



March 2009 Newsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

From Confusion to the Order of Truth

— Clyde Pearce

My pathway home to the Catholic Church required an all-terrain vehicle to negotiate the steep, rocky, tortuous roads including dead ends, cul-de-sacs, and detours. Unlike many of the *Journey Home* stories, I was not trained in theology or doctrine. I attended no seminary, Bible college, or religious institute. But a great deal of informal education in those areas plus years of lay ministry led me to the Catholic Church. And it all started early.

When I was seven years old, my father was killed in an auto accident. I was the eldest of a brother and two sisters. My Mom was six months pregnant with her fifth child. My brother suffered brain damage at birth. He was mentally handicapped and suffered from grand mall epilepsy. We barely survived for most of my growing up years on Social Security and county welfare.

That's when I began to talk to God. I asked Him to forgive me my sins and to please keep our family safe. Except for several summers of Bible Camps (Baptist and Nazarene) I had little religious activity, but prayer was not completely foreign to me. So I grew up mostly without any specific religious discipline. We were however, taught Christian morality and principles.

All the while, I remained desperately alone and afraid without any assurances from God.

But a saving grace was about to emerge into my life: competitive sports beginning with Little League baseball. My mom scrounged up the enrollment money and when they gave me a real uniform I was in embarrassed disbelief. I couldn't afford baseball shoes, but my old tennis shoes were all right. I had a uniform. Baseball would play a big role in my life. I went on to play four years of varsity baseball in high school, as well as football, and basketball. I also played football and baseball in college.

My coaches, God bless them, became surrogate fathers not only for me, but also for a number of other guys. Several of us never had our dad see us play. We tried not to let it show when the other guys walked off the field with their dads, while we walked off alone. My high school football coach, a good Christian man, is one of the finest men I've ever known. From him I learned discipline, honor, sacrifice, teamwork, and always getting up again. His quiet modeling of honesty and generosity remain with me today.

When I began my junior year in high school, I hadn't an inkling of what lay ahead for me. We had a new history teacher ...continued on page 2

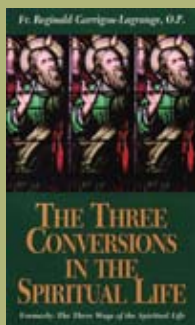
Journey Home

FEATURED RESOURCES

CHNI's monthly newsletter is featuring resources that we believe will specifically aid our members in evangelization. The resources we feature are materials that CHNI uses to give away to those on the journey to the Catholic Church.

The Three Conversions in the Spiritual Life

By Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange O.P.



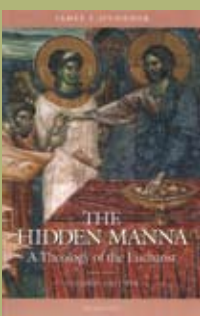
A great book for Lent!

All Catholics should go through three "conversions" in their spiritual life—but many do not, and thus remain spiritually stunted all their lives. In this compact book the famous Thomist

Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, who was one of the greatest theologians of the 20th century, sets forth the classic Catholic traditions on the spiritual life as the full flowering of sanctifying grace in the soul.

The Hidden Manna: A Theology of the Eucharist

By James T. O'Connor



In this in-depth study, Fr. O'Connor lets the breadth and richness of the Church's Tradition speak for itself. Both historically and theologically, the author treats the Real Presence, Transubstantiation,

the Eucharist as pledge and foretaste of heaven, as sacrifice, and as the Sacraments of Sacraments.

Please visit
www.chresources.com
for closeout prices on selected
books while supplies last.

...Journeys Home Continued...

that year. He was bright, young, and even made history interesting for a bunch of teenagers. One day he called me into his classroom on a lunch hour. He had gone over my transcript and told me that my performance was way below my abilities. For the first time in my educational experience, I began to study and experience what an A felt like. Up until then, I felt that academic mediocrity was my lot.

After a few months, he began to engage me in religious discussions. I soon learned that he was a Mormon, which peaked my curiosity. He spent a few hours setting out the basic principles of Mormonism which I found unusual, to say the least, but interesting.

I need to state clearly that I know and love many devout Mormons, many of my own family. They are, as a people, generally upstanding, kind, and generous folks, devoted to family and church. What I write here is not intended to denigrate these wonderful people in any way. My problems with Mormon doctrine, however, cannot be lightly treated; for, I went from a faithful, 100% immersed true-believing member to a distraught, betrayed, and angry one.

