



## July 2009 Newsletter

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# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



## Story of my Conversion

— Aaron B. Huberfeld

I was born May 13, 1977, in Rochester, New York. Two years later my family moved to a suburb of Chicago, where my sister was born. After another two years we moved permanently to Ridgefield, Connecticut. My father worked for several different companies as a patent attorney. In my early years my mother stayed home and continued her schooling part-time; once she obtained her master's degree in psychology she began to hold a series of full-time jobs. My sister and I attended public school; I graduated from Ridgefield High School in 1995. Relations within my immediate family have always been very close. My childhood was filled with joyful days and frequent family vacations. Almost every evening the dinner table was host to intense political and philosophical discussions, especially by the time I entered high school.

My father is of Jewish upbringing, and my mother was raised Protestant, but both gave up the practice of any religion when they reached adulthood. Accordingly, I grew up without religious instruction, having limited exposure through relatives both to Judaism and to Protestantism. My fondest childhood memories are of Christmas at the warm and

cheerful home of my maternal grandparents. The enormous tree, surrounded by endless presents, was the highlight of my existence, and the usual collection of Christmas carols, some with occasional references to a newborn king, afforded what seemed to be the most fitting orchestration for this annual event.

One of my father's brothers became a "born-again" Christian, and when I was about eleven years old he began to encourage me strongly to take the same step. He invited me to his house for a visit and took this opportunity to push me to make a formal commitment to Jesus Christ. I had no time to reflect on the words he prompted me to say; I was thinking mostly of ending the whole awkward episode as quickly as possible. It was, nevertheless, the first time anyone had explained to me who Jesus was, and the Bible he gave to me was the first I had ever seen. My parents were furious when they learned of the incident, though they did not break off contact with my uncle; they simply made sure he understood that he was to engage in no further proselytizing of their children. I understood that they were angry at him for pressuring me, especially in so clandestine a manner, and I was somewhat ...continued on page 2

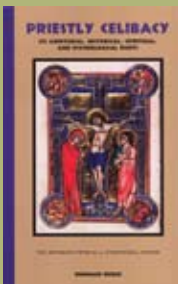
Journeys Home

## FEATURED RESOURCES

CHNI's monthly newsletter is featuring resources that we believe will specifically aid our members in evangelization. The resources we feature are materials that CHNI uses to provide to those on the journey to the Catholic Church.

### **Priestly Celibacy: Its Scriptural, Historical, Spiritual, and Psychological Roots**

*Edited by Rev. Peter M.J. Stravinskias*



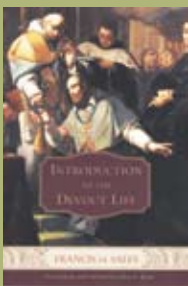
In this book, seven authors argue that there are many solid reasons to retain and promote the discipline of clerical celibacy in the church: biblical, historical, theological, and practical. Turn the pages of this book

and learn more about the foundations of priestly celibacy and how celibacy is relevant even today. This is a wonderful resource to help explain the roots of priestly celibacy.

### **Introduction to the Devout Life**

*by St. Francis De Sales*

*Translated and Edited by John K. Ryan*



*Introduction to the Devout Life* is one of the great religious and devotional masterpieces that has remained a uniquely accessible and relevant treasure of devotion for nearly four hundred years.

Written for every age and walk of life, this book transcends secular lines, providing a unique handbook of spiritual reflection for the world. *Introduction to the Devout Life* provides instructions on how to live a life devoted to Jesus Christ.

**Please visit  
[www.chresources.com](http://www.chresources.com)  
for closeout prices on selected  
books while supplies last.**

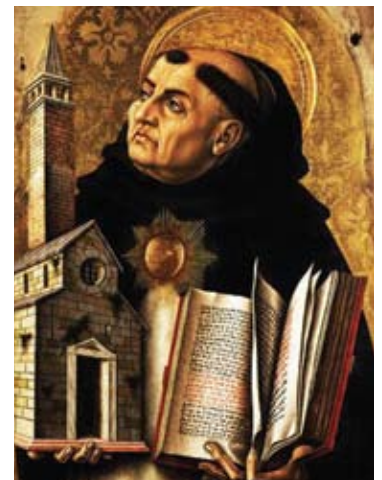
## *...Journeys Home Continued...*

thankful that they had intervened. But this was the first time I had clearly heard them give voice to their deep hostility toward religion. This reaction on their part left me suspicious. My parents had developed a strong libertarian bent in early adulthood. They always encouraged me to be an “independent thinker” and to pursue whatever was important to me. But religion was off the table of discussion: independent thinking could not include choosing to give up on independent thought, and my pursuit of happiness could not include submitting to the control of an organization.

