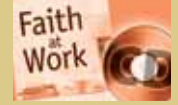




March 2012 Newsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



Surprised by Truth – and Beyond

By Kevin Lowry

Sometimes I think the greatest thing that ever happened to me spiritually was getting kicked out of Franciscan University of Steubenville.

That was the opening line of my conversion story *Son of a Preacher Man* in Patrick Madrid's classic book, *Surprised by Truth 2*. The story was written several years ago, so what follows will reiterate the early years and bring the story up to date. More great things have happened to me spiritually since then – although none of them appeared to be blessings at the time!

A Preacher's kid from Canada

I grew up in a small town near Toronto, Canada, the son of a Presbyterian minister. My parents are wonderful people – and in my opinion, they're living saints. While studying theology at a Baptist seminary in the 1960's, my dad heard so much anti-Catholic rhetoric that he decided to take a Knights of Columbus correspondence course to hear the other side of the story. Partly as a result of that course, he ended up leaving the Baptists to enroll in a Presbyterian seminary. This was one of his first steps toward an appreciation of Catholicism.

After my dad graduated from seminary, my parents became missionaries in Nigeria. Malaria forced them to return to Canada prematurely, but their experience in Nigeria changed their

lives forever. The Catholic missionaries they were exposed to had a powerful, yet practical faith. When civil war broke out, the Catholic religious stayed while others fled the country. Their fearlessness in doing Christ's work had a profound impact on my parents.

The experience in Nigeria had another formative effect on my dad in particular. After witnessing a disorganized approach to trade in Nigeria (just buying a stamp could take 45 minutes), he wondered whether the Lord was calling him to further education in business. After hitting the 99.9th percentile on the GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test) and then topping his MBA class at the University of Western Ontario, he was the recipient of a full scholarship to the Ph.D. program at M.I.T. Despite humble beginnings, he earned his doctorate there in International Business. From that point forward, the unusual fusion of faith and business would characterize his career – and eventually be passed along to me!

Denominational daze

After a stint in academia, my dad accepted a position as the full-time minister of a Presbyterian church. In addition to attending this church, I was exposed to countless Protestant denominations: United Church, ... continued on page 2

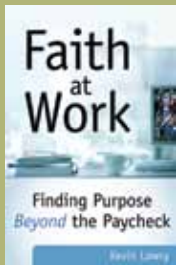
Journeys Home

EVANGELIZATION OUTREACH PACKAGE

In each monthly newsletter we feature resources chosen specifically to aid our members in evangelization. We encourage our members to take advantage of this month's **Evangelization Outreach Package**.

Faith at Work

By Kevin Lowry



Faith at Work: Finding Purpose Beyond the Paycheck shows Christians how to be better workers, and workers how to be better Christians. What if your job could help you grow closer to Christ?

Enhance your enjoyment and effectiveness working in teams? Build stronger relationships? Handle tough situations? Whatever your line of work, this book will help you be the best you can be. *Faith at Work* will empower you to find new motivation, and use the tools of faith to discover purpose in your work. The book will help your career consist of much more than just earning a paycheck!

Deep in Scripture Radio Program Special!



Kevin Lowry joins Marcus Grodi in this insightful Deep in Scripture radio program as they discuss the role of faith in the workplace.

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

➤ **For a donation of \$50, receive *Faith at Work*.**

➤ **For a donation of \$75, receive a *Deep in Scripture* CD and *Faith at Work*.**

...Journeys Home Continued...

Pentecostal, Baptist, Methodist, Evangelical, Quaker – you name it. As I grew in my faith, I discovered that the one common belief within Protestantism was that Christ died on the cross to wash away our sins. Pretty much everything else was negotiable.

Occasionally, I would encounter the Catholic Church. Of course, I didn't understand much about Catholicism, and it seemed very complicated and foreign. Like many of my Protestant friends, I thought that no single denomination had a monopoly on truth, and that Catholicism was simply another denomination. I sincerely believed it was okay that no church had the whole truth, and that we would all be enlightened and unified when the general resurrection occurred.

I knew a lot of people who also held this point of view. They would shop for the denomination that was right for them, the one that best suited them theologically and in the way it worshipped.

You can see the problem. Rather than seeking Christian truth – especially if it meant they had to abandon their personal beliefs – many were content simply to find the group of people who taught doctrines with which they were comfortable. They wanted to worship with others whose perception of God and His demands on them were similar to their own.

I say this not out of any antagonism toward Protestants. These people were my friends, and they were sincere. But they had fallen into subjectivism: they were searching for a Church that held their beliefs instead of seeking a Church whose beliefs they ought to hold. That's backward. Our call is not to conform the Christian faith to ourselves, but to conform *ourselves* to the Faith. After all, who needs to change: we or God?

