



March 2013 Newsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



My Pearl of Great Price

By Sissi L. Baker

My Earliest Formation

I was born in the summer of 1964, and raised as the daughter of a Pentecostal turned Baptist minister in Moundsville, West Virginia. I had an extremely happy childhood, and do not remember a time when we did not attend church. We traveled to many revivals, tent-meetings, and even to big arenas to hear well-known Evangelists preach. My mother and father had been so devoted to these events, that they did not let anything stand in the way of a Holy Ghost meeting, as they liked to refer to them. Not even extreme weather. When I was around five-years old, we ended up in a serious car accident on the way home from a tent-meeting, in which our car went over a steep embankment. I can remember hearing my father cry out to God: "Lord, save us!" And the Lord did. None of us even had so much as a scratch! Our car was not quite so fortunate.

My father was the pastor of a few different churches throughout Ohio and West Virginia during this time. He began as a Pentecostal minister, and would later go on to pastor a Baptist church. My father never attended a seminary, although he received his preaching credentials under the teaching of another Evangelist via postal-mail. I remember as a young girl, my father worked hard at his biblical studies. He continued to work full-time as a carpenter to provide a decent living for his family, but on many

evenings, he would slave over a stack of books for long hours.

I had always enjoyed attending church as a girl. I had an immense love for Jesus, even then. Music played a large part in our services, as well as getting up in front of the congregation to sing. I remember actually writing little songs to Jesus, proclaiming my love for Him. At one point, I told my father that I wanted to be a minister when I grew up (women being called to preach was fairly common in the Protestant world). Even then I had the desire to win souls for Christ.

An Unsettled Heart

As much as I loved attending church in my youth, there were issues that I found troubling. The Pentecostal services seemed to revolve around the congregation's perception of the Holy Ghost. In many of our services, order would be quickly lost, and chaos would seem to take over. It would be quite common for the singing and the testimonials to get so charged that wigs might go flying and dentures could sometimes be seen sailing through the air! There would be dancing in the aisles, and everyone would be completely lost in their own act of worship. I remember many times feeling tremendous anxiety in these services, but I had been taught that these actions were what happened when one would receive the Holy Spirit. ... *continued on page 2*

Journeys Home

...Journeys Home Continued...

If you weren't active in the hymn-singing and hand-clapping, then it was obvious to everyone that you were not yet "saved."

This observation would inevitably lead to the "forced" altar call, which always made me feel extremely uncomfortable. This occurred when whoever was doing the preaching would "receive" a message from God that He wanted you to come and kneel at the altar to be prayed over. I found this totally embarrassing, and would slide down in my seat, hoping and praying that this preacher would not select me! I wondered why our Lord would choose this form of humiliation to "convert" someone.

I can see now that it was all conducted with good intentions. These were simply individuals who loved God and hungered to be filled with His Spirit. But try as I might, I just could never understand it, nor did I observe anywhere in the Bible where the Apostles or Christ ever acted in these ways. We had the Lord's Supper in our churches, maybe once a year. Of course we used crackers and grape-juice. I also remember occasional "feet-washing" services. In contrast to the Catholic tradition on Holy Thursday, commemorating when our Lord washed the feet of His Apostles and demonstrated His love for them, and how they were to do the same for one another (Jn 13:12-17), this was again seen as a literal action of the Holy Ghost. There would be splashing and knocking over of pans, and dancing all the more. My mother always compared this to how the Apostles had been filled with immense joy! This confused me even more, because I had never remembered reading anywhere in the Bible where the Apostles acted in such a way.

Like countless other Pentecostals, I am sure, we did not encourage things such as: women having short hair; men having long hair; risqué forms of dress; rock music; cigarette smoking or drinking alcohol; sports events; nightclubs; gambling or card-playing of any kind; or swearing. Baptism would come around the age of twelve, when the age of accountability would arrive, but only when one would feel the need. Some (although not all) did not see the necessity for Baptism. We missed all correlation to this being the sign of the New Covenant, which had replaced the previous act of circumcision (Gn 17:9-14, Acts 15:16, 1 Cor 1:16).

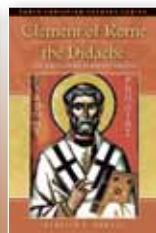
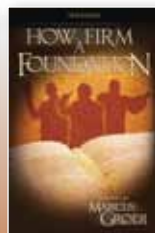
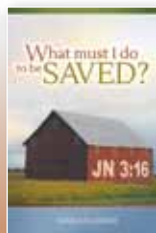
Another thing I found lacking in my church-life as a child was the understanding of the Crucifixion. I remember when I was very young, I asked a young adult in our congregation what Christ dying on the cross really had to do with me. Her only response was that Christ did it in my place! In fact, that is what most members would say when asked. I always thought that this meant that maybe after death, we would all be pinned to some individualized cross in the bowels of hell, and that the ones who were saved would not have to do this! I honestly never got an explanation of the meaning of the sacrifice at Calvary; the Crucifixion wasn't talked about a lot. It seemed as though what was most important was raising the hands, singing and clapping, and just simply closing the eyes and praising God for His love for us. I find no real problem with this, but I think I would have benefited from a detailed explanation of what exactly took place from that Holy Thursday until the Ascension.

