



## March 2015 CHNewsletter

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# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



## Catholicism and the New Creation

by Tyler Blanski

“This is not Middle Earth, this is not Middle Earth,” I kept telling myself. But how else could I make sense of the towering cathedrals, the Tradition and the Scriptures, the real evil to fight and the real good to defend? It was the spring of 2014. My wife, Brittany, and I were about to be received into full communion with the Catholic Church, and we were just trying to take it all in.

We still are.

The Church is the Middle of the Earth, the beginning of the new creation. Chock-full of sinners saved by grace, she is a Kingdom outpost in the “already/not yet” of God’s mission of redemption. The mission is still happening. Christ has not abandoned us to a book and every man’s whimsy. He has promised the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth (Jn 16:13), not just some truth. The Church — the social continuity of the Incarnation — is still proclaiming “the faith delivered once for all” (Jude 1:3). She is still hanging pearls of Christmas lights against the black night.

Yet, Catholicism is “not of this world,” in the Pauline sense of the word. More out-of-this-world beauty can be found here than anywhere else. Peter’s See, a two-thousand-year succession dropping straight into our generation, like slow lightning. The martyrs, robed in otherworldly red. Mary, dressed in a beautiful blue and white. Free-roaming sheep graze these pastures, feeding on Word and Sacrament, as the shepherds of the Shepherd keep watch.

### A Journey

If you would have told me three years ago that today I would be a youth minister, I would have nervously chuckled and looked for the nearest exit. If you would have told me that I would also be a Catholic, I would have stiffened, as if by corset, and fainted Victorian-style.

I was a hipster and an Anglican living in Uptown, Minneapolis. My wife, Brittany, and I felt called to plant an Anglican church in Minneapolis, to form a liturgical community of praise and grace in the heart of the city. Brittany wanted to teach high school math, and I wanted to be an Anglo-Catholic, slum priest. Together, we were going to do nosebleed high liturgy with on-your-knees urban ministry.

Now we live in the boonies of Wisconsin. Brittany’s arms are full of our newborn son, Timothy Augustine, and I have a cinderblock office in a sprawling wing of a large Catholic parish. It’s still hard to say it without doing a double-take, but we’re a Catholic family in the suburbs.

*Continued on page 2* ➤

Journeys Home

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

The journey has been a long and winding one, full of late night watches and tears, exciting epiphanies, falling in love with Christ all over again, a holy renaissance in our marriage. The discernment of the last year, especially, has been unexpected; yet as we look back, we have been on the “road to Rome” a very long time. Our conversion was not like the blinding light that struck St. Paul on the road to Damascus, but something more like a treasure hunt.

### Searching for beauty

Growing up, I was able to dive into different ideas of what Christianity is all about. For my entire childhood, my family went to John Piper’s Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis. It was there my lasting humility before Scripture was first nurtured. I went to a small fundamentalist elementary school. But in the third grade, I came home crying and telling my parents that I hated being a Christian. Anne of Green Gables would put it this way: there was no scope for the imagination. So, by junior high, I was attending the local public school instead. Throughout my adolescence, I attended a mega-church in the suburbs, Wooddale Church. I lived and breathed Wooddale and even helped start the youth group’s worship team. My first sweethearts and closest friends were at the huge church. I eventually grew dreadlocks and worked at an organic foods co-op, and by the time I was seventeen — the year was 2001 — I was a “covenant participant” at Doug Pagitt’s Solomon’s Porch, a colorful emergent, postmodern community. Around this time, I started attending a unique high school dedicated to the fine arts, to study guitar for my junior and senior years. The school was

packed with lesbians and liberals, tattooed thespians and young rappers, and it was there that I started my modest music career (it was more of a hobby, really, but for years I loved writing folk songs, producing albums, and stomping my feet and blowing into my harmonica).

Although I beheld much of the behind-the-scenes wonders of the modern art scene, I didn’t learn much at the arts high school, and knew it. So in 2002 I ended up going to, of all places, Hillsdale College in southern Michigan, a school on the opposite end of the political, moral, and educational spectrum. No one seemed to care about fashion or entertainment; everyone was talking about books and ideas. I was shocked to discover in my first semester of a classical education that our Western culture is not something we recently made up. Whether we like it or not, we are the recipients of the Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian heritage. Also while at Hillsdale, I stumbled into the ugliest, tiniest, most ordinary church I had ever seen: Christ’s Church, a small Anglican church. It was there I first encountered Christendom’s beautifully weathered prayers, historic liturgy, and creeds. I witnessed a small band of Christians living together in love in a daily life rooted in Word and sacrament. My faith, I discovered, did not consist of only me, my Bible, and my hip church floating alone in outer space. I didn’t know it at the time, but that humble and homely little Anglican church launched me on a journey. When I moved back to Minneapolis to paint houses and write books, I became a member of Church of the Cross, another Anglican church, eager not even to retrieve a golden age, but to love God more and to know Him better.

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## FEATURED RESOURCES

### What is Truth? CD



Marcus Grodi shares his conversion story from being a Presbyterian pastor to becoming a Catholic in this inspiring talk.



