



May 2011 Newsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



Confessions of a Protestant Pew Potato

By Tim Cooper

Oh, no, I thought to myself, here we go again. Some latecomers had forced us to move into the middle of the pew. There's nothing worse than being in the middle of the pew in a Catholic church if you're a Protestant "pew potato."

You've heard of a couch potato? I was a pew potato. I plunked down in my pew every week but didn't participate a whole lot, other than singing a hymn I recognized or shaking hands with my neighbors during the sign of peace.

So what's the big deal about sitting in the middle of the pew? The problem is with the Communion line.

My choice: I could either go up front with my arms crossed and receive a blessing, or I could stay back in the pew. I hated going up and not receiving the Eucharist. And in a large church like ours, chances are I would get a "blessing" from some teenager serving as a Eucharistic minister.

No thanks, I thought. I'll just stay in the pew.

Unfortunately, this meant I would end up being a hurdle for some folks in my pew, who would have to climb over me either on the way up or on the way back. I always wanted to sit at the end of the pew so I could avoid the "hurdle" problem — which brings up another pet peeve I had about the Catholic Mass (besides the numerous crying babies in the sanctuary). It seemed to me that half of the parishioners showed up two minutes

prior to the start of Mass. The situation made it nearly impossible to guarantee my coveted "end of the pew" position.

This situation was just one dilemma facing a Protestant pew potato. There were others as well. I wasn't sure what I was supposed to do during the Mass. Was I supposed to cross myself? genuflect? kneel?

If I wasn't participating in the Eucharist, was I to kneel during the prayer of consecration? At first I just sat while others knelt. But I felt awkward sitting while everyone else was kneeling.

So I started kneeling during the prayer of consecration. But I didn't believe in the "Holy Sacrifice of the Mass" or transubstantiation. I didn't want to bear a "false witness" to what was going on. So I finally settled on the "half-sitting, half-kneeling" position.

How I Got Into This Predicament

I'd never had these problems as a member of various Protestant congregations. They had passed trays of wafers and tiny grape juice glasses, so there were never any communion lines to deal with, where you might have to trip over somebody who couldn't or wouldn't participate. Deciding whether to take part wasn't an issue, especially in one particular non-denominational congregation that publicized its "open" communion policy every week. ... continued on page 2

Journeys Home

FEATURED RESOURCES

"That They May All Be One": The Catholic Church and Ecumenism



In this newly released interview, Fr. Ray Ryland joins Marcus Grodi in discussing the true role of ecumenism in our divided Christian world today. Our Lord made it very clear that He wants all His followers to be one in the truth. But from the time of the Apostles there have been individuals and groups who left the Church's communion, so the Church has always had deep ecumenical concerns. In this thought-provoking discussion, Fr. Ryland explains how there is only one way to overcome Christian disunity.

Father Ray Ryland, Ph.D., J.D., is a former Episcopal minister who became one of the first to be ordained a priest in the Catholic Church under the Pastoral Provision. He serves on the Board of Trustees for the Coming Home Network International and is a past chaplain of the apostolate.

Christifideles Laici: The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People

By Blessed John Paul II



In the Apostolic Exhortation: *Christifideles Laici* (published in 1988), Pope John Paul II discusses the vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and the world. The goal of the document is to show how Christian laymen and women are called to participate in human society. In this illuminating reflection, the Holy Father seeks a more profound awareness among believers of the gift and responsibility they share, both as a group and as individuals, in the communion and mission of the Church.

TO RECEIVE 1 CD for a donation of \$35, 1 DVD for a donation of \$50, or 1 DVD, 1 CD, and *Christifideles Laici* for a donation of \$100, please return the envelope provided inside this newsletter. You may also order these and other resources by calling 740-450-1175 or by going to www.chresources.com

...Journeys Home Continued...

So how did I get myself in this predicament? It's all because of my wife, Sandy. I love Sandy with every fiber of my being. I would do just about anything for her.

I agreed to get married in the Catholic Church because Sandy was Catholic and I loved her so much. I agreed to raise our kids Catholic because I loved her so much. I agreed to go to Mass with her every week so we could worship as a family because I loved her so much.

However, I did draw the line at becoming Catholic myself. Before we got married I told her I would never, ever become Catholic. She was fine with that. Even so, she told me she could never become Protestant, either, so we would have to figure out a way to work it out.

I had dated several nice girls before, but there was something different about Sandy. It was hard for me to put my finger on it. She was very quiet about her faith. I think I knew in the back of my mind that I was going to marry her after our first date.

