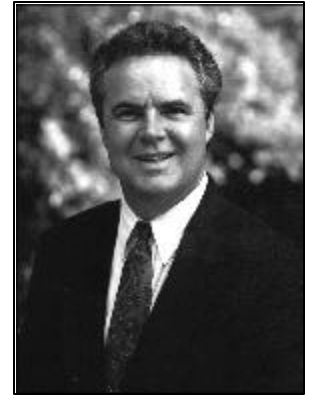




*The Coming Home Network International*  
P.O. Box 4100  
Steubenville, OH 43952



## Membership Letter - May 2000

### **Convener's Corner** by Marcus Grodi

#### **Sock Drawers and Spiritual Entropy**

There are many laws that shape and guide our spiritual lives. Some are mere statements of reality or truth, while others are instructions that require our willful initiative. An example of the first type is found in the First Epistle of John:

*God is light and in Him is no darkness at all...If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth (1 Jn 1.5-6).*

This is a spiritual reality that we must accept as true and then heed.

An example of the second type is the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." This is Jesus teaches we ought to live if we expect to reap the benefits of God's blessings.

The Scriptures are replete with both types. One of the most significant reasons we are to be ever vigilant in reading and meditating on Scripture is so that we can know and live according to these spiritual laws. As the Apostle John reminds us:

*Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he has promised us, eternal life (1 Jn 2.24-25).*

But there is one spiritual law—that of the first type, in other words, which is a reality that shapes all of our lives—which we can best learn from the physical sciences. Technically called the Second Law of Thermodynamics, or the Law of Entropy, it is stated thusly:

***The entropy of a closed system shall never decrease, and shall increase whenever possible.***

At first glance you may wonder what this has to do with your walk with Christ, but I can guarantee you that it has everything to do with it.

**Entropy** is most commonly described as a measure of the "disorder" in a system—lots of disorder means high entropy, while lots of order means low entropy. A **closed system** describes any system, such as our universe, to and from which no energy (especially heat) and

matter (atoms and molecules, etc.) can naturally flow. For entropy to decrease within a closed system (and order to increase) energy must be added from an exterior source. Therefore, the reason that order came to our disordered universe (Genesis 1) was because God instilled this order, and the order He established in this closed system now runs by this law He initiated—unless there is intervention, either supernaturally or by us operating in His image.

One illustration of how this law works can be seen by filling a box half full of black marbles, half with white marbles, and then shaking the box. The marbles will become mixed—and further shaking will never separate the marbles back into groupings of black and white. This is why a tablespoon of black pepper will become evenly distributed in a recipe containing five-cups of flour: it will distribute randomly. In both cases, additional energy or effort is needed from outside the system to bring order back to the marbles or to the original ingredients of the recipe.

The effects of this law can be seen all around us in nature, at all levels of creation. If you let ten acres of finely tilled farmland go for ten years without supplying any efforts to



manage or control the plant growth, you will end up with a mess—actually the beginnings of a forest will emerge. There are of course other biological laws at work so that many layers of order and disorder can be detected, but it's obvious that letting the land go without management would never produce a finely manicured golf course or an award winning arboretum.

There is much more to be said about the implications of the Second Law of Thermodynamics—which explains the direction one finds in every action in the natural universe—but this is enough to uncover its deeper implications upon the direction of our everyday lives. Refrain from vigilance in picking up your home or the back seat of your car and entropy will win the day. If you're anything like me, the simplest example of this is the common sock drawer. I can spend an evening sorting out all the socks, underwear, tee shirts, loose coins, receipts, and other random trash into genus and species, colors and styles, shapes and state-of-being. However, if I don't repeat this process regularly, the drawer will quickly regress into what I have now: a completely random rumple of everything mentioned, plus.

