



## July 2014 CHNewsletter

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

“Longing For Truth”  
By Leah DesGeorges ..... 1

EWTN’s *The Journey Home* Schedule..... 2

“By Grace We Have Been Saved”  
By Marcus Grodi ..... 3

“Staff Update” By CHNetwork Staff ..... A

Prayer List ..... D

# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



## Longing For Truth

By Leah DesGeorges

*“My longing for truth was a single prayer.” - St. Edith Stein*

As a 13-year-old Evangelical Protestant, I spent a day in a sporting good store asking people, “If you died tonight, do you know for sure that you would go to heaven? Would it be worth two minutes of your time to know for sure?” Today, at 27, I am a devout Catholic, in the first step of formation to become a Catholic sister with the Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles. Surely, God has a sense of humor, but when I reflect on how He brought me here, I know that it was His providential hand guiding each step.

### A fervent foundation

I grew up in a non-denominational Evangelical church in Boulder, Colorado. I “accepted Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior” for the first time when I was 3, again when I was 7, and several other times after that for good measure. My parents, both fervent believers who met each other at church, made it a point to raise my two younger sisters and me to know Jesus. We went to church together every Sunday, and I don’t remember a time in my life when I didn’t believe in God.

My parents taught us that the first and most important thing in life is to love Jesus Christ, and I am incredibly indebted to them for that. In the charismatic, evangelical church we attended, I saw firsthand the beauty of fellowship among Christian believers. My parents hosted a weekly home

Bible study, where they and their friends would sit in our living room and discuss God and the faith for hours. When we were little, we would play in another room while they conversed, but as I grew older, I began to sit and listen to them talk. It seemed to me that there, in our living room, true Christianity was being lived out, permeating the lives of everyone there.

At our church, we understood communion to be entirely symbolic, so there was usually no formal communion service. Instead, we had baskets of small crackers and cups of grape juice on tables at the front of the church, and during the time of worship, as you felt led, you could go up and help yourself. Sometimes I would partake of the bread and juice very reverently, imagining that it really was the Body of Christ

*Continued on page 2* ➤

Journeys Home

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

broken for me, and the Blood of Christ shed for me. I remember wanting to be connected to Jesus through this communion. For a time, I helped to prepare the wafers and juice cups in the kitchen before service. I remember asking the woman in charge about this communion, why we do it and what it means. She told me that Jesus told us to eat His Body and drink His Blood, so we do what He tells us to, and it helps us to remember how He died for us on the cross. I remember her answer was unsatisfying: I wanted it to mean something more.

### Faith nourished by Truth

Growing up in Boulder, one of the least religious cities in the country, I found vibrant and open opposition to my Christian Faith from my teachers and friends at the public schools I attended. This opposition didn't deter me from my faith; instead, it drove me to seek a deeper understanding of what I believed and why. I learned what made Christianity different from other religions and how it differed from the build-your-own-spirituality mentality around me. I began looking for apologetic arguments for the faith. Surrounded by a secular, relativistic culture, Christian authors like C.S. Lewis and G.K. Chesterton bore witness to something much more solid. I became convinced, first of all, that Truth exists outside of myself and my own experience. I became even more convinced that the Truth is always found in Christ. This deep conviction originated in my own personal experience of Christianity in my church, and especially in our charismatic worship services. I became active in my church's youth group, as well as in the Young Life and Student Venture ministries at my high school. A Christian friend and I met at the flagpole of our school every Friday morning at 6:30 for two years, snow or sun, praying for our friends and teachers. My own experience of God's love in my life deepened, and during high school my identity as a Christian became deeply rooted in my heart.

When choosing a college, I decided that I wanted to find a Christian school where my faith would be nourished. It was also

important to me to find a school that took questions of faith seriously, without any fear of asking hard questions. I was convinced that honest questioning would always lead to the truth, to Christ. I wanted to be around other Christians where I could delve more deeply into the faith. I found what I was looking for at Wheaton College in Illinois, a beautiful community where I found many students and professors genuinely committed to Christ and seeking truth. My new friends were from many different Christian denominations: Presbyterian, Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, and many others.

I found through these friendships that, although we were united in our search for truth and our deep love of Christ, there were also vast theological differences that existed between our faith traditions. As each of us looked to Holy Scripture as the infallible and only source of truth, we came to very different conclusions about almost every aspect of the faith. We all believed in Baptism, but we disagreed on when to baptize (infants, adults, or somewhere in between), and whether Baptism was regenerative or merely symbolic. We disagreed about whether the Holy Spirit is active in the Church today and, if He is, *how* the Holy Spirit is active. We disagreed about whether Christ died for all or only for the elect. We disagreed about whether the human person has free will to accept or reject Christ's atoning sacrifice. We disagreed about issues of morality and how to discern when something was acceptable or unacceptable for Christians. For each item of faith there was a broad spectrum of thought.

