

May 2014 CHNewsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



I wonder what sort of a tale we've fallen into?

By Peggy Gibson

This question concludes one of my favorite passages from J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (book IV, chapter VIII, "The Stairs of Cirith Ungol"). In the "tales that really mattered, or the ones that stay in the mind. Folk seem to have been just landed in them, usually – their paths were laid that way...but I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn't...We hear about those as just went on." Is my own life being crafted by my Creator with the same care that Tolkien took with his tale? My hope is kindled in the best Book; there I find one of my favorite names of God: Jesus is "the author and finisher of faith" (Heb 12:2, *Douay-Rheims*). Each of our lives is a heart-stirring story that can resound with the glory of our Creator.

My story began as a cradle Anglican, which means I have been surrounded by beautiful words of prayer my whole life. As long as I can remember I have come into God's presence on the Lord's day praying "Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy Holy Name." Each week we approached Holy Communion praying "Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his Blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his Body and our souls washed through his most precious Blood, and that we may

evermore dwell in him, and he in us" (*The Book of Common Prayer*).

With such a rich patrimony it seemed my pilgrimage had been well supplied with food for the journey. But as the recent history of Anglicanism has shown, when we as prodigals leave our generous Father's home, no matter how rich the inheritance we take with us, our wealth will be exhausted and we will one day know our hunger and long to return to His table.

The meaning of suffering

My family of origin rejoiced in the love of our parents and the gifts they both brought to their marriage. However, we struggled with the consequences of my father's illness. For the last several years of his life,

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Journeys Home

...Journeys Home Continued...

until his death at 42, he and my mother tried to support his health in the midst of the demands of professional and family life. Losing a parent in childhood set my heart on my invisible Father: I was convinced that what is invisible is even more real than what is visible. Our family is quite close; my mother and three siblings are all thankful for the gift of faith and are active in their church communities, both Anglican and non-denominational.

My husband, Jonathan, and I both renewed our commitment to discipleship as young adults; we met during our undergraduate studies in music and were married in 1984, before undertaking our professional degrees. He was ordained to the Anglican priesthood in 1988 and I graduated from medical school in 1989. My first hunger for deeper Catholic truth came after our first child was born in 1992 with a rare, sporadic genetic disorder that included a lethal, congenital heart malformation and a developmental disability that is an obstacle to independent living. We were loved and prayed through our son's open-heart surgery at the age of 6 months and he is now a healthy young man with a love of life.

Despite the blessings of his "happy ending," I was left wrestling with the meaning of suffering, particularly what Paul meant by "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (Col 1:24). Many well intentioned friends offered the comfort that one day we would understand God's purposes...but what about our son? What about the meaning of his day-to-day experience of limitations and isolation? The potential intellectual satisfaction of understanding was a faint glimmer compared to the radiant joy of Paul's incarnated fellowship in Christ's redemptive suffering. Was that joy meant for all believers or just the Apostle? Turning elsewhere in Scripture for comfort, I took solace in knowing

that the sword of Jesus' suffering had pierced His mother's heart (Lk 2:35) and so I was not alone on my journey. Even before we knew our son's diagnosis, we had named him Thomas, the disciple who knew the Lord through the privilege of touching His wounded body. Reading the meditations of Henri Nouwen and Jean Vanier on disability were like water in a desert. I still love John Paul II's thoughts, as quoted by Vanier:

Disabled people are...living icons of the crucified Son. They reveal the mysterious beauty of the One who emptied himself for our sake and made himself obedient unto death. (*Message of John Paul II on the Occasion of the International Symposium on The Dignity and Rights of the Mentally Disabled Person*)

How could we truly complete Christ's afflictions as members of His Body and manifest His beauty? Around this time, a dear Catholic friend from medical school gave us a beautiful hand-carved crucifix. The mystery of participating in God's ongoing work of creation through sharing Christ's sufferings became precious to me.

And so, God was still graciously giving me food for my journey: the joys and busyness of family and professional life were still deeply satisfying. We welcomed a healthy daughter, Elspeth, in 1996 and delighted in the unique way in which she too reflects the beauty of her Creator. My Catholic friend and I invited each other to be godmothers to our second children.

