



June 2014 CHNewsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



On Whose Authority?

By Father Raymond Ryland

It is with a mixture of sadness yet blessed joy that we dedicate this edition of the CHNewsletter to recently deceased Father Ray Ryland, our former Chaplain and Vice-president. He was a constant friend, guide, and intercessor, for my family and me, for the staff and work of the CHNetwork, and for thousands on their journeys of faith. Our prayers are with him and his family, as we know that he continues in love to lift us all before the Father. *Sincerely in Christ, Marcus Grodi*

"How can you go into that darkness, once you have known the light?" In deep anguish, my mother-in-law asked my wife and me this question when we told her we were going to enter the Catholic Church.

There was a time when the thought of becoming Catholics would have caused us even greater distress than our news caused her. Now, however, we were near the end of a sixteen-year pilgrimage. We could finally see the Tiber ahead, and we were eager to cross.

For many years, we had known ourselves as seekers. Now we realized we were pilgrims. The difference? Pilgrims know where they are going.

Whatever its hidden roots, the "seeking that was a pilgrimage" began not long after Ruth and I married. While the initiative was largely mine, all those years we traveled together: reading, praying, discussing, at times arguing — always just between ourselves.

Yet we never walked in lockstep. Sometimes one of us would go ahead, and the other would insist

on a spiritual rest stop. (I did most of the darting ahead and the chastened retracing of steps.) But we were always together. For that, we are forever grateful.

During much of our pilgrimage, we knew that we were wrestling with the problem of authority. How does one know Christian truth with certainty? We saw with increasing clarity that this issue underlies all the divisions among the thousands of competing Christian traditions.

We also began to recognize that the issue of authority is at root a Christological question: What has God done in Christ to communicate His truth to the world?

The quest for ultimate doctrinal authority may arise out of psychological need. Some of our friends put this interpretation on our pilgrimage. They seemed to think I was the culprit, dragging my poor wife along on my ill-fated journey. "Ray, we always knew you had a need for the authority and structure you've found in the Catholic Church."

Continued on page 2 ➤

Journeys Home

...Journeys Home Continued...

What they said was true. It was true in a far deeper sense than they apparently meant it.

With all our hearts, we believe every human being needs the authority and structure of the Catholic Church. In our Episcopal years, Ruth and I grew in our personal relationship with Jesus Christ, loving Him and trying to serve Him. Fairly late in our pilgrimage, we realized that we had accepted Christ on our terms, because we had no other.

In every instance of moral decision or of personal belief, we were the final authority as to what we should do or believe. This is the dilemma of all non-Catholics.

The Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ and claims to speak for Him under carefully specified conditions. Once the truth of that claim became clear to us, after a long and arduous search, we had no alternative but to submit to the Church's authority.

In that submission, we knew we were submitting to Jesus Christ on His terms. No longer were we ourselves the final authority in matters of faith and morals. This submission is possible only in the Church Christ established and to which He gave His authority.

Looking back over the years, we knew it was the Holy Spirit who long ago had put in our hearts this yearning for ultimate doctrinal and moral authority. It was in entering the Catholic Church that the yearning would know its fulfillment.

Vocation and Conversion

The discernible beginnings of our journey lie in my vocation to ordained ministry. The first faint sounds of a call to the ministry came to me in a summer church camp before my freshman year in college. The sounds were so faint that when I entered a college of my denomination, I had no clear vocational focus. I majored in history only because it was my favorite subject.

A sophomore course in European history introduced me to details of Catholic teaching. The two textbooks were written by Carleton J. H. Hayes, who was to be the American ambassador to Spain during World War II. (Only recently, I learned he had become a Catholic while a student at Columbia.)

I began to learn about popes and monks and bishops and sacraments and interdicts and penitent kings standing barefoot in the snow. Hayes' books gave far more detail about Catholic belief than the average history book. The Catholic Church was a fascinating subject, but I was not drawn to it by my study then: It was too remote, too utterly different from my Protestant world.

Even though entering the ministry kept coming into my mind, I never thought of asking God to guide me. After all, it was my decision to make, or so I thought. (I thank God that He ignored my ignoring Him!) In my senior year, I decided to enter the seminary at my college.