I heard over and over that this disagreement was normal and even desirable; that among Christians there should be "in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity." However, no one agreed on what was essential and what was left up to personal discernment, so subsequently almost every issue was considered non-essential, a matter of personal liberty. One day, in a theology class, our professor instructed us to define the central gospel of Christ — to make a list of what we believed were the essentials of the Faith, *Continued on page 5* ▶

## 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  
*The Best of the Journey Home*: Monday-Thursday 12 AM ET

**July 7**

Elizabeth Ficocelli\*  
Former Lutheran

**July 14**

Scott Bloch\*  
Former Evangelical Christian

**July 21**

Fr. M. Price Oswald\*  
Former Southern Baptist

**July 28**

Deacon David Miller\*  
Former Lutheran

\*Schedule is subject to change.

# By Grace We Have Been Saved

By Marcus Grodi

It's truly amazing, and disconcerting, how sincere brothers and sisters in Christ, who take the inspiration of Scripture so seriously, can yet so drastically disagree over even the most basic of Scripture texts. We certainly want to be faithful to Christ; to honor the mercy He has shown us through His undeserved grace; simply to do nothing more than share what we have received, so that others, too, might share in His salvific love. Yet, too often, we Christians have allowed our love and devotion for Christ to devolve into anger, ridicule, and rejection — all in the defense of a “God who so loved the world that He gave...”



Throughout the centuries, many Christians have been willing to fight, even die, in defense of the Truth (as they perceived it), while at the same time sometimes forgetting how Saint Paul warned against the danger of anger, of each person's need to “speak the truth with his neighbor,” to not be “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine,” and to do this all in love. Sadly, Christians have too often forgotten his words, and opened the doors for the divisive work of the devil (cf. Eph 4:11-32).

Often these drastic differences, based upon disagreements over Scripture, come from taking important Scripture passages out of context. One significant example of this is the well-known text from Ephesians: **“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God — not because of works, lest any man should boast”** (2:8-9). Regularly this verse is interpreted as referring to the assurance of eternal salvation after death, which true believers (or the elect) now have received freely “by grace... through faith,” and not as a reward “because of works” — which these interpreters generally presume Catholics believe. The truth is that the Catholic Church has never taught “salvation by works,” but has always warned against this — and has always warned poorly catechized Catholics not to misinterpret and misrepresent the meaning and praxis of Catholic teaching and devotions.

Certainly this text, from the midst of Saint Paul's theology, can be extrapolated to refer to the gift of salvation for those who eventually “die in God's grace and friendship and are perfectly purified” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1023). However, this was not the point of the text as Saint Paul originally penned it.

The overall context of the book of Ephesians was how being brought into the Church through the anointing of Baptism changes us, unites us as brothers and sisters (Eph 1-3), and then calls us to live this new life out in grace and love (Eph 4-6). As Saint Paul wrote to those newly baptized pagan Gentile converts, whom he had only heard about through the witness of the leaders he had previously installed (cf. Acts 20:17-37): “In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (1:13-14). There are more than enough places in the New Testament to affirm that this “guarantee” we receive through being “sealed with the promised Holy Spirit” is not a “once saved — always saved” presumption of salvation, but an assurance that through Baptism we have indeed been changed, recreated (cf. 2 Cor 5:17) — but now we must live this out in humility, holiness, and love.

To understand the intention of Saint Paul when he said that these newly baptized believers had been “saved by grace through faith,” we must read this text within the entire context of Ephesians chapter two.

*Continued on page 4* ➤

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God — not because of works, lest any man should boast”

The following verses show that verses 8-9 are but a parallel retelling of what he says four other times in this chapter:

“And you he made alive when you were dead ...” (2:1).

“But God ... even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus ...” (2:4-6).

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God — not because of works, lest any man should boast” (2:8-9).

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ” (2:13).

“So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God...” (2:19).

