have received as a result of the death and resurrection of Christ and the new life of our baptisms, yet we can still sin, still fail, or turn away...”

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE



Listen to Marcus Grodi and Dr. Kenneth Howell on the Deep in Scripture radio program on Saturdays at 11:00am ET and Sundays at 2:00pm ET on EWTN Radio Plus.

Please visit our website www.deepinscripture.com for live feed, archived programs, and further information.

► “Yield to Christ” continued from page 3

“greater and greater iniquity” (12,19). As St. Paul warned earlier in Romans, “For he will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are factious and do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury” (2:6-8).

► “Journeys Home” continued from page 2

In studying and singing the works of Brahms, Beethoven, Bruckner, and Mozart, I learned the words of the *Gloria*, the *Sanctus*, the *Agnus Dei*. In Bach, Handel, and Mahler, I discovered the sublime. By participating in the vocal expression of this transcendent music, I came to understand something greater than our human existence. However, as a thorough Deist, I did not really grasp the deeper importance of the sacred words I was singing.

I once challenged an old friend from high school, who was raised Catholic but was then dabbling in Buddhism, that I could prove the existence of God by relying on the inexpressibility of the number π (pi). We are absolutely certain that the value of π exists, is fixed, and is real. If something undoubtedly exists but cannot be expressed or comprehended by man, how did it come to be? Certainly we mere humans did not *invent* π . It existed long before we conceived of it. The only answer left is God. God is infinite. God knows everything. God is everything. God is the only thing that can contain π . My friend countered that this was compatible with the idea of Zen as a state of mind outside of reality, which can be achieved through rigorous meditation (this was disappointing since I had hoped that he would attempt to disprove the existence of God).

The Problem of Evil

In all of my life up to this point, I had never really faced evil. I remember during the summer of 2001, there was a parody bit on the radio singing “Where in the World is Osama bin Laden?” to a game show theme song, but nobody was laughing on September 11. My crisis of faith culminated as I struggled to understand what had happened on that terrible day. For the rest of my college years, I kept a journal as I read the philosophy of

There is a trajectory to our actions, our choices, how we live out our faith in “obedience from the heart” (cf, Rom 1:5), for if we “yield [our] members to righteousness...the return [we] get is sanctification and its end, eternal life” (6:19,22).

So, as we enter this new year, may we by grace follow St. Paul’s instructions:

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin
and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies,
to make you obey their passions.

Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of
wickedness,

but yield yourselves to God as men who have
been brought from death to life,
and your members to God as instruments of
righteousness” (11-13).

Why? Because the verse that millions of Christians have memorized applies not only to those who have yet to put their faith in Christ, but also to baptized, believing Christians: “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (23).

Blessed new year! ■

Bentham and John Stuart Mill and critiques of religion by Carl Sagan. I read *Atlas Shrugged* during one summer. I wanted to believe in the goodness and perfectibility of man, the essential premise of liberalism. I needed to believe that the perpetrators of the attacks were not really human, that they were not like me, that something had gone terribly wrong. Of course, it was not mankind that had failed, but my philosophy. The recovery from my error was not quick or easy, but this was the moment when everything began to change.

In the spring of my senior year, I would take long walks home after class through the agricultural section of campus. One evening as I passed through a grove of trees in the lengthening shadows, a feeling of peace came over me. It had occurred to me that this world in which we live is a miracle. Through all of the wars, all of the disasters, and all of the crises of human history, the earth has gone on without ceasing. The world does not need us. God did not put us here for worldly things. We have a higher purpose. When I was young, I thought that man was superior to the natural world, but now I began to see that the beauty of God’s creation surpasses any contrivance of human industry.

Challenging my views

The year after graduation, I was starting to get bored with my frequent long solitary walks, so I decided to get involved in politics. Politics is a good way to meet people. I was more interested in economic issues and foreign policy at the time and my Whiggish views most naturally fit with the neoconservative wing of the Republican Party. As a social liberal, I began attending meetings of a pro-choice Republican group. It was easy and popular to say I was a Libertarian. Libertarians are cool. Republicans are not.

Continued on page 5 ►

From the Vatican

By Marcus Grodi

Dear members, for twenty years, the Lord has mercifully allowed my staff and me to have the privilege of working together in this apostolate, helping non-Catholic Christians, clergy and laity, “come home” to the Catholic Church. Often we are called to stand beside men and women for whom this conversion involves radical changes if not conflict and turmoil.