The training I received from the many spirited debates at home encouraged me to be outspoken at school, both in the classroom and with my friends and acquaintances. Since all my peers were not equally elated over being entitled to my opinion, I soon fixed on one of my more soft-spoken friends as my favorite sounding board. James listened to my political views (imbibed largely from my parents) with seeming interest, but when the discussion would turn to religion he would be sure to make his beliefs known, carefully but firmly. It was through these initial exchanges that I learned that James was a devout Catholic. This led to two further realizations: 1) that I knew nothing about the Catholic Faith; and 2) that, though he corrected my rude misconceptions with great meekness, James was intent on defending the truth of his Faith, not in the heated manner in which one defends a political opinion, but with the peaceful confidence with which one sets forth a scientific certitude.

I resolved to educate myself. At sixteen I was offered a job in the town library. The daily task of shelving books brought me into contact with a substantial Catholic bibliography. I studied the Lutheran and Calvinist positions as well, in the hopes perhaps of confuting my friend, but here, by a twist of Providence, my parents again intervened. My mother had rebelled against her Protestant upbringing largely because its insistence on human wretchedness. Her religion had taught her that she was inherently bad, and when she heard a similar proposition come from my lips at the dinner table, she condemned it for the cruel falsehood that it was, and my father seconded the motion. The lesson stuck.

James had me over to his house for dinner several times. Against his family there could be no argument. I was deeply impressed by the prayers they recited before and after meals, the religious music that played in the background, and the civility with which they addressed each other. We spoke about Catholic education and St. Thomas Aquinas; this unfamiliar name would soon begin to loom large in my private studies. The first time I saw an image of the Angelic



**St. Thomas Aquinas**  
*depicted by Carlo Crivelli*

Doctor, with haloed head and visage in peaceful contemplation, I thought, *surely this man had the truth*. He taught that there could be no conflict between faith and reason, and an initial perusal of his works and their logical structure convinced me that St. Thomas knew much more than I did about right reasoning. His copious quotations of Holy Scripture dispelled any notion that evangelicals had patented the practice. I had been reading the Bible for some time, but I now began to realize that the Bible was a Catholic book. If it proved anything, it proved what the Church had always believed and practiced.

One final influence during high school would have a decisive impact on my conversion and on the later development of my faith: my exposure to sacred music. I sang in the high school choir throughout my four years. The choir director was a Catholic, and she had no scruples about introducing us to a great body of religious music, nor did she hesitate to take us all over town to sing carols at Christmas. We sang music from a variety of traditions, but especially polyphony of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. I began to consider music from a new perspective. Modern music was mostly about human love, which it treated in trite terms. "Classical" music seemed to speak to various human emotions in a more or less vague manner. But sacred music was about the love of God; it seemed at once frigidly set apart and more warmly intimate than any other form of human expression. It seemed, in fact, that it was not crafted by man at all; it was rather given to him. Like the writings of St. Thomas, sacred music had the ring of objective truth.

I discreetly asked my friend James to show me how the sign of the Cross was made. I began to sign myself alone in the car and to recite daily prayers. I had sung the Hail Mary many times in Latin (a language which I had not yet studied); I was so excited the first time I came upon the prayer written in English that I immediately took it as my own, neatly by-passing all Protestant disquietude. At the end of high school I went on a Christian retreat for young people. There was a Catholic priest on hand during the retreat for confession or private conversation. I went to see him and presented my situation: eighteen years old, unbaptized, without any formal religious instruction, and "pondering my next step." The priest replied, "You're not baptized, and you've come to speak to me. You're asking Jesus to bid you come out to Him on the water. Well, He bids you."

A couple of months later, I was settling into college life, newly arrived at Boston University. Walking down one of the campus streets, I saw the sign for the Newman house and slowed my step. The priest was standing on the sidewalk speaking to someone, but when he saw me he introduced himself. After exchanging only a few questions we were soon on the topic of taking classes to become Catholic. The classes would start in a few weeks; until then he encouraged me to continue my reading and to attend the Mass on campus. I had never been comfortable attending Mass in my hometown parish, so this was my first time. I was struck by the order I found in the Catholic liturgy. Born-again services and youth meetings had been wild or awkward, and in Protestant services I had discerned little ...continued on page 4

## CHNI NEWSLETTERS BY EMAIL

The *Coming Home Network International's* monthly newsletter is now available by e-mail. Though CHNI members will always be able to receive the newsletter by regular mail, members now have the option to have it delivered to their inbox. Through e-mail the newsletter is more accessible to take with you, it is easier to forward onto friends who are not members, and it is simpler to make copies. As an added bonus, e-mail newsletters are in full color. CHNI members have the option to receive the newsletter both by e-mail, and through regular mail. To sign up to receive the *Coming Home Network International's* monthly newsletter by e-mail, please contact Rob Rodgers.