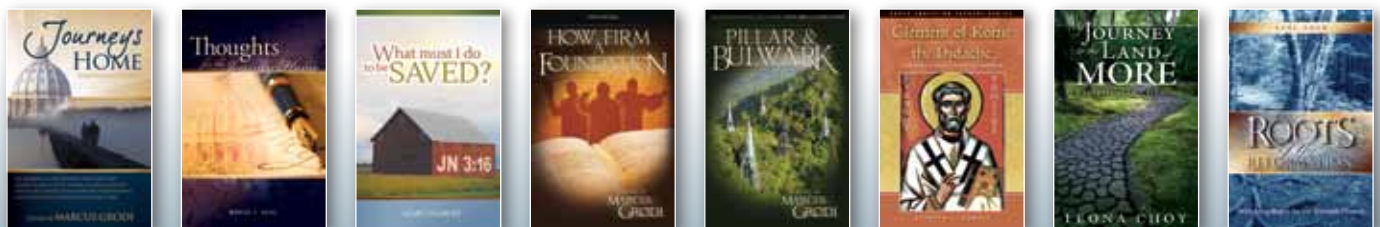
Saint Paul was not talking about what might happen someday in the future, but how God, in His mercy, had already rescued these former pagans out of their sinful lifestyles and culture and into the Church, “the household of God.” He did this not as a reward for their having changed their lifestyles on their own while they were still lost, but before they even thought of changing, while they were still “dead through [their] trespasses.”

The danger of misinterpreting and misapplying this passage to mean a “once saved — always saved” assurance of salvation is that it can lead to a presumptuous laxity; it can essentially lead otherwise sincere believers to stop reading Ephesians here, and ignore the rest of Saint Paul’s teachings, where he begs baptized Christians — who have received this “guarantee” of the Holy Spirit — “to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:1-3). He said that we “must no longer live” as we did before we surrendered to Christ (4:17), but to, “[p]ut off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (4:22-24).

May we, in love, be inspired by these recent words of Pope Francis to live in obedient unity:

It would do us good today to think about our Christian identity. Our Christian identity is belonging to a people: the Church. Without this, we are not Christians. We entered the Church through baptism: there we are Christians. And for this reason, we should be in the habit of asking for the grace of memory, the memory of the journey that the people of God has made; also of personal memory: What God did for me, in my life, how has he made me walk ... Ask for the grace of hope, which is not optimism: no, no! It’s something else. And ask for the grace to renew the covenant with the Lord who has called us every day. May the Lord give us these three graces, which are necessary for the Christian identity.

*Pope Francis’ homily at Casa Santa Marta,  
Vatican City, May 15, 2014 (Zenit.org)*



Visit [www.chresources.com](http://www.chresources.com) or call 740-450-1175  
for these and other great resources to learn more about the Catholic Faith.



## Staff Update

By CHNetwork Staff

### Wendy Hart, Financial Assistant

I am a convert to the Catholic Church from a Methodist background and have been a part of the Coming Home Network's staff as the Financial Assistant since 2009. My work encompasses a variety of tasks, and it is my privilege to often be the first person to interact with those who contact the CHNetwork by phone, although I share that duty with Ann Moore and Mary Clare Piecynski, and people say that we all sound pretty much alike! One of my main responsibilities is to enter and process donations and work with Ann to ensure that all is flowing smoothly and kept up to date in the finance department. I also facilitate all the mailroom activities and send out the orders we receive. I am happy to be able to serve the CHNetwork's membership and help the apostolate in the countless practical duties that ensure we are able to continue assisting men and women on the journey to the Catholic Church.

### Bill Bateson, IT/Facilities Coordinator

As the Coming Home Network's IT/Facilities Coordinator since 2006, I work closely on the technical side of things. In our studio I am one of four technicians that help in the recording of *The Journey Home* and *Deep In Scripture* radio show each week. I am also the post video editor for both shows as well as any other studio projects. In addition, I help with troubleshooting various computer issues and make sure our software and equipment is running well and is up to date. When not working with technology, I also take care of our facilities and make sure maintenance projects are done well. After working construction for many years, I ended up working on the CHNetwork property in 2003 around the same time my conversion to the Catholic Faith. By the grace of God I was able to eventually work full-time for the CHNetwork. I enjoy working in a Catholic environment and encountering people who help build up my faith.

### Scott Scholten, Director of Studio/Media

It has been an absolute blessing to be the Studio Director here at the Coming Home Network for the past 5+ years. Marcus asked me to join the CHNetwork staff in 2009 and put our TV/Radio studio together so that we could produce EWTN's *The Journey Home* from our studio here in Ohio. We also produce our weekly radio program *Deep In Scripture* at CHNetwork. (After taking some time off, we

are thrilled to have this one-hour weekly radio program with Marcus and Dr. Kenneth Howell back on EWTN radio). For the first 12 years of *The Journey Home*, Marcus would commute to the EWTN studios in Alabama to host *The Journey Home* program. Working closely with the technical staff of EWTN, we were able to duplicate the set of *The Journey Home* here at the CHNetwork and have been producing the program here in Ohio since early 2010. As the Producer/Director of this program, I am also responsible for finding and scheduling all of the guests who appear on *The Journey Home*. What a blessing it is to have so many converts/reverts willing to share their story with us. And, there's no shortage of guests! On average, I receive at least a half-dozen recommendations/suggestions each week for guests to appear on our program. Even though there have been over 700 *Journey Home* programs produced since the first one aired in 1997, each guest's "journey" is a unique story that inspires me every week. As a convert myself (from the Presbyterian church), I am always learning more about our Faith by meeting each of our guests when they visit us at the CHNetwork. Without a doubt, the best part of my job is getting to know all of our guests and to hear their "journeys" first hand!