I enter Franciscan University – twice!

In spite of my denominational confusion, I had an idyllic childhood, watching my parents live out their vocations to love and serve the Lord in full-time ministry. Since I had started school early as a child and later skipped a grade, I graduated from high school when I was sixteen. Full of exuberance and self-confidence, I believed I was ready for college.

At that time, my dad read a now-defunct Catholic magazine called *New Covenant* (published, significantly, by *Our Sunday Visitor*). The magazine ran an article about Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio. After reading about this unique school, my dad thought the dynamic Christian environment might help me through my rebellious years.

At sixteen, I enrolled in the university. Although I was there to study psychology, I double-majored in beer and billiards. Three semesters later, my enthusiastic dedication to these pursuits got me academically dismissed – kicked out of the university. I returned to Canada humiliated.

The Lord soon provided me with a job at Sony of Canada, where I matured, improved my work ethic, and discovered that I enjoyed the world of business. After four years with Sony, I wanted to be on track to the top of the company. That required a degree, so I returned to school – this time to study business.

By the grace of God, Franciscan University allowed me to re-enter.

A closet Catholic?!

The second time around at Franciscan, I worked hard. However, I finally had to take the Catholic theology courses I had avoided during my first three semesters. So I would call up my father, and say “Hey, you wouldn’t believe what I heard in class today. What do you think about this?” My dad, with characteristic patience and wisdom, would explain the Catholic and Protestant perspectives, and then explain why the Catholic viewpoint makes a lot of sense. Over time, this approach led me to accept as reasonable many Catholic teachings; they weren’t as bizarre or unfounded as I had once believed.

One topic had a significant impact on me. In my ethics course, we studied the Catholic teaching on birth control. As a Presbyterian, of course, I saw nothing wrong with artificial contraception. However, as I considered the Catholic teaching on it, I came to see that anti-contraception arguments were simple and compelling, and I began to understand why the “modern miracle” of contraception has such sinister effects on society.

Artificial birth control breaks the natural connection between marital love and the conception of children. Contraception makes it easier for extramarital relationships to happen and even thrive. Contraceptive sex is self-indulgent – hardly an authentic expression of love and total self-donation to another person. This realization led me to see that artificial contraception enables women to be demeaned, even unwittingly, by being treated by men as mere objects, used selfishly for gratification, and so I eventually rejected the conventional Protestant acceptance of contraception.

The issue of contraception raised a bigger doctrinal question for me. Until recently (the 1930s), all the older Protestant Churches taught that birth control was wrong. Nineteen hundred years after Christ’s life on earth, did Protestants wake up to the truth that contraception was fine, or had they caved in to societal pressure? The Catholic Church had consistency in the development of doctrine over its two thousand year history. I wondered why, if God doesn’t change, Presbyterian teaching could – and how could it change by a simple majority vote?

During my final semester, as my mind reeled from my steadily forming doubts about my Christian identity, my father changed hats and came to Franciscan to teach as a visiting professor of business. I had thought my dad would reaffirm me in my crumbling Presbyterian faith and help me sort out the theological questions that beset me. He didn’t.

I soon realized that my dad was a closet Catholic.

The toughest way to be Christian

His own appreciation and understanding of the Catholic Faith was growing as I struggled with theology in the classroom. During this time, I also fell in love with a beautiful American girl named Kathi. She too had a Protestant background, and we were similarly bewildered at the Catholic teaching in our classes. It was like learning a new language or culture. Nonetheless, we married in her small hometown’s Wesleyan church and subsequently moved to Cleveland, where I took a position in an accounting firm. My parents moved back to Canada for the sake of my sisters.

... continued on page 4



DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

On EWTN radio with Marcus Grodi & Guests

Airs: Wednesdays @ 2:00 PM ET
Encores: Thursdays @ 1:00 AM ET

Be sure to check out our *Deep in Scripture* website, deepinscripture.com, where you can:

- **Watch** the program online.
- **Join** in a live discussion during each show.
- **Find** more information about the guests and the Scriptures being discussed.
- **Access** archives from previous *Deep in Scripture* shows.

Deep in Scripture Guests

March 7
Joanna Bogle*

March 14
Fr. Shawn Gould*

March 21
TBD*

March 28
Judy Hehr*



*This schedule is subject to change.