**Rob Rodgers**  
rob@chnetwork.org  
740-450-1175 ext. 109

## NEWSLETTER COPIES



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





## EWTN'S THE JOURNEY HOME

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

### TELEVISION

Mondays **LIVE** at 8:00 PM EDT  
Encores: Tuesdays 1:00 & 10:00 AM EDT  
Wednesdays 1:00 PM EDT  
Saturdays 11:00 PM EDT

### RADIO

Mondays **LIVE** at 8:00 PM EDT  
Encores: Wednesdays 2:00 PM EDT  
Saturdays 6:00 PM EDT

### July 6

Richard Howick\*  
*Former Presbyterian seminarian*

### July 13

Open-Line  
Dr. Mary Healy\*  
*Life-long Catholic*

### July 20

*The Journey Home in Scandinavia\**

### July 27

Aaron Huberfeld\*  
*Former atheist*

*\*This schedule is subject to change*



## ...Journeys Home Continued...

order beyond a stale pile of hymns and a sermon. But the Mass was truly an ordered action, with nothing theatrical about it (later encounters would be more disappointing in this regard, but by then I would be sufficiently formed so as not to be discouraged).

The catechesis I received through the R.C.I.A. program was less than perfect, and being on a campus without a Catholic church was also unhelpful (all Christian groups shared the same chapel), but I was greatly blessed by the sponsor who was chosen for me (I did not yet know any practicing Catholics well enough at university, and my friend James was off with the Merchant Marine and could not be reached). My sponsor was a fellow undergraduate named Jeff Gubbiotti. Jeff took me to a church downtown where I could see Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament and take part in traditional Catholic devotions. I was greatly moved by the meditative rhythm of the Rosary. My preparation for baptism developed steadily. I was, however, leading something of a double life: to my sponsor, the people at Newman house, and a few new friends at school, I was a catechumen, a great sign of hope to Catholics. To my friends and family back home, I was the same person as always. My sister knew of my plans from the beginning, and I told my parents at Christmas, but no one else knew. It was normal, of course, that I should wait until I neared the end of my preparation before making an announcement to the family at large, but I was also very reticent to discuss the matter with friends who had known me since childhood. It would be years before I would be able to do so at length. At any rate, it turned out that my reception into the Church would be no private affair.

I was scheduled to be received into the Church on the Easter Vigil, 1996. The plan was that I would be baptized and make my First Communion with two other catechumens at the chapel on the Boston University campus; I would be confirmed at the cathedral at a later date. About three weeks before the Easter Vigil, the Newman house received a call from the chancellor of the Archdiocese.

Apparently the Newman house at B.U. was one of the only churches in the diocese with more than one catechumen for the Vigil. The Cardinal wished to have one of them received into the Church during the celebration of the Easter Vigil at the cathedral. The lot fell to me, and I agreed. I would receive all three sacraments at the hands of Bernard Cardinal Law, Archbishop of Boston.

I now made a general announcement to the family, mostly to my mother's side, since these were the relatives I saw on a regular basis. I received small

“There would never be any family opposition to my conversion. May God bless them for their good will.”



gifts and good wishes from my Protestant relatives. My parents, my sister, and several friends came to the Vigil, and were impressed by the solemnity of it. My mother said afterwards that she was very pleased by the ceremony and found nothing negative about it. There would never be any family opposition to my conversion. May God bless them for their good will.

When people ask me how I became Catholic, I usually say, “the same way an infant does.” I chose to become a Catholic as a young man. I had experienced nothing but the mildest human influences, most of which I had sought out. Nevertheless, I know I was led by Someone at every step I took on the path to the baptismal font in the Cathedral of the Holy Cross.

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## Vocation

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Soon after my entry into the Church, I was taken by a desire to settle in as a Catholic as quickly as possible. I sensed that Catholics in general had little understanding of converts: either you were a Catholic or you weren't; you didn't become one. Being a convert meant being a star, and I had no wish to remain in the spotlight. I was ready to start an “ordinary” Catholic life; I had not yet learned that every Catholic life is a unique adventure. It was largely for this reason that I took parish life as it came. I was a bit disappointed to observe that the sacred music I had come to love in high school was not to be found in any Catholic church I had come across. But for the time being, I performed a certain mental abstraction from the liturgy I encountered on a weekly basis, content enough to be an anonymous fellow in the pew.