Desire for unity

My husband and I dearly loved our parish and it grew into a life-giving community, where many felt they encountered God in word and Anglican sacraments just as the disciples had done on the road to Emmaus (see Luke 24:13-35). It was as though we lived in the joy and peace of Tolkien's Shire, but there were

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



TELEVISION

Mondays at 8 PM ET — Encores: Tuesdays 1 AM ET, Fridays 1 PM ET

The Best of the Journey Home: Monday-Thursday 1 PM ET

RADIO

Mondays at 8:00 PM ET — Encores: Saturdays 7 AM ET, Sundays 1 AM ET

The Best of the Journey Home: Monday-Thursday 12 AM ET

May 5

Most Rev. Kevin Vann*
Bishop of Orange, CA

May 12

Leslie Blackwell*
Revert

May 19

Fr. Jurgen Liias*
Former Anglican priest

May 26

Collin Raye*
Former Southern Baptist
Re-air from 6/11/12

*Schedule is subject to change.

...Journeys Home Continued...

dark clouds gathering on the Anglican horizon. As we matured as a family and a parish, we began to take seriously the need for faithful leadership on the larger stage of national and international Anglicanism. Theological and moral dissent was threatening the ability of local congregations to proclaim the word and faithfully administer the sacraments by undermining the trust between pastors and their bishops.

As the Anglican Communion approached the once-a-decade meeting of all the world's Anglican bishops at Lambeth in 2008, it became clear that Anglicanism as we had known it was in crisis. Rather than honoring Christ's prayer for unity in John 17, bishops in North America were reinterpreting Scripture in order to bless relationships that could not reflect the "great mystery" of Christ the bridegroom's union with His Bride the Church (see Ephesians 5). Consequently, many bishops would no longer share Holy Communion with the revisionist bishops or support a meeting that did not take the need for unity seriously.

As a family, we planned pilgrimages to Great Britain to affirm God's faithfulness in bringing us the gospel through our Anglican roots despite all the storms of history that have battered that family tree. In 2008, we explored how the Christian Faith had come to Britain through unknown Roman citizens and began to put down roots and bear fruit. Beginning in 385, the withdrawal of the Roman legions from Britain led to the breakdown of cohesive governance. We were particularly drawn to the witness of the Celtic church, which through strong monastic communities had effectively evangelized many in the midst of the social upheaval. We stood on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, where St. Cuthbert lived and prayed, and knew that nothing could separate us from the love of God. St. Cuthbert had presided over the Celtic monastic community on Lindisfarne in 664 when they accepted the authority of Rome at the Synod of Whitby, requiring reform of their traditions. Their faith inspired the "Father of English History," St. Bede, and survived the Viking raids of the ninth century and the Norman Conquest of the eleventh century. We stood in St. Mary the Virgin in Oxford and read the plaque marking both Catholic and Protestant martyrs of the sixteenth century as members of one community. In Westminster Abbey, at the tombs housing the remains of Elizabeth I

and Mary I, we prayed for the unity hoped for in the inscription on Elizabeth's tomb: "Partners both in throne and grave, here rest we two sisters, Elizabeth and Mary in the hope of one resurrection."

We thought we had fallen into a story like that of the Celtic church: we were entering a storm of dissolution and with our little community we needed to work for the re-establishment of the larger Anglican church's stability. Were we called to live through a period of ecclesiological chaos by faithfully witnessing to the gospel with our local community? We did not yet discern that the true storm was the English Reformation itself, which had separated the English Church from its true roots. As in the Celtic Church, only by welcoming reunion with Rome would we know the full joy of God's faithfulness. It would not be a revitalized Anglican *via media* (Latin: middle way) between Protestantism and Catholicism, but Roman Catholicism that would again offer the unshakable foundation on which Jesus intended His Church to be built.

In 2010, we traced the roots of our favorite stories: *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. We had the privilege of visiting Oxford, in the ancient kingdom of Mercia, that is depicted by Tolkien as the Shire, and Northern Ireland, the landscape that shaped Narnia. We hoped that our lives would resemble these great stories: that despite the temptation to turn

back in the face of darkness, we might grasp the chance to persevere and take our place in a "tale that really mattered" and to travel "farther up and farther in" to our true home beyond this world.