EWTN'S THE JOURNEY HOME

on television and radio, hosted
by Marcus Grodi, president of
CHNetwork

TELEVISION

Mondays at 8:00 PM ET

Encores: Tuesdays 1:00 & 9:00 AM ET

Fridays 5:00 AM ET

Saturdays 11:00 PM ET

RADIO

Mondays at 8:00 PM ET

Encore: Saturdays 7:00 AM ET

Sundays 1:00 AM ET

March 5

Joanna Bogle*

Life-long Catholic

March 12

Fr. Shawn Gould*

Former Presbyterian

March 19

*The Journey Home International **

March 26

Judy Hehr*

Revert

**This schedule is subject to change.*



...Journeys Home Continued...

In Cleveland, Kathi and I struggled to find the right denomination for us. We were spiritual nomads, shopping for a place to call home. We tried a Full Gospel church, wildly open to the Spirit but without sufficient doctrinal grounding. We visited a Catholic church, but the people seemed cold and distant, and it was so large that it was rather frightening. We then tried a Christian and Missionary Alliance church, which I liked, since it had Presbyterian roots and was relatively mainstream. The people were friendly, too, so we stayed there for our first year in Cleveland.

Yet I continued to struggle internally with many theological questions, looking as I was for a “biblically based” church. Why were there so many different denominations, all claiming to be grounded in Scripture and with teachings opposed to one another?

In college, I had majored in accounting because a friend had told me that it's the toughest of the business majors, and I wanted to take up that challenge. But then occurred to me that Catholicism is the toughest of the Christian religions. As a Protestant, I could shop around until I found a church with people whose beliefs mirrored my own. As a Catholic, even if I didn't live up to that ideal, the ideal was still held out as the goal. But it seemed easier for me to change churches than to change myself.

Rome beckons

Around this time, my dad had an opportunity to visit the Vatican for a week. He had created a computerized Bible study program called the *Findit Bible*. The software had been selling well in Europe, and my father's distributor had arranged for him to have an audience with Pope John Paul II to present him with an Olivetti computer loaded with several of my father's Bibles. His meeting with the pope and his new friendship with Archbishop (later Cardinal) John Foley led him to write an article on Christian unity for the *Presbyterian Record*, the magazine of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. On the cover of that issue was a full-page photo of my dad shaking hands with the pope.

When the issue came out, all hell broke loose. For almost twenty years, my father had been the clerk of the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) – an extremely visible role. Responses to the article poured in, many praising his efforts towards church unity. Others bordered on being hate mail. One letter was simple, yet beautifully compelling: “Why doesn't Dr. Lowry just become Catholic?”

After the ruckus had died down, my dad and I made a trip back to Steubenville together. As we drove there, we listened to a tape by Scott Hahn, who was coming to teach at the university the following year. We were enthralled by the moving and dramatic story told by this articulate, former Presbyterian minister who became Catholic after struggling with so many of the same issues that troubled us. I was surprised to learn that the birth control issue was also his starting point for serious investigation into the Catholic Faith. It was an inspiring testimony, and the Holy Spirit used it to give me a clear sense of direction for the first time in years.

“I want to become Catholic”

At the end of the tape, my father turned to me and said, “You know, I can't argue with anything this guy is saying.” I went home after the trip and



announced to Kathi, “I want to become Catholic.” Just like that. She was shocked.

As we spoke, all my reasons and feelings came pouring out. I wanted to love and serve the Lord in all that I did, and I finally felt I had found my way home. The Catholic Church offered a depth and beauty unparalleled in the Protestant world. So many of the questions I had grappled with were deftly resolved by Catholic teaching. How could so many denominations be based on the Bible, yet have such vastly different interpretations? How could the prerequisites for salvation be viewed so differently by so many people? How could matters of faith and morals be decided simply by majority vote? The teachings of the Catholic Church were intellectually compelling, her doctrine was scripturally sound, and I was finally convinced that one Church actually did have the whole truth: the Catholic Church.

Although Kathi was hesitant at first, she agreed to go through RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) with me. She knew she was under no obligation to convert, and I think she attended in an effort to save me from what she perceived as a dead Church.

Praying the Rosary brings spiritual conversion

Still searching for answers, I called Scott Hahn. We agreed to meet at Mass at Franciscan University the following weekend. After Mass, as we talked about searching for the “right denomination,” Scott’s face lit up. He reached into his suit pocket, fished out a beautiful Irish rosary, and handed it to me. “I wondered why I put this in my pocket this morning,” he chortled.

Sheepishly, I stammered something about not having the slightest idea what to do with his gift. Before I knew it, Scott was writing out a list of books I should read! It struck me at the time that it was rather like a physician writing a prescription. Well, the medicine worked! I read those books and prayed the rosary regularly as Kathi and I went through RCIA.