In that same year came the attack on Pearl Harbor. Soon I realized that I could not sit in a classroom while my friends fought a war we all believed was necessary. After graduation, I entered officers training for the Navy. I assumed that if I survived military service, and if the attraction to the ministry was valid, the attraction too would survive.

During almost all of my three years in the Navy, I served as a communications and navigation officer on an aircraft carrier in the Pacific theater. We were at sea almost all that time, so in my off-duty hours I read widely and studied in preparation for seminary.

A chaplain on our ship put me in touch by correspondence with his former professor, Robert H. Pfeiffer, distinguished professor of Old Testament at Harvard Divinity School. Pfeiffer very graciously guided my study of his classic introduction to the Old Testament. *Continued on page 4* ➤

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

June 2

Andy McNutt*
Former Baptist

June 9

Cliff Bajema*
Former Reformed Church of
America pastor

June 16

Fr. Tyson Wood*
Former Lutheran minister

June 23

Mike Aquilina*
Revert

June 30

Mike Carlton*
Former Presbyterian
Re-air from 5/23/2011

*Schedule is subject to change.

Assurance of Salvation?

By Fr. Ray Ryland

I recently received an e-mail in which the author spoke about the issue of justification and salvation. He said he understands Catholic doctrine, but has some difficulty in accepting it on an emotional level.



“In Protestant theology,” he wrote, “or at least that of evangelical Protestants, the conversion experience of accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior suffices for salvation. As you know, this is sometimes expressed as ‘eternal security,’ and indeed it does provide lasting comfort to believers to be assured of their salvation.”

Limitations of space, of course, preclude discussing a vital issue raised by relying on one’s conversion experience for assurance of salvation, but the issue is this: How can I know whether I have given my life to Jesus Christ on His terms or on my terms? How do I determine the truth in this all-important matter?

The belief that one has assurance of salvation — absolute assurance — mistakenly identifies what we may call “objective redemption” and “subjective salvation.” “Objective redemption” denotes the fact that in His life, death, Resurrection, Ascension, and sending of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ has redeemed the whole universe. Period. Our Christian Faith demands that we be absolutely assured of this fact.

Whether I personally benefit from this objective redemption, however, depends on my response. The merits of Christ have to be received and acted on in my life. That is the process of “subjective salvation.” Unless by God’s grace I appropriate the objective redemption wrought by Jesus Christ, it can have no effect on my life. If I simply take comfort in the fact that Christ has redeemed the world, and do not work continually at receiving that redemption more and more fully into my life, I am living in a serious delusion.

A number of years ago a book was written about an incident in New York City involving two elderly men, the Collier brothers. Neither had married, and they had always lived on upper Park Avenue in the large home where they were born. One day neighbors realized they had not seen the old men for quite a long time. They called the police, who broke into the house and found the old men dead. The coroner determined they starved to death. Neither has been disabled. They simply sat in their home and starved.

The police also found a fortune in cash and negotiable securities, all of it in plain sight. Those old men had starved with a fortune at their fingertips, simply because for some strange reason they refused to buy food.

In the tragedy of the Collier brothers we can see a parable of the Christian life. Because we belong to Jesus Christ through Baptism, we are surrounded by all the riches of heaven. They belong to us. But unless we use them, apply them to our lives, we too will starve spiritually, and forever!

Each of us Christians has the comfort of assurance that Jesus Christ has redeemed us and destined us for everlasting union with Him in glory. But none of us can see the whole future

course of his life on earth. Only God can see there. Not one of us, therefore, can have absolute assurance that till his dying day he will always persevere in appropriating Christ’s redemption in his life.

The correspondent I referred to at the beginning expressed his feelings with regard to the Catholic doctrine which I have just summarized. He said, “my reaction to the Catholic doctrine is one of walking on a tightrope and in constant fear of falling to one’s eternal death.”

My response is this. Suppose you really were walking on a tightrope from which you could fall to your destruction. Which would you prefer? Would you want to know the danger you were in, so you could guard against it? Or would you prefer not to know the danger and blithely assume you were walking on solid ground?