From time to time at the university, other Catholics would ask me if I thought I might have a vocation to the priesthood. I would respond vaguely in the negative. I had always quietly declined to have any involvement in the liturgy on campus; I never wanted to be a lector or a Eucharistic minister. In my catechesis I had not retained any strong definition of the sacrificial priesthood; being a priest seemed more along the lines of these other liturgical functions. I had no “pull” to this life, and I thought little of it until shortly after college.

I majored in classics at Boston University: I learned Greek and Latin, and ancient history and literature. Though I loved my course of study, I decided, to the dismay of my professors, to halt my studies after undergraduate and not to enter a doctorate program. The job market was good when I graduated from B.U. in 1999; I easily landed a job in Boston at a major bank. The work did not interest me, but it allowed me to make some money, stay in Boston with my friends, and plot my next move. I now lived on the other side of the city, so I had to find a residential Catholic parish of which I could become a member. There was a beautiful church in walking distance from my apartment, but the Sunday liturgy was, as far as music and other practices, simply unbearable. One Sunday in Autumn I happened to be downtown and had to find another church for Mass. It occurred to me that I knew about a Tridentine Mass ...continued on page 6



## MARCUS GRODI'S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

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### July 31-August 2, 2009

#### Defending the Faith

Franciscan University of Steubenville, OH

[www.franciscanconferences.com](http://www.franciscanconferences.com)

740-283-6314 / 800-437-8368

Join CHNI at our mixer Friday at 10 pm!

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### August 28-29, 2009

#### Faith Matters Conference

##### “Living Your Catholic Faith”

Polk County Convention Center: Des Moines, IA

Admission: Adult \$50, Couple \$90, Family \$125,

Youth 30-under \$30

All are welcome, go to: [www.kwky.com](http://www.kwky.com)

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### September 18-19, 2009

#### Fire at the Beach Conference

Diocese of Charleston

St. Francis by the Sea Church

Hilton Head, SC

[www.catholic-doc.org](http://www.catholic-doc.org)

[cathy@catholic-doc.org](mailto:cathy@catholic-doc.org)

[psmith@catholic-doc.org](mailto:psmith@catholic-doc.org)

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### October 6-16, 2009

Catholic Answers' Cruise—Witnesses to the Faith throughout the Centuries: saints, martyrs, scholars, statesmen, and even art and culture.

10-Day Western Mediterranean Cruise

Among the other speakers will be Karl Keating, president of *Catholic Answers*, and Christopher Check, vice president of *The Rockford Institute*.

The Holland America Line ship will sail from Rome. We'll visit Florence, Monaco, Barcelona, Mallorca, Tunis/Carthage, Palermo, and Naples/Herculaneum.

There will be instructive talks aboard the ship and exciting excursions on shore.

For complete details, please visit [www.catholicanswerscruise.com](http://www.catholicanswerscruise.com), or call 1-800-707-1634.

## THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTL'

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### President/Executive Director

Marcus Grodi (former Presbyterian Pastor)

### Chaplain

Fr. Ray Ryland (former Anglican Priest)

### Director of Pastoral Care

Jim Anderson, M.A. (former Lutheran)

### Director of Administration

Robert Rodgers (former Anglican)

### Studio/Office Manager

Scott Scholten (former Presbyterian)

### Administrative Assistant

Sharon Coen

### Financial Coordinator

Ann Moore

### IT/Facilities Coordinator

Bill Bateson (former Mormon)

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Mary Clare Piecynski

### Resource Specialist

Mary Lou Lopez

### Resource Specialist

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### Resource Specialist

Peter Grodi

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Dr. Paul Thigpen (former Evangelical Pastor)

Dr. Charles Feicht (revert from Evangelicalism)

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

in the city. I had been to a low Mass once during college and had found it quite alien, but in a brief moment on the subway I resolved to give it another try.

That morning in Holy Trinity Church changed the course of my life. Seeing the priest emerge humbly from the sacristy and go unto the altar of God, I thought at once: *I want to be a priest*. I made it downtown to the Latin Mass a few Sundays later, and it was a High Mass, with Gregorian chant

and Palestrina. *This is all I want in life*. This time I discovered the coffee hour after Mass. The people were very friendly, and I learned from talking with them that there were several communities in the Church where one could study for the priesthood in the traditional rite. A new world had opened to me, and I was beside myself with glee. Despite this first fervor, it would be another three years before I would finally arrive as a candidate for the seminary of the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest. The events that intervened belong as much to the story of my conversion as to that of my vocation.