Back at the Catholic church we had originally found so huge and uncaring, we began to meet deeply spiritual people who loved the Lord. We continued to study and grow in our faith, even as we had our second son and, only a few months later, discovered we were expecting another child. We stayed in touch with the Hahns, and Scott’s wife, Kimberly, gave tremendous encouragement to Kathi in both spiritual and practical matters. Kathi’s apprehensions were evaporating rapidly and she began to share my enthusiasm for the Faith.

I continued praying the rosary. I prayed for things that seemed nearly impossible, but to my shock and amazement, I often received them. My interior life changed rapidly, too. Although my intellectual conversion had taken many years, the rosary brought about my spiritual conversion in a matter of weeks.

I desired the sacraments, having a particular hunger for the Eucharist. I remember going to Mass during the RCIA process and having to leave before Communion, dragging along Kathi and our infant children. I longed to have a place at the eucharistic table.

Kathi and I receive the sacraments

At Easter in 1992, Kathi and I were received into the Catholic Church. My parents attended and looked on with what I can only now describe as envy. The night was vivifying: I was baptized, and we both ... *continued on page 6*

SUPPORTING CHNETWORK JUST GOT EASIER!

For your convenience, CHNetwork is able to automatically deduct monthly donations directly from your credit card, checking, or savings account. If you would like to set up an automatic monthly donation, please go to chnetwork.org/donate/ or complete the form below and mail to:

CHNetwork

Attention: Ann Moore
PO Box 8290
Zanesville, OH 43702

Please contact Ann at 740-450-1175 or ann@chnetwork.org if you have any questions or concerns.

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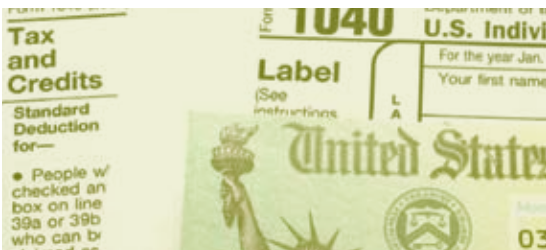
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EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Please go to chnetwork.org/resources to see current job listings. Or, if you know of an employment opportunity that you would like posted, please e-mail it to maryp@chnetwork.org.



TAX LETTERS

If you need a record of your 2011 contributions for tax purposes, please contact Wendy Hart.

Wendy Hart

wendy@chnetwork.org
740-450-1175 ext. 102

UNSOLICITED MAIL

The CHNetwork would like to remind our members that we are unable to send unsolicited mail. Since our ministry exclusively responds to non-Catholic clergy and laity who initiate contact with us, we cannot add anyone to our mailing list or send materials unless they themselves first make a request. However, if you would like to have CHNetwork send materials with a gift card in your name, or if you have any questions about this policy, please contact our office at 740-450-1175.

SHARE YOUR STORY!

The CHNetwork always welcomes those of our members who are converts or reverts to share their written conversion stories of how they were drawn (or drawn back) to the Catholic Church. If you feel called to share your story, please feel free to go to <http://chnetwork.org/converts> to review our writer's guidelines, see sample stories, and upload your testimony.

...Journeys Home Continued...

received the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion. Kathi and I were thrilled to discover our marriage was now a sacrament.

This first step in a lifelong journey of faith was a true celebration of God's love. In becoming Christian when I was young, I felt that I had chosen God. In becoming Catholic, I felt that God had chosen me.

I still tell my Protestant friends that my becoming Catholic isn't an abandonment of my Christian faith; it's the fulfillment of it. As Catholics, we're given the spiritual tools to live a sacramental life.

As a Presbyterian, I didn't even understand what the word "sacrament" meant (outward signs of inward grace, instituted by Christ for our sanctification) nor what they were (the seven sacraments are Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance or Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Marriage). Yet as a Catholic, I recognize the sacraments as the primary, practical means by which we seek to draw closer to God.

In particular, frequent reception of the Eucharist has been of enormous value. It provides spiritual strength for the journey, a way of tapping into the Divine Life and opening my soul wide for transformation. Reconciliation is not only a means for obtaining forgiveness of sin, it's also truly a sacrament of healing – both spiritual and emotional. Marriage, that great preparation for the mission of building up the Church, is often an underestimated sacrament. Despite the challenges that are part of every marriage, it is a means of tremendous grace.

My parents also become Catholics

My parents continued to move in the direction of the Church. My dad in particular wanted to convert, but believed that since his commitment to my mom preceded this desire, that he should wait for her. They decided to go through an RCIA program together.