As many of you know, the media has reported over the past year many statements by our present Holy Father, Pope Francis, that seem to indicate that Catholics are no longer to try to bring our separated brethren home. If these statements are accurate, it made me wonder whether he would approve of the work of the Coming Home Network.

So I wrote Pope Francis a letter. And I want to share with you his response.

First, here is the main content of the letter I sent him:

Your Holiness,

My name is Marcus Grodi. I was a life-long Evangelical Protestant and a Presbyterian pastor for ten years, before my family and I entered the Catholic Church in 1992. All the traditional apologetics convinced me that sola Scriptura and sola Fide were unbiblical and that the Catholic Church led by the Magisterium in union with Peter is the true Church established by Christ.

My conversion, of course, required that I give up my pastorate, my ordination, and my livelihood, to become a Catholic layman.

Soon after my conversion, I started a lay apostolate called the Coming Home Network International to help other non-Catholic clergy and laity “come home” to the Catholic Church. You can find out more about our work at www.chnetwork.org. During these twenty years, we have helped hundreds of clergy discern whether God was calling them to resign their pastorate and convert. We have never pushed, pulled, or prodded anyone into the Church; yet, we have believed, given the teaching of the Church, that once they have come to “know” the truth about the Catholic Church, they need to take seriously the statement that “they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it” (LG 14; CCC 846).

Then in 1997 I began hosting a program on the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) entitled The Journey Home. For seventeen years I have interviewed over 700 converts and “reverts” to the Catholic Church. You can find out more about this program at www.chnetwork.org/media/journeyhome/.

I have loved and tried to follow Jesus Christ my savior for over sixty years, forty years as an Evangelical and now twenty as a Catholic. I just want to be faithful to Him and His Church.

However, during the twenty years I have led this apostolate helping non-Catholic, mostly Evangelical Christians, I have not heard one pope, cardinal, or bishop state publicly that our separated brethren still need to “come home.” Many cardinals and bishops have affirmed my television program and the work of our apostolate, but few have been willing to publicly affirm the work we do in helping non-Catholic clergy and laity “come home.” I was also quite surprised that the Synod on the New Evangelization mentioned nothing about evangelizing our separated brethren.

Ever since the beginning of your pontificate, the media has presented quotes that seem to indicate that you do not believe that our believing separated brethren need to “come home” — “for the sake of their salvation.” For example, the recent quote from your meeting with Brian Stiller seems to confirm this: “I’m not interested in converting Evangelicals to Catholicism. I want people to find Jesus in their own community. There are so many doctrines we will never agree on. Let’s not spend our time on those. Rather, let’s be about showing the love of Jesus.”

My question, your Holiness: Do you confirm the work that my apostolate and I have been doing for twenty years, or are we running contrary to how the Church and you have come to understand “salvation outside the Church”? Should we quit trying to help non-Catholic Christians “come home” to the Church, and instead

encourage them “to find Jesus in their own community”? Should we encourage Evangelical pastors to remain where God has already planted them, guiding their congregations in their faith and love of Christ, in the midst of a world in great confusion?

This is a crucial issue for our work. Every week, two-to-five new Protestant ministers contact us with questions about the Church. Most do not continue pursuing the Church, but many become convicted and are forced to discern a life-changing decision. For example, a forty year old Presbyterian pastor (family of five) says he now “knows” the truth about the Catholic Church and wonders what God is calling him to do. His wife and children are not interested in converting. He has no training or experience in anything but the pastoral ministry. He is also concerned that if he resigns to convert, his conservative Presbyterian congregation will not understand — and they will not have his leadership to fight the battles of their denomination which has recently voted to ordain and marry homosexuals. If he stays in his position, he can look for ways to share with them what he has discovered about the Catholic Church; if he resigns, he will lose whatever credibility he now has with them.

My apostolate and I are not “Feenyites.” We are committed to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, and are fully willing to be submissive to the Magisterium in union with You. But it has become difficult to understand the trajectory of the Church’s teaching concerning our baptized separated brethren, and if our apostolate is not in-line with the Church, then we either need to modify our mission or cease to exist.

I look forward to your guidance, and would gladly meet with you to discuss our work.

*Your Servant in Christ,
Marcus C. Grodi*

Founder/President, The Coming Home Network International

Then, after several months, we received the following response:

Dear Mr. Grodi,

His Holiness Pope Francis has received your kind letter, and he has asked me to thank you in his name. He appreciates the concerns which prompted you to write to him.