My correspondent further expressed his misgivings this way. He said that according to Catholic doctrine, “notwithstanding a lifetime of generally successful and sincere attempts to walk the straight and narrow, if I were to stumble and fall into mortal sin and then suddenly and unexpectedly die, I would lose everything and be cast into darkness.” He asked, how does one “live in confidence and faith, rather than in fear of stumbling?”

The fact is, no one ever “stumbled” into mortal sin. By definition, mortal sin involves serious matter which is freely chosen and to which full consent is given. One has to choose to commit mortal sin; one cannot simply “stumble” into it. Moreover, while we can and must judge that certain actions constitute mortal sin, objectively speaking, only God knows whether in a given instance all the conditions for mortal sin were met.

The whole point in living the Christian life is to keep one’s eyes on Jesus, not on fear of falling into sin. Remember what happened to Peter when he asked to be allowed to walk to Jesus on the water. At Jesus’ invitation he was actually miraculously walking on water, until he took his eyes off Jesus and began looking fearfully at the waves. Then he began to sink. And so do we all when we take our eyes off Jesus.

The scriptural command to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” means striving to let the objective redemption of Jesus Christ unfold in our lives, by His grace. It means to let that objective redemption become more and more fully our subjective salvation. Our confidence, our serenity, and our joy come from knowing that “God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12f.).

God’s “good pleasure” is to bring us home to Him. We have the ticket. Jesus Christ paid for it. God forbid that we should ever throw that ticket away. ■

This article was originally published in the CHNetwork’s Salvation and Justification journal.

...Journeys Home Continued...

My correspondence with Pfeiffer and friendship with the chaplain, himself a Harvard graduate, led me to choose Harvard Divinity School.

Ruth and I had been in college together, and we were married just before the war ended. When I was released from the Navy, we moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where I enrolled in the Divinity School. I soon learned that some of the faculty and students were Unitarian.

Until then, I had scarcely heard the word “Unitarian.” In my course work, I made a fateful discovery: I, too, was Unitarian. In my college and especially in my Navy years, I had drifted imperceptibly into the Unitarian belief that Jesus was only a great moral teacher, nothing more.

My first theology course was taught by an elderly Dutch scholar with a very impressive name, Johannes Augustus Christopher Fagginger Auer. Without knowing it, I think, he did me a great favor by showing me the superficiality of what I actually believed.

One day, when in a reflective mood, he admitted to us in class, “It’s not an easy thing to come to the end of your life and not know whether there’s anything beyond death.” At that moment, I realized that at most I had only a vague hope that there is something, but no assurance. Ruth had retained the Trinitarianism of her Protestant upbringing, but was not strong in her faith then.

After two or three months of pondering my own situation, I told the dean I had no desire to preach and teach Christianity if what I was learning in class was all there is to Christianity. Either I must pursue some other vocation or go elsewhere to inquire further into the Christian religion. I was thinking of transferring to Yale Divinity School.

The dean was gracious and seemed to try to understand my difficulty. Though he himself was a graduate of Yale, he recommended that Ruth and I go instead to Union Theological Seminary in New York. He said that Union was a more cosmopolitan environment than Yale. After a trip to Union and a talk with several faculty members, we decided to transfer there.

Ruth and I lived in the men’s dormitory, three floors of which had been given over to married students. We took our meals in the refectory. For three years we ate, slept, drank, and breathed theology.

Theological discussion was the consuming passion of everyone at Union. We were immersed in the theological bedlam that is Protestantism — all traditions to some extent contradicting each other, with each claiming to be based on the Bible.

Union was indeed cosmopolitan. Dozens of denominations and many competing theological approaches created a lively, fascinating environment. Ardent followers of Barth argued fiercely with equally ardent followers of Brunner; followers of Niebuhr battled with followers of Tillich. But everyone, as far as I knew, was Trinitarian.

At Union, I heard Jesus Christ powerfully proclaimed. I became a believing Christian, surrendering my life to Jesus Christ, while Ruth’s faith in Christ was greatly strengthened.

Voice of Sanity?