Since Dad's role in the PCC was so highly visible, he also wanted to avoid scandal and hurt among people he cared for. He continued to preach in a Presbyterian church on Sundays, although on one of my visits to Canada, I discovered a little secret: he was also attending daily Mass (without receiving the Eucharist) Monday through Saturday!

In the fall of 1992, my parents returned to Steubenville. The following February, they came into full communion with the Catholic Church. I was deeply moved when I was able to serve as my dad's sponsor in a beautiful ceremony led by Fr. Michael Scanlan, president of the university. My dad later accepted a permanent teaching position in the business department at Franciscan.

My parents were utterly thrilled to enter the Church, and several months later, my dad was also able to bring his departure from the PCC to an unexpectedly positive conclusion. The General Assembly invited him back to provide a farewell address, and to thank him for his many years of dedicated service. Although he got a couple smiling comments about "being in a Catholic way," the event was suffused with a spirit of mutual respect and gratitude. He counts it as a blessed ending to that chapter of his journey.

Practical consequences

In the time since we became Catholic in 1992, Kathi and I have been blessed beyond description, and have experienced abundant joys – and challenges. For



example, one of the practical consequences of our desire to submit our fertility to God was His blessing, in the form of more children. We now have eight. The birth of our seventh child in particular provided us with some hard-won lessons.

When Kathi was about five months pregnant, she began to experience problems and went to visit her obstetrician, Dr. Michael Parker. As a physician who had made the courageous decision to become “NFP (natural family planning) only” in his practice, we trusted Dr. Parker implicitly. Yet when he called me at the office, I knew something was up.

It turned out that Kathi had excess amniotic fluid building up around the baby, and what followed was a mind-numbing, rapid succession of complicated medical tests and procedures. The diagnosis turned out to be a frightening congenital condition – polysplenia syndrome. The survival rate past adolescence, we learned, was only 10%.

We spent the next couple months in mourning for our baby boy who hadn't even been born yet. We didn't know if he would survive his birth, but assuming he did, a surgery was needed right away to correct some internal, structural anomalies. During the time leading up to his birth, we prayed fervently, and Kathi regularly sent out email updates to family and friends. Her emails frequently found their way to prayer chains; in particular, our close family friend Fr. Ray Ryland (former Episcopalian minister and chaplain of the Coming Home Network International) led the prayer efforts.

Through what we believe was the prayer of hundreds, if not thousands of people, our son David survived his birth and I had the profound honor of baptizing him prior to his surgery. Subsequent testing determined that he did *not* have congenital heart disease, the cause for such a high mortality rate, so despite some ongoing challenges, his prognosis is good.

David's birth had some unexpected graces attached. Through the process, Kathi determined that we would not stop at child number seven. “I'm not going out like this!” she would say. Our beautiful youngest daughter Hannah is evidence of Kathi's courageous openness to life, despite the hardship of her pregnancy with David.

Surprisingly, our family was also brought closer together through David. As we all came to recognize the fragility of his life, it had the effect of helping us to grow in appreciation for one another.

Faith at work

The experience also caused us to reevaluate our priorities from a family perspective. My work in a CPA firm had demanded long hours for many years. After much prayer and emotional discussions, we decided it was time to make a change. The day I informed my good friend and mentor at the firm, he handed me the number of a recruiter. “Give this guy a call,” he said.

Within 24 hours, I had an interview that turned into a role with a dynamic company as Vice President of Finance. 5 minutes into the interview, I was convinced that I wanted to work for them – as soon as I heard that the local executive team had recently been discussing how to tithe their bonuses. What an amazing gift! However, there were hardships there too, as we were buying companies and growing rapidly.

... continued on page 8



DEEP IN HISTORY CONFERENCE

The Coming Home Network International would like to thank everyone who has been a part of our previous *Deep in History Conferences*. Unfortunately, for many reasons, the CHNetwork will no longer be sponsoring these annual conferences. We are most grateful to Franciscan University of Steubenville for co-hosting a memorable event last year.

Instead, we are exploring various alternatives to continue our commitment to becoming “deep in history,” to quote Bl. John Henry Cardinal Newman. We anticipate that this may involve expanded use of our in-house studio, and expanded resources on our website. We also hope to reinstitute our annual retreat for clergy members, and may consider a small number of regional parish events. More information will follow in future newsletters and on our website www.chnetwork.org.

If you would like to obtain previous conference material (including the 2011 event) please visit <https://store.chnetwork.org/> or call our office at 740-450-1175.