In this regard, I trust that you understand that not all reports or interpretations of His Holiness’s words or intentions are to be given the same weight, and that his statements are naturally to be understood in the light of authoritative Catholic teaching on the Church’s unity and the goal of ecumenism.

The Holy Father sends prayerful good wishes for your efforts to promote the truth and credibility of the Christian message, which, as he has said, “would be much greater if Christians could overcome their divisions and the Church could realize the fullness of catholicity proper to her in those of her children who, though joined to her by baptism, are yet separated from full communion with her” (Encyclical Evangelic Gaudium, 244). To you and your colleagues he sends his blessing.

*Yours sincerely,
Monsignor Peter B. Wells
Assessor*

I couldn’t agree more with the assessment of this response than that given by Monsignor Frank Lane, one of the new members of our Board: “This is great. Certainly your concern and worry over this last year or so can be put to rest. Your mission continues!!”

And I want to thank all of you for your continued support and especially your prayers — for the staff and I could not do this work without you! ■

EWTN’S THE JOURNEY HOME on television and radio, hosted by Marcus Grodi, president of CHNetwork



TELEVISION

Mondays at 8 PM ET — Encores: Tuesdays 1 AM ET, Fridays 1 PM ET
The Best of the Journey Home: Monday-Thursday 1 PM ET

RADIO

Mondays at 8:00 PM ET — Encores: Saturdays 7 AM ET, Sundays 1 AM ET, Sundays 5 PM ET
The Best of the Journey Home: Monday-Thursday 12 AM ET

January 5

Rick Rosen*
 Convert from Judaism

January 12

Cole Matson*
 Former Presbyterian

January 19

Joshua Bowman*
 Former Episcopalian

January 26

Gary Zimak*
 Revert

**Schedule is subject to change.*

Epiphany Challenge

By JonMarc Grodi

In last month's newsletter we announced a "Christmas Challenge" of distributing 2000 copies of an earlier edition of my dad's novel, *How Firm a Foundation*, to non-Catholic Christian friends and family members, and we are off to a good start! However there are still plenty left of this excellent resource for sharing the beauty of our Catholic Faith with our separated brethren. Thus we are extending this into an "Epiphany Challenge" for this first month of the new year. Our hope is to make it as easy and convenient as possible for you to give this evangelization tool to whomever you think would benefit from it (and don't be afraid to request a copy for you to put aside until God brings someone along).

How Firm a Foundation is unique in that as a fictional account of a non-Catholic minister grappling with issues of authority and biblical interpretation, it was specifically written to be a conversation starter. As was noted in the last newsletter, the best strategy for evangelization begins with and flourishes among relationships and we would hope that the themes brought up in *How Firm a Foundation* provide great material for dialogue therein.

So be sure to use the return envelope or visit CHNetwork.org/premiums to order your copy for \$5 (again, just enough to help CHN break even with shipping/handling). ALSO, we would very much like to hear about your experiences of giving away this book and the dialogue that follows. Just email me at jmgrodi@chnetwork.org or fill out the response form at CHNetwork.org/members.

You will be seeing more of these sorts of challenges and opportunities for evangelization in future newsletters. Please 1) take advantage of the opportunities and excellent resources, 2) let us know your experiences in using the resources for evangelization, and 3) between us we'll continue to prayer-

FEATURED DEEP IN HISTORY TALK: SCRIPTURE AND LITURGY WITH DR. SCOTT HAHN

Watch and discuss at www.CHNetwork.org/members

In this month's free featured Deep in History talk, Dr. Hahn discusses how his study of typology and the interconnectedness of the Old and New Testaments pointed him, at every turn, toward the historic Catholic Church. He shows the place of tradition in Christian life and how Scripture is fundamentally connected to liturgy. He concludes with a discussion of the sacramentality of marriage and the powerful daily liturgy we are called to in the domestic church.

TAX LETTERS

If you need a record of your 2014 contributions for tax purposes, please contact Wendy Hart.

wendy@chnetwork.org or 740-450-1175 ext 100

fully discern new ways to share the beauty of the Catholic Church with our separated brothers and sisters in Christ. Glory be to God!