What really "sealed the deal" was my observation of how she treated children and the elderly. When we were dating in college, my wife had an internship at a local club for boys. After graduating she worked in a nursing home.

She treated everyone she encountered, young and old, with dignity, love, and respect. I thought to myself, *I have got to make this woman my wife*. A mixed marriage was the price I was willing to accept in order to spend my life with the woman I loved.

Nazarene Roots

If you had told me only a few years before that I would eventually get married in the Catholic Church, I would have told you, "No way." I was born in Indianapolis, one of six kids in a family that belonged to the Nazarene denomination, which was largely hostile to the Catholic faith. (We later relocated to Fort Wayne, Indiana, where I finished my high school years.)

My mom and dad were, and still are, wonderful Christian role models. We frequently had family devotions, including Bible study and prayer. Our faith was part of the air we breathed.

I asked Jesus to be my Lord and Savior when I was twelve years old. I was baptized at the age of fourteen. I gave several emotional testimonies at church.

I remember saying once that I believed God had a special plan for my life. At the time I was thinking about missionary work or the ministry. They even allowed me to preach the sermon one Sunday when we celebrated "Youth Day," when young people were allowed to lead the services.

I have many wonderful memories from my youth in the Nazarene Church. Our sense of community was very strong, and other members of our congregation were always good to me. I remember one Nazarene minister in particular who taught me so much as a young man. He and his wife were so humble, so kind, and so pure that the light of Jesus shone through them. I cannot explain it any other way.

The Nazarene denomination had broken away from the Methodist denomination in the early twentieth century as a result of the Holiness revival movement. The Nazarenes remain part of the Wesleyan tradition, so John and

Charles Wesley, the central leaders of the early Methodist movement, were heroes of mine.

I was close to my aunt and her husband, a United Methodist minister, and their children. Their youngest son, whom they named Charles Wesley, was close to me and my younger brother. My cousin would eventually enter seminary and become a wonderful minister himself.

Three of my eight great-grandparents were ordained as ministers in various Wesleyan denominations. Even today, numerous Protestant ministers and missionaries are in my extended family. One family is working in Guatemala, encouraging Catholics to leave their religion and embrace what they call “Bible Christianity” instead. Another family is currently serving in Croatia (a country that’s more than ninety percent Catholic) with the same goal.

It may be different today, but when I was growing up in the Nazarene denomination, we considered three particular religious communities to be “off the reservation”: the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the Roman Catholic Church. We saw none of these groups as truly “Christian.”

We believed that salvation came by faith alone, and we were taught that Roman Catholics practiced a religion with the heretical view of justification by faith plus works. Roman Catholic teaching was, we said, full of unbiblical, manmade doctrines, rituals, and traditions such as Mariolatry (the worship of Mary). We believed that the Church had fallen off the rails many centuries ago, but that the Protestant reformers had restored the Christian faith to its true biblical roots.

Pebbles in My Shoe

When I was young, the issue of Christian unity bothered me. St. Paul told the Corinthians: “I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and judgment” (1 Cor 1:10). In Romans 12:5, the Apostle teaches that we are “one body in Christ.”

St. Paul repeatedly demanded unity throughout his epistles. (See, for example, Rom 12:4–5; 16:17–18; 1 Cor 1:10–13; Eph 4:1–6; Phil 1:27; 2:1–2; Titus 3:9–11). Jesus prayed for our unity: “I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one” (Jn 17:20).

Nevertheless, we couldn’t maintain unity even among Wesleyans, much less the broader Protestant community. The Wesleyans had serious problems with the Calvinists. I remember frequent sermons on the “errors of Calvinism” in our Nazarene congregation.

Of course, Calvinists weren’t as bad as Catholics. But they still had some serious errors in their doctrines. We affirmed free will, which Calvin rejected.

We agreed with other Christians who taught a type of assurance of salvation. But we rejected the notion of “absolute” assurance. We did not agree with the “once saved always saved” doctrine.