NEWSLETTER COPIES

CHNetwork encourages members to make copies of the newsletter and distribute to family, friends, and church groups. We do ask that copies of the newsletter not be sold. Unless otherwise indicated, the contents of this newsletter are Copyright © 2012 by the Coming Home Network International. All rights reserved.

WWW.CHNETWORK.ORG

The CHNetwork invites you to visit our website where you can read the latest CHNetwork news, follow our blog, read conversion stories, watch videos, and join in discussions on our forum. Keep up to date with the CHNetwork and become more involved in our mission to assist men and women who are on the journey to the Catholic Church.

VISIT! SHARE! ENJOY!

THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

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NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE

Download and print full-color copies of all previous CHNetwork newsletters from our online archive. Visit www.chnetwork.org/newsletter-archive

...Journeys Home Continued...

Within my first year at the company, some disputes among the shareholders arose, and the company was put up for sale.

I had hoped my work life was stabilizing, but instead it went into overdrive. The process of selling the company took much longer than anyone had anticipated, and it once again demanded tremendous sacrifice. Then finally, we were sold – to a good company that unfortunately already had a fully staffed finance department. I was put on the list to be terminated.

Through what again I can only describe as the grace of God, after several months helping out with the transition to new ownership, I was given another opportunity. One of the founders of the original company asked if I would consider a new challenge. In the end, I was promoted to Senior Vice President in an operations role, and eventually had responsibility over the Ohio operations of the company. What a tremendous blessing.

Since that time, I have been given many more opportunities, including becoming a member of Legatus' Columbus chapter, and a director on the Board of *Our Sunday Visitor*, the Catholic publisher whose magazine had initially brought me to Franciscan University!

In addition, *Our Sunday Visitor* just published my first book, a labor of love entitled *Faith at Work: Finding Purpose Beyond the Paycheck*. The book encourages everyone with a job to continue down the path of conversion by fully integrating faith and work. I'm convinced this helps people to become happier, better team players, and better able to handle workplace relationships and challenges.

On top of all this, the Lord provided another opportunity – to leave the corporate world and serve full-time as chief operating officer of the Coming Home Network International. It's a privilege serving the organization, Marcus, and the staff.

Although life continues to provide many difficulties, I have been blessed beyond description. I am deeply thankful for the many challenges God has provided – as with getting kicked out of Franciscan University many years ago, they have all turned into spiritual blessings!

More than anything, I am grateful for the many people who have enriched my life, especially my family, and my relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church, the rich and mysterious Faith to which He brought me home. ■



KEVIN LOWRY is an enthusiastic Catholic, husband, father, and serves as Chief Operating Officer of the Coming Home Network International. His first book, *Faith at Work: Finding Purpose Beyond the Paycheck* was just released by *Our Sunday Visitor*. Kevin's website and blog can be found at <http://gratefulconvert.com/> Kevin will be a guest on *The Journey Home* program April 2, 2012.

BLOG

Please visit www.chnetwork.org/blog to comment on and discuss this story!



By Kevin Lowry

KEVIN LOWRY has been a great addition to the CHNetwork staff when he left his influential (and quite lucrative) position as senior vice president of a large secular firm to become the CHNetwork's chief operating officer. Besides helping me keep a careful but trusting handle on our finances, he is also helping us develop more effective means to assist non-Catholic clergy inquirers *while they are still on the journey—before they resign their pastoral ministries and enter the Church.* In this effort, I asked him to glean from his many years as a financial consultant and produce a booklet to help guide clergy inquirers as they discern their future. This booklet is available for download from our website, but here is a sampling...

Marcus

So you're thinking about becoming CATHOLIC...

Welcome to the journey! You might be surprised to know that hundreds of clergy have gone before you and left their ministries to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church. Like you, each one has a story. Many of the stories involve serious, heart-wrenching sacrifice. People have given up their livelihoods, status in the community, health care coverage, friends, even family. At the same time, a sense of joy and discovery permeates every journey. Drawing closer to the Catholic Church means drawing closer to Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

Preparation

As you pray and discern, questions will undoubtedly come to mind from many directions. One concern is almost universally shared among clergy converts: the very practical matter of how to make a living. Scripture tells us: "For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?" (Luke 14:28). Particularly when you have a family, providing materially is an essential matter and deserves proper consideration. The purpose of this guide is to assist you in preparing for your future career and finances.

