



July 2012 Newsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



A Heart's Journey *By Kathryn J. Betournay, D.Min.*

Atheism

I was born on April 15, 1952 in Columbus, OH, the first of 2 children, into a family that did not practice any religious faith. We moved every couple of years, as my dad advanced his career as a professor. Christmas and Easter were celebrated as secular holidays. In fact there seemed to be an outright opposition in my household to anything to do with God, Jesus, the Bible, or church.

At 8 years old I became convinced that God did not exist. By then, I felt I was smart enough to figure out that Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy, and the Easter Bunny were fictional fun. At that time, the United States space program began sending men into orbit. I thought, "Surely, if heaven did exist, wouldn't it be obvious?" My 8-year-old mind reasoned that heaven did not exist, and that God was just another fantasy, like a Santa Claus for adults.

I can remember one summer, feeling very sad and confused when my friends were going to Vacation Bible School and my parents would not let me attend. It seemed that my parents thought "faith" was beneath our dignity, which only reinforced my perception that there was something inferior about people who believed in God and Jesus.

Old, family wounds

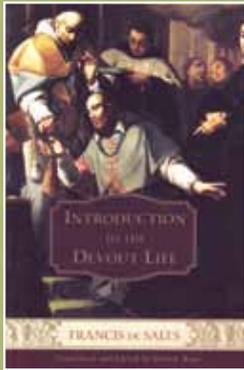
My mother's parents immigrated from what is now Slovenia, the former Yugoslavia. They were Catholic and my mother and her brother were baptized in the Catholic Church. My grandparents did not have a lot of income and decided to have only two children. When the priest asked my grandmother why they weren't having any more, she admitted to using contraception. She refused to give it up and the priest refused to give her absolution. By the time my mother was in high school she decided that when she got married she would also use contraception. It was then she stopped attending Mass. Her grandmother, who was a devout Catholic and attended daily Mass, lived with them for a couple of years. I believe my great-grandmother's intercession probably had something to do with my own Catholic conversion. In her honor, on the day I was confirmed, I wore some lace she had crocheted as well as a gold cross that my grandfather had given to my mother.

The other side of my family was Methodist. My paternal grandparents were active members of a church, until World War II, when my father was missing in action. The Methodists supported conscientious objectors, which made my grandparents feel betrayed. They felt as though their church ... *continued on page 2*

Journeys Home

FEATURED RESOURCES

Introduction to the Devout Life — *St. Francis De Sales*



St. Francis De Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life* has remained a uniquely accessible and relevant treasure of devotion for nearly 4 hundred years. The desire to be closer to God that this saint found in all people led him to compile these instructions on how to live a life devoted to God. This book's compassionate message transcends secular lines and provides a unique handbook of spiritual reflection for people throughout the world.

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Marcus Grodi and his guest, Sheila Liaugminas, discuss conversion and the radical call to follow Christ in this exceptional Deep in Scripture program.



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\$50

For a donation of \$50, receive *Introduction to the Devout Life*.

\$75

For a donation of \$75, receive a *Deep in Scripture* CD and *Introduction to the Devout Life*.

...Journeys Home Continued...

had no compassion for the suffering they were enduring, nor appreciation for the soldiers' sacrifice. Thus, they stopped attending church. Once I asked my father why he didn't go to church. He replied, "The last time I went to church, I came out married!" On another occasion, he said, "I'm not going to let some minister tell me how to live my life."

My mother eventually joined a Unitarian Church, and I attended Sunday School during my elementary years. We learned how to get along with others, the wonders of created nature, and the varieties of creation stories in other religions. In sixth grade we built models of "sacred buildings," such as the pyramids and the new Prudential Center in Boston. All I could ever find out about Jesus was that He was a "good teacher," which about sums up my religious formation as a child.

Discovering God

When I was a freshman in high school, I began to ask more questions about life. I was thinking one day, "What was the difference between things that were alive and those that were dead or inanimate?" Suddenly, as if a light had pierced the darkness of my mind, I believed in God! "*God* is the thread of life that connects all living things!" It was a beautiful moment for me, because I felt that this thread existed within me too, and that I was connected to all living things: plants, animals, and humans everywhere. Amazing! In tenth grade I read some writings of the New England Transcendentalists, Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. To the extent that I could understand what they were saying, they seemed to

confirm my "discovery." I was convinced that God existed, but that Jesus didn't have anything to do with "it."