### JonMarc Grodi, Manager of Outreach

My focus is on the active, "reaching out" that is a necessary and important part of our work. I work on making the Coming Home Network discoverable by those who might need fellowship and support and also on helping to facilitate the encounter with perhaps that first kind word, beautiful image, inspiring article, or compelling video that might be a channel of God's grace and a prelude to a larger journey of conversion. Through our website and online materials, digital media, social networking, our forum and comment boxes, and various other means, I work on putting forth the invitation for people to consider the beauty and truth of the Catholic Church and the need for continual conversion to Jesus Christ.

As I mentioned in the May CHNewslet-



ter, we recently launched a new version of the CHNetwork's website. In addition to the various form and functional improvements that were made, getting the new site launched has cleared the way for some exciting new projects. Allow me to highlight a few things:

- We are now not only archiving EWTN's *The Journey Home* program on our website but will be adding all the classic episodes as well. These will be indexed and searchable among our conversion stories by keyword and previous denomination.
- If you visit CHNetwork.org/Catholic you'll see that we have begun building a series of pages that highlight articles, videos, conversion stories, and external links concerning some of the common issues that people wrestle with when exploring Catholicism, such as Mary, Authority, Salvation, etc.
- We have 10 years' worth of talks from our Deep in History conferences and we have decided to begin releasing them online so that more people, all over the world, can have the opportunity to go Deep in History, and thereby deeper into Christ. If you are one of our donors (and prayer warriors!), keep in mind that we are able to share these great resources with the world because of YOUR generous support!

### Ann More, Financial Coordinator

I have been working for the CHNetwork since 2002 and currently serve as the Financial Coordinator. I am responsible for various aspects of our financial accounting and reporting. On an ongoing basis I process donations, do payroll, and keep CHNetwork's financial records reconciled and up to date. As a lifelong Catholic, I enjoy working together with my colleagues to serve the apostolate and ensure that our donors are well looked after. ■

## CHNETWORK MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Coming Home Network International (CHNetwork) is to help inquiring clergy as well as laity of other traditions to return home and then be at home in the Catholic Church. To learn more about our work, please go to [www.chnetwork.org](http://www.chnetwork.org).

## NEWSLETTER COPIES

CHNetwork encourages members to make copies of the newsletter and distribute to family, friends, and church groups. We do ask that copies of the newsletter not be sold. Unless otherwise indicated, the contents of this newsletter are Copyright © 2014 by the Coming Home Network International. All rights reserved.

## 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. These donations support all aspects of our small non-profit apostolate. Thank you for your support!

## 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/](http://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](mailto: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

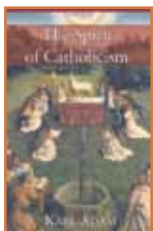
Discover

AmericanExpress

# FEATURED RESOURCES

## The Spirit of Catholicism

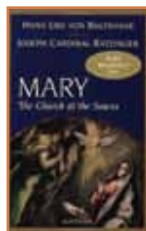
— By Karl Adam



The *Spirit of Catholicism* is an accessible, articulate, and compelling presentation of the fundamental tenets of the Catholic faith, explaining to all — Catholic and non-Catholic alike — exactly what the Church represents. This book is one of the finest works of Catholic apologetics written in the last hundred years, and is a must-read for anyone wishing to more deeply appreciate and comprehend the riches of Catholicism.

## Mary: The Church at the Source

— By Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI) and Hans Urs Von Balthasar



Two great theologians offer a spiritually rich approach to Mariology that brings into new relief the Marian contours of ecclesial faith. Ratzinger and Von Balthasar show that Mary embodies the Church and co-operates in giving birth to the Church in the souls of believers. At once profound and accessible, *Mary* offers a theologically balanced and biblically grounded presentation of traditional and contemporary thought on Marian doctrine and spirituality.

\$35

For a donation of \$35, receive the *The Spirit of Catholicism*.

\$50

For a donation of \$50, receive *Mary: The Church at the Source*.

\$75

For a donation of \$75, receive *The Spirit of Catholicism* and *Mary: The Church at the Source*.