Without realizing the significance of July 12th, we were in Belfast on Orangemen's Day, when Northern Ireland Protestants celebrate the defeat of the Catholic pretender to the throne of England. We realized the truth of Tolkien's observation on C.S. Lewis's conversion to Christianity: "Lewis would regress. He would not re-enter Christianity by a new door, but by the old one: at least in the sense that in taking it up again he would also take up again, or reawaken, the prejudices so sedulously planted in childhood and boyhood. He would become again a Northern Ireland Protestant." The unimaginable depth of hostility between the communities shocked us and made us realize how far Lewis had come by embracing sacramental reality to the extent that he did. *Continued on page 5* ▶

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CHNetwork Online

By JonMarc Grodi



Over the past few years the CHNetwork has been making better use of the internet to encourage inquirers, converts, reverts, as well as life-long Catholics on their respective journeys of conversion. As our online activity has increased and diversified — a more dynamic and content-oriented website, fellowship through social media and our forum, videos, and more — it has become clear that the “digital continent” is and will continue to be a crucial mission field for the CHNetwork.

In March we launched a new version of the CHNetwork.org website. In addition to making our resources more available to converts and inquirers coming to us for help, we hope to use the website to take a more active role in the New Evangelization: presenting the beauty and fullness of truth found in the Catholic Faith and emphasizing the need for every Christian to pursue lifelong conversion to Jesus Christ.

If you haven't had a chance to visit our website for a while, here are a few items to check out and to share with family and friends:

DEEP IN HISTORY — We have a brand new History page on which we will feature a variety of resources on Church History, including some videos from our past conferences!

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE radio is back now on EWTN Radio 2 and you'll find new episodes along with other scriptural resources on our Scripture page.

DEEP IN CHRIST — I myself am working on a new series of interviews and discussions with Catholic converts (and converted Catholics!) on the call to holiness and the process of continual conversion, of which becoming authentically Catholic is but one of the first steps. We hope to launch the project this summer but if you'd like a preview, one of this month's featured resources (pg C) is a pilot episode I filmed with Joseph Pearce. Check it out!

CONVERSION STORIES + THE JOURNEY HOME PROGRAM — New episodes of EWTN's *The Journey Home Program* are now being archived on our website and we are in the process of adding past episodes as well. These programs will show up among our conversion story archives so that they can be browsed or searched by former denomination or the issues discussed. Be sure to check out our new *Journey Home Program* and *Conversion Stories* pages!

Thanks for your continued support and for connecting with us in prayer and learning through the monthly *CHNewsletter*. Until next time, be sure to stop by the new website or give us a shout-out over Facebook or Twitter, and don't hesitate to contact us with questions or suggestions. ■



A Look at Our Work

By CHNetwork Staff

Since most of the CHNetwork membership is not able to stop by our office or have a lengthy conversation with a staff member regarding our day-to-day work, we have compiled some reflections on our ministry to give you insight into some of the struggles and joys that we encounter as we interact with those on the journey to the Catholic Church. We humbly ask your continued support and prayers for the CHNetwork and for those who feel drawn towards the Catholic Faith.



Ken Howell,
Resident Theologian

Over the past year I have been privileged to work with many non-Catholic clergy and academics who are on the journey to the Catholic Church or who are trying to adjust to the Church after having been confirmed and received. Great joy filled me this past December when a couple in their thirties with four children made a successful transition into the Church after a year's worth of dialogue, struggle, and prayer. Seeing others experience the joy of the Eucharist reminds me of the exultation I felt when receiving my first communion as a Catholic. There is something wonderful about being home! At times, sadness has filled me as well because I have seen some who struggle financially after entering the Church. Their heart's desire is to be obedient to God's call upon their life, a call that for them has meant great sacrifice.

Perhaps the most difficult cases are those like mine when it took fourteen years for my wife to join me in the Church. Nothing seems to wrench the Christian heart like the feeling of separation from the one you have loved and pledged yourself to. I have seen both husbands and wives in enormous pain because they seem to face an impossible situation. They desire more than anything to be in the Church and to partake of Christ's Body and Blood but they equally desire to do so with their spouses at their side. When a spouse refuses to do so, or even worse, refuses to discuss the matter openly, the pain of alienation can be felt on both sides. Still, as Paul says, "hope does not disappoint us." Even in the seemingly most desperate situations, hope fills us with the promise of a brighter tomorrow. Paul says hope does not disappoint because "the love of God is poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us" (Rom 5:5). We at the CHNetwork always counsel patience and caution in such circumstances because God is not finished with either us or our spouses.