Christianity

My family moved to Bloomington, IN in 1966 when I was a sophomore in high school. My junior year of high school, some friends invited me to attend a youth group called "Christian Faith and Life" at an American Baptist Church in town. I conceded, because my boyfriend had recently moved away. This was his home church and I was lonely. Worried about how my parents would respond, I told them, "It's not a churchy thing." When I arrived, I told Ced, the Minister of Education at the church, "I'm not sure I belong here, since I'm not a Christian." He encouraged me to stay and see what it was about, and assured me that I did not have to "believe" to join in the activities. The youth group fostered a sense of belonging. We went on a weekend retreat together. We talked about life issues such as trust, honesty, community, and who we were meant to be. All of these things were really about Jesus, but I didn't see that at the time. Regardless, I was feeling a love and acceptance there, which I did not feel in my own home.

After I graduated from high school, the youth group was no longer available to me, but I still hungered for more. Ced asked me if I would like to help out with a second grade Sunday School class. While helping out, I heard something that riveted my attention: "God is Love." That concept had never occurred to me. It struck a chord, because love was what I was longing for, what I felt was missing in my family.

...Journeys Home Continued...

A couple of years before, after a conflict with my dad turned physical, I escaped through my bedroom window and hid inside St. Charles Catholic Church. It was two blocks away and was kept unlocked all night. I sat there, and felt comforted by the ambiance of peace. Although I did not know it, the red candle near the altar meant that Jesus was there for me that night. I know now that I felt His presence, even though I didn't identify it as such then. In a similar experience during college, I walked around the campus one evening and ended up at the Catholic Newman Center. I walked inside and sat down. Noticing the stained glass windows and candles flickering in the dark, I could sense this place was holy. I was feeling so lost and confused about my life that I actually considered seeking someone to talk to, like a priest. I didn't have the courage to do it, but the Lord was with me there.

Fulfilling the hunger for love

After my experience helping with Sunday School, there was a great hunger within me to know what Christians believed and what it was they had that I was missing. I began attending church, and liked the liberal, intellectual sermons that they preached in my college town. I borrowed a paperback copy of *Good News for Modern Man: The New Testament*, which I read and never returned, because I couldn't bear to part with it. As a freshman at Indiana University, I enrolled in religious studies classes and continued to read books from the church library. One of the two most influential books I read was Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Cost of Discipleship*. His theme was that the true disciple must be willing to give up everything for Jesus Christ, even life itself. The other book was C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*. He presented Christianity in a way that made practical sense. By the time I was finished reading that book, I was on my knees in my dorm room, praying, "Yes, Lord, I do want to give my life to you!"

I took a walk and ended up at the First Baptist Church. I sat there in the dark and thanked the Lord for finding me. The darkness didn't seem dark at all that night. About two weeks later, without any further preparation, I joined the church by coming forward and presenting a yellow, pew card to the pastor. I had become a Christian and joined a church. It went against my upbringing, but I didn't care. I had a peace and joy that my family could not comprehend.

A couple days after I joined the church, I learned that I would have to be baptized. After a few preparatory meetings with the pastor, I was baptized by immersion on the first Sunday of Advent, 1971. Although they said it was merely an outward sign of my decision to follow Christ, rather than a renewing sacrament, I still had a feeling of being newly born and starting out on a brand new life. I will never forget that feeling of gently being lowered down and then raised up out of the water. I was filled with joy. I felt I had found a new family, and had entered into a new life that no one could ever take away.

Ordained Ministry

During college I majored in fine arts and religious studies. I had no career plans and, thus, started to consider going into ministry. I wanted to find a way to share the joy of my faith. In September of 1973, I enrolled in the Master's of Divinity program at Andover Newton Theological School. I thought I might discover a way to integrate art with ministry. ... continued on page 4



DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

On EWTN radio with Marcus Grodi & Guests

Airs: Wednesdays @ 2:00 PM ET
Encores: Thursdays @ 1:00 AM ET

Be sure to check out our *Deep in Scripture* website, deepinscripture.com, where you can:

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- **Find** more information about the guests and the Scriptures being discussed.
- **Access** archives from previous *Deep in Scripture* shows.

