

The *Coming Home Network* *International*

MARCH 2006 NEWSLETTER

Journeys Home

There & Back Again

by

Deacon Joseph A. Pasquella



On October 20, 1956, I was born in Paterson, New Jersey, the son of George and Gloria Pasquella. I was baptized on October 28, 1956 at St. Michael's R.C. Church in Paterson. My father died when I was only four years old in December 1960. He was a young man of only forty. A year later, my mother remarried outside the church.

My family was not particularly religious, but at the age of nine, I wandered into a Catholic Church and knew I wanted to be a part of it. In spite of her reluctance, my mother allowed me to attend Mass and receive First Communion. I was confirmed when I was about thirteen at St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Church in Paterson. Soon after, my mother began worshipping as a charismatic evangelical Christian. She had been Protestant before I was born, and in spite of my First Communion and Confirmation, she compelled me to join her church. I was sad and confused, as if I was abandoning my faith. The pastor of my mother's Assemblies of God congregation took it upon himself to chastise my choice of Catholicism. He told me I had been worshipping idols and that the Catholic Church was a cult and the "whore of Babylon." He proceeded to indoctrinate me with Pentecostal beliefs. I was only thirteen years old, and very impressionable. Not knowing how to defend my faith, I went along with the program and embraced my mother's church as best I could. My life at home was very difficult due to my mother's emotional illness, yet I always knew that God was present in and around me, protecting me at all times.

I was supposed to have graduated high school in 1975, but due to my mother's illness additional income was needed at home. I took two years off to work in a bookbindery then enlisted in the military with the hope of completing my GED

and going to college on the G.I. Bill. Unfortunately, I was discharged for having flat feet after one month. I returned to high school, earning my diploma in 1977.

Perhaps it is too strong to say that I had been "brainwashed" against the Catholic Church, but at the time of my high school graduation, I was convinced that it was not the True Church. With my heart nonetheless devoted to the service of Christ, I moved to Reno, Nevada to do some missionary work. I ran Christian fellowships out of my home, while working as a mechanic. I eventually entered a four-year Christian Leadership Training Program at the Way College of Biblical Research in Rome City, Indiana. I graduated with an Associate's Degree in Theology on July 8, 1983. Two days later, I was married to my wonderful wife Cathy, whom I had met at the Christian Leadership Training Program. She was a practicing Protestant at the time, working as a staff member at the college.

Our first assignment was to establish a mission Church in Norwalk, Connecticut. We started the mission out of our

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home and in two years had eighty-five families. We were then asked to go to Sparks, Nevada to coordinate some other fellowships and start another mission. The outcome was again successful. Throughout the course of both these ministries, I maintained full-time secular employment in addition to my work for Christ. Cathy and I worked hard as a team in our spiritual endeavors. We believed God had given us a place in which His glory and power could be witnessed.

But when the leadership of the International Ministry, referred to as “The Way,” began to endorse erroneous doctrines, we spoke up. Their teachings became quite contrary to certain facts in Holy Scripture, such as questioning the Divine Nature of Christ. We protested vehemently, and were shunned by the community.

We settled in Cape Cod, Massachusetts (Cathy’s home state) on December 5, 1987. The move was necessary because we had resigned our previous ministry to follow our Christian beliefs. It took two years before we started to seek out a new Church. My wife and I had daily Bible fellowship meetings and prayed together with our two children. These two boys (ages 13 and 15) are a blessing from God in every way. I say this in spite of the fact that they are both disabled and have some emotional difficulties. These challenges have only enhanced our love for each other, and for God the Father.

While we lived with my mother-in-law, a faithful Irish Catholic, she encouraged us to have our children baptized. The priest who agreed to baptize the boys said we first needed to have our marriage convalidated. In 1990, we had our marriage blessed in the Catholic Church, and our boys were baptized Catholic.

As I continued my journey of faith, in March 1992 I met a former evangelical minister whom I had known. He had converted to the Antiochian Orthodox faith. We talked for many hours. In many ways, I was reminded of the Catholic faith. Having had such a distorted image of Catholicism from my Pentecostal background, I was more receptive to Orthodoxy. The Orthodox also shared some of the derogatory views of Catholicism that the Protestants had, so I felt comfortable with Orthodoxy.

It came upon me that with all the infighting between the Pentecostal churches, the True Church must exist somewhere! All I had witnessed in the Pentecostal faiths were individuals who interpreted the Scripture as they saw fit. They had no hierarchy, no canonical law, no history, no roots, and no Eucharist. Due to my further research, I began to understand that the Eucharist should be the linchpin of Christianity. My friend eventually put me in contact with an Orthodox priest, and thus my journey to the Orthodox Church had begun.