Amid this bedlam, we thought we heard a voice of theological sanity. We began to learn about the Episcopal Church through one of my professors, who was an Anglican clergyman and a persuasive apologist for his tradition. (Anglicanism is a generic term to designate the Church of England and all its transplanted branches, such as the Episcopal Church in this country.)

The Episcopal Church holds that to avoid theological chaos, Scripture must be interpreted by tradition — in particular, by the tradition of the early Church. Here, we thought, is a church rooted in the past, in historical continuity with the early Church. Its theological approach seemed very sensible. We quickly came to love the Elizabethan language of the *Book of Common Prayer*, the distinctive Episcopal architecture, the Englishness of the Episcopal ethos.

So we became Episcopalians. By this time, I had completed my theology degree and a year of doctoral study at Columbia and Union. Ruth had earned a Master’s degree at Columbia while teaching nursery school.

To prepare for ordination and life within the Episcopal Church, we moved to Alexandria, Virginia. I attended the Episcopal seminary there for a year and worked as a seminarian in a Washington parish. The Episcopal bishop of Washington ordained me to the diaconate and later to the priesthood in the National Cathedral.

In Washington I served two parishes, one as an associate rector (pastor), the other as rector. Three of our children were born during our Washington years.

We were happy as Episcopalians, but we became increasingly aware of theological discord within the denomination. Anglicans may claim that they have no distinct theology — that their theology is only that of the early Church. But there is widespread disagreement regarding what the early Church’s theology was. One distinctive characteristic of Anglicanism is what is called *comprehensiveness*: trying to embrace a wide range of differing and even contradictory theological opinions within one communion.

The longer we lived within the Episcopal Church and the more we studied its history, the more we saw its theological and moral fragmentation. (We deeply regret that in recent years that fragmentation has greatly accelerated.) Initially, at Union, the Anglican claim of comprehensiveness attracted us. Now we saw that term as a euphemism for chaos.

For generations, Anglicans have boasted that theirs is a bridge church. That means they stand midway between Protestantism and Catholicism, partaking of the good features of both and rejecting the bad. I used to remind my colleagues that no one lives on a bridge. A bridge is only a means for getting from one place to another.

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Thank You, Fr. Ray

By Kevin Lowry

I first met Fr. Ray Ryland over twenty years ago. As a new Catholic, perhaps the most striking thing at the time was also being introduced to his wife, Ruth.

He's married? And a Catholic priest? How can that be?



Boy, did I have a lot to learn. There was this thing called the Pastoral Provision, and it enabled certain non-Catholic clergy who came into full communion with the Church to subsequently be ordained Catholic priests. Thankfully, I had some good teachers — namely my father, Dr. Douglas Lowry, a former Presbyterian minister who had just come into the Church along with my mom. There was also a new friend named Marcus Grodi, another former Presbyterian minister who was in the process of creating a new “apostolate,” a kind of network for non-Catholic clergy who were coming home.

Fast forward to March 2014. Fr. Ray's funeral was beautiful, a compelling display of the same kind of love and affection he showered on those he met during his remarkable lifetime. My sharp-eyed fifteen year old daughter claimed there were 26 bishops, priests, and deacons present. Family members, including sons and daughters, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, outnumbered them. Friends were a greater multiple still. At St. Peter's Church in Steubenville, there was standing room only. All had come to honor a truly great man.

He was a great man indeed. Since learning of Fr. Ray's death, I have been contemplating whether I have been privileged to know a greater man. So far, I'm not coming up with anyone.

I was privileged to see Fr. Ray only a few days before he passed away, at the Coming Home Network retreat (Fr. Ray assisted Marcus in the formation of the apostolate, and was a faithful board member and chaplain for two decades). He was his usual, joyful self. A strong handshake. A great sense of humor. He had been my confidant in times of strife, and this time was no different. Upon approaching him with a question, his answer instilled within me a sense of hope and opportunity. It was powerful, yet somewhat...typical. In a way that doesn't minimize the power of his words. He was just that kind of man.