The World's Empty Promises

As time went on, I eventually grew tired of being made to go to church; television, radio, rock music, and public school would change me to the very core. It seemed as if the evil one had won during those teenage years. Only every now and then would I come back down to earth and actually behave in a rational way. At that point, my father was pastoring the Fork Ridge Baptist Church, which I very rarely attended.

Tragedy struck on November 24, 1980 when I was sixteen. My father had a massive heart attack on a hunting trip. He had been out quite a distance in the woods, and by the time he made it to a nearby cabin, it was too late. He passed away as he was phoning for help. My mother and I were devastated, but we managed to survive.

Like many young adults, I left God, and the life I had known as a Christian. After years of living a rock and roll lifestyle, I soon began to feel an emptiness within me. I knew there had to be more to life. The nightclubs and music just didn't bring the happiness that it once did. I ended up in a brief relationship and became pregnant when I was twenty-three. On November 30, 1987, I gave birth to a beautiful son, Ian. His father had no desire for commitment, so, with the help of my family, I raised my son alone.



Visit www.chresources.com or call 740-450-1175 for these and other great resources to learn more about the Catholic Faith.

A Mysterious Beckoning

As time went on, I would regain direction in my life through parenting and resuming my education. I went back to school as a psychology major. However, my strenuous job forced me to leave college before receiving a degree. My son and I continued to do well for the most part, minus a husband and father. As I finally grew up, I began to realize that there was still something missing inside of me. Oddly enough, this missing piece was shaped exactly like God!

In desperation one day, I actually found myself praying the “sinner’s prayer” with Pat Robertson, after watching an episode of *The 700 Club*. It was strange; after this, I found myself beginning to change in subtle ways. I began to remember the Lord. I began to pray again and seek His assistance in my life.

After browsing through the cable channels early one morning, I stopped on a televised Catholic Mass at St. Ann’s Basilica, in Scranton, PA. That beautiful grandmother of our Lord sought me, and played a major role in my conversion into the Catholic Faith.

Like my family, I really knew nothing about the Catholic Church, and at the time, I could not tell you the reason why I was so attracted to this new television show (although I know the reason *now!*). I truly admired the utter reverence that these Catholics had for whatever it was that they were doing. I also loved that it was in such an organized manner — which was a total contrast to the Pentecostal services of my youth. Soon, I memorized the prayers of the Mass and even found myself singing some of the songs. There was something so inviting, but I couldn’t put my finger on it. I soon began to look forward to watching the Mass every morning.

I began to wonder how I would go about attending a Catholic church – and SOON! This question would keep tugging at my heart. When I think back on it, it is so amazing how God opened doors and led me to a few very special people who guided me to where I needed to be.

I was working a temporary job at the time. Through bits and pieces of a random, overheard conversation, I found out that a co-worker of mine was a Catholic. I couldn’t believe it! I explained to her that I felt attracted to the Church, and was wondering how I would go about becoming a Catholic. I asked her if she thought that it would be okay for me to attend a Mass even if I wasn’t Catholic. She assured me that it would be fine, and she proceeded to tell me about the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, or RCIA program. She told me that I would need to call the local parish for information. Well, my excitement somewhat faded at that point and some anxiety began to set in. I wanted to call so badly, but I was afraid. I put it off, but the desire to attend Mass never left me.

About a month or two later, the next door would be opened. My son, Ian, began a friendship with a boy from school that

lived close by. One day this boy invited my son over to his house to go for a bike ride. I ended up chatting about the day’s events with this child’s mother whom I had already met a few times before. She mentioned some things she had done after returning home from church. I am still not sure what it was that made me ask, but I asked her which church she went to. It was none other than the local Catholic church that I had been too afraid to call!

When I left the home of these dear friends that day, I had the Sunday bulletin of St. Francis Xavier complete with telephone numbers and schedule in hand! Now I did not have the excuse of not knowing the telephone number and I made the call. I enrolled my son in the the children’s religious education class (CCD) and I joined RCIA soon after.