Eventually, my teacher invited me to attend church with him on Sundays and I went. The congregation (called a "ward") was small, but in it were a couple of attractive girls my age and three guys who were also juniors. They were a warm welcoming committee. Being on the debate team—and just being argumentative by genes and environment—I challenged some of what I was hearing. The whole Joseph Smith story seemed like, well, a story. But my teacher friend and my new Mormon friends solemnly testified that it was all true. I read the Book of Mormon.

I'll never forget the strange feeling I got when I opened the Book of Mormon for the first time. Dismissing that eerie feeling, I plowed through the book over the next few months. The language rang familiar since it was after the King James style. Then I was "challenged" to pray about its truthfulness and that if I did so "with real intent" and an open heart its truthfulness would be "manifest unto me."

I prayed about it a lot. But no angel visited, no overwhelming divine confirmation warmed me. Since all these other people *knew* it was true, I assumed that I was the problem not the Book of Mormon. I read several books written by church leaders all pounding the same theme: Jesus set up His Church on earth; soon after the death of the Apostles, a great apostasy set in and all keys and authority were withdrawn until 1820 when fourteen-year old Joseph Smith was visited by God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, His Son; they told him that none of the churches on earth was the true one,

...I went from a faithful, 100% immersed true-believing member [of the Mormon church] to a distraught, betrayed, and angry one.

that they were all “an abomination” to God, and that Smith would be God’s instrument for restoring the full, pristine, and true Church; and that through divine guidance, Joseph was led to some “Golden Plates” written in “reformed Egyptian,” which Smith translated as the Book of Mormon. Eventually, in the spring of my senior year of high school, I agreed to be baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, LDS, or the Mormons. Of course, I lent no credence to my mother’s concerns and objections.

I had all-star seasons in football and baseball that year, and got several good scholarship offers. At the last minute, however, some of the people in the ward got together and decided that I should go to Brigham Young University (whose athletic scholarships were gone by then), and advanced money for my freshman year. So, off I went to Provo, Utah, leaving behind an unhappy and upset mother.

From a high school of fewer than 500 students, walking onto the BYU campus of more than 16,000 students overwhelmed me somewhat. I had never seen so many Mormons. That it was not a completely homogenous campus quickly appeared to me. We California kids were different from those Utah and Idaho students. They looked down on us as being liberal and not very faithful; we, in turn, looked at them as parochial bumpkins. We wore shorts and flip-flops to class. They reported us to the honor committee for dress code violations. This was the distant early warning signal to me that compliance was going to be required in more than just belief in Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the succeeding prophets of the church.

Overall, I was happy. My girlfriend from home was also at BYU, I walked on and won the starting quarterback position on the freshman football team (this was before all the great QBs to follow), was the third baseman on the baseball team, and was awarded a full baseball scholarship. Culturally, I was completely seduced.

A year and a half later, my local bishop called me to go on a two-year mission for the church. I willingly accepted and was soon in the North British Mission that included northern England, Scotland, and Ireland. My first assignment was to Dublin, Ireland. My companion (Mormon missionaries always come in pairs) and I were the only two elders (as the missionaries are called) in all of free Ireland.

The Irish loved Americans. They loathed Mormons. Knocking on doors for twelve hours a day taught me a lot. The people considered themselves “Irish Catholics” not Roman Catholics, a distinction not lost on me. We almost never got invited into a home. When we did, the first time the conversation turned to religion and to questions about Catholicism, we were shown the door.

Two particular experiences deeply impressed me. One day we knocked on the door of a Jesuit priest. He, unfortunately, did invite us in. Arrogant in my competitive debating skills, I was ready to teach this priest a thing or two. But nobody had warned me about Jesuits. Although I started on the attack—Mary-worship, the Trinity, apostasy, infant baptism, etc.—I soon was backing and filling in hasty retreat and defense. He was polite but pointed. He skillfully took apart Mormonism, and rebuilt it as Catholicism. To my great relief, my companion—who had not entered into the discussion at any point to help me—excused us for another “appointment.” ...continued on page 4

CHNI NEWSLETTERS BY EMAIL

The *Coming Home Network International's* monthly newsletter is now available to be received by e-mail. Though CHNI members will always be able to continue receiving the newsletter through regular mail, members now have the option to have it delivered right to their inbox. Through e-mail the newsletter is more readily accessible to take with you, it is easier to forward onto friends who are not members, and it is simpler to make multiple copies. As an added bonus, e-mail newsletters will be in full color. CHNI members have the option to receive the newsletter both by e-mail, and through regular mail. To sign up to receive the *Coming Home Network International's* monthly newsletter by e-mail, please contact Rob Rodgers.