A traditional law (of the second type mentioned previously) was quipped by some astute mother or grandmother surely centuries ago to combat this daily increase of entropy: "a place for everything and everything in its place." If this law is heeded with regularity and discipline, the entropy of our lives will decrease, and order will reign (My sock drawer may remain a mess, but at least the overall entropy of our home will decrease, because there won't be underwear in

the silverware tray).

I think it should be obvious how pervasive the law of entropy influences our lives, but you may never have realized how much it influences our spiritual lives—for our devotional lives are in many ways like a sock drawer. Unless we make constant and regular determined efforts to keep our spiritual lives alive and well ordered, entropy will increase in our souls. The great Catholic spiritual writers put it this way:

*"In the ways of God, he who does not progress loses ground."*

In this life, we will NEVER reach a point spiritually where we can presume we have somehow arrived, kick back and wait for our heavenly rewards. We must continually fight the natural spiritual entropy of our souls by heeding St. Paul's example:

*Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature be thus minded..."*  
(Phil. 3.13-15)

And isn't this exactly what the scriptures mean by the image *darkness*? As darkness increases in our soul, spiritual entropy increases, until as John warned: "he... is in the darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes" (1 Jn. 2.11). How can darkness blind one's eyes? Because entropy can so fill our lives (we can become so accustomed

to disorder) that we no longer recognize it as disorder. (We learn to live with messy sock drawers—who cares?)

Why am I pontificating on all this in our member's letter? Because I believe one of the greatest reasons for *coming home* to the Catholic Church is to benefit from the powerful spiritual heritage she provides for combating spiritual entropy. The wealth of spiritual traditions, the advice of the great Saints and spiritual writers, the sacraments and of course the Sacraments have all been developed, preserved and handed down for two thousand years to help us grow in grace so that our hearts, souls, strength and minds can become ordered to the ways of God.

I believe that all of the teachings and spiritual disciplines the Catholic Church has preserved and promoted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit are to help us fulfill what the Apostle John exhorted those who would consider themselves children of God:

*Abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming (1 Jn. 2.28).*

What better reason to tell all of our friends and family about the beauty and fullness of the truth of the Catholic Church: so that when they one day stand before Jesus, the spiritual condition of their soul won't suffer the same entropy as their sock drawers.



## **From the Director** by Christopher Erickson

*Dear members and friends of the Coming Home Network,*

Our apostolate continues its growing pains! Here's "what's happen'n." Marcus and I have long recognized the need for me to dedicate more time to several areas in my current duties as director, and also to begin giving time to the important area of development. This is now possible through your continued wonderful support of the **CHNetwork**. **Thank YOU and praise God!**

I invite you to welcome our new part-time assistant director, Chris LaRose, who will take over three principal areas of our apostolate: the *CHNetwork's* helpers network, the website, and our two discussion groups. Chris is a convert from the United Methodist Church, having served as Assistant Pastor in Norfolk and Raymondville, New York. He, along with his wife, Janine, own and operate their own internet business, *Bibletech Christian Resources*, which gives Chris experience in website design and maintenance. He received his BS in Engineering and Management from Clarkson University. We welcome Chris' assistance and are delighted to have him working with us.

### **CHNetwork opening for Administrative Secretary**

We need YOUR help. Heather Keimig will be leaving the Steubenville area in July to work

with...[get info], and we are looking for an administrative secretary to replace her. Any interested mature Catholic woman with the following qualifications should contact us ASAP:

1. Able to work full-time alongside me at our office in Steubenville, Ohio.
2. Available to start this June 1.
3. Willing to commit to a minimum of five years serving the *CHNetwork*.
4. A Convert to the Catholic Church from a separated Christian community.
5. Have good secretarial skills in communication and organization.
6. Have computer experience with the Internet, ACT database and Windows 98.
7. Have a solid grasp of the mind of the Church as presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.
8. Be sensitive to those on "the journey" and to the difficult issues they encounter along the way.