My faith was "stirred up" on those Sundays of Advent, 1999. I later learned that these were once called the Stir-up Sundays for their collects which begin with that phrase -- *Excita, Domine*. I knew that before making any decision about the seminary, I needed to take a great step forward in the practice of my faith. My life had to become Christ-centered. I ended a long standing relationship that had been threatening my faith. I began to attend daily Mass (unlike Sundays, the daily Mass near my apartment was quiet and prayerful) and to say my daily Rosary much more faithfully (I unhesitatingly credit the Rosary for preserving me through those years when I had grown lax in my new religion). For the first time since my conversion, I went to confession regularly. I started to learn more about the worldwide Catholic Church by attending liturgies of the Eastern rites. It was nothing short of a second, greater conversion. All through college, it was enough if I could tell people that religion was an important part of my life. I had now experienced a change of heart: religion was not an important part of my life; my life was part of my religion.

There were no more immediate obstacles to my answering a call to the priesthood. None, that is, except myself. I soon found that I could continue quite well where I was without compromising my faith – I could still enjoy friends, family, and the Boston Red Sox. I took a spiritual director at the diocesan seminary, but he put no pressure on me in my discernment. I was still dissatisfied with my job, but I looked into the possibility of teaching Latin and Greek in secondary school, and before long I had several job

“Seeing the priest emerge humbly from the sacristy and go unto the altar of God, I thought at once: *I want to be a priest.*”



offers. One offer was too good to pass up: a boys' school in Maryland near my grandfather's house, with the same pay as the bank – plus a bonus for teaching both Latin and Greek. I charged ahead, sure that accepting the offer was the right decision. My family was in strong agreement; it would be foolish to turn it down. I told the school that I would be moving down for the following September. Everyone was happy that I had found such a good place for myself.

It was now winter, 2001. I had dinner one evening with a priest I knew from my college days. I had already spoken to him in the past about my vocation. I cheerfully announced to him my plans to move away and take the teaching job. He agreed that it was a fine position, but added, "And what does this have to do with your vocation?" I explained lamely that I had not given up on a priestly vocation, but that this job would surely not interfere with my discernment. "Your current job may not interfere with your discernment," he replied, "but changing your job, your friends, your location – that's taking off for somewhere else just to go into a hovering pattern. If you're seriously thinking about a vocation, you need to settle that question first." The conversation unsettled me, but I made no immediate changes in my plans. I decided to pray on it during Lent and to stay open to God's will. That year I assisted for the first time at Holy Week in the traditional rite. The graces I received that Easter insured that I would never again be content moving any direction but toward my calling. My plans to move away now left me unable to sleep at night. I prayed and prayed again, and went to pour out my thoughts before my spiritual director. We talked for an hour, and as I was leaving he told me to stop by the chapel and ask Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament to show me His will. I did so; and my life is now established on the answer He gave me so clearly that day.

I contacted the school and withdrew my acceptance. I had not yet resigned at my job in Boston, so I remained working there while I began my search for a seminary or a community. I was resolved to one thing: no more roadblocks on my path to the priesthood. The coming year would not accommodate me in this regard; I had already been given much, and more would now be expected of me. The distractions piled up: a major car accident, an increase in work hours, discouraging conversations with disappointed friends and family. I found that I could not see clearly; the vocational literature I received from various communities left me without a clear decision. My spiritual director told me frankly that he did not understand my attraction to the Latin Mass and that I should probably find another director if that was my resolve. I left spiritual direction and sank into several months of discouragement. I allowed myself to be taken up with the many distractions in my life and proceeded no further. As I was driving home from work one night, I made a split-second decision to stop at a light that had just turned yellow. I stared in dumb amazement as truck flew through the red light on the intersecting street, passing directly in front of my car by the driver's side. I had missed death by an instant. The thought came to me at once: *while you sit here and mull, life is happening.*

...continued on page 8

## DEEP IN HISTORY MP3s

The *Coming Home Network International* is pleased to announce that MP3s of our recent *The Catholic Paul* conference are now available for download online. All past *Deep in History* conference talks are also available in MP3 format through our website. Go to [www.chresources.com](http://www.chresources.com) to download the MP3s. Each talk costs \$5.

## DONATIONS

CHNI is excited to announce that we are now able to accept donations by bank draft (ACH) for one time or recurring donations.

If you are interested in making a donation using your checking or savings account, please contact Ann Moore at 740-450-1175 ext. 101 or [ann@chnetwork.org](mailto:ann@chnetwork.org).

## SPOUSES NETWORK

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

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

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

If you would like more information or if you feel called to become a part of this apostolate please contact Mary Clare Piecynski by e-mail at [maryp@chnetwork.org](mailto:maryp@chnetwork.org) or by phone at 740-450-1175 ext 105.

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



## 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 if you are 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 web site, [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 you are welcome to contact Mary Clare Pieczynski.