I pulled out my copy of Fr. Ray's memoir, *Drawn from Shadows Into Truth: A Memoir* the other day. In it, he left the kind of inscription that continues to inspire me. “For Kevin — dearly beloved, deeply respected, son in Christ — Fr. Ray.” This brief note had far less to do with me than the kind of man Fr. Ray was — one of deep, abiding char-

ity and humility. If you haven't read the book, it's fantastic. Beyond a conversion story, it includes topics such as a deeply insightful chapter on the value of priestly celibacy.

Fr. Ray was my son David's prayer partner, and a serious one at that. When we discovered that David had medical complications even before his birth, Fr. Ray stepped forward and prayed for him — and has done so ever since. Perhaps now even more so.

Fr. Ray and Ruth were, and are, best friends to my parents. My dad has often remarked just how privileged they have felt to be included in all sorts of Ryland get-togethers, events and even family gatherings. The entire family is amazing. I knew some of this, of course, through my friendship with son Chris and daughter-in-law Sandi. They're all gifted, and the legacy of Fr. Ray will surely live on for generations to come.

I could go on and on, but there's a point to all this. Fr. Ray Ryland was an extraordinary man, including as a priest, theologian, attorney, WWII navy veteran, writer (for *Our Sunday Visitor*, among others), husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and friend. But here's the point: what set him apart was his love for others. Despite his intellectual prowess, worldly accomplishments and countless virtues, his greatest triumph consisted of a life steeped in faith, hope, charity and humility.

Fr. Ray, I'm going to miss you dearly. Thank you. Thank you for your tremendous example, your love and encouragement, and your friendship these past twenty years. You won't soon be forgotten. ■

This article first appeared on the author's blog, gratefulconvert.com. Used with permission.

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.

Fr. Ray Ryland: An Appreciation

By Dr. Kenneth J. Howell

I first saw Fr. Ray Ryland in the summer of 1992 at a Defending the Faith Conference in Steubenville, Ohio. He was on a panel of speakers who were fielding questions from the conference participants about how best to share the Catholic Faith with Protestant Christians. At the time, I was a professor at a Reformed seminary and exploring the Catholic Church. My knowledge of Catholicism was mixed at best but the belief that Christ intended and founded only one Church compelled me on a difficult exploration. At the time, I was unable to conceive of how Christians could ever be unified in one Church on Protestant principles and I had not yet quite grasped the Catholic principle of unity.



Fr. Ryland fielded a question which asked if Catholics should downplay the distinctives of their faith in order to get along with Protestants. As the questioner was finishing up, I fully expected Fr. Ryland to say that Catholics should *not* emphasize differences between them and Protestants because that would drive them further apart. To my surprise, Fr. Ryland insisted that only by explaining the fullness of Catholic truth could one be doing a service to Protestants. With love and gentleness Fr. Ray said we should not downplay the content of Catholicism at all. On reflection, I realized later that Fr. Ryland was completely right. Further, I appreciated deeply his candor in not watering down the Catholic Faith.

It was only later that I would learn of Fr. Ryland's own journey from the Episcopal ministry to the Catholic priesthood with his wife and children many years before. Somehow that knowledge conjoined with my perception of him as a man of principle impelled me on in my pursuit of the fullness of truth. It would be about two or three years later that I would personally meet Fr. Ryland and still a few more years that we would end up working together in the Coming Home Network. He, along with Marcus Grodi, stood as pillars of integrity that drew me into the important work of helping other Protestant clergy who made arduous journeys to the Catholic Church.

Over the years Fr. Ryland's writings and speeches became sources of great learning and inspiration for me. His talks at the Deep in History conferences in Columbus, Ohio were always a joy and a challenge. I learned much from him particularly about Eastern Orthodoxy and its relation to Rome. During the twenty-two years of knowing him, Fr. Ryland repeatedly offered his help and priestly assistance with confession and counsel. On several occasions, when I was struggling with the idea of a priestly vocation, I would call Fr. Ryland and ask his advice. As a married man, he seemed to understand what potential struggles might arise when a man is living in both the sacraments of matrimony and holy or-

ders. Fr. Ryland never pushed me one way or the other but he did emphasize some crucial thresholds to look for in my thinking. In the end, his advice proved correct as another priest, my spiritual director, helped me discern that those thresholds mentioned by Fr. Ryland never appeared in my life. I was and am content as a layman in the Church.