Then another incredible thing happened. I wanted to attend Mass after my son’s CCD class, but once again was still somewhat fearful. I remember while waiting in the car for him, I couldn’t shake this feeling of being watched. Possibly even a better description would be, that I seemed to be aware of a presence nearby that was absent from my view. I would soon learn what that Presence was. Of all sources, I learned of it through a couple of Mormons who had been attempting to persuade me to join their church.

During one of their home visits, they began briefly discussing how the Mormon faith is different from the others. I was shocked when I heard one of the young men say that Catholics believed that the bread and wine at their Mass actually *became* the Body and Blood of Christ! Of course he was quick to let me know that the Mormon faith did not believe this, but I could not get these words out of my mind. Suddenly, it all made sense to me. I *knew* what that strange attraction had been from that televised Mass! I *knew* what I had felt in the parking lot of the church! I knew what they said was true. I believed this beyond a shadow of a doubt — and I have believed ever since.

Treading New Ground

I did eventually make it to a Mass. A dear member of my RCIA class was going to attend one morning to hear her son do the reading at the children’s weekday Mass. She invited me to go along. Even though my knees were trembling, I went! The moment we entered the vestibule, I noticed her dabbing her finger in a little glass dish containing water, just inside the door. She then made the sign of the cross (that thing that you see many Catholics do in the classic, vampire movies). I asked about the meaning of this. She explained to me that this was holy water, and that it was blessed. She said that it was to bless us, and remind us of our Baptism. She told me that I could bless myself with it. So I did. By this time, I wasn’t sure my legs would hold me up, because they were trembling so badly! ... *continued on page 4*

...Journeys Home Continued...

I noticed her making a kind of bowing, only with her knees bent, one touching down on the floor. She said that she was genuflecting, because *Jesus* was present. At that time I still did not fully understand what she meant, but I did it also.

When the Mass began, it was almost exactly the same as I remembered it on television. I actually knew what to expect after that. It was kind of strange, because I had felt that mysterious feeling again, the same one I had felt in the parking lot. I would soon come to welcome this feeling, and would ultimately feel more at home there, than any other place I would ever be in my life. My son and I soon began to attend regularly.

I fell completely in love with this church! Being a lover of music, the gothic sound of the pipe organ affected me in a profound way. I loved the incense, and did not feel nervous about kneeling here, the way I did during the altar calls as a child. This new experience, complete with “bells and smells,” won my heart completely!

Ian and I were received into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil of 1999. A few of my Protestant family members actually attended. I really don't think that they understood much of what was going on, but they were still kind enough to attend (a true miracle). I can honestly say that this was the happiest night of my life. For on this anticipated night, my son and I received the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus in the Eucharist. My life has never been the same!

Effects of Schism

I do not recall the Catholic Church even being mentioned at any time during my childhood. But I have to tell you that I didn't realize just how anti-Catholic many of my friends and family members were, until I became one.

One aunt told me on the telephone before the Easter Vigil that she would rather I not belong to any church at all, than to become Catholic. A cousin told me she didn't think that Catholics went to heaven. Since I could tell they were unknowledgeable regarding the Catholic Faith, it was hard for me to understand how they could remain so steadfast in their resistance to any attempts of explanation! I love my Protestant family and friends more than words can even describe. As intelligent as they may be, they were shaped very early on in small, Protestant churches, and have had no exposure to Catholic teachings. They may not even be as familiar as they should be in the doctrines of their own particular denomination. But still the same, nothing can compare to their immense love for the Lord. I feel there may be instances in which some individuals' hearts are so hardened due to misinformation, that we may never be able to reach them, regardless of how well we explain the Faith. This is when we must step back and allow the Holy Spirit to do the work.

I have heard a couple of my family members say in the past: “If someone is not called to preach, then they won't be able

to preach!” They believe that if one is meant to be a pastor, then he must have been called from birth, and they tend to frown on seminaries and theological training. They feel that the Holy Spirit will give them the words to say, despite that they have no formation in Hebrew or Greek — the languages in which the early texts of their Bibles were written. They know nothing of the era or context in which the Bible was written, or the sending of priests through the laying on of hands. If any topic is not mentioned in the King James Bible, it is simply not necessary. Many are not familiar with Tradition, the Protestant Reformation, and do not know even one of the many reasons as to why Mary is honored. Sadly, they reject any consideration to the literal meaning of what Jesus said in regards to eternal life coming to all those who eat His Flesh and drink His Blood (Jn 6:47-55), which is, the very essence of our Catholic Faith. They will argue this to the end as being a “symbolic” statement and seem to forget about those followers of Christ who did take this “hard saying” literally, and thus refused to follow Him any longer (Jn 6:66). As important as their salvation was to Jesus, He just let them walk away without telling them that He hadn't really “meant” it quite that way. Why would He do that if indeed He had only been speaking symbolically? How grateful we are that others *did* believe, and continued to take Him at His word for over two thousand years!