Every once in a while we would make a little fun of our Lutheran and Anglican brothers and sisters, labeling them “Catholic-Lite.” We called them that because they believed in some type of Real Presence ... *continued on page 4*



DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

On EWTN radio with Marcus Grodi & Guests

Airs: Wednesdays @ 2:00 PM ET
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EWTN'S THE JOURNEY HOME

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

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Mondays **LIVE** at 8:00 PM ET
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May 2

Gary Michuta (Re-air from 8/6/07) *
Lifelong Catholic

May 9

Teresa Tomeo*
Revert

May 16

Terry Hatty*
The Journey Home in Canada

May 23

Mike Carlton*
Former Presbyterian

May 30

Nancy Groom*
*Former Presbyterian & Christian
Reformed Church*

**This schedule is subject to change.*



This year *The Journey Home* again goes international to bring you stories of men and women who have come home to the Catholic Church. Be sure to tune in the third Monday of each month to view all-new episodes of *The Journey Home* taped in Canada.

...Journeys Home Continued...

in the Eucharist, and their worship was liturgical. (For us, “ritual” was a no-no.) Most of them seemed to live like the Catholic “heathen” we encountered, with habits of dancing, smoking, drinking, cussing — that kind of thing. The so-called “mainline denominations” were viewed in general with scorn, since many had modernist interpretations of Scripture, and their members also lived “worldly” lives.

Meanwhile, we didn’t agree with our Pentecostal brothers that the gift of tongues is the sure-fire sign of “baptism in the Holy Spirit.” In fact, while we recognized the possibility that the gift of tongues is still today a valid gift from the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues was not a part of our spiritual practice in the Nazarene denomination.

Given all these denominational divisions, the biblical injunction to Christian unity was like a bothersome pebble in my shoe. I couldn’t figure out how we were supposed to achieve unity if we couldn’t agree on how to interpret Scripture. How literally were we to interpret certain passages that didn’t easily lend themselves to a strictly literal interpretation, such as the Genesis account of creation? Was the world created in six days about six thousand years ago?

Another pebble in my shoe was our Nazarene stand on certain practices such as dancing, gambling, going to movies, and drinking. I understood some of the logic behind the prohibitions, but I didn’t see them explicitly stated in Scripture. Didn’t Jesus change water into wine as His first miracle?

At the time, these practices were absolutely prohibited in the Nazarene denomination. Internally I started to question this black-and-white view of some of these so-called “moral” issues. I started to wonder whether some of these issues should be approached with moderation and common sense.

Was it really so evil to see a Disney movie at a theatre just because the same theatre might also show an R-rated movie? How far did we have to go with this approach? Should we just hide ourselves in caves until Jesus comes back to snatch us out of an evil world?

As a young adult, I eventually left the Nazarene denomination, and most of my family did as well. We tried other denominations. For a time I attended the denomination known as the Missionary Church (which also has some roots in the Wesleyan tradition). That denomination didn’t have the legalistic view of some of the prudential questions that bothered me about the Nazarene denomination.

In college I met with a non-denominational congregation, but I never felt comfortable there. For one thing, their continuous harping on “open” communion seemed to water down the faith too much. They would say it doesn’t matter whether you’re Protestant, Catholic, or Eastern Orthodox; all are welcome to the table.

It sounded as if they were saying, “It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you believe.” I thought I might have found the unity I was seeking, but at what cost? Didn’t truth matter too?

A Spiritual Crisis

When I was in college I experienced a spiritual crisis. I encountered too many competing views of reality, and I couldn’t make sense of all the different religions and worldviews. I started to question everything.



While I became something of a skeptic, I never became an atheist. Atheists have no explanation why there is anything at all. I also realized I couldn't be an agnostic. Agnostics still have to make a choice. You either live as if God doesn't exist, or you live as if God does exist. I still believed in God, but I was quite confused about the Christian faith.

Eventually I happened on a book by the Anglican writer C. S. Lewis that brought me back firmly into the traditional Christian fold. The book was called *Mere Christianity*. In it, Lewis posed the question that all seekers must ask themselves.

Jesus claimed to be the divine Son of God; He said, "Before Abraham was, I AM" (Jn 8:58). So if He isn't our divine Lord, He must have been either an evil liar or a lunatic. Neither of the latter options seemed reasonable in light of the evidence we have about His life, so I reaffirmed the Lordship of Jesus in my life.

Since the time *Mere Christianity* was written, skeptics have proposed a new option for the "Lord, liar, or lunatic" proposition. I would call this the "legend" option. That is, the "divine Jesus" was merely a "legend." This position holds that the early Church leaders, possibly including the Apostle Paul, collaborated to fabricate Jesus' claims to divinity, along with followers' claims that He rose from the dead, for the sake of self-promotion, or for other motives.