Rob Rodgers

rob@chnetwork.org
740-450-1175 ext. 109

NEWSLETTER COPIES

CHNI encourages members to make copies of the newsletter and distribute to friends, family, church groups etc. We do ask that copies of the newsletter not be sold. CHNI and the authors reserve all rights and permissions.



EWTN'S THE JOURNEY HOME

on television and radio, hosted by
Marcus Grodi, president of CHNI.

TELEVISION

Mondays **LIVE** at 8:00 PM EST
Encores: Tuesdays 1:00 & 10:00 AM EST
Wednesdays 1:00 PM EST
Saturdays 11:00 PM EST

RADIO

Mondays **LIVE** at 8:00 PM EST
Encores: Wednesdays 2:00 PM EST
Saturdays 6:00 PM EST

March 2

Open-Line
Jerry & Yolanda Cle
Former Assemblies of God ministers

March 9

Fr. Trevor Nicholls
Former Anglican minister

March 16

Dr. Carlotta LeVay, Ph.D
Scandinavian pretape

March 25

Pre-tape

March 30

Pre-tape



...Journeys Home Continued...

Furious, I yelled at my companion for not stepping in to help me. “We’re not here to argue,” he said, “but to bear our testimonies and teach our lessons.” I would later learn the real meaning of his answer: the last resort of a true believing Mormon is his or her “testimony.” For many who are born in the church, it is both the first and last defense, even—especially—when faced with lucid, powerful, facts contradictory to their basic beliefs. Faith trumps facts. Yet, St. Paul tells us in Hebrews 11:1 that faith has *substance* and *evidence* at its roots.

The second experience, more memorable than the first, happened on a sunny morning. It was my turn to knock. A lovely young woman holding a newly born infant in her arms answered. She gave us a warm smile and she appeared to be glowing. After I went through my spiel and she nicely declined, I whipped out my testimony that what I brought her I knew to be the truth. With her countenance becoming more radiant, she said that she knew her Catholic Church was true, that Jesus was the center of her life, that He loved her, and came to give Himself to her in the Mass. I was stupefied. We were told that other people couldn’t bear testimony because they didn’t have the truth. But this beautiful young mother and baby gave a warm and divine witness.

During my time in Ireland, we received a book from our mission president (*A New Witness for Christ in America*) that we were directed to place in a public library. I thought I’d better read it first so I could deal with someone who may also read it. The first half of the book dealt with arguments and claims against the validity of the Book of Mormon. I found these critical positions to be quite convincing, but hoped that the second half of the book would easily and clearly refute them. Even reading the latter half of the book from the bias of accepting its apologetics, I found them weak, requiring more “testimony” than analysis and deduction. But the busyness of missionary work let me put my doubts away.

While in Ireland, I concluded that the Catholic Church and the Mormons were much alike in many ways, especially as to authority, but exact opposites in many others. It was easy for me to see why the Book of Mormon, and many writings and sermons by Mormon leaders—even within the past fifteen years or so—refer to the Catholic Church as “the church of the devil,” that “great and abominable church,” the “whore of the earth” who leads men to hell. At the same time, Protestants were given short shrift. After all, they all splintered off from Catholicism, and you can’t take good fruit from a bad tree. And the fact that Protestants worshipped in over 20,000 denominations proved to me that just reading the Bible did not lead to unity.

“...the Catholic Church and the Mormons were much alike in many ways, especially as to authority, but exact opposites in many others.”



Over time I had a temple marriage (“for time and all eternity”), was ordained a high priest at age 22, served in many positions including five years as a bishop. Being “active” in the Mormon church means having a temple recommend (which admits one to any Mormon temple), tithing, and fulfilling callings in the church leaving little time for study and thought. As a bishop, I served between 15 to 40 hours a week while still working full-time and attempting to be a husband and father.

God has gifted me, however, with an unrelenting intellectual curiosity. I kept digging into Mormon history and came upon facts that to my mind are indisputable.

My serious inquiry began when I entered law school where I met other questioning LDS students. They challenged my apologetics. And, like many

“My serious inquiry began when I entered law school where I met other questioning LDS students.”

who have shared their stories on *The Journey Home* who set out to prove the Catholic Church false only to discover its truth: I began to search and read, looking for evidence to buttress the Mormon claims. What I found was clear and convincing evidence: that Joseph Smith was a pretender, steeped in magic, who used a seer stone to look for buried treasure, concocted the Book of Mormon (which he translated by placing his seer stone in a hat and then putting his face into the hat translated the words that appeared on the stone), a book that has had

thousands of changes made to it. He proclaimed polytheism: that God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, the Son, were separate and distinct with bodies of flesh and bones, and that the Holy Spirit is a separate and distinct body of spirit.

