



P.O. Box 8290
Zanesville, OH 43702-8290

June 2001

The Coming Home Network International

Membership Letter

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It's always helpful to the visibility and promotion of an apostolate when someone else voluntarily 'blows your own horn.' Over the last several months, the National Catholic Register has published the following two articles by Timothy Drake, a Lutheran convert who has just recently been added to the Register's full-time journalistic staff (congrats, Tim). You may recall Tim's name. His new book "There We Stood, Here We Stand," a collection of Lutheran conversion stories, was our featured book in March. He was also my guest on the Journey Home program on March 12.

It seemed appropriate to pass these along to you in this month's Members Letter because we believe he has accurately captured both the goals of the CHNetwork as well as the needs that we are trying to meet. As always, thank you for your prayers and support.

*Sincerely In Christ,
Marcus G.*

When Being Catholic Means Losing Everything You Love

by Timothy Drake

Clergy Conversions to Catholicism are not Picnic.

Marcus Grodi tells the story of a 59-year-old former Baptist pastor in Texas who converted to Catholicism. "He approached the local Diaconate program, but they wouldn't cut him any slack. They wanted five years from him. By the time he would have finished he would be 65. Unable to find any work that would use his skills, he now works as a greeter at a Wal-Mart. The Coming Home Network exists because things like this happen," said Grodi.

Such examples demonstrate one of the many obstacles that clergy converts must overcome. While the journey is fraught with challenges, those who have made it offer hope. What is lost, they say, is nothing compared to what is gained.

After 18 years as a Presbyterian minister, Dr. Kenneth Howell's first hurdles were theological. "Following an in-depth study on the Eucharist," said Howell. "I realized that the early Church fathers unanimously held that it was the Body and Blood of Christ." That realization, coupled with discoveries about the nature of the priesthood and Christian unity, led Howell to embrace Catholicism. However, because of practical difficulties, it would be another four years before he converted.

"Conversion," notes Grodi, "has a profound impact upon an individual's vocation, marriage, family, and friendships. For many, all they have ever done is serve as a minister. What will they do now? How will they use their talents and gifts? How will they provide for their family? Did their ordination mean anything?"

According to Grodi the lack of understanding among family and

friends is a major hurdle. "The person on the journey is receiving important information that those around them cannot 'hear' because they are still deafened by their ignorance and prejudice," explained Grodi. "Because their spouse, their children, or their parishioners spend virtually no time studying the Catholic issues, they do not understand what the inquirer sees."

Naturally, for many, this gap leads to marital difficulties. "One of the greatest practical difficulties," agreed Howell, "was not being united with my wife in our walk of faith. After years of prayer and discussion, I felt I had a moral responsibility to enter the Church, but she could not bring herself to do so because she did not completely embrace it."

In addition to struggles with theology and relations, Howell also faced

vocational challenges. "I had been teaching at a Presbyterian seminary for seven years. Each year we were required to sign a statement of faith in agreement with the confessional standards of the Presbyterian Church. Eventually, I was unable to do so and had to leave the seminary," said Howell.

What Howell planned as a two-year sabbatical turned into four years of uncertainty. "They were the most difficult years of my life," explained Howell. "We had three teenagers and I was trying to piece together an income. Yet, through it all, God provided beautifully."

Marcus has found through his own conversion experience and knowing the stories of hundreds of others, that while each person's story is unique, we all share in basically the same stages of conversion. "First, let me say that I believe there are basically four things that keep people from becoming Catholics. Three things are: ignorance, prejudice and 'bad Catholics'.

Many just don't know what the Church teaches, and are blinded by ignorance. Or what they think the Church teaches is incorrect. And sometimes the Catholics they have known have not been good models of the Catholic faith, or even the Christian faith, from their Protestant perspective. The fourth thing that holds people back is their heart condition: do they have a hard or tender heart?"

Conversion essentially begins when a breach of some sort occurs in the tough wall that protects a hardened, ignorant or prejudiced heart. A crisis, an "Aha" experience, a shocking Scripture, or a friend converting—all these things and more can cause a breach in one's defenses. For the first time a person sees something Catholic which doesn't repulse them. When this door opens, for whatever reason, we call these individuals "inquirers".