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

SUPPORT CHNETWORK

For your convenience, CHNetwork is able to automatically deduct monthly donations directly from your credit card, checking, or savings account. If you would like to set up an automatic monthly donation, please go to chnetwork.org/donate/ or complete this form and mail to:

CHNetwork

Attention: Ann Moore

PO Box 8290

Zanesville, OH 43702

Please contact Ann at 740-450-1175 or ann@chnetwork.org if you have any questions or concerns.

Your information

Name _____

Signature _____

Address line 1 _____

Address line 2 _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone number _____

Email address _____

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

Checking account or Savings account

Bank routing number (9-digit number)

Account number

Credit card

Card number

Expiration date

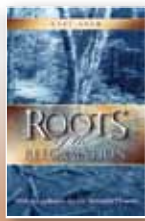
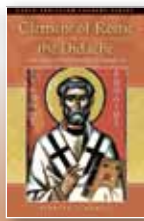
CVV Code

Visa

MasterCard

Discover

AmericanExpress



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

Prayer List



Clergy

- For a Non-denominational lay minister in the Philippines, that the difficulties of his annulment may be rectified to open a way for him to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church.
- For a Nazarene minister in the Midwest, that his wife may grow to accept and embrace his journey towards the Catholic Faith.
- For Jose, a Lutheran minister, that he may receive the grace to return to full communion with the Church of his baptism.
- For an Anglican vicar in the United Kingdom, that his concern and desire for Christian orthodoxy may guide his path home to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
- For Eric, a minister in Wisconsin, that he may overcome the stumbling block of the witness of bad Catholics that causes him to hesitate entering the Church.
- For Greg, a former Charismatic Episcopal seminarian, as he discerns God's calling to the Catholic diaconate.
- For an Episcopal priest and his wife, that the Holy Spirit guide them in knowing how best to proceed with their faith journey.

■ For Justin, a Non-denominational minister, that the Holy Spirit would guide his reading and study opening the way for him to come home to the Catholic Church.

Laitiy

- For William, a Pentecostal, who is feeling drawn back to the Catholic Church.
- For Nancy, who has been watching EWTN, that she be given a warm welcome in her local Catholic parish.
- For Natasha, that she will find encouragement and support in her faith journey.
- For Michael, who is hesitant to pursue an annulment but feels drawn to become fully Catholic.
- For a fallen-away Catholic in Missouri, that she be able to return to the sacraments and experience the healing power of God's grace.
- For Kristi, a lifelong Missouri Synod Lutheran, that God will grant her grace and provide answers to her questions as she explores her sense of being called to full communion with the Catholic Church.
- For Steve, that he be able to move forward with his interest in the Catholic Church.
- For Pam, that she will have clarity as to which direction to pursue in her faith journey.
- For Carol, who is struggling with various difficulties surrounding her desire to return to the Catholic Church.
- For Michael, to be able to continue his study of the Catholic Faith as he goes through RCIA.
- For a former Pentecostal, who is having a difficult time finding her place in the Catholic Church after her conversion.
- For Kim, who is drawn to the Catholic Church but has doubts and concerns about becoming Catholic.
- For Kristen, a former Lutheran, as she prays for God's guidance in her spiritual journey, seeks His help in rebuilding the strong faith of her youth, and strives to model Jesus' selfless love in her relationships with her husband and their daughter.

In every issue we include timely prayer concerns from the membership. All members are encouraged to pray at least one hour each month before the Blessed Sacrament for the needs, both general and specific, of the CHNetwork and its members and supporters.

Please submit all prayer requests and answers to CHNetwork Prayer List, PO Box 8290, Zanesville, OH 43702 or email prayer requests to prayers@chnetwork.org. We use only first names to preserve privacy.

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

President/Founder, Marcus Grodi
(former Presbyterian pastor)
Resident Theologian, Dr. Kenneth Howell
(former Presbyterian pastor)

Senior Advisor: History & Theology, Jim Anderson
(former Lutheran)
Director of Studio/Media, Scott Scholten
(former Presbyterian)

Financial Coordinator, Ann Moore
IT/Facilities Coordinator, Bill Bateson
(former Mormon)
Publications and Laity Coordinator, Mary Clare Pieczynski

Manager of Outreach, JonMarc Grodi
Financial Assistant, Wendy Hart
(former United Methodist)

Board of Directors: Marcus Grodi (President), Msgr. Frank Lane (Chaplain), Dr. Robert Geiger (Vice President), Dr. Charles Feicht (Secretary), Bruce Sullivan (Treasurer), Dr. Marian Schuda (Director), Donald Brey (Director)

...Journeys Home Continued...