I will be forever grateful to the Pentecostals who taught me about Jesus, and demonstrated such love for His Holy Spirit! In becoming Catholic, I have only built onto what was already instilled in me. But, as we have all seen, many anti-Catholics only go by what they have heard from other non-Catholics, and what they “think” the Catholic Church believes. Many times they have no desire to know about historical truths.

Unity

Everyone would have to agree that Christ did not establish over 30,000 different denominations. It is clear from the Bible that He established one, universal Church, with one leader and mission that would endure: “And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18).

Christ desired unity among His disciples – not separation. Many biblical passages show this again and again:

I urge you, brothers to watch out for those who create dissensions and obstacles, in opposition to the teaching that you learned; avoid them. For such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites, and by fair and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the innocent. (Romans 16:17-18)

... continued on page 5

The Year of Faith and the Desire for God

by Dr. Kenneth J. Howell



Many who are moving toward the Catholic Church, whether just beginning or near the door, have discovered that their journey is about much more than changing churches. For some reason becoming Catholic raises multiple issues in a person's life. I know it did in mine. But beneath all those issues lies the question of why. Why become Catholic? Why be a Christian at all? Why should I pursue such an arduous path? In one way or another, the answer comes down to faith. Faith in God calls us to stretch out beyond ourselves and to desire something we can never supply.

In October of this past year Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed the Year of Faith for the Church and the world in hopes that the focus of our prayers, thoughts, and works this year would all revolve around growth in faith and spreading the faith Christ gave to us. How does one grow in faith? Many well-intentioned Christians are sometimes puzzled about what exactly it means to grow in faith. At the center of growth in faith lies the desire for God. Pope Benedict himself stated this well in the first installment of his series on the life of Jesus, *Jesus of Nazareth*, "This book is ... my personal search for the face of the Lord."

Sometimes in Scripture we find one text that capsulizes the answer we are seeking. Psalm 24 seems to be such a text. This Psalm tells us that the essence of faith lies in seeking God, not seeking greater faith in God but that seeking God is itself greater faith. An increase in faith means an increase in our desire for God. To catch the meaning of Psalm 24, imagine standing outside the gates of the temple in Jerusalem, the ancient city of David. You are ready to go up the hill to enter the temple because it is there that you know for certain that God dwells and blesses His people. And so you join in the throng which sings:

Lift up your heads, O gates
Be lifted up, O ancient doors
That the King of glory may come in. (24:7)

As you call on all the barriers to fall in the face of your desire to be with God, you realize that this is the heart of faith, to seek God as your highest good which is expressed in verse six. This usually rendered in traditional English versions:

This is the generation of those who seek Him
Who seek the face of the God of Jacob. (24:6)

Even the ancient translators had difficulty understanding this verse because the above rendering is what is found in the Syriac and Septuagint versions. The original Hebrew is more closely rendered:

This is the generation of those who seek Him,
Who seek your face, Jacob.

The modern translation of Jewish Publication Society renders this verse:

This is the circle of those who turn to Him
Jacob, who seek Your presence.

The Jewish translators have clearly taken the pronouns as referring to God rather than to Jacob since they capitalized them. Recently, as I was reading this verse in a new French version, I was struck by how the translators took it in a slightly different way:

Telle est la race de ceux qui le cherchent
Qui recherchent ta face: c'est Jacob.
Such is the race of those who seek Him
Who seek Your face: it is Jacob.

Here the French translators have captured a meaning that accords with our point. The essence of being Jacob, of being the people of God, is seeking the face of God. In the New Covenant those who belong to the mystical body of Christ are the new Jacob, those who seek the presence of God in the face of Jesus Christ, "God has shone into our hearts for the enlightenment of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6).

Psalm 24 expresses the yearning of the child of God for the presence and blessing of God. Verse five contains the promise of blessing, "He will receive blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." Both are crucial: presence and blessing. But it is possible to seek God for His blessing without seeking Him for His presence. That is very dangerous. If we seek God for His blessing without His presence, we are using God for our own ends rather than for Himself. On the other hand, if we seek God for His presence, we cannot be deprived of His blessing because His presence in our lives is the greatest blessing we can receive.

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The order of meaning in the Psalm is important. The true pilgrim first seeks to come into the presence of God, or to use the language of the Psalm itself, “to ascend the mountain of the LORD and “to stand in His holy place” (24:3). Seeking God’s presence requires a purification of heart and life, a turning away from evil. In fact, it is the longing for God that turns our hearts away from evil. And the more we turn from evil, the more we receive God’s blessing and His righteousness. When the Psalmist speaks about “clean hands and a pure heart” (v 4), he is reminding us of the need for greater detachment so that we may embrace the good waiting for us in God. He is confident, as we should be, that God knows and wants the best for us. So, seeking God at once requires drawing near to His presence, and turning away from all that could keep us from God.