### Journeys Home 2 — Edited by Marcus Grodi

*Journeys Home 2* gathers together more conversion stories of men and women, clergy and laity, who found themselves drawn to the Catholic Church. Most discovered and placed their faith in Jesus Christ in non-Catholic traditions of Christianity. Yet, in each case and in unique ways, the Holy Spirit opened their hearts to realize that much of what they had been taught about the Catholic Church was never true. They learned to listen to the voice of truth speaking through history, theology, philosophy, Sacred Tradition, Holy Scripture, and personal testimony. In time, their desire to follow Christ faithfully — to remain faithful to the truth He taught and to the Church He established through His Apostles — led them to consider the claims of the Catholic Church. In the end, they were all convinced that, whatever the cost, they must become Catholic. And so they did.



\$35

Receive a *What is Truth?* CD for a donation of \$35.

\$50

Receive *Journeys Home 2* for a donation of \$50.

\$75

Receive *What is Truth?* CD and *Journeys Home 2* for a donation of \$75.

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Obtain premiums by returning the envelope included with your newsletter, calling 740-450-1175, or by going online to [chnetwork.org/premiums](http://chnetwork.org/premiums)

Join in our **Evangelization Challenge** and order a DVD of Steve Ray’s talk *Peter, the Rock, the Keys, and the Chair* for just \$5. (USA addresses only)

# From Here to Eternity: Five Essentials of Conversion

## PART ONE: FROM NOW TO THEN

By Dr. Kenneth J. Howell

Becoming a Catholic can be a difficult row to hoe. The process of conversion is a complex one that involves almost every aspect of a person's life. When people experience internal struggles of faith, marital discord because of possible conversion, the alienation of family members, or the loss of employment, the inherent obstacles of conversion hit them right in the face.



Yet, those who come as adults to the Catholic Church from another background do not have proprietary rights on the title of convert. The word “convert” derives from the Latin verb *convertere* and literally means “to turn to be with” (*con* = with, *vertere* = turn). It expresses the same meaning as the Greek word *metanoia*, the word used in the New Testament regularly translated as “repentance.” Converts are people who have changed their life and have moved closer to God through faith and repentance. Conversion in the Catholic sense is a lifelong process of repentance (*metanoia*), faith, and good works that yields a profound internal change of heart, ultimately leading to final union with God. In the final analysis, becoming Catholic is not about changing churches or adopting a new religion; it is a movement from Here to Eternity.

Whether one is a cradle Catholic or from outside the visible confines of the Catholic Church, conversion involves a process of change in one's worldview that reaches to the core of one's being. It is not for the faint of heart. Hidden beneath the process of conversion lie other more subtle obstacles that can be easily missed by those drawn to the Church. In their enthusiasm for a new-found faith or expression of the faith, potential converts can sometimes miss what a deep conversion really consists of. In this and following months, I would like to point to five areas that are both stumbling blocks and stepping stones for converts to the Catholic Faith.

### From Now to Then

Many people who grow up in the West imbibe a philosophy of life that devalues history. It is not just that they do not know history — though historical ignorance in our school systems is horrifying — they often do not even think that the knowledge of history is valuable. Sometimes, the resistance to historical wisdom is submerged under misconceptions and distortions of history.

Becoming Catholic inevitably involves coming to appreciate and embrace the value of the history of the Church and the desire to be rooted in history. Of course, such a desire tends to be fostered in those who read the Bible because Scripture is dripping with a strong sense of the historical. The Old Testament constantly recounts the history of Israel so that the ancient people of God will see themselves as heirs of God's gifts and actors in God's ongoing project of salvation. The New Testament, too, repeatedly draws its readers back to the central events of salvation in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, His suffering, death, and resurrection. Recall how Paul reminds the Romans that their baptisms united them with the Christ in His death and resurrection (Rom 6:1ff) and how he reminds the Corinthians that the celebration of the Lord's Supper (Eucharist) is a proclamation of the historical death of Christ (1 Cor 11:26).

So it is not surprising that those who are immersed in the biblical history and who have cultivated a sense of history within themselves find Catholicism easier to embrace. By contrast, those who are stuck in the Now of the Present find it difficult to move out of themselves and

into the historical wisdom of the past.

Those who are willing to learn from biblical history often begin asking about the intervening time between the New Testament Church and their own day. They find themselves asking questions about the early centuries of Christian worship, piety, and doctrine which naturally leads to exploring the faith of the early Church Fathers. Contact with the writings of the Church Fathers raises the question of continuity and discontinuity. Which church, if any, stands in the closest relation to the faith of earlier generations? Some churches seem cut off from the past while others are seeking to be in union with the past. Nowhere is this difference more evident than in those mainline Protestant churches which have jettisoned cardinal doctrines and morals of past generations in favor of the current secular moral values. The abandonment of traditional Christian positions has driven historic believers to the

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“Conversion in the Catholic sense is a lifelong process of repentance, faith, and good works that yields a profound internal change of heart, ultimately leading to final union with God... it is a movement from Here to Eternity.”



margins. These believers, perceiving themselves on the outside of their own churches, have regularly asked where one might find a church faithful to the Christian past.