Jim Anderson,
*Senior Advisor —
History & Theology*

It is my pleasure to usually be the first person to talk with Protestant clergy when they initially contact CHNetwork. Many of them come to us with many questions and concerns. Often they are over doctrinal issues, such as the papacy or the Blessed Virgin. More often, though, they are concerned about the future. How are they going to talk to their spouse about the Catholic Church? How are they to inform their congregation and their denominational superiors that they will be leaving the ministry? Then what!? How will they provide for their family? Where will they get a new job? Recently we were contacted by a young Evangelical missionary couple serving in Mexico. Fortunately for them, they are both on the same page concerning their newfound Catholic faith, but this means that they cannot stay in Mexico and must return to the United States and find employment to support their growing family. Most of the Protestant clergy who contact us do not find themselves in such dramatic circumstances but most must deal with some opposition from spouses, family, friends, and congregations, as well as the financial disruption of leaving the ministry. With all of this the Lord continues to draw people Home to the Catholic Church. On average two to three ministers continue to contact our office each week requesting our assistance. Each and every one of these brothers and sisters is a blessing to work with. Recently, I had the privilege of meeting some of these men and women at a small retreat the CHNetwork sponsored for non-Catholic clergy and those who have been received into the Catholic Church. It is always a blessing to learn how God has worked in these people's lives and has drawn them closer to Christ and His Church.



Brother Rex Anthony Norris

Here are a few examples of my ministry to individuals who contact the Coming Home Network for help:

■ Carolyn's husband has threatened to leave her and fight for full custody of their three children if she doesn't stop attending Mass and remove their children from parochial school. Her husband, a former Catholic, has come under the sway of a large Protestant sect with decidedly anti-Catholic leanings. Together with Carolyn I am praying for her husband's conversion and for clear direction as to how best to navigate this unfortunate situation.

■ John is the senior pastor of a large evangelical Protestant congregation. He has been studying the Catholic Church — her history and doctrines — for some time now. He very much wants to resign his pastorate and enter the Catholic Church. His family shares his desire. We are in the process of prayerfully discerning when and how he will make the transition from Protestant clergyman to Catholic layman.

■ Margaret is a convert living in the United Kingdom. She is discerning a call to consecrated life as a Benedictine Nun. As a convert and a man in consecrated life I am able to share my own experience, strength and hope with her as she prayerfully considers what this call from the Lord will mean for her and her relationship with family and friends, not all of whom are supportive of her entrance into the Catholic Church, let alone the possibility of her entrance into a convent.

Thanks to your ongoing support of the CHNetwork I am able to help these sisters and brothers in Christ walk the journey into deeper and deeper communion with Christ in His Church.

**Names have been changed and the situations altered slightly to respect the privacy of individuals.*



**Kevin Lowry,
Chief Operating Officer**

One of the most profound challenges our clergy members encounter in their journey to the Catholic Church is that of what to do about employment. For many of them, their entire adult lives have been spent being prepared for, and then actively participating in, full-time ministry.

So what happens when that paradigm is completely changed? As a CPA, I've thought of it in terms of learning the accounting and tax rules of a particular country, spending my life anticipating a career there — and then falling in love with a woman from a foreign country and emigrating. Wouldn't the thought of learning new rules and principles (not to mention un-learning others) be daunting? Leaving your professional connections behind? Learning a new language while attempting to make a living?

Thankfully, by God's grace, there is hope. Many of our clergy members go through the equivalent of job-retraining, and often begin with a program called The Gifted Vocation. This self-study program helps them to "take a step back" and assess their unique gifts and talents in a new context. Through the creator of the program, professional career coach Suzanne Freiberg, many of our members have found new purpose and discovered fresh possibilities previously not even considered.

This program is just one example of the "Network" aspect of CHNetwork. We're grateful to be of assistance to clergy on the journey, or who have come into full communion with the Church. Please join us in praying for those in need.



**Mary Clare Pieczynski,
Publications and Laity Coordinator**

I am fortunate to be able to work with lay men and women who feel called to the Catholic Church. While they may not experience some of the specific struggles that non-Catholic clergy experience, these men and women nevertheless often have profound faith journeys that inspire me with their dedication and perseverance. Each week I compile a list of the needs of the individuals with whom I have corresponded by e-mail or phone and ask the rest of the CHNetwork staff to join me in praying for their intentions. One might be for the man who asks us for advice for how to be supportive of his wife's concerns and doubts about the Catholic Faith while he is feeling drawn to enter the Catholic Church. Others struggle with how to tell their family and friends of their impending conversion. Of course, we receive numerous requests to help clarify or explain Catholic teachings and why Catholics believe certain doctrines. We at the CHNetwork strive to provide continual support, encouragement, and information for those on the journey to the Catholic Church, whether they be non-Catholic clergy or laity. ■

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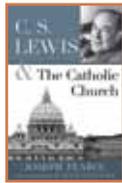
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FEATURED RESOURCES



Joseph Pearce *Deep in Christ* DVD

JonMarc Grodi invites author and former agnostic Joseph Pearce to discuss the process of continual conversion in everyday life balancing the physical, spiritual, and intellectual life, as well as how good fiction aids our ongoing conversion. This is a preview episode of "Deep in Christ", a new video series from the Coming Home Network beginning this summer.