In time the inquirer has absorbed enough new information, has worked

through prejudices, and has met Catholics who model the faith. At this point they reach a stage where they will never be the same again. We call this stage the "journey". This stage involves continuous "widening and healing of the breach" through prayer, study, correspondence, even debates.

As they reach the far side of their journey they come to the stage we call "no man's land", where they have enough information to know that they cannot remain Protestant, but they surely cannot become Catholic! There are too many strange Catholic rituals or practices. They also realize the impact of what a conversion will mean for their life, their vocation, their marriage, their family and their friendships. For many, all they have ever done is serve as a minister—what will they do now? They wonder, "How will I now use my talents and gifts? How will I provide for my family? Did my ordination mean anything?"

It is at this stage where communication and marital difficulties often arise.

For many, though, the final stage is RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) when the individual makes the decision to go the rest of the distance. Conversion requires deep surrender and a final acceptance to do what the Lord calls us to do, whatever that may be.

How Should We Then Serve?

Some converts, such as Larry and Joetta Lewis, are finding innovative ways to serve. "I spent my entire life jumping through Protestant hoops," said Larry, who spent more than 30 years as a Protestant minister. "Your self worth is wrapped up in what you do. I became a Protestant minister because I heard God's call in my life. When moving from one world into another it can be difficult to figure out how you can be faithful to the call God

placed on your heart and how you can fit within the Catholic Church."

Lewis' conversion also posed a challenge to his family relationships. "My father was an Assembly of God minister," explained Lewis. "My conversion was extremely difficult for my father. He said it was much like losing a son. My father's friends viewed him as a failure because his son was now a part of the 'whore of Babylon'." Lewis says that his father is now one of his biggest supporters. "There have been tremendous struggles, but I've never once felt that our decision was wrong," commented Lewis.

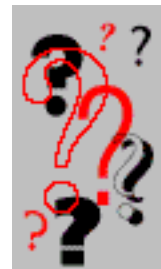
In order to make use of their ministry experience, Larry and his wife, Joetta, formed One Body, an apostolate calling Catholics to practice their faith more fully and share in the New Evangelization. "We're trying to bring non-practicing Catholics back home and share the Catholic faith with Protestants," added Joetta. They are in the process of relocating their center of evangelization from Oklahoma to Florida. To date, they have produced video and audio materials and presented their story to more than 300,000 people throughout Europe and the United States.

Ongoing Challenges ...

According to Noah Lett, originally a Lutheran pastor in New York, the difficulties do not cease once one has become Catholic and found employment.

"When you come into the Church as a convert," explained Lett, "there are other obstacles. You carry with you your Protestant habits of mind. You don't have all the Catholic "street" knowledge and you often times still speak with an accent."

Lett has also found that it is not uncommon for a pastor or an organization to look upon a convert as someone who might be willing to help transform the traditional Catholic



Mass into something more Protestant. Said Lett, "That is taking the Church in a direction that I don't find much comfort in. Why would I want to return to the place where I came from? If I had wanted that I could have stayed where I was."

"Experiences such as Noah's are not all that uncommon," suggested Grodi. "Ninety-nine percent of clergy converts are coming into the Church because they love it. They aren't coming in to change the Church."

Finally, Lett says that there is the tendency to feel as if you are valued only for your "story", rather than being valued for what you can do. "As a clergy convert especially, you want to find ways that you can help, but you don't know how," added Lett. Lett, and others, have found help through the Coming Home Network. In fact, his current position as a theological researcher with EWTN came through his relationship with Coming Home president Marcus Grodi.

Support in the Journey...

In an effort to support those coming into the Church, Grodi founded the Ohio-based Coming Home Network in 1996. Today it has more than 10,000 members. "Our goal is not evangelization," says Grodi, "but to link converts to those considering the faith for the purposes of fellowship, encouragement, prayer, and support." The network also provides resources, a job bank, and limited financial assistance to clergy converts who face financial problems because of their conversion.