— THESE PREMIUMS ARE AVAILABLE FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY —

## DEFENDING THE FAITH CONFERENCE FRIDAY NIGHT SOCIAL



Once again, the Coming Home Network International will be hosting a Friday night social at this year's *Defending the Faith Conference* at Franciscan University of Steubenville. The conference is being held from July 25-27, 2014.

The annual social has become a tradition and affirms the long-standing partnership between CHNetwork and Franciscan University. "Many of our members, including several former non-Catholic clergy, have come into the Church after experiencing a Franciscan University conference," said Marcus Grodi, CHNetwork's President and Founder.

The social provides conference attendees with an opportunity to meet one another in a relaxed, informal atmosphere on Friday night. These connections are sustained throughout the conference weekend, and often beyond.

"We have long recommended that our members consider attending Franciscan University conferences, and *Defending the Faith* in particular," said Marcus. "For those who are interested in apologetics, or learning more about the Faith, it's a great opportunity for growth."

The ties between the two organizations run even deeper than that. Prior to founding the Coming Home Network, Marcus was the Director of Evangelization at Franciscan University and ran the Light and Life Foundation. He has both taught and taken courses at Franciscan. His son Jon Marc, CHNetwork's Manager of Outreach, is a current graduate student studying philosophy. Kevin Lowry, Chief Operating Officer, is a Franciscan University graduate.

This year's conference's theme is "Standing for the Church with Boldness, Zeal, and Love." Speakers include Dr. Scott Hahn and his wife Kimberly, Dr. Donald Asci, Jeff Cavins, Dr. Paul Crawford, Mark Hart, Patrick Madrid, Fr. David Meconi, SJ, Bishop Jeffrey Montforton, Dr. Ian Murphy, Dr. Alan Schreck, Franciscan University President Fr. Sean Sheridan, Tim Staples and Dr. Benjamin Wiker.

The CHNetwork social will be held in the Gentile Gallery (downstairs in the JC Williams Center) following Friday evening's closing announcements, at 10:00 p.m. Please consider joining us to meet the CHNetwork staff, and possibly some new friends. We'll see you on campus!

# Prayer List



## Clergy

- For a Baptist pastor in Texas, that God would grant him the grace to have a hunger for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.
- For a Christian & Missionary Alliance military chaplain in Texas, that the Holy Spirit would guide him as he reads, explores, and discovers the profound truths of the Catholic Faith.
- For Billy, a minister in West Virginia, that he may come to experience the many joys Jesus wishes for him in the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church.
- For a Wesleyan pastor in Pennsylvania, that our Lord Jesus would guide him and his wife as they discern how to depart from Protestant ministry and enter the Church.
- For Richard, a former Southern Baptist minister, that his many theological questions be answered, paving the way for him to enter Mother Church.
- For Erica, a United Methodist pastor in the South, that she may be granted the grace to follow the Blessed Virgin's invitation to become a Catholic.
- For the wife of a military chaplain, that her journey to the fullness of the Catholic faith may be a witness to her husband.
- For a Southern Baptist missionary couple in Spain, that they may find committed Catholic friends who will assist them to come home to the Catholic Church.

## Laity

- For a longtime Evangelical who just recently became drawn to the Catholic Church.
- For Mike, who is exploring the possibility of returning to the Church, that he find the support and answers he is seeking.
- For Pam, who is continuing to look into the Catholic Church and is appreciative of Pope Francis' witness.
- For a woman who came into the Church at Easter and is concerned about how best to tell certain people in her life about her conversion.
- For Katherine, a recent convert, who is exploring various ways of going deeper in her faith.
- For George, that the Holy Spirit guide his journey and give him discernment.
- For Cindy, who is planning on going through RCIA again and is reading and studying about the Catholic Faith.
- For Alicia, that her time before beginning RCIA be fruitful and bring her closer to Jesus.
- For Barbara, who is on the journey and beginning to connect with Catholics in her area, that Jesus bless her with good friendships.
- For Kim, who is drawn to the Catholic Church but is uncomfortable with certain issues.
- For Linda, who is having a difficult time knowing how to move forward with her faith journey.
- For Sam, that he be able to connect with local Catholics to support him in his desire to return to the Church.
- For Emily and her husband as he continues to be supportive of her wish to be Catholic.
- For a woman in Texas, that her husband be willing to have their marriage convalidated.
- For Theresa, who has encountered hostility from her family and friends after they learned she became Catholic.
- For Roxanne as she connects with Catholics and considers how to go forward with her journey.
- For Doug who wishes to become Catholic but doesn't have the support of his family and friends.
- For Mark and his continued discernment as to God's leading in his faith walk.
- For the wife of a minister in Florida who wishes to become Catholic but doesn't know how to convert without negatively impacting her family.