The problem with the "legend" conspiracy theory, of course, is obvious. All but one of the Apostles, including St. Paul (along with their successors, the early bishops) faced tremendous persecution and suffered eventual martyrdom for proclaiming that Jesus was the divine Son of God. How could they have been motivated to do so by a desire for self-promotion? And would they actually have been willing to die for making a claim they knew to be a lie?

Journey to the Church Jesus Founded

With these convictions, I settled into my own form of "mere Christianity." My wife had proven to me that Catholics could indeed be very good Christians. She maintained a better prayer life than I did. She treated others with more charity than many of my Evangelical friends did. I met many good Catholic Christians and became close friends with them.

Even so, I still wasn't interested in becoming a Catholic. Too many doctrinal hurdles remained. I was still firmly entrenched in the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* (the notion that Scripture alone is the authoritative source of doctrine and practice). And I couldn't see the Pope or the doctrines about Mary (among others) in Scripture. I eventually became involved in several Protestant Bible studies, while my wife started attending a Bible study at our parish.

I had started a business and was busy building my career. When my daughter received her First Communion in 1999, I started to think about investigating the Church. I thought it would be good to receive Communion as a family.

By the time I finally started RCIA (Rite for the Initiation of Christian Adults) in the fall of 2002, I had been attending Mass nearly every week for twenty-two years. I enrolled in the program in our parish to learn why the Church holds to the doctrines she proclaims. I wanted to get scriptural support for Catholic teachings. ... continued on page 6

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MARCUS GRODI'S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

July 23-24, 2011

EWTN Family Celebration
Birmingham, AL
www.ewtn.com/familycelebration
205-271-2989

July 29-31, 2011

Defending the Faith
Steubenville, Ohio
www.franciscanconferences.com
800-437-8368

August 5-7, 2011

International Bible Conference
Catholic Scripture Study
Charlotte, NC
www.cssconference.com
conference@cssprogram.net
877-228-7830

August 20, 2011

"We Walk by Faith"
OKC Catholic Women's Conference
Oklahoma City, OK
405-306-5187
thomaschrisL@sbcglobal.net



...Journeys Home Continued...

Instead, I received a continuous stream of negative views on the papacy and how the Church was unfair to women. For that reason, today I tell people inquiring about the Faith to read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Many RCIA programs are solid, but in some parishes, inquirers have to take what they hear in RCIA programs with a grain of salt. I started RCIA in September, and by Christmas I was ready to quit because of what I was hearing there.

Reading That Helped

Fortunately, my wife gave me a book for Christmas, *Rome Sweet Home*, by Scott and Kimberly Hahn. Dr. Scott Hahn was a Presbyterian minister and seminary professor who quit his ministry to become Catholic. Through his research into Catholic doctrines, history, and Scripture, he decided that Catholics got it right. The account of this couple's journey into the Catholic Church was easy to read and captivating.

Dr. Hahn got me thinking about the validity of *sola Scriptura*. He made a rather convincing case that *sola Scriptura* is a theological assumption, not a biblical truth. As I read his insights, everything started to fall into place.

Dr. Hahn solved the dilemma that had confronted me in college about unity and truth. Since the Bible needs an interpreter, the *sola Scriptura* position guarantees you will have to compromise one or the other, but you can't have both. However, when you add apostolic tradition and a living teaching office to Scripture, you have a firm foundation that ensures both unity and truth.

Another question that challenged me was the New Testament canon. Shortly after reading *Rome Sweet Home*, I read another book, by Mark Shea, entitled *By What Authority?* That reading also rocked my world.

The canon was in flux for more than four hundred years. It was the Catholic Church that finally defined the New Testament canon that I subscribed to as a Protestant. How could a fallible Church produce an infallible canon? I had no good answer to that question.

I soon realized that another one of my cherished doctrines, the notion of the "invisible church," was also a theological assumption and not a biblical truth. Scripture points to a visible church. In Matthew 18:15-17, Jesus gives the Church the final authority to determine what it means to be part of the Christian community. How can an invisible church define its own membership?

Dr. Hahn introduced me to the Church Fathers. I started to read them for myself. I had read some Protestants' attempts to defend Protestant doctrines by using various quotes from the Church Fathers. However, as I read the same Church Fathers, I was surprised to find a very Catholic understanding of ordination, tradition, authority, communion of saints, liturgy (including the Sacrifice of the Mass), Baptism, the Eucharist, and much more.