"We have no statistics that tell us whether the Church is receiving more converts now than it has in the past; there has always been a constant flow, primarily from the Anglican Church. However, from what I have seen, what is surprising today is the number of converts from across the denomina-

tions. I know clergy who have converted from at least 35 different denominations. The largest number of converts seems to be from the evangelical world primarily because evangelicals are committed to Scripture, to following Jesus wherever he might call and to seeking truth through the reading of history and the early Church Fathers," Grodi said.

The foundation of the Coming Home Network coincided with Dr. Howell's journey into the Church. Grodi and Howell had met three years prior at a conference, and so in the beginning Grodi tapped Howell to work for the Coming Home Network. For the next two years, Howell answered inquirer's questions and helped others in their journey. His real calling was to academia, and in 1998 he was offered a position as director of the Institute for Catholic Thought at the University of Urbana-Champaign, where he has been since.

"I am deeply grateful for the support of the Coming Home Network," commented Howell. "It made me realize that I wasn't a lone ranger. It gave me the real sense of belonging to a movement. We felt supported by others that are on the journey."



Upcoming guests on the Journey Home Program on EWTN, Mondays live at 8 pm EST

June 4 Kristine Franklin, convert open-line week

June 11 Dr. + Mrs. Charles Feicht, Dr. is a "revert", Mrs. is a convert.

June 18 Thomas Richard, former Unitarian Pastor

May 28 John Davis, former Jehovah's Witness

Can't catch the show when it is broadcast live?

Tune in for re-airs: (EST)

Tuesdays 10 am

Fridays 1 am

Saturdays 11 pm

Greetings from the Helpers Network:

MASS-OUR HOLY HOUR WITH JESUS

by Chris LaRose

Recently, I posted a Bishop Sheen story which speaks to the power of the witness of a martyr (which means witness). A couple of months before his death Bishop Fulton J. Sheen was interviewed on national television. One of the questions was this: "Bishop Sheen, you have inspired millions of people all over the world. Who inspired you? Was it a Pope?"

No, it was a little Chinese girl of eleven years of age. He explained that when the Communists took over China, they imprisoned a priest in his rectory near the Church. After they locked him up in his house, the priest was horrified to look out of his window and see the Communists proceed into the Church, where they went into the sanctuary and broke into the tabernacle. In an act of hateful desecration, they took the ciborium and threw it on the floor with all of the Sacred Hosts spilling out. The priest knew exactly how many Hosts were in the ciborium—32.

When the Communists left, they either did not notice, or didn't pay any attention to, a small girl praying in the back of the Church who saw everything that had happened. That night the little girl

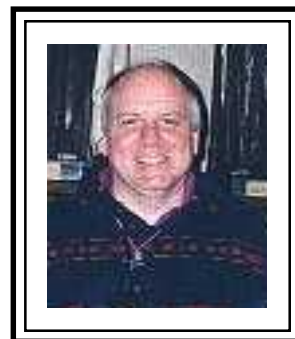
came back. Slipping past the guard at the priest's house, she went inside the Church.

There she made a holy hour of prayer, an act of love to make up for the act of hatred.

After her holy hour she went into the sanctuary, knelt down, bent over with her tongue, since it was not permissible at that time for laymen to touch the Sacred Host with their hands, and received Jesus in Holy Communion,

"Bishop Sheen, you have inspired millions of people all over the world. Who inspired you?..."

The little girl continued to come back each night to make her holy hour and receive Jesus in Holy Communion on her tongue. On the 32nd night, after she had consumed the last host, she accidentally made a noise and woke the guard who was sleeping. He ran after her, caught her, and beat her to death with the butt of his rifle. This act



of heroic martyrdom was witnessed by the priest as he watched grief stricken from his bedroom window.

When Bishop Sheen heard the story he was so inspired that he promised God he would make a holy hour of prayer before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament everyday of his life. Let us too, make Holy Hours of prayer, seeking with faith, hope, and love the unity Christ so fervently desires of us.

The CHNetwork is growing rapidly. We are here to help our brothers and sisters to find the fullness of faith and to be here for each other in support and encouragement. Let us continue to seek Him and be open to the abundant graces He sends us daily, as we become one Body in the one Lord. (Eph. 4: 3-7)

EcceHomo!