The seasoned Cistercian monk Michael Casey OCSO points out in *The Road to Eternal Life* that when we radically reorient our lives toward God in a new way, that is, when we experience and practice *metanoia* or conversion, we also experience some loss and some gain. We are called to give up attachments that hinder us from a deeper relationship with God. Such attachments are hard to let go of because we can become accustomed to them even if they bring us misery. The loss is painful. But the gain we obtain opens up our hearts to God in a previously unexperienced way and after a while the loss seems less. Conversion implies loss and gain but the gain is so much better than the loss.

What we gain over time is a greater desire for God. That desire then permeates all our thought and actions. As Fr. Casey says, “the work of God is to bring to actuality all the

potential inherent in our individual human nature. We are not so much called to do as to become. Our primary God-given task is to become the person whom God has called into being” (p. 55). The task of becoming what God wants is the essence of our being; it is the essence of being Jacob. We seek God not for His blessing but for Himself. In that way we also have the blessing of being His child.

Without much exaggeration we could say that the Catholic Church was founded by Christ to instill and increase our desire for God. And this is the essence of faith. The reason that considering the Church raises so many issues is that it strikes at the core of who we are. We are people made for God, people in whom God is instilling a desire for Himself. Pilgrims on the journey know that becoming Catholic is about more than changing affiliations. It is about increasing our desire for God and then having that desire filled.

So in this Year of Faith, let us begin our own personal search for the face of the Lord. That search begins by desiring God, something St. Augustine reminds us, that He has already put in our hearts, “You made us for Yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in You” (*fecisti nos ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te. Conf. 1:1*). Growing in faith means an increase in that desire for God. It means turning away from evil and even lesser goods to find complete fulfillment in the greater Good who is God. It means receiving the blessing of God’s greater, richer, and deeper presence in our souls. This is what we were made for; this is the essence of who we are. And Holy Mother Church desires this for us more than we desire it for ourselves. ■

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Member-Specific FEATURED RESOURCES

A Pocket Guide to St. Paul — Dr. Scott Hahn



St. Paul was a thinker, a pastor, a missionary, a revolutionary, and a martyr. By the end of his life – and largely thanks to his efforts – Christianity enjoyed a worldwide presence. Since then, he has emerged repeatedly down the millennia as a fresh voice, compelling us to envision God, and life, in a new way. We cannot understand Christianity unless we understand his message. We cannot understand ourselves as Christians unless we see ourselves in the light of his word

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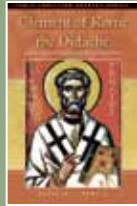
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Clement of Rome and the Didache: A New Translation and Theological Commentary — Dr. Kenneth Howell



Newly released! *The Letter to the Corinthians* by Clement of Rome and the *Didache* are two of the most important documents from the earliest days of Christianity. Here we stand at the very fount of Christian teaching outside of the New Testament. Both reveal how Christians were implementing and living out the faith taught by Jesus and passed on by the twelve apostles. This new translation and commentary gives an insightful perspective into the common faith, common morality, and structured liturgy of the early Church.

The Priesthood of All Believers

by Br. Rex Anthony Norris



In my ministry as spiritual companion and intercessor for men and women coming home to (or already home in) the Catholic Church, it is a great joy and privilege to help them prayerfully discern how they can best serve Christ and His Church.

Some, having spent years, sometimes decades, as members of the clergy in their respective Protestant denominations, struggle to be at home as members of the laity. Other folk, having been part of a small close-knit Protestant community now on Sunday feel lost in a large Catholic parish where they struggle to find a place to minister.

To people in each of these categories, I am quick to point that the Catholic Church takes seriously the call of the laity, the priesthood of all believers.

In the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity promulgated by Pope Paul VI are these words:

“In the Church there is a diversity of ministry but a oneness of mission. Christ conferred on the Apostles and their successors the duty of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling in His name and power. But the laity likewise share in the

priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own share in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world.

The activity of the laity is directed to the evangelization and sanctification of men and to the penetrating and perfecting of the temporal order through the spirit of the Gospel. In this way, their temporal activity openly bears witness to Christ and promotes the salvation of men.”

The call of every layperson is to evangelize and to sanctify the temporal order. There is no such thing as “just” a layman or “just” a laywoman in the Catholic Church. Every member of the Church is part of the “*priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ.*”

To guide and encourage people on the journey home, to help those who have arrived find their place in the Body of Christ is a great blessing to me. I thank God for the opportunity to do so. And I thank God for those of you who make this ministry possible by supporting the Coming Home Network with your prayers and your financial gifts.