Deep in Scripture Guests

July 4

Dr. Taylor Marshall, *Former Episcopal priest**

July 11

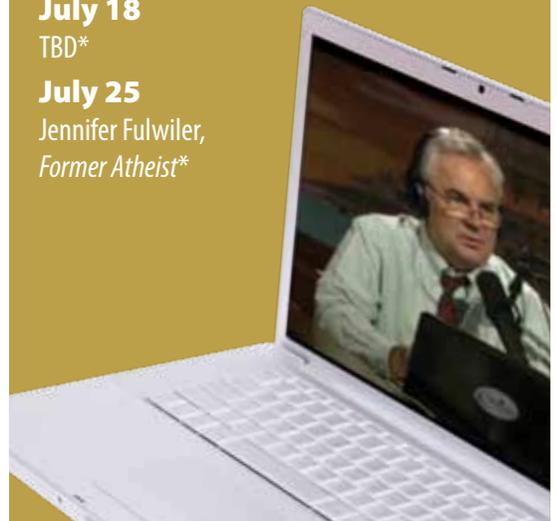
Fr. Randy Musselman, *Former Baptist**

July 18

TBD*

July 25

Jennifer Fulwiler,
*Former Atheist**



*This schedule is subject to change.



EWTN'S THE JOURNEY HOME

on television and radio, hosted
by Marcus Grodi, president of
CHNetwork

TELEVISION

Mondays at 8:00 PM ET

Encores: Tuesdays 1:00 & 9:00 AM ET

Fridays 5:00 AM ET

Saturdays 11:00 PM ET

RADIO

Mondays at 8:00 PM ET

Encore: Saturdays 7:00 AM ET

Sundays 1:00 AM ET

Monday-Friday 12:00 AM ET: *The Best of the Journey Home*

July 2

Dr. Taylor Marshall*

Former Episcopal priest

July 9

Fr. Randy Musselman*

Former Baptist

July 16

The Journey Home International *

July 23

Jennifer Fulwiler*

Former Atheist

July 30

Fr. Michael Taylor*

Former Methodist, Pentecostal and Evangelical

*This schedule is subject to change.

...Journeys Home Continued...

There, I met my future husband, John, and we eloped in January, 1974. The officiant was our Dr. Gerald Cragg, our Early Church History professor. If I had only known then, where I would be now, I would have paid more attention in class!

After we had married, though, I wavered in my commitment to ministry and dropped out. After John's graduation, we moved to Pennsylvania and I joined the United Church of Christ (UCC), because that was where John would be serving in his first church.

The UCC was formed out of a combination of two groups, each of which was a combination of two other groups. Two of these were the "Congregational Churches," with Puritan roots in America, and the "Christian Church," with American frontier beginnings. These two groups united to form the "Congregational Christian Churches" in 1931. The other two groups were the "Evangelical Synod of North America," a 19th century German American church, and the "Reformed Church in the United States," initially composed of early 18th century churches in Pennsylvania. These two united to form the "Evangelical Reformed Church" in 1934. The "Congregational Christian Church" and the "Evangelical and Reformed Church" merged to form the United Church of Christ in 1957. Today the UCC values the autonomy of the Congregational tradition, while incorporating the liturgical tradition of the Reformed churches. They value freedom of individual expression, debate over social and theological issues, and the freedom to choose, including the freedom to seek abortion, to "marry" persons of the same gender, and even to change one's biological gender. There are approximately 5,600 UCC churches in the US, with about 1.2 million members.

While in Pennsylvania, I took a course in church history at Lancaster Theological Seminary taught by Fr. William Walsh, SJ. During class, he invited the students to a weekend retreat based on the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola. John and I took him up on the offer. That was my first exposure to spiritual direction, silence, and meditative prayer on the Scriptures.

In 1976, we returned to Massachusetts while John was working on his Doctorate of Ministry. While there, I went on a couple of weekend retreats with spiritual direction by a Roman Catholic sister at LaSalette in Attleboro, MA. Our first son was born in September 1978, and I decided to resume my seminary studies. Our second son arrived in August 1981, and we moved to New Hampshire, where John and I served in a church together. I finished my Master of Divinity degree in 1984, and was ordained in the United Church of Christ on Pentecost Sunday.

While working as a part-time, Associate Minister at a UCC church in Concord, NH, I discovered an interest in Pastoral Counseling. I enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at Andover Newton and worked part-time as a Chaplain at Havenwood, a retirement community founded by the



Wedding night, January 8, 1974



UCC. I really enjoyed my work there with the residents, and wrote my thesis on “A Study of Faith and Loss in Older Adults.”