Chris LaRose
Director of the Helpers Network



Please pray for...

✦ Chris, Jody, and the Erickson family that their faith remains strong and that God will console them as they grieve their loss of 3 year old Raphael.

✦ The St. Mary Mattingly Settlement Church family in changing times of their parish community.

✦ Pete, an Australian minister who is going through an extremely heart-wrenching time on his journey.

✦ Peggy's brother to return to the Church.

✦ Gary, an Anglican who has been attending Catholic mass for a couple of years and is in RCIA, as he considers converting.

✦ Christine, who is going through a difficult time on her journey.

✦ Kim, that she has the wisdom to use the right words as her Protestant friend asks about Catholicism.

✦ Gerard, to return to the Church.

✦ Theo, that he return to the Church and stop making it difficult for his wife to raise their children Catholic.

✦ Naneeta, convert in India, working to raise funds for a hostel to aid converts who have no funds or jobs to live on.

✦ Curt, clergy convert with Old Catholic orders, coming into the Church, as a priest or layman.

✦ David and Chuck, UMC pastors who so want to be Catholic, that their spouses will support them.

✦ Larry and Kancy, trying to weather the stormy seas, and become Catholic, their sole support is a Christian bookstore which may suffer by their conversion.

✦ Jackie and all our Helpers on the front line, that they be protected from the evil one and his attacks.

✦ Becky and others, whose spouses have left or threatened to leave them if they become Catholic.

✦ Mike, an ex-Mormon, in RCIA being attacked by his mother.

✦ Judnie's teenage friend, who's involved in the occult, that she may see the light through Judnie's Catholic witness.

✦ Bruce, UMS pastor, hopefully coming in this Easter, still in need of a job.

✦ Several pastors who want to convert, but with varying personal financial issues cannot.

✦ All those with marital issues holding them back from full communion with the Church, may they receive the graces they need to persevere home.

✦ Peter, a lapsed Catholic, to continue his journey back to the Church.

✦ Joseph, to learn more about the Church and the Catholic faith.

In every newsletter we include timely prayer concerns from the membership. Keep in mind that the requests for prayer are new in each issue. Please pray at least one hour each month before the Blessed Sacrament for the needs in general and specific of the CHN network, its members, and supporters. Submit all prayer requests and answers to:

*CHN Prayer List
PO Box 8290
Zanesville, OH 43702
or
prayers@chnetwork.org*

We use only first names to protect anonymity.

✦ Patty and Kris, coming home this Easter, with heavy family pressures not to.

✦ Paul, who wants to come home, wants to "come out of the closet: to his friends and family and has even been told to stay where he is, that it's not necessary to convert.

✦ Chris and Heather, that they will be united in their love for and understanding of the Catholic faith.

Bulletin Board

Be Thou My Vision



The new novel being released initially in serial format by **Marcus Grodi**. A fictional novel undertaking a story about a clergyman, and his story of conversion to the Catholic faith. A very good resource for those considering the Catholic faith. Also good reading for those who enjoy a good story.

Marcus is releasing the novel in serial format in hopes to get input from readers so come join us in making this resource the best it can be.

Hard copies available for \$15, and pdf format (computer file) available for \$10. Being offered now at chresources.org, also on our website at chnetwork.org, or by calling us at (740) 450-1175.

CATHOLIC CONFERENCE AT SEA

AUGUST 12 - 19, 2001



Join fellow Catholics on the 2001 Envoy Scripture-Study and Apologetics cruise to Alaska! Mark your calendars for August 12 - 19, 2001, if you are looking for a different way to enrich your spiritual life. Enjoy the beauty of Alaska's mountains, wildlife, and Glacier Bay, as you study Scripture. The cruise will include Mass, lectures, seminars, and more.

For details, please call Mrs. Pat Baker at Bon Voyage Travel: 1-888-343-8121, email her at pbaker@bonvoyageltd.com or visit Envoy's web site at www.envoymagazine.com/cruise2001/html

Envoy Magazine hopes you'll join them on this unforgettable experience that will rest your body, refresh your spirit, and feed your mind.