Pax et Bonum! (Peace and All Good!) ■

Prayer List



Clergy

- For Teri, the wife of a minister, that the Lord grant her help to know how best to come home to the Catholic Church despite her husband's lack of interest.
- For Kristin, a former Lutheran youth minister, that the Holy Spirit would continue to deepen her relationship with Jesus and His Church as she prepares for the Easter sacraments.
- For Steven, a Non-denominational minister in Florida, that his interest in the teachings of the Catholic Faith would blossom into a desire to come into full-communication with the Church.
- For a Lutheran minister in Australia, that his desire for unity would bring him home to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- For a Pentecostal minister in New Jersey, that the Father would grant her the grace to return to the Catholic Faith of her youth.
- For Brian who faces numerous difficulties in conversion, that God grant him wisdom on how to move ahead.

- For those who seek union with the Catholic Church, but whose spouse does not share their faith journey, that they find marital harmony and continued commitment to their marriages.
- For Pete, who longs to enter the Church after many years.
- For Ryan and his wife, that their entry into the Church will be smooth and that Ryan will find employment to provide for his family.

Laity

- For all those journeying towards full communion in RCIA, that their last few weeks of preparation be a special time of growing closer to Christ.
- For Matt and Laura, that the Lord will lead them both towards the fullness of the faith.
- For Bruce, that his heart be softened and receptive to the work of the Holy Spirit in his life.
- For Betsy, that she find peace with her faith journey and continue pursuing her interest in the Catholic Church.

- For Agnes and her battle with cancer.
- For Marilyn and her husband, that the Holy Spirit guides them as they attend Mass and discern where God is leading them.
- For Jocelyn, that her attraction to Catholicism deepen and blossom through the influence of her Catholic friend.
- For Lynn, that, as she and several members of her family journey towards full communion with the Catholic Church, the Lord Jesus increase their joy.
- For Mary, that our Heavenly Father remove all obstacles preventing her from moving forward with her desire to be received into full communion with the Catholic Church.

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.

Please also pray for the Coming Home Network International's staff and Board of Directors.

President/Founder, Marcus Grodi (*former Presbyterian pastor*)

Chaplain, Fr. Ray Ryland (*former Anglican priest*)

Chief Operating Officer, Kevin Lowry (*former Presbyterian*)

Director of Pastoral Care and Resident Theologian, Dr. Kenneth Howell (*former Presbyterian pastor*)

Senior Advisor: History & Theology, Jim Anderson (*former Lutheran*)

Director of Studio/Media, Scott Scholten (*former Presbyterian*)

Financial Coordinator, Ann Moore

IT/Facilities Coordinator, Bill Bateson (*former Mormon*)

Publications and Laity Coordinator, Mary Clare Pieczynski

Communications Coordinator, JonMarc Grodi

Financial Assistant, Wendy Hart (*former United Methodist*)

Board of Directors: Marcus Grodi (*former Presbyterian pastor*), Fr. Ray Ryland (*former Anglican priest*), Dr. Charles Feicht (*revert from Evangelicalism*), Dr. Robert Geiger (*revert*), Bruce Sullivan (*former Church of Christ minister*)

...Journeys Home Continued...

... continued from page 4

I urge you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

...one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism; one God and father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:4-5)

Home At Last

I have truly longed for all fullness of truth, not for the best music or the loudest preaching. I long for the Church that history has shown is the true Church that Christ built over two-thousand years ago upon Peter the rock. Thank God for those Apostles and their teachings which came straight from the mouth of Christ, as well as those earliest preachers that came soon after, having been taught by them. How fortunate we are to have those historical writings to show that the early Christian worship services are what we recognize as our Catholic Mass today (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 1345). In my additional research of the early history of the Church, I have found a treasure beyond words!

After fourteen years, I have continued to grow in the Faith. I soon began teaching CCD in that same parish that my son attended as a child! I have also been fortunate enough in the past to have been an RCIA sponsor. What a joy that was to be able to stand with another person who was making the journey into the Church! As anyone who has been through

this knows, it has NOT been an easy journey. And yes, I too have lost friendships and a few close relationships with family members. But I have gained so much more!

We must be knowledgeable in the Faith, as well as in our early Church history. After that, we must pray! Pray and offer up all of our sufferings, uniting them with the sufferings of Christ on the cross (Col 1:24-27), that we may achieve that salvific understanding that is missing. We must offer our very all, so that others may experience that same grace to accept that fullness of truth, new as it may be.