The heinous practice of polygamy as introduced by Smith repelled me, when I found that he had an affair with a 17 year old (Fannie Alger) some three years before he had a “revelation” that he was to take plural wives, and that he did not “commit adultery” because he was merely obeying the revelation. Moreover, he and Brigham Young and succeeding prophets taught that polygamy (really polygyny) is the obligatory order of the highest heaven.

Brigham Young taught that Adam was our God who had come to earth to get his body and then has progressed to where He is today. Most blasphemous, Young also taught that we can do the same thing. In Mormon’s Celestial Kingdom, men will have all these wives with whom they will procreate innumerable spirit children. They will then create worlds where they will send these spirit children, replicating our mortal experience. “As man is God once was; as God is man may become,” expresses in couplet form the Mormon belief.

Young also taught in quite clear language the doctrine of “Blood Atonement.” If a man’s sins are of a serious nature, that man should shed his own blood in atonement for those sins. Until 2004, ...continued on page 6



DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Live Radio program with
Marcus Grodi & Guests

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Encores: Friday @ 9 PM EST
Sundays @ 6 AM EST

Following our Holy Father’s call to rediscover the inspiration of St. Paul and his writings, our *Deep in Scripture* live radio programs will be featuring guests discussing their favorite verses from St. Paul.

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTL'

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...Journeys Home Continued...

the lingering evidence of Young's doctrine was found in Utah's permitting criminals who are about to be executed to choose a firing squad so that they may spill their blood as opposed to another form of death.

Recently, studies of DNA of Indian tribes has shown that about 98% of them (as traced through their mitochondrial DNA) are of Asian descent. The rest are from Europe, mainly Spain. There are no traces of Jewish ancestry which confutes the Book of Mormon claims that the people written of therein came from Israel. No archeological evidence validates the history as suggested in the Book of Mormon.

The behavior of more recent Mormon leaders failed me. "When the prophet speaks, the thinking is over," has become a motto. When the leaders speak, you follow, for, "obedience to the Lord's anointed" requires such response. The problem with that fiat—besides the theocratic approach to stifle free thought and speech—is that the leaders have dissembled.

Time and space restrict me from going more deeply into such examples, but they are plentiful, beginning with Smith and continuing.

I learned first-hand that leaving the Mormon Church, exposes one to agony deeper than could have been imagined. Such extrication is like having one's heart removed without the benefit of anesthesia. In my case, it resulted in four years of separation ending in divorce, alienation from friends and family members, and shunning by most of my children. My wife had come from generations of Mormons. My children were born in the church and received its teachings from age two onward; three of them went on missions; they have married Mormons in the temple (where I was not allowed) and now have their own children.

My anger and bitterness targeted not only Mormonism, but also God. How could He have let this happen to me? Why? I spiraled into agnosticism and depression. I didn't know any longer if there was a god and what's more, I didn't care.

Only an opportunity at a new job gave me any enthusiasm. The job was only for a year but it was so intensive with a lot of traveling that it helped crust over my woundedness, giving me little time to think about it.

During this time, I renewed my acquaintance with a friend I had known some 15 years earlier through work. She had just ended her marriage and was in the process of annulment by the Catholic Church. Our friendship grew into courtship and we were married four years later.

Mary Patricia (Trish) is a cradle Catholic fully educated in Catholic schools from Sacred Heart kindergarten through Dominican University. During our courtship, I had fully vented my Mormon experience and told her unequivocally that I would never be part of organized religion again.

My wife is as bright as she is lovely. She didn't push me. But before too long I was going to Mass with her and my three stepchildren. I often sat defiantly with my arms folded, refusing to stand or kneel at any time. During the Mass, I parsed every word of the homily, the mispronunciations of the lectors, and the perfunctory prayers. I limited the sign of peace to my family. If Trish asked me about the homily or the Scriptures, I answered with caustic assessments.

After serving as the general counsel to a large U.S. Government agency, and then accepting a partnership in a national law firm, we moved from Washington, D.C., back to California, where I practiced in our Century City office.

Blending families challenges the best of marriages. Blending faiths—or in our case one faith with no faith—exacerbates the struggle.