The Coming Home Network International (CHNetwork) wants to help you and other clergy discern your vocation in the context of the Catholic Church. We've learned a great deal about what you might expect should you choose to "cross the Tiber" and formally enter the Church. Here are a few facts that might surprise you:

- The great majority of clergy converts (outside of those from the Anglican traditions) are not ordained as Catholic priests.
- After conversion, most former clergy are employed outside the institutional Church.
- Approximately 1/3 of CHNetwork members who are clergy converts are employed in some form of pastoral service; 1/3 in academic or lay apostolate; and 1/3 in secular careers.
- Many clergy converts report frustration because they seem unable to use their gifts and talents as fully as they would like within the Church.

The last point in particular is often difficult for clergy converts to accept. Many come into the Church filled with a sense of excitement and expectation, only to run into brick walls as they seek new employment as Catholics. The most obvious place to begin is with the Church itself, right? Well, maybe not ...

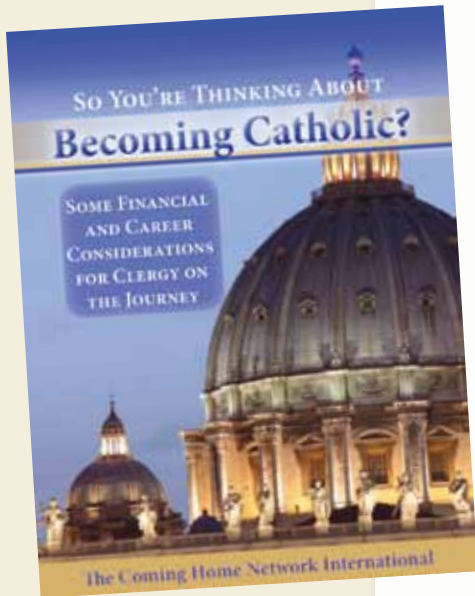
The path of humility

Consider a bishop who is approached by an enthusiastic clergy convert, eager to be ordained to the Catholic priesthood, perhaps with a dispensation from celibacy. Such a man (for women cannot become priests) might be twenty years out of a Protestant seminary, have a family, a mortgage, and other needs, along with half the work life expectancy of the typical young Catholic seminarian.

Do you think the bishop might have to think long and hard?

Clergy converts are endowed with many gifts and have frequently exercised spiritual leadership in their respective denominations. In becoming Catholic, they choose the path of humility and take the "lowest place" at the table (Luke 14:7-11). They may, in time, be invited to a "place of honor," but there are no guarantees. Submission to spiritual author-

... continued on page 10



“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?”
(Luke 14:28)

ity is one of the most difficult aspects of conversion, yet it is essential to authentic Catholic discernment.

If not the Church, where?

So if you're called to the priesthood, it's a tremendous gift. If not, take heart! Many other avenues are available. It's a matter of rediscovering your vocation in the context of the Catholic Church.

Pope John Paul II observed: “We come to a full sense of the dignity of the lay faithful if we consider *the prime and fundamental vocation* that the Father assigns to each of them in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit: the vocation to holiness, that is, the perfection of charity. Holiness is the greatest testimony of the dignity conferred on a disciple of Christ” (*Christifideles Laici*, 16).

So we all share a vocation to holiness. Now it's just a matter of figuring out where, specifically, you are called to serve. As you prayerfully discern your career options, don't forget to include others in the process. Of the utmost importance is obtaining competent spiritual direction. In addition, include trusted advisors, friends, family, and CHNetwork staff. The purpose of such counselors is to provide objectivity and to assist, encourage, and pray for you.

Financial preparation

How are you prepared financially? If you were to leave your pastorate tomorrow, what financial difficulties would result? Loss of a regular paycheck ... health insurance ... housing and other benefits? For some, these difficulties present an enormous challenge. What is your net worth? How much liquidity, or cash, do you have? If your income stopped tomorrow, how many months' worth of expenses would you have covered?

Of course, you may not know the answers to all these questions. So the next step is to come up with some answers, and prepare a monthly budget. Once you know where the money's going, by category, you'll know approximately how much is required to keep your financial ship afloat each month. Make sure you have included irregular expenditures (those not paid on a monthly basis) such as insurance or property taxes.

Putting it all together

When you've performed a clear assessment of both your career prospects and financial status, you can fold this information into your discernment process. Along with prayer for guidance, once again consider consulting those with expertise in career counseling or personal finance. You may still be called to enter into the Catholic Church immediately, with a spirit of faith and trust. On the other hand, God may be calling you to slow down.

This is the crux of the matter. You may be caught in a “catch 22” situation where you desire to enter the Church but aren't sure how to do so without putting yourself and your family at risk. Will God provide if you take the leap of faith?