► “Journeys Home” continued from page 4

In the summer of 2004, I joined a few liberal friends at a pro-choice march to show that right-thinking and open-minded Republicans sided with the cause of “reproductive freedom.” However, two things left a lasting impression on me. The first was a speaker from the Sierra Club who got up on the stage and said in his remarks, “We don’t want fewer abortions. We want *more* abortions,” to loud cheers from the crowd. The second was seeing graphic images of abortion for the first time. I had never really considered what abortion was, but, after seeing those images, this was certainly not something I wanted *more* of. At the time, I shrugged it off, but it was something that unsettled the back of my mind from then on.

After the election, I helped clean up the campaign offices. In one of the cubicles, I found a paperback copy of Russell Kirk’s *The Conservative Mind*. The history of conservatism begins with the Whiggish Burke; ironically, I started reading the book as a Whig and ended it as a conservative. For the first half of the book, I was horrified and disgusted by the ideas that formed the consciences of our Founding Fathers, but by the end, I was eagerly turning through the pages and dog-eared my favorite passages. This, combined with Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, awakened in me a new appreciation for the importance of Christianity in American life.

Joined with all humanity

A year later on the night of All Saints’ Day, I went to go see an old friend sing evensong at the Episcopal parish of St. Paul’s Rock Creek in Northeast D.C., which is located in the middle of a large cemetery. In the middle of that dark night in the dimly lit church surrounded by generations of the deceased, the deacon gave a sermon about the Communion of Saints, and I could not help but think of Burke’s “democracy of the dead.” Then we recited the Nicene Creed and I remember thinking to myself, “I *do* believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

Chills went up my spine as I finally considered the significance of these words that I had said so many times before. As Christians, we are part of the Body of Christ and are united in the heavenly Communion with all of the saints, and even the Old Testament prophets. When we share in the Eucharist, we are joined with God and with all of humanity. So too, when we hurt other people, we injure the whole human family. This night finally answered all of the questions about death that had first (through my father) opened the breach between myself and the Episcopal Church so many years earlier.

After that, I began occasionally attending the Episcopal parish near my house and started identifying as an Episcopalian again, but I was not really committed. One spring day, I took a friend who was new to D.C. to see the National Cathedral, which is an Episcopal house of worship. As we walked around the neo-gothic vaults and went down into the crypt, I felt very proud of the Protestant contribution to American history. This was the place where presidents came to honor God and to seek

consolation in times of great national tragedy. We came upon a small votive altar in a side chapel and I was suddenly moved to light a candle and say a prayer for all those who had died in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This was the first time I had ever really asked anything of God.

Recognizing continuity

Through the connections of conservative politics, I started to meet more Catholics. Over time, I began to question the differences between Anglicanism and Catholicism. The immutability of Catholic teaching was one of the main attractions. Unlike the divisions, which have since uprooted my former Anglican parish, the Catholic Church does not hold a vote on what is to be believed. The continuity of belief is unbroken. As the Creed says, the Church is one, holy, and apostolic. The entire Catholic Church can trace an unbroken line to Jesus Christ Himself. The laying on of hands forms not only a spiritual, but a *physical* connection across the generations to the Son of God, the Word made Flesh.

I once asked a Catholic friend if there could ever be unification between the Anglicans and the Catholics, and we discussed famous Anglican-to-Catholic convert Bl. John Cardinal Newman and the Oxford Movement. He also sent me the text of Pope Leo XIII’s bull *Apostolicae Curae*, which states the reasons why Anglican orders are not recognized as valid by the Catholic Church. I also learned about the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII, and my heart was broken. We had never learned about any of this in Sunday School.

That winter, I was in Indiana visiting my grandparents and we went to a Christmas Eve service at their Methodist church.

NEWSLETTER DONATION

The CHNewsletter is our primary means of outreach and communication. We request a yearly tax-deductible gift in the amount of \$35 or more to continue receiving the newsletter and remain a supporting member of the CHNetwork.

MARCUS GRODI’S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

January 24, 2015

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

...Journeys Home Continued...

I had been to Methodist services before, but this was the first time I had done so after my newfound interest in Catholicism. Many familiar things were missing; most noticeably, there was no communion — even though it was Christmas Eve. When I returned home, I asked my Catholic mentor about this. “Let me put it this way,” he said, “the Catholic Church has Mass every day of the year except for Good Friday.”