C. S. Lewis and the Catholic Church

— By Joseph Pearce

C. S. Lewis, the great British novelist and Christian apologist, has been credited by many—including the author—for aiding their journey to the Catholic Church. In *C. S. Lewis and the Catholic Church*, Joseph Pearce delves into Lewis's life, writings, and spiritual influences. Although C. S. Lewis's conversion to Christianity was greatly influenced by J. R. R. Tolkien, a Catholic, and although Lewis embraced many distinctively Catholic teachings, such as purgatory and the sacrament of Confession, he never formally entered the Church. Meticulously researched and beautifully written, this book digs deep to present the facts of Lewis's life, to illuminate key points in his writings, and to ask the question: Was C. S. Lewis on the path to Rome? This revised and updated edition—with a new introduction by Father Dwight Longenecker—is a fascinating historical, biographical, theological, and literary account of a man whose writings have led scores to the Catholic Church, despite never having become a Catholic himself.

\$35

For a donation of \$35, receive the *Deep in Christ* DVD.

\$50

For a donation of \$50, receive *C.S. Lewis and the Catholic Church*.

\$75

For a donation of \$75, receive the *Deep in Christ* DVD and *C.S. Lewis and the Catholic Church*.

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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.

These donations support all aspects of our small non-profit apostolate. Thank you for your support!

CHNETWORK MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Coming Home Network International (CHNetwork) is to help inquiring clergy as well as laity of other traditions to return home and then be at home in the Catholic Church. To learn more about our work, please go to www.chnetwork.org.

...Journeys Home Continued...

► “Journeys Home” continued from page 3

“The Weight of Glory,” a sermon delivered by C.S. Lewis from the pulpit of St Mary’s Oxford, is a breathtakingly beautiful exposition of the things that “God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). His wisdom seemed to witness to the integrity of the Anglican Church and yet now we wondered whether “Mere Christianity” was enough.

The next summer we were visiting with my faithful Catholic friend and updating her on our ecclesiological struggles. With a mixture of sympathy and exasperation she pointed out (not for the first time) that I was her “most Catholic friend” and why weren’t we Catholic? In 2009, Pope Benedict XVI had announced *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, an Apostolic Constitution that invited Anglicans to come into full communion with the Catholic Church. By 2011, the structures were starting to be put in place for Anglican groups to come into full communion and retain elements of their worship tradition, such as those well-loved prayers that really were *lex orandi, lex credendi* (Latin: the law of prayer, [is] the law of belief). Our friends had heard a radio interview with a former Anglican priest who had been ordained within the Catholic Church under Pope John Paul II’s Pastoral Provision; it seemed obvious to them where our future lay. But at the time, we explained our hopes for Anglican renewal and confidence in conciliar government rather than the Petrine ministry. Their persistent welcome to us lived out paragraph 819 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

“many elements of sanctification and of truth” are found outside the visible confines of the Catholic Church: “the written Word of God; the life of grace;

faith, hope, and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as visible elements.” Christ’s Spirit uses these Churches and ecclesial communities as means of salvation, whose power derives from the fullness of grace and truth that Christ has entrusted to the Catholic Church. All these blessings come from Christ and lead to him, and are in themselves calls to “Catholic unity.”

“Reformed catholicity”

One of the most respected international Anglican leaders declined the “gracious offer” of *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, but as an alternative expressed his vision for Anglicans to live out

“reformed catholicity.” I decided that if we were to grasp “reformed catholicity,” I needed to have a firmer grasp of how Anglicanism grew from its Catholic roots. Week by week, Anglicans affirm their faith in the words of the Nicene Creed, but what did it really mean to say “I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church”?