Through the next several years a number of difficult things happened. God crashed through my arrogance and my hubris trying to get my attention. Like Jacob wrestling with an angel, the outcome was not in doubt, except for me.

One day, when the cruel, whirling, riptide sucked me under for what felt like the final time, I found myself inside of Sacred Heart Catholic Church. But for one other person, I was alone. I sunk to my knees and buried my face in my hands. The only words I could whisper were, “Please, love me.” Soft, warm, assuring, loving arms engulfed me. I wept. The boy who had always been afraid and alone heard: “Be not afraid; I am with you always.”

While I could no longer deny God, I wasn’t ready for any church, let alone the Catholic Church. Church hurt, it betrayed, it lied. God did not get my attention, however, for purposes of leaving me there.

With a couple of months, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) began. Trish suggested that since I once said I might be interested in learning more about the Catholic Church, this might be a good time. I cautiously agreed.

When I arrived for my first meeting—the group had already met three or four times—I wore my shield of aloofness. The director of the group made a couple of announcements and then said, “We have a new face among us. Would you please tell us your name and tell us why you are here?”

With a smug reply about my face certainly not being new although they might be seeing it for the first time, I said “And I don’t know why I’m here.” An awkward silence followed before the director collected herself and moved on. I folded my arms across my chest.

Just about ten minutes later, the parish priest stepped in to greet the RCIA. I will never forget what he said. After a few words of greeting he declared: “Some of you may not even know why you’re here. But that’s OK, because God does.”

I sat up, unfolded my arms and listened. I listened for seven months and I read. The evidence stood firmly on a rock foundation. The chain links of



The Virgin Mary — El Greco

authority from Peter to John Paul II for 2,000 years put to rest all remnants of the notion of a “great apostasy.” I fell in love with Mary, the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven, my Mother. The Sacraments compelled me. The Holy Trinity made sense. Beginning to understand the Eucharist, I longed to partake. The early Church Fathers, (Sts. Ignatius,

...continued on page 8



MARCUS GRODI'S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

March 7, 2009

Men's Spirituality Conference

The theme is “Let Us...Strengthen One Another”. In the Archdiocese of Philadelphia at the Cardinal O'Hara High School.

For more information or to register:

www.archphila.org/evangelization/famlife/famlife.htm

NEW LOOK

The *Coming Home Network International's* newsletter has received a new look. With the same great content, we hope you will enjoy our new layout. *CHNI* looks forward to hearing your comments and suggestions concerning the new design. Please contact Mary Clare Piecynski to give your feedback.



Mary Clare Piecynski

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DEEP IN HISTORY MP3s

The *Coming Home Network* is moving history forward, with all past *Deep in History Conference* talks now available in MP3 format through our website.

Check out www.deepinhistory.com and click on a previous year's conference page. There you will find a list of all the talks with a link for downloading. Each talk will cost \$5.

Take our Catholic history wherever you go as we continue to make our resources more accessible to you.



QUO VADIS NEWS

<http://www.quovadis youth.org/>

The *Coming Home Network International's* youth apostolate *Quo Vadis* was established to provide peer support for the children of clergy of other faiths who are either on the journey to the Catholic Church or have already been received into the Church. If you are a young person who is interested in the Catholic faith or if you are a young person who would like to share your Catholic faith with others we invite you to discover *Quo Vadis*.

Interested in learning more?

Quo Vadis has a web site, www.quovadis youth.org with information about the network and ways to become involved. *Quo Vadis* would particularly like to invite you to come to our weekly chats, they are every Thursday night at 8pm EST in the *Coming Home Network* chatroom. The chats are a great means to learn more about the Catholic faith and to experience fellowship with other young people. We hope you can come! If you would like to learn more about *Quo Vadis*, or you have a question about the Catholic faith you are welcome to contact Mary Clare Piecynski.

Mary Clare Piecynski
maryp@chnetwork.org
740-450-1175 ext. 105

...Journeys Home Continued...

Irenaeus, Polycarp), clinched the evidence. The essential role of tradition made sense. (I had often wondered about the closing verse in the Gospel of St. John 21:25: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." Amen.) The Scriptures themselves came from oral history and tradition, not all of which was canonized. Thank God for the Magisterium of the Church. I began to embrace the church of smells and bells, of icons, stained glass, and holy water.

I was won over by the unique recognition and respect the Church gives to the individual conscience. An informed, prayerful, and studiously prepared one it must be; for, in the end I am to follow it. Can you understand how vivifying that is for one who was taught to be "immediately obedient" when the leaders speak, no thinking is required or allowed?