A friend from the campaign days loaned me a copy of *Brideshead Revisited* by Evelyn Waugh and I eagerly read it. On many nights out drinking in the bars of Georgetown, one of my friends would often remark, “that’s very *Brideshead*” and I was curious to know why this book was so important to many of my Catholic friends. As I read, I did not at first understand what all the fuss was about, but the closing words made a lasting impression on me, which I often ponder:

...A small red flame – a beaten-copper lamp of deplorable design, relit before the beaten-copper doors of a tabernacle; the flame which the old knights saw from their tombs, which they saw put out; that flame burns again for other soldiers, far from home, farther, in heart, than Acre or Jerusalem. It could not have been lit but for the builders and the tragedians, and there I found it this morning, burning anew among the old stones.

The immutable “red flame”

I witnessed the entirety of the Catholic Mass for the first time at the wedding of the friend who had loaned me *Brideshead Revisited*. As I entered the Cathedral of St. Matthew, I was struck with awe at the richness and intricacy of the architecture and decorations. This was truly a holy place. I was the first to arrive, so I stood in a sort of reverie in the narthex, taking in this marvelous scene. I had never crossed myself with holy water before, but I did so then without even knowing the significance of this sacramental renewal of my baptism.

One splendid evening on a back porch in summertime, I was discussing with a group of Catholic friends the difference

between the Episcopalian and Catholic views of the Eucharist, which had been so thoroughly uninteresting to me so many years before. As my faith had reawakened, I desperately yearned to know what I really believed. My Catholic mentor, who had been so helpful in previous discussions, once again provided the missing piece that I needed to grow in my understanding. He asked, “What if at the Last Supper, Jesus performed a new kind of miracle? What if He, as the Son of God, created a new kind of food for us?” This was a revelation. By partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we nourish our bodies and souls in a way that no earthly food can ever do — and how hungry we are for this nourishment!

Right after the 2008 election, I met for the first time the woman who would later become my wife. She was Catholic, and after we started dating, she insisted that I start going to Mass with her every week. This was what I needed. Everything up to that time had prepared me to truly experience the Catholic Mass.

The parish we attended was built in the 1960s, so the decorations were very plain with little artwork or stained glass to contemplate. On the few occasions that we attended weekday Masses, there was not even any music. I was somewhat taken aback by this at first. However, in that silence and the sparse surroundings, I finally began to understand what those closing lines of *Brideshead Revisited* were really about. Tastes and fashions change — and not always for the better — but the flame and the Real Presence do not. The defining features of our Faith are those things, which are unalterable and immutable, because God does not change.

Growing confidence

After going to Mass for six months, I started the process of initiation in the fall of 2009. During our classes, I was continually astonished that the teachings of the Anglican Church were so similar to those of the Catholic Church. In truth, I had never really learned what I was supposed to believe as an Anglican. We studied Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and it finally began to dawn on me how perfect Christianity is. Everything is connected. As Saint Augustine said, “Therefore do not seek to understand in order to believe, but believe that you might understand.” During Lent as we prepared for the Sacrament of Confirmation, Father met with each of us individually to see if we had any doubts or concerns about entering into full and visible communion with the Catholic Church. I was happy to be able to say that I had no reservations at all; I was ready to swim the Tiber.

Telling my family was a different matter. My father surprised me. He said that he had attended Mass for a while when he was in college and was very encouraging. My mother was more skeptical. She asked me if I really supported the “harsh views” of the Catholic Church and told me of her Catholic college roommate who used to pray for her soul, because she was a Protestant. I replied that just because I was becoming Catholic, didn’t mean that I thought my family was going to Hell. My Methodist grandparents were thrilled about my reawakened faith

STAY CONNECTED BY EMAIL!



We have a number of email lists that may be helpful and spiritually edifying to you: Conversion Story Email Club, The Journey Home Program, Deep in Scripture Radio, Deep in History Videos, and more.

Visit www.CHNetwork.org/email to customize your email subscription and

stay connected with your favorite CHNetwork content.

...Journeys Home Continued...

in Christ, while my Presbyterian grandparents were somewhat more ambivalent.