Receiving my doctorate in 1992, I began working as a counselor in community mental health centers and a family service agency. The work was challenging and I learned a great deal about the pain and struggles that many people are facing. However, I missed pastoral work and returned to work as a chaplain at Havenwood in 1999. I struggled with spiritual dryness, so I decided to begin regular, monthly spiritual direction, again with a Roman Catholic sister. I wanted to discover what it meant to have a “personal relationship with Jesus.” This term was not popular in the UCC, but I felt that I was missing out on something that my evangelical brothers and sisters talked about. A couple of years later, I found a copy of St. Teresa of Avila’s *Interior Castle* at the retreat center where I was going for spiritual direction. The depth of St. Teresa’s spiritual experiences motivated me to seek an even deeper intimacy with Jesus in my prayer life.

The Emmaus Road

Although becoming Catholic had never entered my mind, I was already having some concern about decisions that were made within the UCC, and with the “congregational autonomy” which was held to be almost sacred. It seemed to me that the UCC was constantly wrestling with issues of management, survival, and identity.

In January 2004 I made an 8-day retreat at a Jesuit retreat center. I was excited to have that much time to be free for prayer and for whatever communication with Jesus that He would allow. We were given some Scripture readings to ponder as the retreat began and the one that attracted me most was Hosea 2:19-20: “And I will betroth you to me for ever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy.... and you shall know the Lord.” My desire was to be in love with the Lord. By the end of the first full day, I knew in my heart that the reason God became human in Jesus is so that we could fall in love with Him.

The turning point that led to my entry into the Catholic Church came while stifling laughter during Mass! After he distributed Holy Communion on the Feast of the Epiphany, the priest sprinkled water into the Sacred Vessels and then drank the water, in order to be certain every drop of Precious Blood had been consumed. One part of me wanted to laugh out loud, when I thought, “What would the residents at Havenwood think if I washed the dishes at the altar, drank the dishwater, then dried the dishes and put them away before the service ended?” Another part of me was saying, “Wow! He really believes it is the Blood of Christ and does not want to throw away one drop.”

At dinner, I struggled with rude thoughts about elderly priests vainly trying “emulating the Pope” by shuffling along. I felt such remorse for having these disrespectful thoughts that I asked Jesus, “Lord, what’s going on with all this ridicule inside my head?” The answer that came was, “You are resisting intimacy with me.”

It was then I knew I was experiencing the temptations of the Enemy. I instinctively said, “Satan, get off my back!” I *wanted* to have deeper intimacy with Jesus,

... continued on page 6

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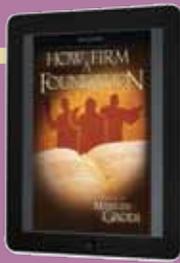
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EBOOKS

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MARCUS GRODI'S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

July 27–29, 2012



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www.franciscanconferences.com
(800) 437-8368

August 3–5, 2012



Midwest Catholic Family
Conference
Wichita, KS
www.catholicfamilyconference.org
(316) 618-9787

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...Journeys Home Continued...

and I knew that these Jesuit priests believed in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar and intimately loved Him.

Therefore, I humbly started to pay more attention to what was going on at Mass. The entire retreat became like the Emmaus Road. I recognized Jesus in the “breaking of the bread,” my heart was burning within me, and the Scriptures were coming to life. My prayer time was intense, and on January 10th, I had a vivid awareness of Jesus’ presence, as He said to me with great love, “I have been waiting long and patiently for this day.” I was completely amazed, dumbfounded, and filled with joy.

After the retreat ended, I started attending Mass on Saturdays, reading some of the *Documents of Vatican II*, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and talking with the few priests I knew. I was amazed at how scripturally-grounded the Catholic Church was!

However, it was the Eucharist that really drew me in. The Catholic Church has believed in Transubstantiation for 2000 years and, somewhere along the line, Protestants stopped believing in the Real Presence. Which would I believe? To start to legitimately receive the Eucharist was going to cost me my ordained standing in the UCC. Was I willing to lose my life in order to find it? If what Catholics believed about the Eucharist was true—that the bread and wine *actually* become the Body and Blood of Christ—how could I walk away from my Lord?