There was no Antiochian Orthodox Church where I was living on Cape Cod. I knew a few Orthodox Christians

that lived near me and had to travel far to go to Church. It became evident that we needed to start an Orthodox Mission Church, and set our minds and hearts upon the task. We were fortunate to have a priest who was on sabbatical, living on the Cape when we started. Fr. Matthew George provided us with sacramental services and Divine Liturgy on Sundays. In June 1992 I was received into the Orthodox Church at the second Liturgy.

Once fully in communion with the Antiochian Orthodox Church, I soon applied for acceptance into the St. Stephen’s Course of Orthodox Theology. The Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of the U.S. and Canada sponsors these classes for those who cannot attend Seminary but who want to serve the Orthodox Church as deacons or priests. The course was initially instituted for those who were previously ministers in other Christian denominations, wishing to receive Holy Orders in the Orthodox Church. I successfully completed this three-year course of study.

I continued to serve in the Orthodox Church as a reader and cantor, and helped with the pastoral needs of St. Michael the Archangel Antiochian Orthodox Mission of Cape Cod. At the same time, I was taking my courses and doing the required practicum field projects under the supervision of the Orthodox priests assigned to help with the Mission. Eventually I was ordained a sub-deacon. We only had a priest available to us every four to six weeks. When we didn’t have him, I would conduct a reader’s service, known in the faith as a “Typica Service.”

On December 8, 1996, His Eminence Metropolitan Philip Saleeba, the Primate of the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese covering the United States and Canada, ordained me a deacon. I was assigned as the Administrator of St. Michael’s Antiochian Orthodox Mission of Cape Cod. We still only had a priest visit us about once a month, so I ran communion services and preached the sermons when there was no one available.

Then in August of 1997, I was diagnosed as having chronic Lyme disease. Due to the residual effects of this illness (severe debilitating headaches, joint pain, short-term memory loss), I was no longer able to work full time in the nursing field or as a barber. I informed my Bishop of my illness and its effects, and asked for his assistance. I was given a leave of absence.

Because of the illness and my inability to work a full time job, I spent a lot of time studying the early Church fathers, especially St. John Chrysostom. He wrote something that struck my heart: “schism is worse than heresy, for it divides the body of Christ.” This sparked an unquenchable desire in my soul to closely examine why the Eastern and Western Churches were not in full communion.

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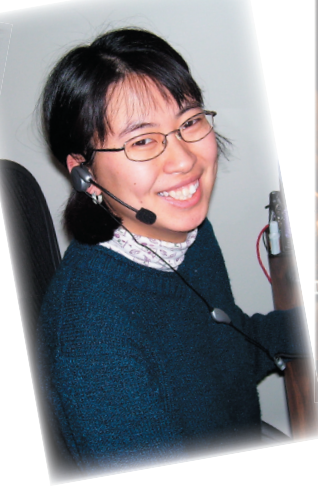
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DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

LIVE RADIO PROGRAM

WITH
MARCUS GRODI
& GUESTS



WEDNESDAYS
2-3 PM EST

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FRIDAYS 9 PM

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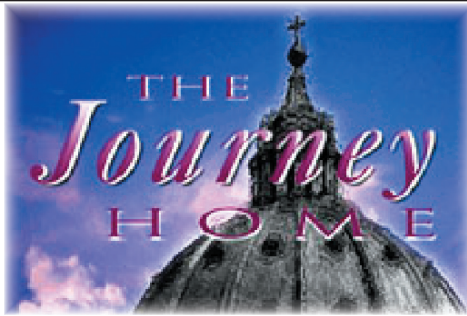
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AND JOIN THE DISCUSSION FORUM



Upcoming guests on
The Journey Home Program

on EWTN,
Mondays live at 8 PM
Tuesdays 1 AM & 10 AM
Wednesday 1 PM
Saturday 11 PM EST



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March 6 *Open Line*
John Martignoni
revert from secularism