But most of all, I experienced the living Jesus Christ. (See Pope John Paul II's *Ecclesia in America*.) I have read dozens of *Coming Home Network International* conversion stories, many about the treks of Protestant ministers steeped in their beliefs. For them, a long intellectual undertaking seems to be the *sine qua non* for their conversion. But even for each of them—as for me—the final step across the threshold is experiential. That part was primary for me.

As I prepared for the Easter Vigil that Saturday in 1994, I spent the day praying, meditating, listening. I had decided to fast from Friday night to the Vigil, so that I would break my fast with the Body and Blood of Jesus. The cleansing baptism, the gifting of confirmation made my soul exultant. And then when I looked at my priest's eyes and he said to me, "The Body of Christ, for you, Clyde," tears flowed of their own will and continued as I received the Blood of Christ. My fast was broken, I had now the Bread of Life to feed me and the Cup of Salvation to slake my thirst. I was home.

And just when I thought I was finally out of tears, we sang:

Do not be afraid, I am with you
I have called you each by name.
Come, and follow me and I will bring you home
I love you, and you are mine.

The little boy and the man were now no longer afraid and alone. ■



Clyde Pearce, a former Mormon missionary and bishop, is a member of Sacred Heart Parish in Salinas, California. Active in lay ministries, he was a founding member and director of the parish's stewardship committee; founding member and convener of the Small Faith Sharing Groups Committee; Director of the RCIA; founding member of the Evangelization Task Force, and has worked on the finance committee. His wife, Mary Patricia has joined him in all these activities. He is a California attorney and has practiced in Arizona, Utah, Washington, D.C., and Virginia. In a notable career achievement, he filed and won the very first NAFTA case against the United Mexican States. He will be a guest on the Journey Home in May.

Prayer List

Clergy

■ For Oliverio, a Methodist minister in the Philippines, that the Lord would open the way for him to return to the only, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

■ For Father John, an Orthodox priest in Michigan, that all the stumbling blocks that he perceives before him may disappear so that he may enter the gates of the Catholic Church with joy and thanksgiving.

■ For Mark, an Anglican minister in Texas, as he discerns God's purpose for him at this time. May the Spirit guide and direct his path.

■ For Cliff, a Baptist minister in Oregon, that the Lord Jesus would reward him richly as he studies and prays over the truths of Jesus' Catholic faith.

■ For Andrew, a United Methodist minister in North Carolina, who is drawn to Catholicism but does not know what he would do for a living if he were not in ministry.

■ For Adam, an Pentecostal minister in Kansas, that the Lord would guide his studies and grant grace and wisdom to his Catholic e-mail friends.

■ For Larry, a former Church on the Rock minister in Colorado, that he would find strong Catholic fellowship that will effectively assist him on his journey to the holy Church.

■ For Kevin, a former Missionary Baptist minister in Oklahoma, that he may seek and find, knock and the door of the Church be opened to him.

■ For Robert, a Southern Baptist minister in Nevada, that as he studies and prays God would lead him to the fullness of grace and peace, which is found in the Catholic Church.

■ For Gary, a Wesleyan minister in Oklahoma, that he would discover the holiness of life in the Catholic Church which he seeks.

■ For Joan, a United Methodist minister in Iowa, that she may find the depth of faith and prayer which she has sought in vain among the Evangelical preachers on TV.

■ For Mark, a Christian and Missionary Alliance minister in Arizona, that he may become deep in the Scriptures and the history of Christ's Church and be led to its holy sacraments.

■ For Brad, a Southern Baptist minister, that he may find many brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus in the holy Catholic Church.

■ For Bill, an Episcopal priest in California, that God may grant him the faith and wisdom to enable him to step out in faith so that he may enjoy the communion of the Church of the ancient fathers.

■ For David, a Lutheran in Texas, he may place the fullness of his faith in God by relying on the one Church of Jesus Christ which is the pillar and foundation of Truth.

Lay

■ For Heather and her interest in the Catholic Church.

■ For Anne that she returns to the fullness of truth in the Catholic Church.

■ For a young man who was recently in a car accident.

■ For Joel that our good Lord Jesus blesses his artistic ability for his beautiful drawings of Jesus and angels.



■ For Doug's wife and her faith journey.

■ For Michelle, her family, and their intentions.

■ For Caroline and her cancer treatment.

■ For all within the *Helpers Network*.