The desire to be in communion with the generations of Christians that have gone before is more than nostalgia. Continuity with the past is ultimately about *participation* in God's ongoing salvation of the human race. Those believers who become historically sensitized discover the centrality of the Church Fathers as a natural way to extend the biblical truths of salvation history. As salvation history in the Bible is more than historical fact, so that same biblical story is being lived out in the present day because the original events contain an eternal significance and meaning. Abraham's faith is as potent today as when he first heard God's promise. Peter's faith (cf. Matt 16:16-17) is still as relevant now as he when uttered that first profession of faith. Mary's fiat ("Let it be done to me according to your word" Lk 1:38) resounds down to our time as something worthy of escaping the lips of any believer. Paul's assurance that the Church is built on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20) reverberates still today as an indispensable bulwark of faith. To the historically aware believer, the past is a way of participating in God's plan of salvation.

### Swimming in or Jumping over the Stream?

Cardinal John Henry Newman, perhaps the most prominent English convert in the nineteenth century, employed the metaphor of a stream to describe the issue of history. Should one attempt to live in the stream of tradition flowing down through history from the original Church to our day? Or, should one attempt to jump over the stream of tradition intervening between early Christianity and reestablish a supposedly pristine Christianity based on one's own perceptions of the New Testament? The history of Protestantism is chock full of attempts to circumvent intervening Christian history in favor of reestablishing an imagined Church.

One of the most significant in the United States was the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons). It was predicated on the belief that the Church had gone off the rails at the Council of Nicaea by its affirmation of the Trinity. Though less radical and severe, thousands of other such movements sprang up in the history of Protestantism with the same desire to leap over established church traditions and to get back to "the New Testament church." The Restoration Movement of the nineteenth century, sometimes called the Stone-Campbell movement after its most prominent founders, reacted against what its founders perceived as the deadness of mainline Protestant churches with their minimal celebration of the sacraments. One of its hallmarks was the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper in imitation of the churches of the New Testament. Of course, the Catholic Church had been celebrating the Lord's Supper (Eucharist) weekly for nineteen hundred years but this fact was either unknown to the founders of the Restoration movement or dismissed as irrelevant. These leaders rightly saw the centrality of the Eucharist in the worship of the early Church and its loss in the Protestantism of their day. What the Stone-Campbell movement missed, however, was that their own purely symbol-



ist views of Baptism and the Lord's Supper were not the views of the early Church.

The American religious soil may have been fertile ground for upstart religious movements but the water that nourished those innovative attempts flowed steadily from the Reformation itself. The original Reformers (Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Cramner etc.) desired to be truly catholic — I think because they had grown up in a Catholic culture — but it did not take their followers long to splinter. By the mid-seventeenth century, Protestantism had witnessed hundreds of small sects of competing churches in England alone.

By contrast, the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century was involved in a reformation and restoration project of its own. Even at the time of the Lutheran and Calvinist reformations there were many *within* the Church who called and worked for reform. Desiderius Erasmus, Sts. Charles Borromeo, Robert Bellarmine, and Philip Neri all in their own way sought reforms within the Church. All these attempts and many more took a path very different from the Protestant Reformers. Their projects were one of realigning church structures according to their true inner meaning, a meaning that could be found in the previous history of the Church. Instead of jumping over the stream of tradition, they plumbed the depths of those traditions to place themselves and the Church squarely in the stream of the Church's best traditions. Their project was not one of jettisoning Tradition but of *understanding* it and *developing* it to live in continuity with those who had founded the Church (i.e. the Apostles) and with those who in the past had lived in conformity with those founders.

Today, the choice ultimately becomes whether to live the Christian life in continuity with the foundations of Truth or to live as if the history of the Church is irrelevant. In the next installment we will explore how such a choice plays into the issue of private judgment versus corporate Truth. ■

## Introducing Journeys Home 2

Marcus Grodi and the CHNetwork staff are delighted to introduce a brand-new book, *Journeys Home 2*, just published by CHResources. If you have already read *Journeys Home* you will want to be sure to obtain a copy of this new resource that tells even more journeys of men and women who followed God's call to become Catholic. We hope *Journeys Home 2* will be an encouragement to Catholics to gain a greater appreciation for the great gift of our Catholic Church and a help to those who are on their own journey and considering the claims of the Catholic Faith.

### From the Introduction by Marcus Grodi

"This second volume of *Journeys Home* gathers together more conversion stories that have appeared in the monthly *CHNewsletter*. Most of these men and women discovered Jesus Christ in some non-Catholic tradition of Christianity, and remain eternally grateful to the many faithful Protestant teachers, friends, and family who helped them know Christ and grow in the Christian faith. Yet in each case and in unique ways, the Holy Spirit opened their hearts to realize that much of what they had been taught about the Catholic Church was never true. They learned to listen to the voice of truth speaking through history, theology, philosophy, Sacred Tradition, Holy Scripture, and personal testimony. In time, their desire to follow Christ faithfully — to remain faithful to the truth He taught and to the Church He established through His Apostles — led them to consider the claims of the Catholic Church.