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](mailto: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)

**Chief Operating Officer**, Kevin Lowry (former Presbyterian)

**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**, Jon Marc Grodi

**Financial Assistant**, Wendy Hart (former United Methodist)

**Board of Directors**: Marcus Grodi (former Presbyterian pastor), Dr. Charles Feicht (revert from Evangelicalism), Dr. Robert Geiger (revert), Bruce Sullivan (former Church of Christ minister)



► “Journeys Home” continued from page 2

the non-negotiable items of that must be believed in order to fall within orthodox Christianity. Each of us in the class wrote down a different list with a different number of items. It was striking to see how much we disagreed even on what was essential to agree upon. And ultimately, no one had the authority to say with any true confidence what was essential or what was non-essential, so we left the class, each with our own list in hand, unified only by the lowest common denominator. Each of us was left to discern the truth for ourselves. I found it hard to believe that this fractured church was what Christ had in mind when He prayed for Christian unity in the High Priestly prayer “that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me” (Jn 17:21). I began to wonder if any one church had preserved the truth revealed by Christ, beyond any personal opinion.

### Matter matters

After my first year at Wheaton, I began to attend an evangelical Anglican church. For the first time, I experienced liturgy and formal prayers. It was also the first time I experienced a church service where the central event was not the sermon, but rather the Eucharist. At first, I worried that the liturgy would become monotonous, but I discovered that the opposite was true: the more deeply I learned the prayers and the liturgical dance (stand, sit, kneel, stand...), the more fully I could enter into it. Knowing that Christians had been praying these same prayers for years, I felt connected for the first time to the universal Church beyond my own time and place. Pronouncing the Nicene Creed each week, I felt more connected to the common belief of Christians, in all times and places. I began to work with the middle and high school students in the youth group. The youth pastor assured me that I didn’t need to be an Anglican to work with their students, but he asked that I be “open to a sacramental worldview.” I wasn’t sure what that meant. He explained that as Anglicans, they believe that Baptism and the Eucharist are Sacraments; that is, that God uses matter (water, bread and wine) to convey His grace to us. In other words, “matter matters.”

As I began to consider the idea of the Sacraments, it occurred to me how fitting it would be for the God of the Incarnation, who chose to send His Son to bring salvation to the world by His life and death in a physical body, would also choose to use matter to minister His grace to us. When we received the Eucharist as Anglicans, we believed that Christ was really present, spiritually at least, in the bread and wine. We also believed that while the elements of bread and wine remain in their own substance, Christ becomes spiritually present alongside that, consubstantially, during the consecration. Because Christ is really present, we receive actual grace when we receive Him in communion; thus, the sacrament affects a change in us.

### Theology of the Body

Through my Anglican church, I was also introduced to the Theology of the Body of Pope (now Saint) John Paul II. For the first time, I met Protestants who thoughtfully and lovingly chose to follow God’s natural plan for their families by using Natural Family Planning (“NFP” refers to methods of achieving or avoiding pregnancy by cooperating with a woman’s natural fertile and infertile periods.). At first, I thought it was a strange choice, but I also saw the beautiful fruit which it bore in their marriages: along with their precious children, their marriages were open, loving, and radiated an astonishing depth of love and trust in God.

I learned first of all about the intrinsic and uncompromising value of each human person — persons of soul and body, not a Gnostic dualism, but embodied spirits. I also learned that marriage is intended by God to be to the world an image of the Trinitarian nature of love: as God the Father loves the Son, eternally pouring Himself out in love, and the Son loves the Father, eternally returning that love to the Father, the love between them is so real that it is the Person of the Holy Spirit. Thus, as the husband loves his wife in the marital union, and the woman loves her husband in return, the love between them is so real that it brings forth a new life in their child. The marital act is intended to be an act of total self-surrender, affirming the personhood and value of both husband and wife.

For the first time, I understood why Catholics believe this sacramental image of marital love is distorted by contraception; it turns the definitive marriage act into a self-gratifying experience, rather than an act of total self-gift. Although challenging, I found this Catholic teaching morally consistent and beautiful. I was surprised to find something that rang with truth coming from the direction of Rome. I was also surprised to learn that Christians of every denomination had always rejected the use of contraceptives throughout the entirety of Church history, until the Anglican Church decided at the Lambeth Conference in 1930 that contraception was morally permissible in certain circumstances within marriage. This decision less than a century ago opened the door to the current state of the church, wherein the vast majority of Christians — even many Catholics — use contraceptives without even considering their moral permissibility.