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

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

I could wait no longer; I would follow my vocation, even by a blind step of faith. I had been friendly for several months with a small religious community in western Massachusetts. They had no priestly vocations, and I was not at all sure about having a vocation with them, but I asked them to take me as a postulant. I quit my job and off I went. The move was scary and agonizing for my family, who had no understanding of religious vocations and thought I was simply abandoning everyone who loved me. After six months I knew I had to move on, but the step had been necessary; I had needed this period of prayer and recollection. I was now completely uprooted from my life in the world; the next place I would land would be the seminary.

I went to stay with my parents in Connecticut, and I kept myself busy making phone calls and scheduling visits. For my spiritual reading I took up an author about whom I heard only a little but desired to learn more: St. Francis de Sales. With his *Introduction to the Devout Life* in hand, my first encounter with the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest would be decisive. I got the Institute's superior in the United States, Msgr. Schmitz, on the phone and scheduled a meeting with him. I had never wanted simply to join an order that was "all about" the Latin Mass, and now I understood why. In the Institute, the traditional liturgy was a given, the foundation, inasmuch as the Eucharist is the foundation and source of all priestly ministry. But the Institute of Christ the King is a community with a specific spirituality, as one would expect with any community in the Church. It is the spirit of St. Francis de Sales, Doctor of Divine Love; in the Institute we live by a charity which we practice before we preach. The Catholic faith is the truth and must be proclaimed as such. But if it is not proclaimed and lived with charity, the priest who proclaims it is nothing more than a sounding gong. I took this spirituality for my own at once. I had found my vocation at last.

I left for seminary full of joy, and I went not to "give it a try", but to stay. Those were the parting words of advice which I received from an Assumptionist I knew in Massachusetts, Fr. Joseph Richard. He died 2008 after 62 years of priesthood. I will never forget how he used to say good-bye to people: he would always add, "pray for my conversion." As I begin my final year of seminary, already ordained a deacon of Holy Mother Church, I appreciate more than ever that my conversion to God is not complete; but by the grace of God, it is well underway. ■



*Aaron Huberfeld is a deacon of the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest. Entering his final year of seminary at the Institute's Mother House near Florence, Italy, Aaron hopes to be ordained a priest in the coming year. Aaron was raised without any religious training. He was baptized into the Catholic Church at the age of eighteen, toward the end of his first year at Boston University. He graduated from Boston University in 1999 with a degree in Greek and Latin. He entered the seminary program of the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest in 2003. Aaron will be a guest on the Journey Home program July 27.*



# Prayer List

## Clergy

■ For Jeff, an Anglican priest in England, that the Holy Spirit would protect and guide him and his family as they prepare to be received into the Catholic Church.

■ For Brandon and Jenny, a former Southern Baptist minister and his wife in Oregon, that they may trust in the Lord to know where to step out in faith.

■ For Jeremy, a Presbyterian seminarian in Pennsylvania, that the Father's grace would guide him as he seeks the fullness of the truth in the Catholic Church.

■ For an Anglican priest in South Carolina, that he would be called to experience the rich fullness of the Catholic faith he so desires.

■ For Kathleen, the wife of a United Methodist minister in New York, that as she explores the depths of the Catholic faith her husband's interest would awaken and lead him to seek the grace of the Holy Eucharist.

■ For Joseph, an Anglican priest in Maryland, that he may come to understand that the *via media* is a bridge meant to cross over the Tiber to the See of St. Peter.

■ For Owen, a Non-denominational minister in North Carolina, that he may come to the joy of full communion with the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church founded by our Lord Jesus Christ.

■ For Karl, a Lutheran minister in Texas, that the Holy Spirit would lovingly guide him on his journey of discovery and discernment of the possibility of a priestly vocation in the Catholic Church.

■ For David, a priest of the Church of England, that God would use him as an instrument to

restore the fullness of the Catholic faith in his homeland.

■ For an Assemblies of God minister in Michigan, that the Holy Spirit would anoint him with the graces he needs to answer God's call to come into full unity with the Church of the apostles and prophets in communion with St. Peter.

■ For Gerald, a former Church of God minister in Ohio, that all remaining obstacles between him and the Holy Eucharist would be lifted by God's loving grace.

■ For a Southern Baptist pastor that his mind may be opened to the truths contained within the Catholic faith.

## Laitie

■ For Terry, that God will grant him peace and discernment in his faith journey.

■ For the repose of the soul of Pete, that the angels of the Lord bring his soul to paradise.

■ For Jane's cataract surgery and that she experience complete healing.

■ For Patrick and his battle with cancer.

■ For Else's family's return to the Catholic Church.

■ For Donald, that his employment will allow him to remain close to family.

■ For Judy's return to the Catholic Church.

■ For Donna's family and their reversion to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

■ For all within the *Helpers Network*.