God bless all who are considering this same journey! ■



SISSI BAKER currently works full-time for a corporation in data entry and also teaches fifth grade CCD. She has assisted in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults as a sponsor at St. Francis Xavier Parish in Moundsville, West Virginia.

BLOG

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

TAX LETTERS

If you need a record of your 2012 contributions for tax purposes, please contact Wendy Hart: wendy@chnetwork.org or 740-450-1175 ext. 100

EWTN'S THE JOURNEY HOME on television and radio, hosted by Marcus Grodi, president of CHNetwork



TELEVISION

Mondays at 8 PM ET — Encores: Tuesdays 1 AM ET, Fridays 1 PM ET
The Best of the Journey Home: Monday-Thursday 1 PM ET

RADIO

Mondays at 8:00 PM ET — Encores: Saturdays 7 AM ET, Sundays 1 AM ET
The Best of the Journey Home: Monday-Thursday 12 AM ET

March 4

Don Smith*
Former Non-denominational pastor

March 11

Frank Cronin*
Former Assembly of God

March 18

The Journey Home International

March 25

Shannon Kurtz*
Former Southern Baptist,
Evangelical Free

*Schedule is subject to change.

Correct (but not!) Answers

by Marcus Grodi



How can anyone know that the answers they are given are true and trustworthy?

A friend sent me a photocopy of a quiz given to a high school student. The following are a few of the questions with an unnamed student's very creative answers. What do you think of his answers?

1) In which battle did Napoleon die?

His last one!

2) Where was the Declaration of Independence signed?

On the bottom of the page!

3) What can you never eat for Breakfast?

LUNCH & DINNER!

4) How can a man go 8 days without sleeping?

Easy, sleep at night!

5) How can you lift an elephant with one hand?

You will NEVER find an elephant that has only one hand.

6) If you had 3 apples and 4 oranges in one hand and 3 oranges and 4 apples in the other hand, what would you have?

VERY LARGE HANDS!

7) If it took eight men 10 hours to build a brick wall, how long would it take four men to build it?

No time at all, the wall was already built!

The student's answers were correct, yet not the answers the teacher wanted, which was why the teacher gave the student an A+ for creativity, but an F for the grade.

Are the answers to life's questions given from the pulpit of the myriad of 21st century American churches accurate according to the intentions of God, or merely the creative, inspiring, well-phrased opinions of well-meaning and sincere, yet uninformed, self-appointed fellow-travelers in this confused and difficult world?

It's amazing to consider how quickly in the life of the early Church that the enemy tried to replace the true Gospel with false gospels; in other words, giving similar and convincing sounding, yet inaccurate answers to deep questions of life and salvation in Jesus Christ.

In one of his earliest letters, St. Paul wrote to the Galatian Christians, "I am astonished that you are so quickly desert-

ing him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel – not that there is another gospel, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, If any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed" (Gal 1:6-9).

He made the same warning in other letters. In his letter to the Romans, he warned: "I appeal to you, brethren, to take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by fair and flattering words they deceive the hearts of the simple-minded" (Rom 16:17-18).

In other Christian communities, false teachers were spreading rumors that the Lord's Second Coming had already occurred (see 2 Thess 2f) or that Christ had not been raised and there was no resurrection (see 1 Cor 15:12f) or that Jesus was not the Christ and did not appear in the flesh (see 1 John 4:1f). Many examples could be cited where false teachers were giving enticing answers to those with "itchy ears" who, instead of passing along the gospel message as proclaimed by Paul and the other Apostles, instead chose to "accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings" (2 Tim 4:3).

Paul warned the Thessalonian Christians to "stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter" (2 Thess 2:15). The confusion caused by the rise of false gospels spread so quickly that St. Paul, from prison, told the leaders of Ephesus that he hoped they "may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles" (Eph 4:13-14). How was this preventable? God had called men into leadership in His Church: "And His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph 4:11-13). Jesus said to His Apostles that their message would be trustworthy because the Holy Spirit, whom He would give them, would "teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26).

"Carried about by every wind of doctrine" is certainly a perceptive and prophetic description of the Christian landscape of 21st century America. From a clear Apostolic Deposit of Faith, delivered by Jesus to His hand-chosen Apostles and through them to their disciples and on and on (2 Tim 2:2), we have come to a time where there are thousands

of independent, unconnected Christian denominations and churches.

But yet, they each must give seemingly enticing enough answers to the questions of life to draw members, and inspire new leaders and pastors, and to grow and believe that they alone are the clearest expression of gospel truth.

In the midst of the rising confusion caused by counterfeit gospels, St. Paul reminded the Roman believers that “every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom 10:13). Then he followed up with some very significant questions: “But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?” (Rom 10:14).