■ For all those who feel called to the Catholic Church, that the Holy Spirit guide them upon their journey of faith.

■ For all the members of *Quo Vadis (QV)*.

■ For the upcoming *Catholic Paul* conference on May 16.

■ For Justin's battle with cancer.

■ For Connie's health.

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 in general and specific of the *CHNetwork*, its members, and supporters.

Please submit all prayer requests & answers to:
CHN Prayer List
P. O. Box 8290
Zanesville, OH 43702

You may also email your prayer requests to:
prayers@chnetwork.org

We use only first names to preserve anonymity, and the following code:
(QV) *Quo Vadis*

Saint Paul on Lent

As we approach Lent in this year of Saint Paul, did he have anything to say about observing the disciplines of Lent? It's generally accepted that the specific practice of the forty days of Lent leading up to Easter was a later development in the life of the Church, so in this sense we shouldn't expect him to have said anything about it.

But more in general, did Saint Paul say anything about observing these kinds of seasons of fasting and self-denial? Returning for a moment to my past as a Calvinist Presbyterian pastor, I would have answered this question, "Yes, he certainly did! He would have said, 'Don't!'" As I'm sure some of you, with similar backgrounds, have also done, I would have based my opinion on a carefully selected and arranged sampling of Scripture passages (which are condensed here for the purpose of this article).

I would have begun with the following passage from Galatians. St. Paul was troubled that these Christians were following "false gospels," and one sign of this was that they were falling back into observing superstitious rituals: *"Formerly, when you did not know God, you were in bondage to beings that by nature are no gods; but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years! I am afraid I have labored over you in vain"* (Galatians 4:8-11).

So, I would have said to Saint Paul, observing special days as a form of religious discipline is a useless vanity.

To the Christians at Colossi, he had a similar concern and warning: *"Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath. These are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, taking his stand on visions. . . Why do you submit to regulations, 'Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch' (referring to things which all perish as they are used), according to human precepts and doctrines? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting rigor of devotion and self-abasement and severity to the body, but they are of no value in checking the indulgence of the flesh"* (Colossians 2:16-23).

Whoa! Sure sounds like Saint Paul was telling the first-generation Christians to turn away from and reject leaders who want to impose upon them ritualistic regulations restricting their eating or schedules because, though "they have indeed an appearance of wisdom. . . , they are of no value. . ."

To the Romans, he inserted himself between believers who were judging each other over their different acts of eating and piety, and his answer was *"Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind. . . For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"* (Romans 14:1-17). I would have said that here Saint Paul was saying that this is a matter of individual conscience! What we eat or don't eat, or when, is not as important as being righteous (i.e., holy), for it is only through being holy that one can experience "peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

To his spirited son, Timothy, he warned that someday in the future, false teachers will add these restrictive regulations to the faith and make them mandatory. I would have quipped, "Does the following sound familiar?": *"Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, through the pretensions of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and enjoin abstinence from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving; for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer"* (1 Timothy 4:1-4). I actually used to teach that this verse warned prophetically against churches like the Roman Catholic Church that control the lives of their members through the imposition of unnecessary disciplines.

I could add a few more verses that were a part of my arsenal, but together these appeared to teach that a Church that imposes these constrictive disciplines is one that should not be followed; that these disciplines are mere vanity and do not make us more holy; and that what is truly important is just imitating and following Jesus.

This, at least, is what I used to believe and teach.

But then I discovered the significance of what Saint Paul taught in the verses preceding those quoted in 1 Timothy: *"I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth"* (1 Tim 3:14,15). Two things are expressed here: (1) that the trustworthy source of truth is not Scripture alone nor our individual consciences, but the Church, and (2) that Saint Paul, as one of the highest leaders in the Church, recognized that he had the authority, from Christ, to teach Christians how they "ought to behave in the household of God." The Church and her leaders, guided by the Holy Spirit (as Jesus promised in John 14-16), have always recognized that in our battle against sin, our sin-damaged wills need to be disciplined: we strengthen our will to resist difficult temptations by choosing to abstain for a time from good things.

The early Church saw this. When the apostolic leaders were forced to decide which disciplines from their Jewish past must be imposed upon Gentile converts (i.e., circumcision), they did not merely throw everything

out and tell the new converts to just decide for themselves. Rather the leaders, recognizing their responsibilities under the Holy Spirit to guide the Church, gave a list of regulations which were then to be communicated to all the local churches: *"We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell"* (Acts 15: 27-29). Now we know, from the rest of the New Testament and the writings of the Early Church Fathers, that this was not literally "all" that was now required of them, but rather these were new regulations covering certain dietary disciplines.