Many people can testify to the holiness of Fr. Ryland's life and the effectiveness of his priestly ministry but I came to realize that there was another reason that others may not have seen. His wife, Ruth, is such a remarkable woman that she was his constant support and quiet strength. I observed this reality again only a few days before his death when Fr. Ryland and Ruth had joined us on a retreat at Gilmory in Pittsburgh. I marveled as I listened to Fr. Ryland's homily that was as clear and powerful as any I had heard before from his lips. We sat next to one another during the retreat where I felt as if I was on Mt. Tabor during the Transfiguration. Fr. Ryland's life emanated the presence of Christ. Fr. Ryland, *ora pro nobis*. ■

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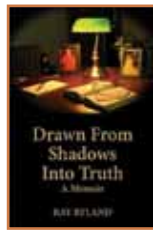
FEATURED RESOURCES

Deep in Scripture CD



Marcus Grodi is joined by Fr. Ray Ryland in this classic *Deep in Scripture* program from May 2011. Listen and be inspired by Fr. Ryland's reflection on why we rejoice in suffering.

Drawn From Shadows Into Truth: A Memoir — By Fr. Ray Ryland



A fascinating autobiography in the spirit of Blessed John Henry Newman, *Drawn From Shadows Into Truth: A Memoir* is the intriguing story of how a married minister in the Disciples of Christ eventually came to be an ordained priest in the Catholic Church. This captivating narrative of Father Ryland's quest for Jesus Christ and the one Church He founded is a spiritual and intellectual adventure — from a poor Oklahoma farm boy to a naval officer to a Protestant minister to a Harvard lawyer to a married Catholic priest.

\$35

For a donation of \$35, receive the *Deep in Scripture CD*.

\$50

For a donation of \$50, receive *Drawn From Shadows Into Truth*.

\$75

For a donation of \$75, receive the *Deep in Scripture CD* and *Drawn From Shadows Into Truth*.

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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!

RECENT CONVERT?

If you have been recently received into the Catholic Church please notify us so we can update our records.

Please e-mail Jim at jim@chnetwork.org if you are a former Protestant minister or Mary Clare at maryp@chnetwork.org if you are a lay person who has become Catholic.

We look forward to hearing from you!

...Journeys Home Continued...

► “Journeys Home” continued from page 4

A ray of hope did shine on us for a time: a movement within the Episcopal Church (and other Anglican churches) known as Anglo-Catholicism. It is based on what proponents call the branch theory. This theory holds that the original Catholic Church is now divided into three branches: the Catholic, the Eastern Orthodox, and the Church of England. Anglo-Catholics claim that all three traditions are equally Catholic.

Anglo-Catholics believe that theological disarray within the Episcopal Church is caused by Protestant influences. The solution is to adopt Catholic ways in liturgy and (to an undefined degree) in theology. The touchstone of doctrine becomes the Catholic faith of the early centuries — Catholic, they insist, not Roman Catholic.

For half a dozen years or more, we identified with the relatively small Anglo-Catholic movement. I taught my parishioners and anyone else who would listen that Episcopalians are Catholics, not Protestants. During these years, we moved to Texas, where I served a newly formed parish, and three years later to Oklahoma, where I was chaplain of an Episcopal elementary and secondary school. One of our sons was born in Texas and another in Oklahoma.

This Anglo-Catholic ray of hope finally gave out. We recognized that, as a movement, Anglo-Catholicism (like Anglicanism) is essentially, inescapably Protestant. The appeal to the faith of the original Catholic Church, like the appeal to the tradition of the early centuries, is futile. There is no one to say what that faith is, or what that tradition is, or what that tradition says about Scripture.

We had to admit that each individual decides for himself, or chooses a clergyman who will decide for him, what is Catholic, and then proceeds accordingly. There is no visible entity to which the Anglo-Catholic can point and say, “That is the Catholic Church to which I belong.” Such a Catholic Church is only an abstraction.

In the nineteenth century, Blessed John Henry Newman tried desperately for years to convince himself and others that they were part of the Catholic Church. Eventually he recognized that his Catholic Church was only a paper church, existing in the imaginations of himself and other like-minded persons.