I learned that Protestants had been guilty of cherry-picking quotes that "sounded" Protestant but were from Church Fathers who were thoroughly Catholic. The Fathers opened Scripture in ways I had never imagined before. Suddenly everything in Scripture started coming up Catholic.

I began to see baptismal regeneration referred to in John 3:3-5 as the Fathers interpreted it. I saw purgatory in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. I saw the Eucharist in John 6:32-50. I connected the dots between the Passover (the Jews consumed



UNSOLICITED MAIL

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

the Passover Lamb) and Jesus as our Passover Lamb. I saw the connection between the offering of bread and wine by Melchizedek on the one hand, and the Last Supper and the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary on the other, in light of what Paul said about the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians chapters 10 and 11.

The Eucharist is clearly one of the practices Paul was referring to when he repeatedly told the early Church communities to hold on to the traditions he had passed on to them, either by epistle or by word of mouth (see 2 Thes 2:15). The very earliest Christians, such as St. Ignatius of Antioch and St. Irenaeus, confirmed that the tradition that the Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood of Christ had come to them from the Apostles. In addition, the earliest Christians, including St. Ignatius, understood the connection between valid ordinations and the Eucharist — an issue that raises the question of apostolic succession.

The Pope

I started to find a teaching office in both the Old and New Testaments. I saw the connection between Isaiah 22:19–25 and Matthew 16:19. Why did Jesus give the keys to only one apostle? Why didn't Jesus explain what the keys mean? These questions had haunted me.

The account in Isaiah chapter 22 is the only Old Testament passage in which a key is passed between one person and another. We see a king (Hezekiah) in the line of David, who removes the key from one royal steward (Shebna) and gives it to another (Eliakim). The royal steward is the king's right-hand man.

Such authority is given only to one person. Verse 19 in this passage refers to the steward filling an "office." This means that the unique authority does not end at that one person's death; it is passed down through an office. Verse 21 clarifies this authority even further: "He shall be a *father* to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah" (emphasis added).

I began connecting the dots. Jesus, a royal descendant of David, is our King. He left His earthly kingdom and appointed His royal steward (St. Peter) to be a shepherd for His flock (see Jn 21:15–17) and their spiritual father (Is 22:21). The keys Jesus gave to St. Peter designate an office and succession (Is 22:19). This succession was passed on to bishops through the laying on of hands (1 Tim 3:1; 2 Tim 1:6).

The early Church Fathers constantly wrote about the office of bishop. St. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons (now in France), spent twenty years with the martyr bishop St. Polycarp, who had spent twenty years with the Apostle John. He once wrote about St. Linus, the first bishop of Rome to succeed St. Peter: "The blessed Apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate" (*Against Heresies*, III, 3, 3). Hippolytus, Eusebius, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine and many others also affirm that Linus was the first to succeed Peter.

St. Irenaeus added: "With that church [the church of Rome], because of its superior origin, all the churches must agree, that is, all the faithful in the whole world, and it is in her that the faithful everywhere have maintained the apostolic tradition" (*Against Heresies*, III, 3, 2). For this reason, I always get a chuckle when I see Protestants using quotes from St. Irenaeus or other Church Fathers to support the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*. ... *continued on page 8*



THE SPOUSES NETWORK

Are you the spouse of a clergy person interested in becoming Catholic?

The *Spouses Network* aids and provides fellowship for the spouses of clergy on the journey to the Catholic Church as well as those who are new Catholics. Through the *Spouses Network*, spouses of clergy who have embraced the Catholic faith provide one-on-one assistance to clergy spouses who are still on the journey or have recently become Catholic. In this way they offer a source of friendship, support, and increased love of Jesus Christ and His Church.

If you feel called to be part of the *Spouses Network*, whether as the spouse of a clergy person who has made the journey home and would like to assist someone, or as a spouse of a minister who is either on the journey or a new Catholic, we invite you to contact CHNI to assist us in the development of this network.

For more information, please contact Mary Clare Picynski by e-mail at maryp@chnetwork.org or by phone at 740-450-1175 ext. 105.

We ask all members of *The Coming Home Network International* please to keep the *Spouses Network* in your prayers as we seek to answer the needs of those spouses of clergy on the journey home and those who are new converts.

NEWSLETTER COPIES

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

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...Journeys Home Continued...