### A draw and a dread

As a Protestant, I never gave much thought to Christians of the past. My vague impression of Church history was based on an assumption that the early Church was evangelical and charismatic. I believed early Christians instinctively trusted in faith alone for salvation and looked to Holy Scripture as the sole authority for that faith: in other words, I believed that the early Church was full of Protestants. I believed that at some point in history, the Catholic Church had infiltrated the unadulterated gospel belief of these early Christians, usurping the pure teaching of Christ and introducing heresies like purgatory, indulgences, and the worship of Mary and the saints. This assumption was the only way to explain what changed between Jesus’

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

death on the cross and the heretical practices that necessitated Martin Luther's 95 Theses. I believed that the Reformation had restored the church to its original purity.

During my junior year, I took a class on St. Augustine. I was interested to see what the Church Fathers actually believed. I was hoping to find in St. Augustine teachings similar to Martin Luther and the Reformers, to reinforce my own view of the early Church as essentially Protestant in theology. As I read St. Augustine's writings first hand, however, I found him to be disturbingly Catholic; much more Catholic to me than I expected. His comments about the Church, the Eucharist, Mary, and the saints were strikingly Catholic. Most shocking to me was how strongly St. Augustine viewed the Sacraments; he said that "the importance of these sacraments cannot be overstated, and only scoffers will treat them lightly." If anyone had a "sacramental worldview," it was St. Augustine. And if anyone was a Catholic, it was St. Augustine. This terrified me, because it meant that my own narrative of the early Church was wrong: if the early Church was Catholic in its teachings, then the Reformers weren't actually restoring the Church to its early purity as I had believed.

I felt both a draw toward the Catholic Church and a dread of what I would find once I began exploring. I signed up for a class on Roman Catholic theology to put an end to my Catholic questions. I wanted to prove to myself that the Reformers were right in leaving the Catholic Church. But, as I learned about each doctrine from the Church herself, reading books like Karl Adams' *The Spirit of Catholicism*, and *Mary: The Church at the Source* by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI) and Hans Urs Von Balthazar, I was surprised to find that the Catholic teachings were far from what I thought they were, and that they were more convincing than any Protestant rebuttals. The actual teachings of the Church, when I heard them directly from a Catholic source, weren't at all what my perceptions of them had been. The Catholic view of the world, of human nature, and of God intrigued me. I tried to ignore it, to shake off the growing suspicion that I had been wrong about the Catholic Church, but the Church's teachings made too much sense for comfort, and were (most surprising of all) too in line with Scripture, to dismiss offhand.

I had assumed that the Reformation had restored the Church to its Protestant roots, but I saw now that the Church was Catholic from its very beginning. And while the Church has developed over the years, as a tree grows out of an acorn, it is still the same organism. Or, as an old man looks very different than he did as a baby, he is still the same person. I had a sinking feeling that I had been wrong about the Catholic Church: she looks

very different today than she did on the day Christ handed the keys of the Kingdom to St. Peter, but I realized it was, indeed, the same Church. And I, a Protestant, suddenly saw myself standing outside of full communion with that Church founded by Christ. It is a historical fact that the evangelical church I grew up in would have been unrecognizable to early Christians, to the Church Fathers, and even to the Reformers themselves.

Though I was at that point very interested in Catholic theology, I still held firm to *sola fide*, the belief that we are saved by faith in Christ's all-sufficient work on the cross, and that we are saved only by faith and not by any works that we do. I had always been told that while Protestants believe salvation is by faith alone, Catholics believe that salvation is by works alone. But when I learned the actual teaching of the Catholic Church on justification, I found that this is far from a fair distinction. The Catholic Church teaches that we are saved by faith in the atoning work of Christ, that justification is a work of the Holy Spirit, merited for us by the Passion of Christ, and which requires our cooperation. This justification comes from the grace of God, which is

the free and undeserved help given to us by God. It is the grace of God, which justifies and sanctifies us, and it will necessarily result in the fruit of good works (see: *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1987 - 2016). I had to admit that this view of justification was more consistent with several passages of Scripture that had always made me nervous and clashed with my once-saved-always-saved views (see Mt 25:31-46; Lk 12:41-48; Lk 13:23-28; Lk 18:18-30; Jn 14:21-24; Jas 2:14-22; 1 Jn 3:4-10).