■ For Lori, that she re-embrace the fullness of truth contained within the Catholic faith.



■ For Mary and her spiritual struggles.

■ For Jimmy and Tina and their family.

■ For Cecelia and her struggle with cancer.

■ For Michael and Jennifer's marriage affected by infidelity and for Michael's desire to get help and healing for his sexual and alcoholic addictions.

■ For all the members of *Quo Vadis*, that God grant these young people the courage and strength to follow the convictions of their conscience. (QV)

■ For a young lady who is exploring the Catholic faith but is unsure how her Muslim family would react to her conversion. (QV)

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

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

You may also email your prayer requests to:  
[prayers@chnetwork.org](mailto:prayers@chnetwork.org)

We use only first names to preserve anonymity, and the following code:  
(QV) *Quo Vadis*

# CONSERVING FIRE

My family and I love to make bonfire's. Our small farm, far from efficiently developed (our farm is called "Weed'em & Reap" for a reason), is strewn with dead trees and brush. We could do a bonfire a month for the rest of our lives and still not conquer the chaos.



During one such conflagration, it struck me how little Mankind has progressed in being a faithful steward of one of the greatest gifts God has given us: fire. With all the amazing technologies Man has developed—all of which, of course, come from God: Man has created nothing, only developed what Grace has revealed to Him—we still only inefficiently utilize this most primitive of gifts.

There before me was a spectacular thermo reaction: worthless dead natural wood and

leaves were being transformed into brilliant light and intense heat. On this particular occasion, the heat was so unbearable that we needed to pass by the usual 6-foot long Spicebush sapling branches to whittle 10-foot branches into hotdog skewers.

As I reflected, our dog Bungie at my side, the question arose: we live in a modern age of previously unimaginable technologies, where most of the world's conflicts are over providing energy to power these technologies, yet here, right before me, was the most primitive of technologies—fire—and yet we have not discovered how to efficiently save and utilize this energy, particularly here in my own backyard. Sure on a larger scale we can put a closed pot of water over fire to produce steam that can turn a fan to drive a turbine to produce electricity that can power a lightbulb or a furnace, but think of how inefficient this is: many indirect steps are necessary to turn heat and light into heat and light, and in fact the original light produced by the fire isn't even used. Scientists are presently working with silicon nanowire technology in an attempt to shorten the transference, but with all we have accomplished and are discovering, we are still a long way from conserving and utilizing directly the heat and light energy of a basic backyard bonfire.

Why do I speak of this in a *Coming Home Network International* newsletter? Because the analogy fits: we (the Church) are not always efficient stewards of the fires of religious conversion. There is nothing so powerful in the universe as a soul that has been changed by grace, from a lack-luster, cold, self-absorbed sinner into an enthusiastic, enlightened, on-fire yet humble servant of God. When this happens, either as the result of a long slow grace-full process or of a grace-sparked explosion, God has given his Church the gift of this on-fire convert for the work of the Gospel. Yet with all our modern means of communication, transportation, and organization, sadly after 2000 years of

R&D (*Revivificare et Dissipare*), the Church (us) is still too often inefficient at implementing, engaging, and utilizing these gifts; at least in America since Catholicism became a legal and tolerated religion after the Revolution, it has too often seemed that the primary emphasis of Church leadership has been upon squelching "enthusiasm" and preventing the production of "waves" (whether photons or particles).

This is especially true when it comes to the conservation of the energy (ie, gifts, training, experience, convictions, and enthusiasm) of clergy converts. Many of the bishops with which I have talked admit that as a group the American bishops just don't know how to best engage and use the gifts of clergy converts for the good of the Gospel and the Church.

On the morning after, when I walked out to the site of the previous evening's bonfire, all that was left was a large gray circle of ashes. We had enjoyed the light and the heat for a brief time, but now all that were left were spent coals.

I feel this way when I consider how enthusiastic clergy converts are so often unutilized and unappreciated in the Church. Before "coming home," they were actively serving Jesus Christ, preaching, teaching, counseling, inspiring, consoling, bringing lost souls to Jesus and salvation. They were respected and appreciated leaders who were basically interested in one thing: spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Now as Catholics their flames are often squandered by the managerial quagmires of local dioceses where tunnel vision seems unsure, not only about how to utilize the gifts of clergy converts, but how to inspire and engage laity in general for the work of the Gospel.