Having made this journey myself, I realize that many non-Catholic Christian readers may feel skeptical or leery of reading on, convinced that anyone open to the Catholic Church must have been deceived by the prince of lies himself! However, resisting the temptation to jump into long pages of apologetic arguments, let me at least assure you that this is not the case. These stories are told by humble souls who love Jesus Christ, who desire to obey Him fully, and who have denounced the devil and his horde. They have sought to follow the teachings of Scripture, as well as the teachings of the early Church Fathers and the ecumenical councils.

In doing so, they were startled to discover the truth of the Catholic Church and its teachings. In the process, they also discovered that throughout its history, the Church has included not only thousands of saints but also thousands of sinners, lay and clergy. Too often these

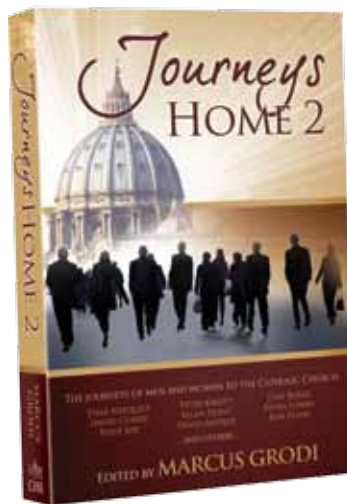
real but less-than-perfect followers of Jesus dirtied the fair name of the Catholic Church and provided fodder for the many misunderstandings and exaggerations that have led to so many schisms.

Since 1993, the Coming Home Network International (CHNetwork) has been helping non-Catholic Christians, clergy and laity, discover the beauty and truth of the Catholic faith. Particularly for clergy, this discernment process can require great sacrifice, including sometimes the loss of family, friends, and vocation. We're not here to "push, pull, or prod" anyone toward or into the Church; rather to stand beside them as fellow Christians to share what we have discovered by the grace of God. The CHNetwork provides inquirers and their families with resources, fellowship, and encouragement on the journey and helps them become acclimated to what can often seem the strange, new world of the Catholic Church.

I encourage you to read the following stories with a prayerful and charitable heart. The decision of a Protestant minister to resign from his pastorate and enter the Catholic Church affects more than himself. It affects his family

and particularly his spouse and their marriage. In many cases, spouses do not share the same convictions, and marriages are greatly tested. Though the journeys of laity may not result in the loss of vocation or employment, the emotional, intellectual, and relational impacts can be equally as challenging.

Now as you begin, please listen with both your mind and heart, for I believe that you will hear the whisper, and see the work, of the Spirit." ■



**GO TO PAGE 2** to order this powerful book. You may also purchase *Journeys Home 2* by calling the Coming Home Network International at 740-450-1175 or ordering online at [www.chresources.com](http://www.chresources.com)



# The Intercession of the Saints

By Br. Rex Anthony Norris | LittlePortionHermitage.org



“Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness. . . . They do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they acquired on earth through the one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus. . . . So by their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 956).

As I prepared to enter into full communion with the Church founded by Jesus Christ I was encouraged to study the lives of the saints and to pick a saint of my liking to be my heavenly intercessor. I chose St. David of Wales, Bishop, Confessor and Patron of the country of Wales, whose life the Church commemorates on March 1.

I picked St. David not simply because a visit to his earthly homeland is on my “bucket list” but because he was a monastic, an itinerate preacher of sorts who is said to have traveled widely throughout Wales and beyond establishing or

re-establishing monastic communities. Any saint dedicated to promoting monastic life in the Church is a friend of mine. St. David became and remains one of my chief heavenly intercessors, second only to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

If you have not yet chosen your own heavenly intercessor, I encourage you to do so. Pick a man or woman whom the Church has declared a saint worthy of veneration. Someone whose Christian walk you admire. Someone whose manner of love for Christ and neighbor speaks to you in a particularly powerful way. Someone about whom you can say, with tongue firmly in cheek perhaps, “when I grow up I want to be like saint (*fill in the blank*).”

Once you’ve picked your saintly intercessor, invoke his or her prayers often. Just as we ask a friend living on earth to pray for us or our loved ones or a particular need, we can and ought to ask our friends in heaven to pray with and for us because as the funeral liturgy of the Church so beautifully remind us, in death *life is changed, not ended*. ■

## MARCUS GRODI’S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS



**March 14, 2015**

Toledo Men's Conference  
SeaGate Convention Centre - Toledo, Ohio  
toledomensconference.com

## STAY CONNECTED BY EMAIL!



We have a number of email lists that may be helpful and spiritually edifying to you: Conversion Story Email Club, The Journey Home Program, Deep in Scripture Radio, Deep in History Videos, and more.

Visit [www.CHNetwork.org/email](http://www.CHNetwork.org/email) to customize your email subscription and stay connected with your favorite CHNetwork content.

## 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, Sundays 5 PM ET  
*The Best of the Journey Home*: Monday-Thursday 12 AM ET

**March 2**

Dr. Wesley Vincent\*  
Former Fundamentalist/  
Evangelical

**March 9**

John Collier\*  
Former Episcopalian

**March 16**

Brandon Barker\*  
Former Southern Baptist/  
Evangelical

**March 23**

Janet Schmittgen\*  
Revert

**March 30**

Jay Richards\*  
Former Presbyterian

\*Schedule is subject to change.