The salary is \$11.00 per hour. If you are interested or know someone who might be interested in this position, please send resumes to me by fax or email ([chris@chnetwork.org](mailto:chris@chnetwork.org); fax: 740-264-7877), or write to: Director, *CHNetwork*, PO Box 4100, Steubenville, OH 43952.

### **Special Edition of the CHJournal**

For those of you who are familiar with the underpinnings of the Reformation (and for those of you who are not), this will be VERY interesting reading! Our next *CHJournal* is a Special Edition featuring a reprint of Karl Adam's superb work *The Roots of the Reformation*. Karl Adam was...[need brief bio]. Writing the Foreword for our Journal is Dr. Kenneth Howell, a former Presbyterian minister for ? years, in which he highlights the salient points of Adam's work and what it means to us today. Our chaplain Fr. Ray Ryland, a Catholic priest who converted from the Anglican Church, offers some closing thoughts on...[??]

In plain easy-to-read language, Karl Adam does an excellent job filling in the background that led to the Reformation, analyzing the theological, political and cultural elements in Germany at the time, and revealing the mind-set of the men who shaped the tumultuous issues of the time. Here's a little taste of Adam's insights from *The Roots of the Reformation*.

*"It is not as though it were only the non-Catholic Christian who was the guilty party while the Catholic could think of himself as completely innocent and magnanimously proffering forgiveness. We made ourselves clear in our first section: both are at fault, and this fault extends*



*to Rome itself.”*

*“But to speak of a reform of the Head was an unmistakable indication that people in Germany were not thinking of discarding the Head of the Church, but of improving him. Apart from a few groups of radical humanists and sectarians, the universal detestation was not for the Pope as the divinely instituted guarantee of the Church’s unity, not for the religious authority of the Papal See, but only for the utter worldliness of the Popes and the Curia. The desire of all was to have at Rome a real representative of Christ, breathing the spirit of Christ in his person and activity....If we*

*avoid being distracted by merely incidental phenomena, and fix our attention on the whole climate of opinion which determined the spirit of the time, we see that the cry for reform was not anti-papal in any dogmatic sense, nor anti-ecclesiastical. It was a simple, elementary cry for conversion, for total renewal....But all these voices went unheard...What followed was therefore inevitable. Instead of a reform there was a revolution, a radical change in the fundamental substance of the Church and Christianity.”*

**What would Luther think today?**

An interesting point to consider is what Martin Luther would think of Rome today. Karl Adam quotes Karl August Meisinger making these significant remarks: “If Luther returned today...he would find to his astonishment a Roman Church which he would never have attacked in her present aspect...Above all he would see...that not one of the abuses which were the actual occasion of his break with Rome remains in existence.”

I encourage you to order extra copies of this upcoming Special Edition of our *CHJournal* so you can share this insightful work of Karl Adam with your family and friends.



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## **From the Desk of Fr. Ray Ryland**

Today I received e-mail from a dedicated pilgrim who designated himself in parting “extra ecclesiam.” Clearing up a canonical problem is all that stands between him and reception into the Church. Though he is not yet in full communion with the Church, he certainly is not “outside the church.” Technically, he is not a catechumen but a candidate, since he is already baptized. But like all catechumens he now stands in a new, mystical relationship with the Church of Jesus Christ. In the early centuries catechumens who were martyred were regarded as having died in the communion of the Church. They had received “baptism of desire,” and (in my private opinion, not the

Church’s teaching) even “communion of desire.”

As a clergy convert, I can understand the impatience sometimes felt by those on their journey home. Ecclesiastical red tape does seem at times to be endless. Some of our pilgrims regard themselves as “marking time” until they can be received into full communion with Christ’s Church.

Let me caution our fellow-pilgrims against this attitude. (Regardless of our canonical status, we’re all pilgrims.) You cannot “mark” time, which often amounts to “wasting” time, without injuring your relationship to eternity. The present moment of time is precisely where

eternity impinges on, opens itself to, time. The only “time” when I can be in touch with God, with eternity, is in the present moment. If I focus not on the present, but on some future time or event (like reception into the Church), to that extent I sacrifice my opportunity to grow in grace.