March 13
David & Michele Zampino
*former Charismatic Episcopal
priest and wife*

March 20
Mark Lenaghan, Irish Pretape
former member of the IRA

March 27
Phillip Boelter
from Lutheran minister

April 3 *Open Line*
Scott McDermott
former atheist

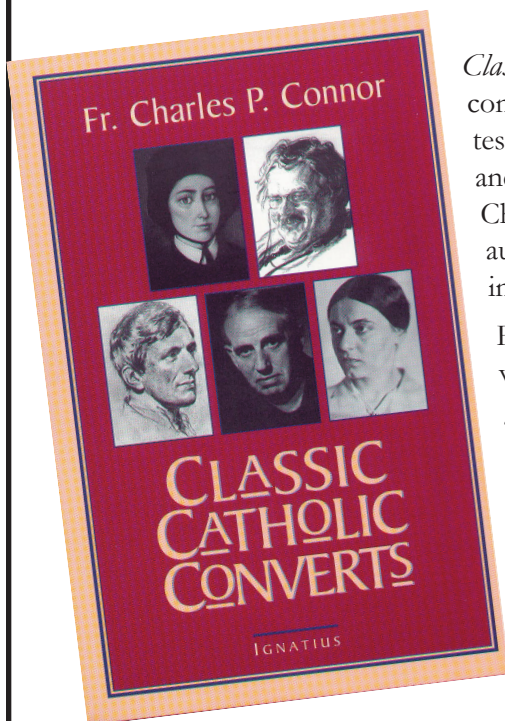
April 10
Special Holy Week Pretape

April 17
To be announced

April 24
David & Barbie Walker
from Methodist seminarians

You can also listen on the Internet at: www.ewtn.com

Featured Resources



Classic Catholic Converts presents the compelling stories of over 25 well-known converts to Catholicism from the 19th and 20th centuries. It tells of powerful testimonies to God's grace, men and women from all walks of life in Europe and America whose search for the fullness of truth led them to the Catholic Church. It is the witness of brilliant intellectuals, social workers, scientists, authors, film producers, clergy, businessmen, artists, and others who, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, studied and prayed their way into the Church.

Fr. Charles Connor, a good friend of the *CHNetwork*, writes insightful and wonderfully readable stories of a rich variety of converts who struggled greatly with many challenges as they embraced Catholicism, including rejection by loved ones, persecution from strangers, and misunderstanding by peers. But, once they responded to God's call, they experienced great inner peace, contentment, and joy. Among the famous converts are John Henry Cardinal Newman, Edith Stein, Jacques Maritain, Dorothy Day, G.K. Chesterton, Elizabeth Seton, Karl Stern, Ronald Knox and many more.

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Please pray for...

W Clergy W

W For Scott, a Presbyterian pastor, as he seeks God will for his and his family's future as it relates to the Catholic Church.

W For Ken, a former Lutheran minister. who wishes to be Catholic but whose wife does not.

W For Suhail a Pakistani Methodist minister seeking to enter the Catholic Church.

W For Brian, an ex-Catholic now Protestant minister, who recently left the Southern Baptist Tradition to start his own church.

W For Shawn, a Pentecostal pastor, who senses a calling to come home but wants to have the wisdom to know the Lord's timing.

W For a Lutheran pastor exploring both the Orthodox and Roman Catholic faiths due to what he believes might be fatal flaws in Lutheran theology.

W For a Quaker pastor who says he is definitely on the journey home.

W For Dave, a former Southern Baptist minister, his wife DeeDee, and their three sons as they prepare to be received into the Church at Easter.

W For Dennis, a former Charismatic Episcopal priest, and his family who are also preparing to enter the Church at Easter.

W For John, a Southern Baptist minister who is sincerely seeking the truth of the Lord.

In every issue we include timely prayer concerns from the membership. Each person mentioned has contacted us and is somewhere along their journey home. All members are encouraged to pray at least one hour each month before the Blessed Sacrament for the needs in general and specific of the *CHN*Network, its members and supporters.

Please submit all prayer requests and answers to :

CHN Prayer List
P. O. Box 8290
Zanesville, OH 43702

You may also email your prayer requests to:

prayers@chnnetwork.org

We will use only first names to preserve anonymity.

W For the Murphy family, especially for the protection of Mr. Murphy in his work.

W For all those who live as Catholic only by word that their hearts be converted and they become convicted of the truth.

W For all contacts in fellowship in the Helpers Network, especially those looking to enter the Church this year

W For all the needs of the Helpers and their families as they look to offer His Word to those in their lives.

W For Robert and his family who are struggling with health and vocational challenges.

W For health and speedy recovery of baby Ambrose, and for his family, Bernadette, Rob, Josephina, and their entier extended family.

W Quo Vadis Youth W

W For all Quo Vadis members: new, old, helper, or inquirer.

W For Nicole and her family who were recently received into the Church.

W For Sarah who was recently received into the Church.

W For Elly who wants to return to the Faith.

W For all youth on the journey.

W Laity W

W Fr. Brady in continued health, also Fr Darling in his travels, and Fr Norden for the gift he is to his diocese.

W For Lynn to have strength in her Journey home to the Catholic Church, and for the needs of her sister.

W For Peg and the repose of her husbands soul.

W For Jeff, Carol, Jennifer, and Diane as they strive to follow His will.

W For Dan and his family as they look forward to the New Year and their reception into the Church.



continued from page 2...