# Evangelization Challenge Continued

By JonMarc Grodi

This month we are excited to again offer a DVD of Steve Ray's talk *Peter, the Rock, the Keys, and the Chair* as our Evangelization Challenge. Steve Ray does an amazing job



of bringing out all the rich significance of Christ's words, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church" and interweaves and elucidates the sig-

nificance of things such as Caesarea Philippi, the gates of the netherworld, the rock, the keys, and Peter's name.

This DVD is a terrific resource to give away to family and friends. As before, we are only asking for a small donation of \$5 to cover the shipping/handling. To get the DVD, use the return envelope or visit [CHNetwork.org/premiums](http://CHNetwork.org/premiums).

Please contact me at [jmgrodi@chnetwork.org](mailto:jmgrodi@chnetwork.org) or fill out the response form at [chnetwork.org/members](http://chnetwork.org/members) and let us know about your experience giving away this resource! ■

## TAX LETTERS



If you need a record of your 2014 contributions for tax purposes, please contact Wendy Hart.

[wendy@chnetwork.org](mailto:wendy@chnetwork.org) or  
740-450-1175 ext 100

## DEEP IN SCRIPTURE



Listen to Marcus Grodi and Dr. Kenneth Howell on the Deep in Scripture radio program on Saturdays at 11:00am ET and Sundays at 2:00pm ET on EWTN Radio Plus.

Please visit our website [www.deepinscripture.com](http://www.deepinscripture.com) for live feed, archived programs, and further information.

## NEWSLETTER DONATION

The CHNewsletter is our primary means of outreach and communication. We request a yearly tax-deductible gift in the amount of \$35 or more to continue receiving the newsletter and remain a supporting member of the CHNetwork.

## NEWSLETTER COPIES



CHNetwork encourages members to make copies of the newsletter and distribute to family and friend. We do ask that copies of the newsletter not be sold. Unless otherwise indicated, the contents of this newsletter are Copyright © 2015 by the Coming Home Network International. All rights reserved.

## SUPPORT CHNETWORK

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/](http://chnetwork.org/donate/) or complete this form and mail to:

### CHNetwork

Attention: Ann Moore  
PO Box 8290  
Zanesville, OH 43702

Please contact Ann at 740-450-1175 or [ann@chnetwork.org](mailto:ann@chnetwork.org) if you have any questions or concerns.

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Visit [www.chresources.com](http://www.chresources.com)  
or call 740-450-1175 for these and other great resources to learn more about the Catholic Faith.

# Prayer List



## Clergy

- For David, a missionary in Alabama, that the Lord Jesus would guide him to know his vocation as he seeks to enter the Catholic Church.
- For a former Bible Church seminarian in New Hampshire, as he journeys home to the Catholic Church of his youth.
- For Margie, a Presbyterian lay minister, that the Holy Spirit would guide her as she moves from being Catholic in her heart to full-communion with the Catholic Church.
- For Steve, a Non-denominational minister, as he comes to believe the whole of Catholic doctrine on the basis of the authority given to Peter and the Apostles.
- For a Bible Church pastor in Arkansas, that the Holy Spirit would nudge him towards the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
- For a former Southern Baptist minister in the South, that as he learns more of the truth about the Catholic Faith God would give him a hunger for the fullness of the Truth in His Church.

- For the pastor of a Methodist church in Mississippi, that the Lord would clear away all the obstacles blocking his path to the Catholic Church.
- For a Christian Reformed minister in Michigan, that God would soften his wife's heart toward the Catholic Church so that he can move forward with his desire to become a Catholic.

## Laitiy

- For a convert in Canada, that her husband's heart be opened to the Catholic Faith.
- For Ruth and her husband as they witness to their family about the beauty of the Catholic Faith.
- For David who feels drawn towards the Catholic Church on account of his desire for unity among Christians.
- For Bruce as he reads about the Catholic Faith and watches the Journey Home, that the Holy Spirit guide him closer to the Church.
- For Abigail who is growing deeper in her faith and knowledge of the Church, that she have peace about the direction of her journey.

- For John, who doesn't feel welcomed at his parish and is no longer attending Mass.
- For Dick and his wife as they grow deeper in their life as Catholics and share their faith at their parish.
- For Matthew, who would like to learn more about Catholicism after watching Journey Home programs.
- For Jennifer, as she perseveres with her desire to be Catholic despite numerous setbacks and discouragements.
- For Peter, as he decides whether to pursue his interest in Catholicism.
- For Amanda, that she will find the help and spiritual guidance she needs.
- For a man who is becoming more steeped in Catholic devotions but is confused with the claims of "traditionalist" Catholics.
- For a Baptist who is struggling with Marian doctrines.

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](mailto: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)  
**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 Piecynski

**Manager of Outreach,** JonMarc Grodi  
**Financial Assistant,** Wendy Hart  
(former United Methodist)

**Board of Directors:** Marcus Grodi (President), Msgr. Frank Lane (Chaplain), Dr. Robert Geiger (Vice President), Dr. Charles Feicht (Secretary), Bruce Sullivan (Treasurer), Dr. Marian Schuda (Director), Donald Brey (Director)



► “Journeys Home” continued from page 2

## My wife’s conversion

My wife Brittany’s journey of coming to faith was not one that centers around a grand “ah-hah” moment — even though she often wished it would happen that way. Instead, it was more like a series of little “ah-hah”s or thresholds, that led her toward the Lord.