If you notify us of change of address, it costs us nothing. If the Post Office notifies us, it costs us \$.34. Please help us save this cost. Please email changes to info@chnetwork.org or mail them to us.

And if you're not yet a Member of the Coming Home Network. . .

Levels of Membership

Primary Membership is for former clergy, missionaries, academics or others in full-time ministry and their families who are somewhere along their journey into the Catholic Church. **Secondary Membership** is for laity of other traditions and fallen-away Catholics who are somewhere along their journey into the Catholic Church. **Tertiary Membership**, is for Catholic laity, priests, deacons, religious and bishops who support the CHNetwork with their prayers and generous contributions.

Get Involved!

Become a member of the CHNetwork. Membership gets you on the mailing list to receive *Coming Home Network* related mailings. Primary members and donors also receive the CHJournal.

To become a member, contact the CHNetwork at 800-664-5110 or info@chnetwork.org

THE HELPERS NETWORK

This is the core of our apostolate, comprised of CHN member volunteers who: provide support, answer questions, offer encouragement and prayer, and when necessary, ongoing contact with inquirers to the Catholic faith. Our Helpers Director, Mr. Chris LaRose, matches people based on faith, life, and if required, geographical locations.

If you need help on the journey home, or would like to be a Helper, contact Chris by phone at 1-800-398-0937 or by email, larose@chnetwork.org

Coming Home Resources



What happens when the road to Rome is traveled by only one partner in a marriage?

This Month's Special: **When Only One Converts**

Often the journey is marked by intense opposition, including grief, anger, and threats. Sometimes it ends with a joint conversion; sometimes it ends the marriage itself. In these engaging and moving accounts, converts to Catholicism talk about the impact their decision had on their spouses. These courageous men and women offer their stories to fill a need they themselves have felt deeply—to know they are not alone. Through their words, you will experience the joy and the pain that results when the search for Christ and His truth leads a husband or wife into the Catholic Church. If you, or anyone you love, is struggling with the decision to join the Catholic Church, *When Only One Converts* can provide comfort, understanding, and hope.

“Conversion is a pilgrimage that for most people follows an arduous path, strewn with obstacles and uncertainties. Happy the marriage in which both spouses make the journey together, mutually strengthened by their unity of purpose. But spouses who find themselves alone on this path indeed all readers, regardless of their circumstances—are bound to be encouraged and guided by these graceful, and deeply personal conversion accounts. *When Only One Converts* provides solid food for the journey, prepared for you by those who have traveled that road themselves.” Patrick Madrid, editor of *Surprised by Truth 2*

“At long last, a book for the converts who go it alone. The writers are honest about the grief and frustration of living with a spouse who can't or won't 'get it'. And they are refreshingly transparent about their own shortcomings, insensitivities and even sins. Despite the pain that each one of these individuals has experienced, hope in the love of Jesus and trust in the power of His grace are the melody and harmony of this book.” Kristine Franklin, author, speaker, co-host of EWTN's “Household of Faith”

Response Form for CHResources

BOOKS	Inc. postage	Quantity	Totals
Path to Rome	\$17.00		
Roots of Reform	\$4.00		
Surprised by Truth 2	\$17.00		
Journeys Home	\$15.00		
There We Stood	\$13.00		
When Only One Converts	\$14.00		
Mary of Nazareth	\$12.00		
95 Reasons	\$9.00		
Ord. Path to Holiness	\$9.00		
CCC tabs	\$4.00		
Bible tabs	\$4.00		
Reading Guides	\$0.50		
CHJournal - Mary	\$3.00 -- 1-5		
CHJournal - Authority	\$2.75 -- 6+		
CHJournal - Eucharist	"		
CHJournal - Sole Scrip	"		
CHJournal - Salv/Just	"		
Total \$ for Resources			

Date: _____

Additional Donation to _____
the work of the CHNetwork: \$ _____

Check this box for a free copy of "When Only One Converts"
 (WITH A \$25 MIN DONATION)

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Supporting Member: Annual donation of \$25 or more receive Journals and Newsletters

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This month all donations of \$35.00 or more will receive this book free.

See inside!



New CHResource
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