But the point is that it demonstrates that the Church has always recognized its responsibility, under the Holy Spirit, to place boundaries on our lives, and this includes moral as well as spiritual disciplines.

And constrictive rules and regulations of a season like Lent did not merely evolve over the ages through the un-natural seclusion of angry, repressed monks (as I used to teach), but came from Jesus himself. In his Sermon on the Mount, he spoke long and direct about *"when you*

give alms. . . when you pray. . . when you fast. . ." (Matthew 6:2-18). He wasn't saying these acts were unimportant, or vanity, but rather assumed that all of his followers would continue to practice these age old disciplines. What he warned against was doing these things inappropriately: either to impress other people or to think that in doing them we somehow obligate God to reward us. This is vain.

All the disciplines of Lent—of examining our life; of giving up specific good things for the goal of self-discipline; of gathering together for penance, worship, and adoration—all these things are exactly in line with what Saint Paul taught: ***"Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind... For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"*** (Romans 14:1-17). The acts themselves are not what is important, but how they help us to become more fully convinced in our own minds of the truth of Jesus Christ our Lord and of His Church, His Body, in which we have become full members through baptism.

May these disciplines of Lent help each one of us grow by grace in "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

—Sincerely In Christ, Marcus Grodi ■



Helper's Network Update

The *Coming Home Network Intl'* is updating its information for the *Helpers Network*. If you have not already responded to the survey by e-mail, *CHNI* would deeply appreciate if current helpers would fill out the survey so we can verify and/or update our current information and better serve our members.

If you are currently a Catholic and would like to be part of the *Helpers Network* and assist someone who is interested in the Catholic Church please contact Mary Clare Pieczynski.

Please return survey information to:

Mary Clare Pieczynski
PO Box 8290
Zanesville OH 43702
maryp@chnetwork.org
740-450-1175 ext. 105

Name: _____

Do you still wish to be considered a Helper? Yes ☐ No ☐

Street Address: _____

City/State/Zip Code: _____

Phone number 1 — Cell ☐ Home ☐ Work ☐: _____

Phone number 2 — Cell ☐ Home ☐ Work ☐: _____

E-mail address you prefer: _____

Are you a convert to Catholicism? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, from what denomination did you convert? _____

Do you currently have a helpee (*a person interested in the Catholic faith*)? Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, would you like a helpee? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, would you be willing to have another helpee? Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments: _____

The Coming Home Network International

P.O. Box 8290

Zanesville, OH 43702

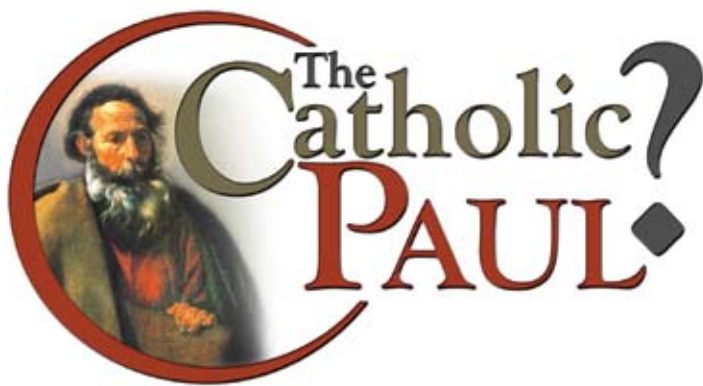
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Marcus Grodi & Dr. Scott Hahn

— along with —

**The Coming Home Network International &
The Saint Paul Center for Biblical Theology**

— present —



Saturday - May 16th, 2009 - Hilton Easton - Columbus, OH

SCHEDULE

9:00 The Catholic Paul—*Dr. Scott Hahn*

10:15 Paul through Jewish Eyes—
Dr. Jeff Marrow

11:45 Mass

1:00 Lunch

2:15 Saint Paul and the Mystical
Life—*Dr. Mary Healy*

3:15 The Mystery of Redemptive
Suffering—*Jeff Cavins*

4:30 Dinner

5:45 The Pauline Texts: Conversion
through The Verses I Never
Saw—*Marcus Grodi*

6:45 Romanism to Rome—
Father Mitch Pacwa

7:45 Closing—*Marcus Grodi*



For more information contact:

COMING HOME NETWORK INTL.

1.800.664.5110

www.chnetwork.org

www.thecatholicpaul.com