Brittany was baptized as an infant, but after her Catholic father passed away a few months later, her mother had a hard time believing in God. Her mother remarried a few years later and they raised her in a decidedly secular household that was nonetheless rooted in values of love, forgiveness, loyalty, and humbleness. In middle school, she went to a church camp with a friend for three summers and every year felt drawn to this message of Jesus Christ, but never had the support or chutzpah to make the faith a part of her life.

In high school, Brittany started getting into philosophy and politics. In those impressionable years she thought she was

“learning” about Christianity...but all of her information was coming from the newspapers and her Marx reader. She remembers being dumbfounded that so many people could fall for what she saw to be a bastion of pigheadedness and hypocrisy.

Looking back, she can’t believe she thought that mass foolishness was more plausible than her own utter ignorance about the teachings of Christianity. But she did, and in 2007 when she began studies at the University of Minnesota and befriended two kind, intelligent, and grounded students, she was shocked to find out that they were Christians. Their strong faith intrigued her, and even though she kept going to Atheist Club, she couldn’t help but finish her freshman year of college thinking that the most important thing she had learned that year was that she could trust and respect Christians. Their patient example of what it’s like to live in Christ called her to push past the mediated representations she had uncritically accepted, and to start asking questions about their God.

It was not an easy process. Over and over again, she found herself confronted with what seemed to be impassible barriers — Why would God allow evil? What about people who’ve never heard of Jesus; what happens to them? What about science and evolution? — at many points, she declared that it simply wouldn’t work; she would never be able to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. But she kept coming back, answering her old questions and coming up with new ones. A few patient friends guided her through this tumultuous time, and she thanks God that He kept them in her life when despair began to set in.

“My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God” (Prov 2:1-5). This passage spoke to one of the greatest roadblocks Brittany encountered. At one point, in 2009, she got stuck in believing there to be a dichotomy between faith and knowledge. She threw up her hands and said, “I cannot bring myself to sacrifice my powers of intellect for a leap of faith!” She thought, “I don’t know how to *believe* in something; all I’ve ever been able to do is understand.”

Brittany began reading Dallas Willard and realized how profoundly un-Christian and in-human faith without knowledge would be. If we didn’t understand the things we believed in, pastors would turn into motivators, manipulating us through tricks of charisma and rhetoric. Since God calls us to know Him, He can handle our doubts. Once she started viewing her doubts as exciting points of departure leading toward deeper communion with God, it was only a matter of time until she came to find that the Christian worldview, quite frankly, makes more sense than any other worldview she had ever known — especially as it contrasts to the dominant academic narratives of fragmentation, displacement, and nihilism.

St. Matthew writes that the kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and kneaded until it

worked all through the dough. Brittany saw that her coming to faith has been primarily concerned with the faculty of mind, but God’s yeast had already begun to spread to her heart and hands, and she knew that He would be kneading her soul, as she kneads His word, for the rest of her days.

Brittany and I started dating in the late summer of 2010. I was writing *When Donkeys Talk: A Quest to Rediscover the Mystery and Wonder of Christianity* (Zondervan, 2013) and feeling called to become an Anglican priest. After Brittany graduated from the University of Minnesota in 2011, she moved to rural Mississippi to teach high school math, and I moved to Wisconsin to attend Nashotah House Theological Seminary to study. One year later, we were married. Brittany worked at a military boarding school while I parsed my way through Greek and Hebrew. We cooked dinners and went for long walks. And as the Sacrament of Marriage worked on us, we began to feel that something was missing.

Up until that point, we had been accidentally Anglican. We stumbled into the denomination unintentionally, mostly because it had good taste, and then found ourselves desperate to

“...it was only a matter of time until she came to find that the Christian worldview, quite frankly, makes more sense than any other worldview...”

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

defend it. I felt called to the priesthood, but I did not know what the priesthood was. As I began my seminary education, I also began to discover the Scriptures and the history of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church — not as a slow corruption of a once pristine Faith, but as the living organism of Christ. It was not long before we found ourselves in front of the Catholic Church, asking ourselves this simple question: *where are we?*

Since our wedding day, Brittany and I have been on a long journey of repentance, discovering and receiving one Catholic truth after another — the Blessed Virgin Mary, transubstantiation, purgatory, the priesthood, the papacy, conjugal openness to life, even hell. We stopped using birth control. We met with a priest. We prayed. We read every Catholic book we could get our hands on, especially the Bible. We read Karl Keating and Scott Hahn and Stephen Ray, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Vladimir Soloviev, and the *Catechism*.

Brittany believed before I did. She just knew — the way you just know that the sky is high and that trees are beautiful and that apples will fall — that Christ established the Church on Peter and endowed her in Christ with every spiritual blessing (Matt 16:17-19; Eph 1:3). And her faith made her flower. I was close behind.