Or put the matter in another light. The New Testament, especially in the Fourth Gospel, repeatedly reminds us that eternal life for the Christian has to be a **present reality**. **Jesus consistently speaks of eternal life to his followers in the present tense.**

“He who believes in the Son *has* eternal life.” (Jn 3:36) “...he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, *has* eternal life; he...*has passed*

from death to life.” (Jn 5:24) “...he who believes *has* eternal life.” (Jn 6:46) “And this *is* eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” (Jn 17:3)

And this longer passage: “And this is the testimony, that God *gave* us eternal life, and this life *is* in his Son. He who has the Son *has* life. ...I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you *have* eternal life.” (1 Jn 5:11ff) Not simply the promise of eternal life under certain

conditions, but *the* reality in the present moment. This fact illumines the significance of each moment of our lives. Each is filled with opportunity in some degree to share in the risen life of Christ, the life of heaven, right *now*.

In the light of this fact I urge persons on their way into the Church not to be restive, not to give into the “marking time” mentality. Make full use of delays and waiting periods as occasions for deepening your sharing in eternal life by increasingly

surrendering your lives to the Risen Lord. Deepen your yearning for union with him. That yearning will (we hope, soon) find in the Eucharist its earthly fulfillment.

Meanwhile, ponder and live by God’s marching orders: “Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances, *for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*” (1 Thess 5:16-18)



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## ***To Be Drawn More Deeply into Christ*** by Heather Keimig

Many of our members, and therefore many of those we get correspondence or phone calls from, are those from “low church” backgrounds, such as Baptist, Assemblies of God, non-denominational churches, and some Presbyterian and Methodist denominations (and probably others, too). By “low church,” I mean basically those without a strong sense of liturgy in their styles of worship. As of one of those former “low church” types, I really had a hard time ‘wrapping my head around’ the idea that liturgy isn’t just having a set order of worship for your Sunday services. In fact, learning about liturgy was, and continues to be sometimes, like learning a foreign language for me. I just couldn’t see what difference it made – even though I thought the Mass was beautiful (once I believed in, and began to understand, what was going on). I had always wanted to know Jesus more intimately and now I was getting to receive Him in the Eucharist, so (frankly) I really didn’t

care or think too much about what the Mass was about or why it was the way it was – until I had some experience of liturgy under my proverbial belt and had time to sit back, think, pray and read about it. And then I found out that it’s not just the order of worship, and it’s not just another name for the Mass.

“The liturgy, then, is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. It involves the presentation of man’s sanctification under the guise of signs perceptible by the senses and its accomplishment in ways appropriate to each of these signs. In its full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members. From this it follows that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the Priest and of his Body, which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree.” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Vatican

**II Constitution, para. 7) In other words, liturgy is then the process of our Lord as priest sanctifying us by giving us His life and nature, of which the Eucharist is the highest, and most intimate, moment of this communion – the masterpiece in a gallery of graces.**

All the life in the Church is a work of, and based on, the transforming grace from the life of the Trinity, with the quintessential point of that grace being the Eucharist. But all liturgy is an opportunity for a powerful, transformative experience of communion with our Savior. It is why we need liturgy and it is why it is the mind of the Church for all forms of catechesis to have a liturgical component and for the RCIA process, in particular, to be integrally liturgical. RCIA is profoundly and fundamentally ordered to the liturgy precisely because of its goal – Christian initiation, which is the work of leading people to live a liturgical

*continued on page 7 . . .*



# Let us Pray...

...for Naomi's grandchildren to come home to the Catholic Church.

...for Janice's son-in-law that he will soften his heart to the Church and come home.

... for Chris as he seeks the Lord's will in where he is ordained and incardinated as a priest.

... for Bert's wife that she will come home to the Church and allow them to raise their children as Catholics.

... for Sophie's daughter who has left the Church, that she will come home.