I believe that every convert is a gift of fire to the Church, and I'm certainly not the first to say this. Listen to what Pope John Paul II said in *Redemptoris Missio* (47):

*"Certainly, every convert is a gift to the Church and represents a serious responsibility for her . . . especially in the case of adults, such converts bring with them a kind of new energy, an enthusiasm for the faith, and a desire to see the Gospel lived out in the Church. They would be greatly disappointed if, having entered the ecclesial community, they were to find a life lacking fervor and without signs of renewal! We cannot preach conversion unless we ourselves are converted anew every day."*

There are certainly places where Smoky Bear mentality makes sense, but not when it comes to fulfilling Christ's Great Commission. Jesus, in fact, wanted far more than a forest fire of evangelization: he asked for the entire world to be set on fire. In Luke 12:49, he proclaimed:

*"I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!"*



I believe the reason God first inspired so many Protestants to abandon any dreams for a regular secular career to go to seminary, to get ordained, to serve as pastors and teachers, and THEN to call them home to the Church was so they could become needed sparks of renewal in the Church.

So what can we do to ensure that the heat and light of their conversions are not squandered—to prevent buckets of quenching discouragement from dousing their enthusiasm? I wish I could give the easy answer (just like I wish I could invent the technology to power my home from my backyard bonfires). Part of the problem is that the answer must come from the top down, and it indeed has: all of our most recent popes have called for a reemphasis on evangelization, renewal, and especially the encouragement of the lay apostolate. The problem is that their messages have had a hard time permeating downward, through the national, diocesan, and parochial filters. It is very difficult, especially in the Catholic Church, to break free from TWWADT (“The way we’ve always done things”).

So what can we do? As a lowly individual out of the powerful technological industrial stream, I can’t expect to solve the big energy questions, nor waste my life waiting. In the mean time, I can enjoy the heat and light of my backyard bonfires, share this with my family and friends, and look for other ways to utilize this God-given free source of heat and light. (In the deep cold winter, we are able to bring that bonfire into our wood-burning stove, heat our entire home, and enjoy popcorn by the fire’s light.)

In the same way, each one of us, recognizing God’s call and the gifts He has given us, can begin right now to look for ways we can share the heat and light of our conversions with those around us—not from above, as if our conversions make us somehow special, but from beside. We can also look for ways to work at the local level, from the bottom up, to open doors for others who have felt frustrated by the “system.” We can pray for God to help us see how we can help others “rekindle the gift of God that is within” each of us, through our baptisms, through our confirmations, and through “the laying on of hands.” As Saint Paul told Saint Timothy, “God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control” (cf, 2 Tim 1:6-7).

“Power ... love ... self-control.” Sounds like forms of God-given energy we certainly can always look for more ways to help each other conserve and implement! Lord help us! Living all around each of us are people in need of the heat and light of the Gospel; may they not go without because we have not taken the time to share.

—Sincerely In Christ, Marcus Grodi



## The Pillar & Bulwark of the Truth

### REGISTRATION FORM

**October 23<sup>rd</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009 — Columbus, OH**

More information and online registration available at: [www.deepinhistory.com](http://www.deepinhistory.com)

or call: (800) 664-5110

(740) 450-1175 (outside USA)

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City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Send your registration form and payment to:**

The Coming Home Network International  
PO Box 8290  
Zanesville, OH 43702

#### RATE INFORMATION *(room not included)*

**Early Bird Special:** *(postmarked by 8/31/09)*

☐ Single Rate \$89

☐ Married Couple Rate \$143

#### Normal Rates:

☐ Single \$99

☐ Married Couple \$159

☐ Religious \$50

☐ Group (10 or more) \$65

#### Other:

☐ Meal Plan \$125  
(2 Breakfasts, 2 Dinners, 1 Lunch)

☐ Friday Night Social \$20

☐ Scholarship Donation: \_\_\_\_\_

#### PAYMENT INFORMATION

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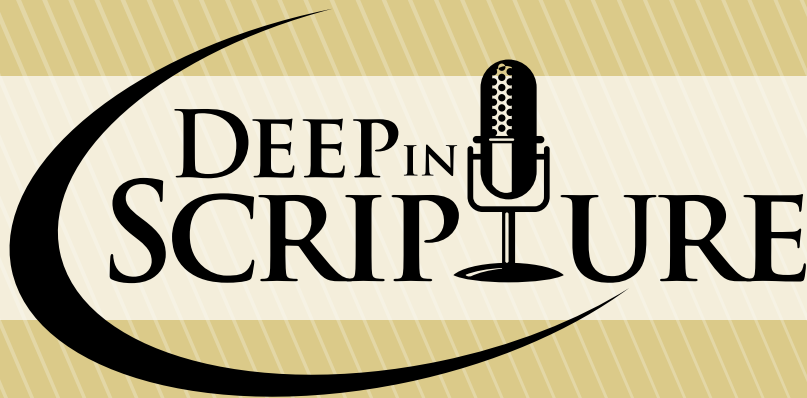


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