The year that followed was filled with much prayer, soul searching, and even an attempt to compromise with God by finding another Protestant de-

nomination that would be a better fit. But deep in my heart, I knew where this was going. In June of 2005, I left my position as chaplain at Havenwood and enrolled in RCIA, the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults. I received the Sacrament of



Easter Vigil, 2006

Confirmation in the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil, April 15, 2006—my 54th birthday. I love God’s timing!

The veil is lifted

There have been some surprises and delights in being Catholic that I have found along the way. One of the first surprises was realizing the Catholic Church’s deep respect for women. As an ordained woman, I had been led to believe that the Catholic Church treated women as second-class citizens. I had taken for granted that a woman had as much “right” to be ordained as a man, and in many situations even brought more gifts to ministry, because women are naturally nurturing and more relational than men. The Catholic Church, I found, values women in a different way, based on equality of dignity and not of roles. The Catholic Church proclaims that the dignity of persons is stamped into the very nature of our bodies and souls, and that the

relationship between the sexes is an icon of the love within the Trinity. Our dignity as men and women is equal, and our differences are complimentary and good. God, in fact, chose a woman through whom He took flesh and entered the world, in order that we could be brought back into full communion with God. I have found that the respect and honor given to the Blessed Virgin Mary is seen reflected in every woman. Mary even becomes the archetype of what it means to be human. The Old Testament, New Testament, and witness of many of the saints attest that the spiritual union between God and humanity is revealed in the marital union of a man and a woman.

Another surprise was cultivating a true appreciation of the use of traditional language in reference to God. In my seminary studies and work as a minister in the UCC, I adjusted to using “politically correct,” gender-neutral pronouns, not only in reference to human beings, but also to God. To portray God in male terms, such as Father, or even Lord, was seen by many of my contemporaries as sexist and damaging to women, because it might lead them to see themselves as something less than made in the image of God. The only times I would allow myself to use the name “Father” for God was in the Lord’s Prayer, public reading of Scripture, and when officiating the Sacrament of Baptism. When I became Catholic, I began to realize how impersonal the gender-neutral language really was. As my desire to have a personal relationship with God continued to grow, my comfort with traditional language increased. I still have difficulty praying intimately to God the Father, but this has more to do with personal history than with any conviction that I should not do it. God is a Father to us and sent Jesus His Son to be born of Mary and allow us to share in His inheritance as children of God.

Finally, I realized that Catholics seem to experience a thinner membrane between heaven and earth. Learning that there is a spiritual world, which exists beyond our vision and interacts with us on a daily basis, was a new paradigm. Angels, demons, saints, and the souls in purgatory are real! The sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, are also ways heaven’s doors open to earth. Praying to the saints and asking for their intercession is another new dimension of my prayer life. I try to pray the rosary every day and dedicate each decade to a different group of people, asking Mary to bring them closer to her Son and into conformity with His will.

I’ve been blessed with the ease at which most of the doctrines and traditions of the Catholic Church have fallen into place in my life. Catholicism has taught me to be humble in praying traditional words in the rosary, Liturgy of Hours, and in the Mass. A Protestant minister said to me, “I would miss the creativity of writing my own prayers.” I responded, “That’s just the point—it’s not about our creativity, it’s about God, and praying in union with the Church.” The Holy Spirit has become more personal to me through the Charismatic Prayer movement in our church. Also, the Sacrament of Reconciliation has brought profound healing in my relationship with my natural father and mother.

Conclusion

Once I became Catholic, I found myself asking the question, “What am I going to do now?” The first few years were the hardest. ... *continued on page 8*

UNSOLICITED MAIL

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

SHARE YOUR STORY

SHARE YOUR STORY!

The CHNetwork always welcomes those of our members who are converts or reverts to share their written conversion stories of how they were drawn (or drawn back) to the Catholic Church. If you feel called to share your story, please feel free to go to <http://chnetwork.org/converts> to review our writer’s guidelines, see sample stories, and upload your testimony.

WWW.CHNETWORK.ORG

The CHNetwork invites you to visit our website where you can read the latest CHNetwork news, follow our blog, read conversion stories, watch videos, and join in discussions on our forum. Keep up to date with the CHNetwork and become more involved in our mission to assist men and women who are on the journey to the Catholic Church.



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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

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...Journeys Home Continued...