The more I studied, the more questions I had. Finally I came across a book called *Jesus, Peter, and the Keys*, by several authors, including Deacon David Hess, a Byzantine Catholic. This book explains the role of the Petrine office, making a strong case for the Holy See's universal jurisdiction over the entire Church. I found Deacon Hess' phone number and called him. He was instrumental in my gradual conversion, and was the major catalyst behind my return to the fullness of the Roman Catholic Church. Then one day I was watching our Holy Father on television, and he said something that amazed me: "the Church has to breathe with both lungs, the East and the West." He was referring to the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Those words still burn deep within my soul. I began to see that for me to be whole, I would have to be in full communion with Rome under the guidance of the Holy Father.

The beautiful home I had built on Cape Cod was quickly becoming a place that we could no longer afford. We had many debts. My wife and I are not quitters, so I continued to work out of my home as a barber as much as I could.

Meanwhile, I had met a Catholic friend by the name of Michele in Buffalo, New York, through an Internet chat group of all places! She was helping me with my movement towards Catholicism. Michele put me in touch with Rev. Robert Moreno, Pastor of St. Basil's Ukrainian Catholic Church in Lancaster, NY. I called him, and he helped me to discern many things, including where God was leading me. Not once did he tell me to return to Catholicism. He allowed me on my own to discover where the Holy Spirit was leading. He traveled a number of times to visit us in Massachusetts.

When I made the final decision to convert to the Catholic faith in July 1998, I wrote to my Bishop, Metropolitan Philip, and informed him of my plans. It was not well received. He informed me that because I had abandoned the "True Orthodox Faith," I was an apostate. Furthermore, by his apostolic authority, he was suspending me as a deacon. In writing, he stated that I was in effect "un-ordained." I subsequently lost all the Orthodox customers that I had in my barber business, putting us in an even more desperate situation.

With the encouragement of my wife and through my own study of works like *Jesus, Peter, and the Keys*, I asked Fr. Mullaney, the Pastor of St. Anthony's Church in Falmouth, Massachusetts, to receive me back into the Catholic Church. Deep in my heart, I had experienced an epiphany: that the Church should not be divided in two. In July, 1998, I made a Profession of Faith and received the Sacrament of Reconciliation, thus returning to full communion with the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church was more amenable to unity than Orthodoxy. Catholicism had grown with Vatican II and set

itself upon reaching the modern world with the gospel. With the Council's *Lumen Gentium*, the baptized were all equally prophet, priest, and king! For me, the average layperson, the Catholic Church provided ownership of those offices. Catholicism seemed so dynamic to me; Orthodoxy, so stagnant and clericalized. Catholicism has grown in aggressively addressing moral issues such as birth control, sexual impurity, and the death penalty. Orthodoxy leaves these issues to the individual and his conscience (or lack thereof).

We needed to move from our Cape Cod home, which by now had become too expensive for us to take care of. With the help of Rev. Robert Moreno, who has been my spiritual director for three years now, and with the help of Amy Betros, the director of St. Luke's Mission of Mercy, I moved into a home in Buffalo, New York, which they helped me acquire. It is a very old home in a very poor area of the city, but it is acceptable for all of us. It is a joy to be near Fr. Moreno, my spiritual mentor, and to be able to help at St. Luke's Mission of Mercy (a kitchen and shelter for the homeless) whenever I can.

I eventually met with the Bishop of Buffalo, Henry Mansell, who was so pastoral and loving that he brought tears to my eyes. He agreed to do whatever he could to help me in my endeavors to have any canonical impediments removed in the proper way, and to make sure that I get all the proper education and needed spiritual formation that was lacking in my Antiochian Orthodox diaconal formation. I also worked with a Canon Lawyer as a mentor in these proceedings. My prayer was that one day, by God's Mercy and Grace, I could serve the Holy Catholic Church as a deacon in the Diocese of Buffalo.

I took courses at Christ the King Seminary in East Aurora, New York, and continued studying under Father Moreno to learn the practical aspects of serving in the Catholic Church. I assist him in his nursing home ministries, help teach RCIA at St. Luke's Mission of Mercy, and have taught an altar servers class there. I also help with the First Friday devotions at the Holy Infant Jesus Shrine. I am at the disposal of the Diocese of Buffalo. I am freely obedient in whatever is asked of me by my Bishop, as well as those whom the Bishop has assigned to help me.

Then last summer by God's merciful grace, I was graciously accepted by the Holy See and the Bishop of Buffalo, New York, to fully serve as a Deacon in the Holy Catholic Church.

Thanks, glory, and praise be to God, for bringing me into the fullness of the Christian faith and His Church. I also thank my father, who himself had converted to the Catholic Faith not long before he died and had me baptized into the Church.

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