Marian Doctrines

Mary was my last hurdle. From my perspective (and that of many Protestants), the idea of having a relationship with Mary took away from the proper attention due to Christ, our sole Mediator. What I discovered is that Mary brought Jesus to us two thousand years ago, and she continues to bring Jesus to us today through her intercessory prayers. She always points us to her divine Son. She doesn't take away from God's glory, but is an awe-inspiring reflection of it.

When I considered becoming Catholic, I asked: Where are the Marian doctrines (such as the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption) found in Scripture? But if Christian truths can be passed on through oral tradition from the Apostles (and therefore aren't limited to explicit references in Scripture), then I should ask other questions: Are these doctrines reasonable? Do they contradict Scripture? Where do they come from? Why are they important?

What I discovered from my research is this: Yes, the Marian doctrines are reasonable. No, they do not contradict Scripture. They come in part from Scripture (or are rooted in Scripture), in part from tradition and the natural development of doctrine. This natural doctrinal development isn't new revelation or invention, but rather a deeper understanding of revelation, often achieved by connecting the dots in Scripture.

Home at Last

I was received into the Church at the Easter Vigil Mass in 2003. I have never regretted the decision, and I absolutely love being Catholic. I didn't become a Catholic to please my wife; I became a Catholic because I had found the "pearl of great price" (see Mt 13:45–46).

“I became a Catholic because I had found the “pearl of great price” ...”

I never stopped searching for the holiness that John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, first challenged me to seek. Granted, I still have a long way to go to achieve that goal. But having new channels of sanctifying grace in the sacraments — most especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation — have been a real blessing for me. ■



TIM COOPER is the software developer for the Faith Database CD-ROM, a searchable library of Catholic writings and multiple Scripture translations. (For more information, go to www.faithdatabase.com.) Tim, his wife, Sandy, and their daughter, Katie, reside in Fort Wayne, Indiana, where they are active volunteers in St. Charles Borromeo parish. Tim also volunteers as a helper for the Coming Home Network International.

Prayer List



Clergy

■ For a Presbyterian minister in California, that he and his wife will open their hearts to every gift and grace offered to them and be drawn into full communion with the one Catholic Church.

■ For Scott, a former Southern Baptist minister in Virginia, that God would lead him to a priest after His own heart who would lovingly guide them to His holy Church.

■ For Michael, a former Baptist minister in Michigan, that the Holy Spirit will guide him in his discernment of a possible priestly vocation.

■ For Charles, a non-denominational lay minister in Ohio, that his heart will be put at ease and his questions answered.

■ For Tom, an Anglican minister in Virginia, that he and his wife will soon discover that their true home is in the one Catholic Church in communion with the successor of St. Peter.

■ For a Salvation Army officer in Pennsylvania, that he will learn that the Holy Spirit is calling him to the many graces Jesus wishes to grant him in the holy sacraments.

■ For Margaret, a Pentecostal minister in Tanzania, that her ministry to God's people will soon come under the protection of true apostolic authority as she finds the graces of the Catholic faith.

■ For Rob, a former Assemblies of God minister, that as he studies and prays, Jesus will draw him into the center of His loving heart in the Catholic Church.

■ For Dan, an Assemblies of God minister in California, that he will become a Catholic Christian in full communion with Pope Benedict XVI, the successor of St. Peter, the prince of the Apostles.

■ For Matthew, that he will find gainful and fulfilling employment, and that he and his family will successfully maneuver the transition to life in America after living overseas.

■ For Paula, a Presbyterian minister, that she will allow the Holy Spirit to guide her as she discerns God's will for her.

Lay

■ For Sara and Suzanne, and for all like them who entered the Catholic Church at Easter, that our Lord will fill them with every grace they need to do His will.

■ For a young teen who is suffering from Satan's attacks, that the grace of her recent Confirmation will strengthen and protect her.

■ For a man who has had three surgeries for brain tumors, that God will grant him healing and strength.

■ For Matt, that his careful study of Catholic beliefs will bring him to profess faith in the holy Catholic Church.

■ For Glenn and Allie, that they will grow stronger in the Lord as they receive His grace in the sacraments.

■ For Lee, who has been unemployed for three years, that the resumes he sends out will bear some fruit, and that he will find a steady and productive job in his field.

■ For David, who is struggling with feelings of inadequacy living his Catholic life, that the Lord will give him reassurance and peace.

■ For Maura, that the Eucharistic Jesus will draw her closer to Himself and give her the clarity she needs in her faith walk.

■ For Bradley, as he strives to lead a holy and chaste life, that the Holy Spirit will give him the courage and fortitude to persevere in his many trials.