I was simmering, just simmering, but Gerard Manley Hopkins brought me to a boil. Then G.K. Chesterton and Cardinal John Henry Newman made me sing like a teakettle. The saints, the Scriptures, the Mass, the hope of glory...I was more than wooed: God had trampled me. It was not long before deep in my heart I knew the truth of the Catholic Church, nothing less than the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The only trouble was, I had just spent the last half-decade pursuing the Anglican priesthood. I wanted to plant an Anglican church in Minneapolis. Letting go of Holy Orders was the hardest thing I've ever done, but I knew that Christ's Church came before my personal sense of calling. So, in a moment of frightening vulnerability, Brittany and I offered up the vision of church planting and priesthood to God.

"Lord," we prayed, "where would you have us go?"

### A Wake Up Call

"I don't buy it," my seminary friend said.

"What don't you buy?" I asked.

"The papacy!" he said.

"It's not for sale," I said.

For us, conversion to Catholicism was the painful, beautiful process of leaving the religion of God-on-my-terms, and entering the religion God-on-God's-terms. Contrary to the intellectual simony so prevalent in Protestantism, we were beginning to see that truth is not determined by whether or not we buy it.

It is not fun for me to point out the unbiblical and theological problems of Anglicanism, because I respect so many kind and loving Anglicans. For my spiritual formation, for their friendship and love, I owe them a debt of gratitude; but seminary was a wake up call.

I was pursuing Holy Orders, interning at an urban church-plant, participating in a prison ministry, and finishing my canonical exams, all the while realizing that mine would be an ordination into *disorder*. The vague, piecemeal, "conciliar" ecclesiology of Anglicanism — that incoherent club of English diaspora — cannot identify Christ's will about even the most basic policies of the Kingdom: birth control, divorce and "re-marriage," women and the priesthood, homosexuality, the number and nature of sacraments, purgatory, justification, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the communion of saints, how many councils were ecumenical, how many were not. It cannot even convene an ecumenical council.

The creeping separateness and theological inconsistencies in Protestantism left us lonely and confused. With a baby on the way, we had to decide sooner rather than later: were we called to Lone Ranger it in parched pastures, or were we called to be received into the family of God, the living Body and Bride of Christ, the Catholic Church? Into what world would we baptize our son?

Surrendering my passion to be a priest was the hardest thing I have ever done. In the end, though, it was not a question of personal vocation, or "Rome vs. Anglicanism," or "the grass is greener on the other side," but of love and obedience. We fell in love with the Church Christ Himself established. We knew we were called to embrace the fullness.

We do not want to be make-it-up-as-we-go kind of people — at least not when God's in the mix. God does not reveal contradictory truth. The Bible is not enough. And Tradition is not a grab-bag to justify whatever interpretation of Scripture you're buyin'.

### A Vision Glorious

The Trinity is reigning. God has established His Kingdom, what He calls "my Church" (Matt 16:18). Jesus is the new King David (Lk 1:32) ruling the nations (Rev 12:5) as "the King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev 19:16). As the new messianic King, He has a Queen, Mary, the Mother of the Church, the Queen of Heaven. As the new King, He treats His mother with at least as much honor as Solomon and all the other Davidic kings treated their mothers (1 Kings 2:19-20; Rev 12:1). The Church's suffering is indeed light and momentary compared to what is foreseen in this eschatological icon, Mary, this "eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor 4:17).

As the new King David, Jesus instituted, not only a cabinet of twelve ministers (1 Kings 4:7), the Twelve Apostles (Matt 10:2-4), but also a Prime Minister (Is 22:15-25), St. Peter (Matt 16:15-19). As King, Christ promised to be with us "to the end" (Matt 28:20). Jesus ascended into the heavens and left His apostolic Church to finish the mission because He is bringing glory to His Father in heaven — and He wants us, empowered with the Holy Spirit, to join Him.

So the Church is not invisible and private, but visible and public, the family of God on earth left to continue Christ's vis-

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

ible and public ministry. She has a visible and public unity as the Holy Spirit leads her into all truth (Jn 16:13). And this is why, quoting Isaiah 22, Jesus names Simon “Rock,” and gives him the keys to the Kingdom in Matthew 16. From here — point zero — all distances of Christ’s Church are measured. Centrifugal spokes of light. A city on a hill. The papacy centers the Church; it is its beating heart. The Office is a compass, a way to know where you are. It is also, as Christ said, a rock, a word with theological implications. *Surrender to God’s permanence and immutability*, it whispers. *Truth does not change with the time of day and season. It does not sway with the jetsam and flotsam of fashion. Truth stays the same.*

G.K. Chesterton says: “How much happier you would be, how much more of you there would be, if the hammer of a higher God could smash your small cosmos.”

In the winter of 2013-2014, I withdrew from my postulancy for the priesthood. We enrolled in RCIA. We prayed with priests and Catholic friends. We started getting involved at our local parish. We spent hours before the Blessed Sacrament. We had never been so alone. Yet, Christ and His Church had never been so close.