Now where to turn?

Looking Eastward

Like most Anglo-Catholics, we looked on Eastern Orthodoxy with awe — an awe largely born, I later learned, of misunderstanding. The Anglo-Catholic logic regarding Eastern Orthodoxy goes like this.

Rome denies that our church is Catholic. (That is, Rome — and also the Orthodox — reject the branch theory.) Rome, however, does admit that the Eastern Orthodox churches are Catholic. (Today, I know this is incorrect.) Therefore, the Eastern Orthodox tradition is living proof that one can be Catholic

DEFENDING THE FAITH CONF. 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 Ascii, 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!

...Journeys Home Continued...

without having to be a papal Catholic. We wondered: Is Eastern Orthodoxy the answer to our seeking?

At this stage of our journey, as a chaplain I had summers free. A generous friend and benefactor made it possible for our family to spend several summers at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. There I studied in the Episcopal graduate school of theology.

In our first summer in Sewanee, a well-known Byzantine scholar offered an introductory course in Eastern Orthodoxy. Ruth and I saw this opportunity for me as purely providential. I found the course and the work on a required research paper to be intensely interesting. I decided the paper should be the basis of a graduate thesis in theology.

Our reading and study drew both Ruth and me toward Orthodoxy, but there was ambivalence in our thinking about the Eastern churches. The Orthodox ethos is utterly foreign to Americans. Whatever its ethnic background, an Orthodox church is a very different world for those raised in this culture. How could we, an Okie and a Texan and our five children, ever be truly at home in any of these other cultures?

Increasingly, the essentially ethnic nature of the various Orthodox traditions stood out in our thinking. No other Christian tradition is so deeply rooted in a particular culture as are the several Orthodox churches.

All the Orthodox churches have been ingrown for centuries. None has evangelized any significant part of the world in recent centuries. Their spread to this country and elsewhere has been due almost entirely to the immigration of Orthodox people from their various homelands. Not one of these ethnic churches has demonstrated universal appeal.

Orthodox theologians agree that an ecumenical council is their highest authority. Yet, in over twelve hundred years they have never conducted one, for with no Christian emperor, who can convoke a council for them? If the patriarch of any of the ethnic churches presumed to call an ecumenical council, he would be opposed immediately as having asserted unauthorized jurisdiction over the other churches.

Most important, Orthodox churches have no real solution to the problem of doctrinal authority. The bishop, they say, speaks for Christ, the ecumenical council is the ultimate authority, and for a conciliar decree to be considered infallible, the entire Church must receive it. However, there is no way of determining whether and when this has happened.

From within the Catholic communion, we now can see other fundamental problems in the Orthodox churches. First, the term "Orthodoxy" commonly designates the Orthodox church-

es as a whole. But Orthodoxy and Anglo-Catholicism have this in common: In differing degrees, perhaps, both are abstractions.

There is no entity, no institution to which one can point and say, "There is Orthodoxy." There is no Orthodoxy; there are only separate Orthodox churches. All basically hold the same faith, but they are not organically united.

Indeed, jurisdictionally they are divided. In any given city in this country, one may find two or three or more different Eastern churches, each with its own bishop. But where is Orthodoxy?

As the Eastern churches gradually separated themselves from Rome, under the influence of powerful Eastern emperors, they became increasingly subservient to the secular authority in their countries. This is the problem of caesaropapism, which has characterized the life of the Eastern churches ever since they began to break with Rome. The Communist secret police's admitted control of the Russian Orthodox Church for generations is only the latest example.

Earlier I referred to the Anglo-Catholic opinion that Rome regards the Orthodox churches as Catholic. This is incorrect. Vatican II documents, for example, always refer to the Eastern Churches, never to the Orthodox Church, and they certainly never refer to Orthodox churches as being Catholic. True, they do have Catholic sacraments and hold most of the Catholic Faith, but they are in schism

with the Catholic Church.

Again, it was back to the search. We loved the Lord Jesus, we wanted to be in His Church, we wanted to do His will. Where should we look next?

Looking to Rome

Almost before we dared ask the question one more time, we knew the answer: Rome.