I found it difficult to find my niche, whether it was in lay ministry, like hospice work, visiting in nursing homes and hospitals, or creating fabric art, which was a long time dream of mine. In the summer of 2010 I received a postcard about becoming a Foster Grandparent. The Foster Grandparent Program evolved out of the Older Americans Act of 1965 for persons over 60 (now 55) who desire to work with children in need of extra support, in schools, after school programs, or day care centers. In September 2010, I entered the Foster Grandparent Program working with children in grades K - 6, tutoring at a private Christian school. Next year, I will serve at St. John Regional School, because of my desire to serve in a Catholic setting. I am feeling blessed that God has called me, and equipped me for this ministry.



John's homecoming, September 27, 2009

As frosting on the cake, John, who was baptized and raised Catholic, and served as a parish minister in the UCC for 35 years, returned home to the Roman Catholic Church in September 2009 (he waited just long enough to officiate at the weddings of our two sons in 2008 and 2009)! We have co-facilitated Bible studies at our church using the "The Great Adventure Bible Study" series developed by Jeff Cavins. We are also very excited to be going with Jeff and Emily on a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land in January 2013. ■



Kathryn and John Betournay live in Concord, NH, where they are active at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church. Their family includes two sons and daughters-in-law: Scott and Jenny; Brian and Molly. Kathryn currently serves as a Foster Grandparent at St. John Regional School, and serves in a variety of ministries at IHM Church. John is a Volunteer Chaplain at Concord VNA Hospice and leads several study groups at IHM. Kathryn enjoys creating art quilts, John enjoys garden landscaping, and they both enjoy walking, biking, skiing, hiking, nature photography, and their Golden Retriever, Rusty.

BLOG

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

Prayer List



Clergy

- For Jose and Rajesh, former Catholics, now Protestant ministers, and for their extended families, that the Holy Spirit opens their hearts and minds to the truth of the Church that Jesus founded and pave the way for their return to the Catholic Church.
- For Chris, a Pentecostal lay minister in Florida, that, as he attempts to follow God through the Scriptures, the Lord Jesus would grant him the grace to realize the fullness of their truth in His one, holy Church.
- For a retired Anglican priest in England, that God would give him the conviction and courage to come home despite his family's resistance.
- For Larry, a former Church of Christ minister in Florida, that he and his wife may find the answers to their questions about the Catholic Faith.
- For a Baptist minister in Germany, that the Holy Spirit would guide his prayer and study of the Church Fathers and lead him to full-communion with the Catholic Church.
- For Ray, a Lutheran minister in Indiana, that his convictions of the truth of the teachings of the Catholic Church may deepen and strengthen as he continues his journey home.
- For Anthony, a former Southern Baptist seminarian in Ohio, that good fellowship, prayer, and study would give him a thirst to be in full communion with the successor of St. Peter.
- For Gregory, a Presbyterian pastor, to return to the Catholic Church with his family.
- For Karen, the wife of a Pentecostal minister in California, that her husband's lack of interest not dissuade her from her wish to be Catholic but that she may become a witness of the fulness of Christ's truth to her spouse.
- For Charles, a United Methodist minister in Texas, that his faith journey which has led him toward a hunger for a deeper, more complete expression of the faith may find fulfillment in the one ancient faith of the Apostles, the Catholic Church.
- For Matt, a full-time Baptist lay minister in Wisconsin, that his wish to find common ground so that he can stand with Catholics and be able to call them "brothers" would lead him to realize that our Lord Jesus is calling him to also become a Catholic.
- For Jonathan, an Anglican priest, and his wife, that the Lord give them strength and peace during this time of transition as they look to become Catholic.

Lay

- For Amy, that her return to the Church and the sacraments deepen her love for Jesus.
- For Carleton, that he is able to continue showing his friends the beauty of Catholic truth.
- For Tonya, a recent convert, that, as she receives the Eucharist, her love will witness to her husband who is not Catholic.
- For Ann who has been in an abusive marriage nearly 20 years, that as she prepares to leave her husband she finds peace according to God's plan for her life.
- For Jack, that the Holy Spirit again open his mind and heart to be receptive to learning about the Catholic Church.
- For Erika, that the angels and saints accompany her on her journey as she seeks answers to her questions.
- For Elaine, that she persevere in her interest in the Catholic Faith despite her family's opposition.
- For Kevin and his family, that God's guiding peace sustains them in all the struggles they are encountering after conversion.
- For Rob, that he finds opportunities and open doors to serve his God as a new Catholic.
- For Alice's children, most of whom have left the Church, may Jesus answer her prayers and bring her children home.
- For Andrew, that the Holy Spirit softens his heart and helps him overcome his anti-Catholic prejudices.
- For Jim and Nancy, that Our Lord bless their generosity and faithfulness to Him in this time of difficulty.