### In good conscience

After graduating from college, as I continued learning more and more about Catholic teachings, I began to struggle more with whether I could remain a Protestant in good conscience. I realized that I actually believed that the Catholic Church was who she claimed to be — the very Body of Christ on earth — and I believed that she had been given authority by Christ to minister His Sacraments to the faithful. I also believed that Christ was present in the Eucharist — Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. But still not wanting to convert, I consulted a friend of mine who had converted to Catholicism that year. I told him of all that I had come to believe, but asked whether he thought I could remain a Protestant. He told me that if God had revealed to me the truth of His Church, that it would be wrong for me to walk away from that knowledge. I knew he was right.

I began RCIA in the fall of 2009, a little over a year after finishing college. There were still things with which I struggled: Mary and the saints were especially problematic for me, as were some

“

...I was surprised to find that the Catholic teachings were far from what I thought they were, and that they were more convincing than any Protestant rebuttals.

”

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

other Catholic practices, which seemed superstitious upon first glance. Mary proved to be the most difficult hurdle to overcome. To me, the doctrines of Mary's Immaculate Conception and Assumption seemed unnecessary, and many of the devotions to Mary seemed overly sentimental and even superstitious. In fact, it was less the Marian dogmas that bothered me, and more the Catholic practices of Marian devotion. But once I began to see for myself that Catholics don't worship her as they worship God, but revere her because of her singular role in salvation, I began to open myself more to understand the Marian teachings and they began to make more sense. It was also helpful for me to see Mary as the fulfillment of the Old Testament type of the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the stone tablets of the law. Mary, who contained within herself the Word made flesh, was singularly set apart for that task: it is because of this that she has a special place within the life of the Church.

But because I had come to believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, I wanted more than anything else to be admitted to the Sacraments. I wanted to be able to finally receive Christ's Body, broken for me, and His precious Blood, shed for me. I wanted to be able to receive Him physically, not just symbolically. I wanted to be able to commune with my Lord in the most Holy Eucharist. This overcame any other doubts or scruples I may have had.

### The beginning of a journey

When I finally received the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion on Easter of 2010, I felt as if I had finally found what I was searching for: the fullness of truth. I discovered in the Catholic Church a depth and breadth I can never plumb—centuries of theology, philosophy, prayer, mysticism, and sanctity. In the lives of the saints, I find the gospel mirrored in unique ways in the lives of real people, in real times, in real places—mystics, virgins, martyrs, and doctors. Living alongside the witness of the saints has made me strive for holiness in my own life. The saints are not statues to adorn church buildings. They are people, our older brothers and sisters who have triumphantly gone before us, who are helping those of us who are still on our way to heaven.

The grace of the Sacraments has transformed me. I thank God every day for bringing me to the Eucharist; I want to receive the Eucharist every day for the rest of my life. It is truly the "source and summit of Christian life." It was during Eucharistic Adoration that I began to discern whether God is calling me to follow Him in Religious Life, and I am currently a Candidate with the Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles. That has been another unexpected journey.

It was difficult to explain my decision to become Catholic to many of my friends and family, most of whom were Protestant. Some of my friends who knew me during college weren't surprised, since they had seen the progression of my journey and could see that I was heading in the direction of Rome. Other friends and family were surprised by my decision, and couldn't

understand my reasons for it. Many people assumed that it was a matter of taste or preference—as if I chose to become Catholic for the music, the liturgy, the incense, or the hats. But it was only because I was convinced of the truth of her teachings, and for no other reason, that I decided to come fully into communion with the Catholic Church.

I am entirely convinced that Catholicism is the fullness of the Christian Faith. I didn't lose anything when I was received into the Church—I *gained* more than I can express. My faith was real before I came into the Church, I truly loved Christ before I knew that He was present in the Eucharist, and I experienced the healing of God in my life before I had the Sacrament of Reconciliation. But, by the help of the Sacraments, through His Church, I know Him more deeply than ever. Through the Church, my faith has been incarnated in my life and in every aspect of who I am, body and soul. ■



LEAH DESGEORGES is in the first stage of formation with the Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles. After growing up as a non-denominational charismatic evangelical, she spent 5 years as an evangelical Anglican before coming home to the Catholic Church in 2010. If you would like to learn more about her journey as she discerns a call to religious life with the Carmelite Sisters, or are interested in supporting her as she works to pay off student loans, please visit [leahtocarmel.blogspot.com](http://leahtocarmel.blogspot.com).

### BLOG

Please visit [www.chnetwork.org/blog](http://www.chnetwork.org/blog) to comment on and discuss this 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. Contact Mary Clare at [maryp@chnetwork.org](mailto:maryp@chnetwork.org) with any questions or concerns.

# The Coming Home Network International

PO Box 8290

Zanesville, OH 43702-8290

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Be sure to check out [www.chnetwork.org](http://www.chnetwork.org) to discover archived Journey Home programs, conversion stories, and lots of great information about the **Catholic Church**.