A few weeks before Easter, our RCIA class went on a Lenten retreat at a former monastery high in the Blue Ridge Mountains nestled between the apple orchards and vineyards of Clarke County, Virginia. We had studied the Faith well for several months and it was now time to discern if we were ready to enter the Church. I knew I was ready, but I had to make my First Confession. I was truly afraid. What a litany of errors this would be! As I looked out over the serene alpine meadows and contemplated my life, I had to make notes to be able to remember the sheer enormity of my sins. That faceless wanderer in the sea of cloud and fog of so many years before was now coming home in the clear air of springtime. I nervously took my seat across from the priest and stared blankly at the floor as I began to recount the sordid details of my past in a low and trembling voice.

Father was very kind. He listened and nodded in perfect patience and silence as I confessed all of my transgressions. He did not scowl or interrupt. As I continued, I grew more confident and my voice grew stronger. The weight of all those years in the grasp of evil was already being lifted from my shoulders. The wounds of my soul were being cleansed. After I finished, I walked along the cloister towards the chapel to do my penance with my head held high and my heart was full. As I knelt to pray, I closed my eyes and said the Lord's Prayer and I was truly at peace. I stayed in the chapel for perhaps half an hour marveling at the tabernacle. Jesus was welcoming me with the love that only the repentant sinner will ever know. The paradox of this infinite love is that every time we go to Confession, this love grows even deeper. Like π , it cannot be expressed by mankind, but it undoubtedly exists. Only God can contain an infinite love, which also grows.

A few weeks later, I was received into the Catholic Church, and since then, my conviction in the Catholic Faith has only grown. The convert's zeal for God is the ultimate rags-to-riches story. Five years on, I am starting to remember details from past Scripture readings. There is so much richness to absorb. The Liturgy of the Word is spiritual food, just as much as the Eucharist. As I recount this story, it is hard to imagine what I was thinking for all of the time that preceded my conversion. "What is wrong with us?" Saint Augustine said. "Unlearned men are rising up and storming Heaven, while we with our teachings that have no heart in them, here we are tumbling about in flesh and blood!"

As a convert, the challenge now is to share this richness with the world. Like the fig tree on the road to Jerusalem, we as Christians are called to bear fruit both in charity and in evangelization. French Cardinal Emmanuel Suhard said, "To be a witness ... means to live in such a way that one's life would not make sense if God did not exist." I think of this often as I struggle almost daily to discern what I can do to better serve the Church and glorify God with my life. In Virginia, I sang in the choir, and in Ohio, I joined the Knights of Columbus. Thanks to the patronage of my good friend Thomas Peters, the American

NEWSLETTER COPIES

CHNetwork encourages members to make copies of the newsletter and distribute to family and friend. We do ask that copies of the newsletter not be sold. Unless otherwise indicated, the contents of this newsletter are Copyright © 2015 by the Coming Home Network International. All rights reserved.



Papist, I am a regular contributor to the *CatholicVote* project. I want to share my faith with the world, now that I am home in the arms of Mother Church, after struggling for so long.

The Christian life is not easy, and I do not imagine for a moment that I have even begun to achieve the smallest part of what God has in store for me. This is not cause for despair, but for great joy. In my youth, I believed in the perfectibility of mankind, but in truth, this would be the worst thing. It is because we are imperfect that there is always more to learn and more to do — and this is what makes life worth living. Christ is the true vine, and as long as we remain in Him, we continue to grow and bear fruit. The struggle is never easy, but the whole Church sings joyous *Alleluias* every year at the Easter Vigil for those who have finally found their way home, and who are joined with us to Christ in the New Creation of His Death and Resurrection. ■



JOSHUA BOWMAN grew up in Northern Virginia and attended Virginia Tech. He was raised Episcopalian but drifted away from his faith during college. After halfheartedly returning to Anglicanism, he joined in full and visible communion with the Catholic Church in 2010. Joshua is currently an information technology professional in Alexandria, VA. He recently took the first degree of the Knights of Columbus and also writes for CatholicVote.org. Joshua hopes that by sharing his story, other Protestants will find the courage to return to our mother, the one, true, and apostolic Church which is Christ's gift to us and our greatest consolation in this vale of tears. He will be a guest on The Journey Home January 19.

BLOG

Please visit www.chnetwork.org/blog to comment on and discuss this story!

The Coming Home Network International

PO Box 8290

Zanesville, OH 43702-8290

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Epiphany Challenge!

JOIN OTHER CHNETWORK
MEMBERS IN REACHING OUT TO
FRIENDS AND FAMILY WITH A
COPY OF MARCUS GRODI'S NOVEL
HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION.

SEE PAGE "C" FOR MORE DETAILS.