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.



Marcus Grodi

FIVE CONVERSIONS

Do not hate toilsome labor, or farm work,
Which were created by the Most High...
Do you have cattle? Look after them;
If they are profitable to you, keep them.

Sirach 7:15, 22

I've experienced five major conversions in my life.

When I was seven, I was baptized a Lutheran. This was my first conversion, though at the time, I was so oblivious to this that it hardly took.

When I was eighteen, I brashly claimed to be a scientific materialist, with no need for God. I thought Jesus was the child of a space traveler and a primitive earth woman.

When I was twenty-one, God had enough of my craziness. Like flicking a speck from His sleeve, He belted me with His grace, and mercifully allowed me to see Jesus. This was my second conversion, and my life has never been the same.



At age thirty-one, after six years of industry and four of seminary, I was ordained a Protestant minister. I wanted to help others see Jesus.

At age thirty-two I met Marilyn and at thirty-four we were married. This was my third conversion, for now I was complete, melded on to a far better half. And my life has never been the same.

At age thirty-five, we had our first son, Jon Marc, and once again, our lives have never been the same. Praise be to Jesus.

When I was thirty-eight, through the witness of a seminary friend, I "saw" for the first time 1 Timothy 3:15, and once again, our lives have never been the same.

At age thirty-nine, God blessed us with our second son, Peter, and again our lives have never been the same.

4

When I was forty, Marilyn, our two sons, and I were received into the Catholic Church. Praise be to God! This was my fourth conversion, and again, our lives have never been the same!

Much, much has happened since then! God has opened many doors: the Light and Life Foundation; Franciscan University; the Coming Home Network International; EWTN; many opportunities to speak and write, and I have been far more blessed than I deserve!



And one of those blessings was the birth of our third son, Richard, and once again our lives have never been the same!

And then Jon Marc met Teresa and they were married, and blessed us with our first grandson, Dominic! Praise be to God! And our lives have never been the same!

All of this has been an unfolding of innumerable blessings, all of which have changed our lives for the better, and for the glory of God!

But this is not to mention my fifth conversion.

It all happened back when I was forty-four. Marilyn was given, by her mother, ten acres of land on the old family farm. We designed a home, and had it built in a whittled-out section of woods, overlooking a hundred-year-old sheep barn that had been built by Marilyn's grandfather John.

One morning, sitting out on our porch, overlooking a valley, across to the barn, it occurred to me that that barn was made for a purpose. In the same way that a house without a family is not a home, that barn without critters was not fulfilling its purpose. This land, which had been hand-cleared by the first settler and his family back in 1825, was not fulfilling its purpose. And in these revelations our lives have never been the same.

I thank God for all of my conversions, and pray for the grace to fully understand and fulfill this last one—though of course, I doubt if it will be my last, for our lives are but one continual journey of conversion.

When I was a boy, I learned that the definition of a farmer is a man outstanding in his field. Now at age sixty, with my son Richard helping me herd six grass-fed cattle between eleven paddocks of pasture, and my wife, Marilyn, trying desperately to put up with my craziness, I ask St. Isidore, the patron of farmers, to pray for me, that I might have even an inkling of the worthiness of a farmer.

And by the grace of God, our lives will continue to never be the same. ■

St. Isidore the Farmer, photo by Dozenist <http://tinyurl.com/bpjgqz>



BLOG

This article can be found on **Marcus Grodi's**
new blog www.fromourbackporch.com!



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

GET INVOLVED!

The Coming Home Network International encourages members to assist in our mission this month to help non-Catholic clergy and laity come home to the Catholic Church in the following ways:

1

Get the July 2012 **Featured Resources** specifically designed to provide our members with excellent material to deepen their understanding of the Faith and in turn pass it along to non-Catholic family and friends.

For more information, see page 2 of this newsletter.

2

Read more conversion stories online at <http://chnetwork.org/converts>.



3

"Adopt" a person on the CHNetwork prayer list for the month and pray for their needs and intentions.