... for Ruth's children that they will be able to see the beauty of the Church and come home.

... for Stella's family members & friends who are on drugs.

... for Wendy that she will stay strong in her convictions about the Church.

... for Jeff that his heart will soften to the truth of the Church.

... for Paul that he will come home to the Church.

... for James that he will be able to see the beauty of the Church.

... for Dean that he will be able to see the beauty of the Church.

... for Arlene's children and husband, that they will see the full beauty of the Church and embrace her completely.

... for Eleanor's family who have left the Church that they will come home.

... for John's wife and in-law's that they will be able to see the beauty of the Church.

... for Betty's daughter, who has left the Church and joined a Protestant church, that she will come home to the fullness of the Faith.

... for Joseph's family that they can come to fully embrace the beauty and truth of the Church.

... for Linda's children and their families to come fully home to Holy Mother Church and know her beauty and truth.

... for Don's daughter and her friend to come back to the Church and be married in the Church.

*Every issue we include timely prayer concerns from the membership. All members are encouraged to pray at least one hour each month before the Blessed Sacrament for the needs in general and specific of the CHNetwork, its members and supporters. Please submit all prayer requests and answers to CHN Prayer List, P. O. Box 4100, Steubenville, OH 43952. You may also email your prayer requests to prayers@chnnetwork.org We will use only first names to protect anonymity*

...for June's friend to be able to have a surgery she needs and for her insurance co. to pay for it.

...for the successful adoption of a girl named Hope from Belize.

... for the further success of the ministry that Gus is involved in, to the glory of God.

... for Fr. Mike C. that he will unite his suffering to the suffering of our Lord

on the cross and through that become more holy and more Christlike.

... for June's daughter & son-in-law (a seminarian) to come back/into the Church.

... for Maria and her family that they will all come home to the Church.

... for Celia's daughter and son-in-law who don't understand the Church and speak against her.

...for Elaine's sister, Therese, to see the Church in a new way and come home.

...for Dorothy's daughter who has been involved in a cult for many years now and, as a result, has isolated herself from her mother.

... in praise for John & Anne's long, holy marriage of 55 yrs.

... for Greg's family to be able to see the beauty of the Church.

...for Patrick's and his wife's family members that they will come to see the beauty of the Church and come home.

... for Chuck, a new Catholic, to feel strong in his decision to become Catholic and convinced anew of being home.

... for Vicki as she struggles with the issue of authority within the Church.

... for Gabrielle's mother that she will come back to the Church.

... for Susan as she struggles with the practicalities of conversion regarding her relationship with her new priest and new parish community.

... for Delores, who recently died, that she will rest in peace and that her family will be comforted in this time of loss.

... for all who are making inquires into what it means to be Catholic that

those who they ask their questions of will answer in love and truthfulness, preserving the inquirer's dignity as a person.

... for all those who have left the Church that the Lord will soften their hearts towards Her and draw them back into full communion.

... for all those who are hardened to the Church for any reason that they will be able to forgive the wrongs that they have encountered and begin to make inquires about the true teachings of the Church.

... for all those in the RCIA process right now that they will have a positive experience and be taught the fullness of our Faith.

... for all the neophytes that they will not be discouraged during their first year as Catholics. Pray that they will continue to pursue holiness, fall deeper in love with the Church, continue to live their lives as Catholics and be responsive to the power of the sacraments in their lives.

... for all those facilitating the RCIA process that they will be sensitive to the specific needs of those sent to them by God and be faithful to the teachings of the Church as they deliver the deposit of Faith to them in a way that is understandable and appealing.