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It was a 60-degree spring day and the world was green and decorated everywhere with sunlight when we were received into the Church. Brittany and I were taking turns holding our newborn son, Timothy, and so grateful to at last participate in the sacrifice of the Mass. A month later, our son was baptized. A month after that, I began my new job as a youth minister in a Catholic parish. The hammer of a higher God had fallen.

We were once runaways. We were once pickers and choosers. But, by God’s grace, we were invited to come home. We are no longer separated brethren. The only appropriate response to a Christianity where we don’t get to pick and choose which parts we like and which parts we don’t like is: “Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief!” The only appropriate response is falling to our knees in gratitude and praise of the most adorable Trinity. God has forgiven even us, lowly but penitent sinners.

### A Holy Ambition

The road has been a stepping out “not knowing whither,” but all along the way God has graciously and unexpectedly opened doors for us. We are so excited to begin youth ministry! Our prayer is that we would be able to shepherd these young adults into a deeper devotion to our Lord and His Church and to help them cultivate a Kingdom love that would last a lifetime. May our family be a platform for righteousness, a table of hospitality, a retreat for prayer, and a trumpet of praise! We are so grateful for the beautiful community at our new parish, so grateful to be a part of this mission.

What is the mission? To borrow a phrase from the Catholic convert Gerard Manley Hopkins, Christ created the Church to give God “praise, reverence, and service; to give Him glory.” The goal is glory: the family of God enjoying and sharing the glory of God. The apostolic succession is a living sign of Christ’s

unending mediation as “the one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ” (1 Tim 2:5). By grace, the Church is Christ’s mystical Body; by love she is His glorious Bride. She is “his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way” (Eph 1:23). She is “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (1 Pet 2:9).

The Catholic Church is “the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15) because she is led by the Holy Spirit “into all truth” (Jn 16:13). She is built by Christ on the “rock” that is Peter (Matt 16:17-19), built as a City with “twelve foundations, and on them the names of the twelve apostles” (Rev 21:14), “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (Eph 2:20), built on the foundation of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:11). The Catholic Church is “built as a city that is at unity with itself” (Ps 122:2), because the goal is the supreme exultation of the most adorable Trinity.

The mission is salvation — not because we’re kind-of-a-big-deal, but because God is a big deal. As Catholics, we are finishing the mission. God is bringing glory to Himself through His Church, and we are called to be a part of it.

Catholicism is the kind of place that makes you realize the triune God is so much bigger than you can ever imagine. At first, it looks like the wind blew the tide backward. But soon you realize it’s just the angle of the light — the light of Christ who is “the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb 13:8). The Good Shepherd left His sheepfold to find us and to bring us back, fat and happy, feasting on Word and Sacrament.

I repeat to myself: “This is not Middle Earth, this is not Middle Earth.” But how else can I make sense of what St. Cyprian called “the bright army of the soldiers of Christ,” or what St. Ambrose called “God’s Kingdom, which is the Church”? The mitred bishops in apostolic succession, a bright ribbon coursing through time? The Tradition and the Scriptures? Real evil to fight and the real good — like, *really* good — to defend? And still the spires slash toward the clouds, every steeple crowned with the contradiction and stumbling block of the ages — the cross.

Humbled, challenged, and grateful, Brittany and I are just trying to take it all in. ■



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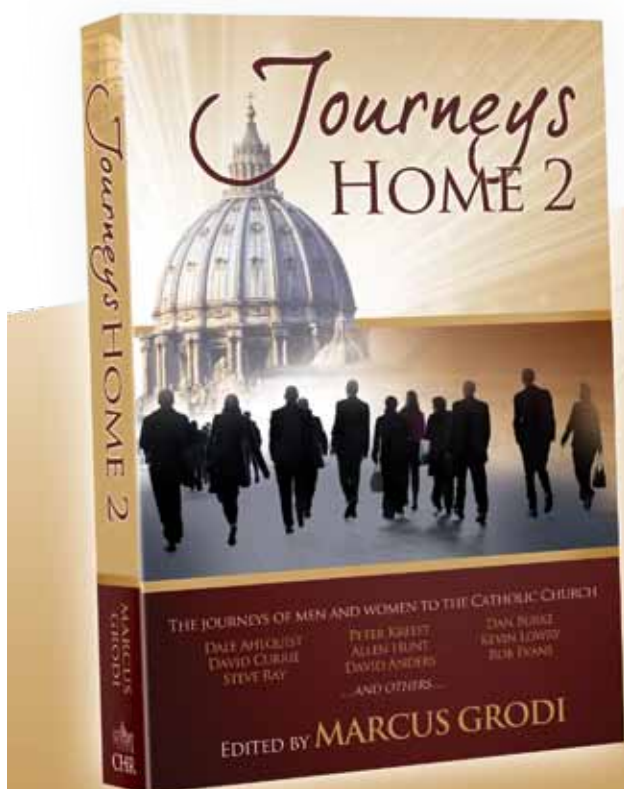


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## *Journeys* HOME 2

Marcus Grodi and the CHNetwork staff are delighted to introduce a brand-new book, *Journeys Home 2*, just published by CHResources. If you have already read *Journeys Home* you will want to be sure to obtain a copy of this new resource that tells even more journeys of men and women who followed God's call to become Catholic.