Frequently, in television coverage of baseball games, the camera will focus several times alternately on the pitcher and the catcher, just before the pitcher throws across the plate. The catcher signals for a certain pitch. The pitcher shakes his head, waits for another signal, then another. Finally, when he gets one he likes, the pitcher winds up and delivers.

How many signals from the Holy Spirit dared we turn down? But Rome? Idol-worshiping, power-hungry, priest-ridden, thought-controlling Rome?

From our upbringing and from our seminary training, we had imbibed all the prejudices, all the stereotypes. These, however, had to be put aside. We already knew the outlines of Catholic teaching from our Anglo-Catholic days. Now we admitted to ourselves that we had to listen to the details of Rome's claims.

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...Journeys Home Continued...

Our reading and discussion resolved most of our objections, which were almost entirely based in misunderstanding.

The last major hurdle between ourselves and submission to Rome was the papacy. We read Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* avidly and devoured Meriol Trevor's two-volume biography of Newman in large bites. Our journey was much like his, though on a smaller scale.

We saw ourselves as pygmies trying to follow a giant. We continually invoked his prayers on our behalf. We received much help from what may be the best single book about the Catholic Church, Karl Adam's *Spirit of Catholicism*.

Sixteen years after beginning our search for the full truth of Christ, we admitted to one another that we had to submit to Rome. Neither of us really wanted to be a Catholic, but God's call was unmistakable. We submitted to His will and eventually to His Church.

We had to keep our decision secret to spare embarrassment to the school of which I was chaplain. Each week for months, we drove to another city to spend an evening in instruction by a Benedictine monk whose friendship has been a rich blessing to us. With his help, I began seeking employment to support our family.

We knew that God never leads anyone down a blind alley. We cast ourselves as completely as possible upon His mercy. Then doors began to open, and the way became clearer.

The day we were received into the Church, Ruth and I wanted to have a party in our home. The problem was that we had no one to invite. Our Episcopal friends were either greatly saddened or resentful. We did not know any Catholics.

Even so, we had our party: Ruth and I, our children, the two priests who received us, and — Ruth reminded us — the angels and archangels.

On the third day after our family was received into the Church, I went to early Mass in our parish church. As I knelt in the pew after receiving Communion, the words suddenly came to me, half-aloud, in a burst of joy: "Now I'm ready to die!"

For the next seven years, I was a layman in the Church. During that time, we moved to Milwaukee, where I completed course work for a doctorate in theology. Back in Oklahoma, I taught and worked for the diocesan educational department and completed my dissertation.

Then came a move to San Diego to join the theological faculty of a Catholic university. While teaching fulltime, I was ordained a permanent deacon in the Church and entered law school at night.

Several years after passing the bar, I was preparing to begin part-time practice, which I intended would become fulltime after I stopped teaching. Then the Church announced the Pastoral Provision for this country. Under its terms, married Catholic laymen who had formerly been Episcopal clergy were allowed to apply through their bishops for a dispensation from the rule of celibacy and for ordination to the priesthood.

My application was the first to be sent to Rome, though it was not the first one acted on. Thirteen months later, my bishop received a letter from then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI), telling him the Holy Father (Pope John Paul II) had approved my being ordained. Several months later, after a series of written and oral exams, I was ordained to the priesthood. That was in 1983.

Each time I stand at the altar, at least once the thought suddenly comes, "Can this be real? Am I a Catholic priest, offering the Holy Sacrifice?" Then comes that blessed answer: "Yes! Thanks be to God!" ■



FATHER RAY RYLAND, PH.D., J.D., was a former minister of the Episcopal Church. In 1963 he was received with his wife, Ruth, and their five children into the Catholic Church. Twenty years later, he was ordained to the priesthood of the Catholic Church, with a dispensation from the rule of celibacy. He served as chaplain and board member for Catholics United for the Faith and the Coming Home Network. He was also a regular columnist for *The Catholic Answer Magazine*, and he served as an assistant at St. Peter's Church in Steubenville, Ohio. Fr. Ryland passed away in March 2014. This story was originally published in *This Rock* magazine, January 1995.

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