Sounds like he had given the necessary answer, which is the answer running rampant in modern America: any person who believes God has called him to preach should just get out there and do it! For “the fields are ripe for harvest” (Jn 4:35).

But St. Paul wasn't done! In the midst of the growing confusion, he expressed an important criterion, how the

early Christians (and we) could know whether a particular preacher was authentic and therefore trustworthy: “And how can men preach unless they are sent?” (Rom 10:13).

A trustworthy preacher must be “sent,” the word that forms the basis for the title “Apostle,” one who has been sent. And in all the New Testament writings, carried on into and through the writings of the early Church Fathers, we see the importance of the trustworthy, God-appointed, hierarchical structure of the Church, established by Jesus Christ in His Apostles around the leadership of Simon Peter, for protecting and preserving and proclaiming the authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Apart from this, today, we have myriads of men and women claiming to have the authority to give trustworthy answers to life, based too often on nothing more than their own private interpretation of the Scriptures. Their answers in the end may get an A+ for creativity, but are they trustworthy enough to receive a passing grade for eternity? ■

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.

MARCUS GRODI'S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

March 2, 2013

Columbus Catholic Men's Conference

Lausche Building - Ohio State Expo Center - Columbus, Ohio
www.columbuscatholicmen.com

March 11, 2013

Annual Bishop Lucker Lecture 7pm

Diocese of New Ulm - 1400 6th St. N. New Ulm, MN 56073
www.dnu.org

CHNETWORK MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Coming Home Network International (CHNetwork) is to provide fellowship, encouragement, and support to non-Catholic clergy and laity who are examining the teachings of the Catholic Church.

To learn more about our work, please go to www.chnetwork.org

KEEP IN TOUCH!

The CHNetwork would like to keep in touch with you via e-mail. Please go to www.chnetwork.org/update to ensure the CHNetwork has your e-mail address on file. We especially ask non-Catholic clergy and converts to provide us with your e-mail to allow us to keep in contact.

NEWSLETTER COPIES

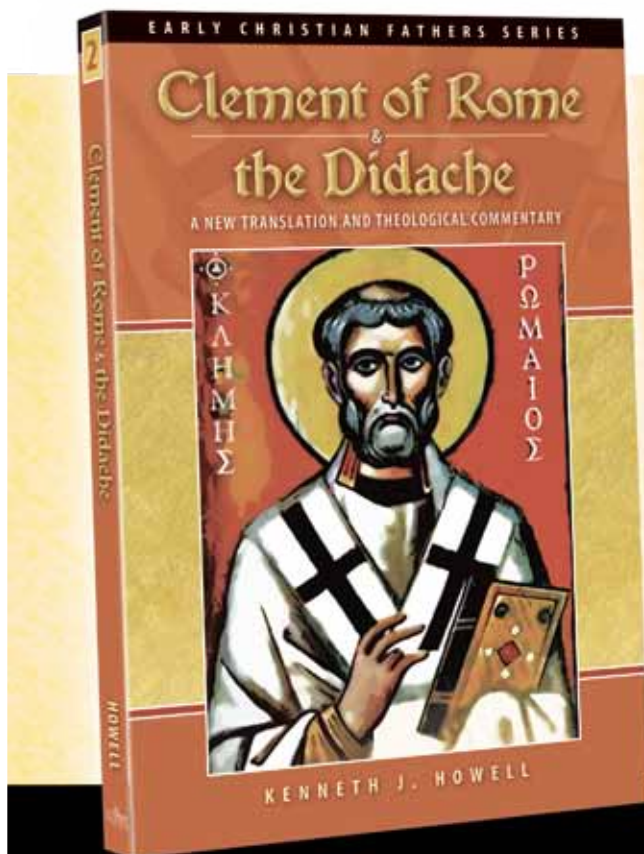
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The Coming Home Network International

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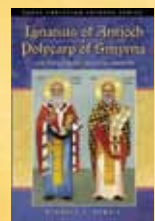
INTRODUCING Clement of Rome & the Didache

By Dr. Kenneth Howell

The *Letter to the Corinthians* by Clement of Rome and the *Didache* are two of the most important documents from the earliest days of Christianity. Here we stand at the very fount of Christian teaching outside the New Testament. Both reveal how Christians were implementing and living out the faith taught by Jesus and passed on by the twelve apostles.

It's hard to exaggerate the importance of these documents. They show us the Church is a eucharistic Church, hierarchical, priestly, sacrificial, liturgical, Catholic."

— Mike Aquilina



When read in conjunction with Ignatius of Antioch's seven letters, these works display a remarkable unity of faith and morality in the late first century.

www.ClementOfRome.com