■ For James and his wife, that they will be able to resolve their questions about the Catholic faith and find harmony in their search for truth.

■ For Chris, that he will be able to find employment in a faith-centered environment.

■ For Karen, that she will be able to share her new Catholic faith effectively with her husband, who has a misinformed view of the Catholic Church.

■ For Mary, a two-year-old with health problems who has had more than a hundred blood transfusions.

■ For Anna, who recently returned to the Catholic Church and is struggling with the transition, especially with people from her former denomination who don't understand her desire to be Catholic.

■ For Andrew, who is looking to return home, that the Lord will guide his study and supply all his needs.

■ For Pam, that God will give her discernment as she considers whether to stay in her present denomination or embrace the Catholic faith.

■ For Amy, that God will guide her decisions as she seeks His will for her life.

■ For Jo Ann, who is devotedly caring for her husband who is suffering from Alzheimer's disease, that Jesus will surround them both in His gentle love.

■ For Henry, who has cancer and is a fallen-away Catholic, angry at what he believes the Church to be.

■ For Ricky, who is looking to come home but is struggling with his anti-Catholic background.

■ For a woman who is experiencing many health problems, that her cross will be united with Jesus' cross to bring souls closer to Him.

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 CHNI Prayer List, PO Box 8290, Zanesville, OH 43702. Or email prayer requests to prayers@chnetwork.org.

We use only first names to preserve privacy.



By Marcus Grodi

Why do we help *our separated brothers and sisters* come home?

Six years ago, almost to the day, I wrote a reflection paper entitled “Why is God calling so many Protestant clergy home?” It was in response to reading a very insightful book examining the present condition of the Catholic Church in America. At the time, I saw how the author’s conclusions confirmed the importance and timeliness of forming a Confraternity for clergy converts. With the lessons and experience of these past years, I believe his conclusions are more pertinent than ever to understanding why the Coming Home Network International exists and needs to stay true to its primary calling.

The author’s conclusion was that for the Catholic Church to survive as a viable Christian witness in America, she must (1) reject the growing denominational attitude that has infected her membership, resulting in the denigration of the key Catholic distinctives that separate her from all other churches, movements, and sects; and (2) refocus her self-understanding and priorities in an attack against the Church’s primary enemy: secularism.

This is a far-too-simplistic summary of the book, but these ideas essentially echo what Pope John Paul II emphasized in his important apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*: “How can one not notice the ever-growing existence of religious indifference and atheism in its more varied forms, particularly in its perhaps most widespread form of secularism? ... I myself have recalled the phenomenon of de-Christianization which strikes long-standing Christian people and which continually calls for a re-evangelization.”

This re-evangelization is at the heart of the mission of The Coming Home Network International. We do not stand in judgment of our non-Catholic brothers and sisters. Rather, we seek to love them by facilitating their search for Truth. The Catholic faith offers us the greatest gift imaginable: participation in the life of Christ through His Church and the sacraments. We are completely committed to the unity of all Christians as our Lord Jesus Himself desires. He prayed: “That they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (Jn 17:21).

I believe that this is one of the key reasons God is calling home so many non-Catholic clergy and laity. Through their conversions, convictions, training, and experiences, Christ has prepared them to strengthen the Church in America, who must fight to regain her witness. Pope John Paul II called for a New Evangelization. Haven’t converts been uniquely

called and prepared to be missionaries of this great work of evangelization?

When non-Catholic clergy originally heard the call of Christ, they had a different understanding of this call based on their particular denominational environments. God was preparing them, however, for the utilization of their gifts now that they are home in the Church. This is another reason CHNI exists: to help clergy and lay converts who have come home to use their individual God-given gifts for the authentic renewal of the Church.

What the author of that insightful book wrote describes a difficult reality, confirmed by many of our former non-Catholic clergy in a survey we recently made. Though God is calling them home, sometimes home doesn’t particularly know what to do with them. Let’s face it: Our Church leadership has its hands full, and no formal programs exist to help non-Catholic clergy transition into roles of meaningful service, using their particular gifts and talents. We at CHNI do our best in this role, but the needs often surpass our modest resources as an organization.

People often comment to me that converts make the best Catholics. Unfortunately, it has been our experience that the transition into the Church is not always easy. The enthusiastic desire of converts to be completely faithful and orthodox is sometimes regarded with skepticism. In many ways, the experience can parallel that of an immigrant in a new home country: smiling, waving a flag, happy to be here, and facing a long uphill road to becoming a “real citizen.” Meanwhile, the rest of us natives smile knowingly to ourselves. It’s as if we’re saying, “That’s very nice, but your enthusiasm will wear off when you see some of our problems!”