The answer is a qualified yes. God always provides, and He knows our needs before we ask Him. Yet the timing of your entrance into the Church and what your future holds are functions of your particular calling — your vocation. While we believe that our Lord has established the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church as the most perfect way for every person to approach Jesus Christ, your situation is unique, and His providence must bring together all the necessary factors in His timing. We hold out hope that even in the most difficult circumstances, God can use that process to draw you closer to Him.

At the CHNetwork, we've witnessed the fulfillment of so many who have come into the Church. At the same time, we've stood beside many who have experienced significant hardship while on the journey and thereafter. We hope that with the benefit of planning and the experience of others, you'll have a clear vision forward that will smooth your path and prepare you for a lifetime — and eternity — of joy.

BLOG

Please visit www.chnetwork.org/blog to comment on and discuss this article!

Prayer List



Clergy

■ For Alvin, a Pentecostal minister in Florida, that the Holy Spirit would draw him back home to the Catholic Faith of his youth.

■ For a Nazarene minister in Kansas, that as he explores the riches of the Catholic Church he would be drawn, by God's grace, into the joys of her life.

■ For John, a Calvary Chapel minister, that the Real Presence of our Lord Jesus in the Holy Eucharist would soon fill his feelings of emptiness.

■ For Brian, a Pentecostal minister in Wisconsin, that he and his wife would realize the fullness of worshiping in spirit and truth in the Catholic Church.

■ For Jeff, a Baptist minister in Kentucky, that as he prays and studies the historic Christian Faith he may be called by God enter into that Faith in the one Catholic Church.

■ For Edward, a Baptist minister in Florida, that his watching of EWTN and the faithful witness of some monks would bear fruit in his entry into the Catholic Church.

■ For Robert, a Disciples of Christ minister, that all obstacles perceived by him and his wife between them and the Catholic Church would be overcome by God's grace.

■ For Kevin, an Anglican priest in Canada, that the Catholic Church's consistent stand for traditional Christian doctrine would call him home.

■ For Marcos, a Baptist youth minister in Massachusetts, that the truths of Christ's holy Catholic Church would draw him ever more deeply into the riches of the Faith.

■ For an Episcopal priest in South Dakota, that he would find the fullness of the Faith in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

■ For David, a former Lutheran pastor, and his family, that Jesus guide their steps towards the Catholic Church and give David the resources to continue providing for his family.

Laitiy

■ For John's family, those living and deceased, who are in need of prayers.

■ For Janelle, that the Holy Spirit guide her heart as she looks to enter the Catholic Church.

■ For Steve, that the witness of his Catholic friends open his heart to the richness of Catholic truth.

■ For Gisele's children to recognize the precious gift Christ gave us in His one, holy Church.

■ For Rita who is in pain from health issues, that Jesus give her the grace to persevere and offer her struggles up for the good of the Church.

■ For Joe who has been undergoing numerous health problems, including a leg amputation, may he look to our suffering Lord Jesus for strength during this time.

■ For the repose of Jane's soul, may she rest in peace and her family find solace in this time of grieving.

■ For Nolan, that he will come back to the Catholic Church.

■ For Gary's family, that they would rediscover and embrace the truth of the Catholic Church.

■ For Angela, may she receive the support and encouragement she needs as she looks to possibly enter the Catholic Church.

■ For Ron, who was raised Catholic and is now a non-believer, to return to the Faith.

■ For Linda, who was recently diagnosed with lung cancer, that she experience God's healing power in her life.

■ For Joseph and his wife's marriage to be abundantly blessed though they struggle with illness and financial concerns.

■ For Patty, that her questions and concerns about Catholic teaching be answered through the Holy Spirit's guidance.

In every issue we include timely prayer concerns from the membership. All members are encouraged to pray at least one hour each month before the Blessed Sacrament for the needs, both general and specific, of the CHNetwork and its members and supporters.

Please submit all prayer requests and answers to CHNetwork Prayer List, PO Box 8290, Zanesville, OH 43702. Or email prayer requests to prayers@chnetwork.org.

We use only first names to preserve privacy.

The Coming Home Network International

PO Box 8290

Zanesville, OH 43702

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

GET INVOLVED!

The Coming Home Network International encourages members to assist in our mission this month to help non-Catholic clergy and laity come home to the Catholic Church in the following ways:

1

Get the March 2012 "Evangelization Outreach Package," specifically designed to provide our members with excellent material to deepen their understanding of the Faith and in turn pass it along to non-Catholic family and friends. For more information, see page 2 of this newsletter.

2

Make a copy of this newsletter and share it with a friend or family member who is not Catholic.



3

Pray for all the members of the CHNetwork who are currently in RCIA and are discerning whether or not to enter the Catholic Church this Easter.