Pilgrimage and International  
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... *Keimig cont. from page 5*

life, because the liturgy is the primary font of their sanctification. (*General Directory for Catechesis*, para. 85, 90; *Catechesi Tradendae*, para. 23) “The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the font from which all her power flows.’ It is therefore the privileged place for catechizing the People of God. ‘Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of men.’ Liturgical catechesis aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ ... by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the ‘sacraments’ to the ‘mysteries.’” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 1074-5a)

If the Eucharist is the quintessential experience of liturgy, what other types are there and how do they relate to one another? If such things could be seen as concentric circles, the next circle out from the Eucharist contains the other six sacraments. These sacraments point to and fill in our understanding of the life in the Trinity, the Lord's relationship with His people or significant characteristics of who God is. For this reason they are closest to the experience of true communion with the Lord in the Eucharist.

The next circle out is the sacramentals, such as blessed religious articles, relics, sacred art and the like. These tangible items remind us of the spiritual realm as we go about our daily lives and keep our focus on the things of God. The outer circle is that of the liturgical life of the Church, composed of the seasons of the

Church calendar and the feast days of the saints, the prayers appropriate to such and the blessings of those with Holy Orders, and especially in liturgical prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours (also known as the Divine Office or just the ‘Office,’ with its shorter version called Christian Prayer). Even our speech is a sign and “way-marker” of interior convictions and hopes. The Liturgy of the Hours is the on-going prayer of the Church, making the hours of each day holy. All the clergy, most of the religious and many of the laity offer up this prayer around the world every day. These prayers change with the liturgical seasons of the Church, as well as the feast days of the saints. The personal celebration of the life of the saints, through the liturgical year, keeps our focus on the holy ones who have gone before us, marking the path to holiness. (Vagaggini, Cyprian, OSB. *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy*, 1976, p. 22-3.)

So it is in liturgy that Holy Mother Church gives each of us ample opportunities to grow in sanctification – to be drawn more deeply into Christ, taking on His nature for our own. As Catholics, we are blessed to have these graces upon graces available to us. Let us – even us “low churchers” – allow liturgy to permeate us, making us liturgical people, that we might more effectively share the good news of our faith. Let us remember that all power to evangelize and catechize is drawn from Jesus the Incarnate God, made present in our lives, transforming our hearts, drawing us to Himself through His passionate love.



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**Primary Membership** is for former clergy, missionaries, academics, or others in full-time ministry and their families who are somewhere along their journey into the Catholic Church. **Secondary Membership** is for laity of other traditions and fallen away Catholics who are somewhere along their journey into the Catholic Church. **Tertiary, or Associate Membership** is for Catholic laity, priests, deacons, religious and bishops who support the *CHNetwork* with their prayers and generous contributions.

### Get Involved!

Become a member of the *CHNetwork*. Membership gets you on the mailing list to receive all *Coming Home Network* related mailings including the quarterly *CHNetwork* Journal. Please **pray for the *CHNetwork*, its staff and members**. All members are encouraged to pray regularly for the needs of the *CHNetwork*, and to present these needs at least one hour each month before the Blessed Sacrament.

### How to Help

Make a contribution to the *CHNetwork*. *The Coming Home Network International* is a non-profit Catholic lay apostolate, solely funded through the generous contributions of its members and friends. All donations are tax deductible, and are greatly appreciated. Please mail any donations to:

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## MARY OF NAZARETH by Dr. Kenneth Howell

*Mary of Nazareth* places before you one of the most pressing needs of the Christian world at the dawn of the third millennium. How can Christians, who have been separated by centuries of misunderstanding and mistrust, find unity in their faith? Kenneth Howell believes that one of the greatest obstacles to Christian unity has been Mary, the Mother of Jesus. No woman in history has been so honored in some human hearts while being so ignored by others. For that reason, no genuine unity can exist among Christians, which ignores the central role played by Jesus' Mother in the history of salvation. *Mary of Nazareth* will lead you through the relevant Scriptures about Mary and will help you understand how intimately bound to one another Jesus and Mary are. It will explain how Catholic doctrines of Mary are rooted in the biblical testimony. This scriptural meditation will touch your mind and heart as you enter into the beautiful life by which Mary gave the world its Redeemer.

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