Of course, converts seek something much deeper than “immigrating” to the Church. They seek Jesus Himself, and we can be thankful that they aren’t easily discouraged.

Yet therein lies the challenge in the mission of the Coming Home Network International. Our work lies between these two realities in tension: On the one side, our separated brethren are called to come home. Unavoidable issues in their lives may require a delay, or they may find that the reality of life in the Church doesn’t necessarily correspond to their expectations. Yet as Blessed John Henry Newman so often wrote to his Anglican friends on the journey, our job is not to encourage the delay, but to help them not to miss their “time of grace.”

On the other side is their sometimes challenging reception into the Church — with expectations bumping up against realities; with hopes delayed for using the gifts, training, and experiences they bring to fulfill the vows of service they made to the Lord long ago. The CHNI exists in this gap, what many have called a “no man’s land.” We help inquirers move forward with adequately formed consciences and expectations so they can find their place in the ordained ministry or lay apostolate of the Church, thus complementing faithfully the efforts of the rest of its members in the great task of evangelization.

I believe God has called us to this apostolate. To accomplish our mission, every member of the staff is dedicated to our core purpose: making straight the path to the Church, so we may be united in Christ. The flow of clergy and lay inquirers and converts continues unabated, and the challenge of putting their gifts to use in the Church is formidable. So we beg your support and prayers as we answer this urgent and important calling from our Lord. ■

— *Sincerely in Christ,*
Marcus Grodi

CHNI CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

As you may have heard by now, our annual conference has been the subject of much prayer and discernment over the past several months. In order to remain true to our primary mission, free up staff time to refocus on our apostolate’s unique charism, and act as good stewards of our limited financial resources, I considered canceling the conference altogether. In fact, I actually went so far as to post an announcement to this effect on CHNI’s website very briefly one day earlier this spring.

By God’s grace, within an hour of posting that announcement, an extremely exciting alternative was presented to me, a real answer to prayer. I am extremely pleased to announce that **CHNI is partnering with Franciscan University of Steubenville (FUS) in 2011 to continue our Deep in History Conferences!**

This arrangement makes sense in many ways. FUS is a faithful, dynamic organization responsible for introducing many of our members to CHNI. We have worked with them for years, particularly at their annual Defending the Faith Conference. In addition, FUS has a dedicated conference office, consisting of professionals whose sole mission is to put on outstanding conferences. They are experts in this area, and it shows.

In contrast, the staff at CHNI are multitaskers. Since all of us handle multiple functions, we couldn’t possibly duplicate the depth of resources and expertise FUS brings to the table. With exceptional efforts each year, the staff were increasingly victims of their own success — sinking more time and effort each year into trying to make the conference even better. Unfortunately, this distracted them from their core roles.

With this partnership, we are shooting for a “best of both worlds” outcome. FUS will manage the complex and time-consuming conference logistics — their area of expertise — while I will continue to host the event. CHNI will also provide the audiovisual video equipment, along with our media staff, in order to produce conference CDs and DVDs. Our members tell us that these materials are valuable for their own edification and to pass along to others, so we are very happy to continue this important work.

I believe this arrangement effectively plays to the strengths of both organizations. We want to provide an excellent conference experience for our members, along with the recordings on CD and DVD. Please join us in praying for the success of this partnership as we seek to serve the Lord and our membership in this new and exciting manner.

It bears repeating that the most important reason for this change is to enable our staff to focus even more of our efforts on our primary mission: to help non-Catholic ministers and laity come home to Rome and use their gifts within the Church. Through our efforts, we strive to be instruments of the great commission and encourage all Christians toward the glorious goal of unity: a prayer poignantly expressed by Jesus Himself in John 17.

Please pray for us as we at CHNI strive to be faithful stewards of the unique mission to which we have been called. Particularly among clergy converts and those on the journey, we are aware of so many needs. Thank you for your support and understanding, and we hope to see you at this year’s conference!

— *Sincerely in Christ,* *Marcus Grodi*



The Coming Home Network International

PO Box 8290

Zanesville, OH 43702

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RADIO Program on EWTN
with **Marcus Grodi** & Guests
every **Wednesday** at **2 PM ET**

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Go to www.deepinscripture.com for more information
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