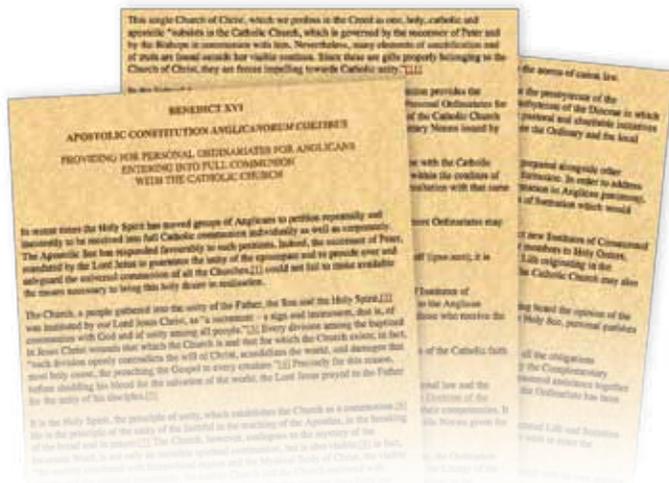
During that same visit in 2011, my friend recommended Scott

Hahn’s *Signs of Life: 40 Catholic Customs and Their Biblical Roots*. Perfect! I thought; when we got home, I found that, while the title my friend had recommended had been checked out from our public library, they did have the same author’s *Reasons to Believe: How to Understand, Explain, and Defend the Catholic Faith*. Being an avid reader, I thought I’d get a better sense of Hahn’s point of view if I read more than one of his works. And so I unsuspectingly brought home a book that would change the direction of our quest.

Hahn’s book of apologetics not only covered the familiar grounds for conversion to Christ, but also boldly made the case for conversion to the Catholic Church, including exegesis of Matthew 16 that pointed to Isaiah 22. I had never before encountered the scriptural underpinnings of the keys given to Peter; that they represent not just his confession of faith, but also the office of the Davidic steward. Disconcerted, I checked the many study Bibles in our home and could find no cross-references to Isaiah 22.

The absence of references to this compelling exposition of Jesus’ solution to the problem of authority within the Church was unsettling — why was this not being taught in our Anglican tradition with its high view of the sufficiency of Scripture? Our consciences were formed by the sixth of the foundational Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion found in the Book of Common Prayer (1662): “Holy Scriptures containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be

I decided that if we were to grasp “reformed catholicity,” I needed to have a firmer grasp of how Anglicanism grew from its Catholic roots.



proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.” The Articles go on to recognize the need for the Church to exercise “authority in controversies of faith” (Article XX) and for the Church to give her authority publically to those sent to minister in the Lord’s Vineyard (Article XXII). But who was giving the Church *her* Authority?

We had a pressing need for a rock on which to build our house! In John 17, Jesus promised that it was unity amongst His disciples that would witness His love to the world. And yet it was becoming painfully obvious that, even with the formation of a new North American Anglican province in 2009, Anglican ecclesiology was no closer to the creedal marks of being “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic,” as differences remained on sacramental theology. Could it be that we were living in the time when Lewis’ hope that the “...tragic farce which we call this history of the Reformation” was being healed by “mature and saintly disputants”?

Blessed Mary

Throughout the fall of 2011 and the spring of 2012, I read voraciously, participated in online forums, and regularly prayed in the Catholic perpetual adoration chapel near our home. Being in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament was enough to convince me that transubstantiation was true; the Real Presence I had been taught by the Anglican catechism was only *part* of the truth. I was trying to work out whether I could truly accept that Jesus had gifted the Petrine office with the authority that would allow me to say “I believe and profess all that the holy Catholic Church believes, teaches, and proclaims to be revealed by God.”

I needed to work at reforming my conscience to recognize that the Church, which had grown from a mustard seed to a great tree (Lk 13:18-19), had been led into truth (Jn 16:13) when she promulgated the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854. Anglicans regularly pray the Magnificat in Evening Prayer and I truly wanted to “call (Mary) blessed” (Lk 1:48). Marian dogma at the time of the English Reformation had not been captured in *The Book of Common Prayer* and so there is a wide range of belief and practice within the Anglican Communion. Some Anglican churches continue to bless “Mary, ever Virgin”, but increasingly, this devotion has fallen away from common

worship. As for the Immaculate Conception, our estrangement from the See of Peter meant we were missing the centuries of discussion and exegesis that had led to its promulgation. Hadn’t Thomas Aquinas himself contested the doctrine? Why was it now taught as dogma?

I rejoiced in the generosity of God that could have granted the Virgin Mary freedom from our first parents’ fall. But could Mary’s seemingly effortless holiness, as depicted in popular piety, really make her the model disciple (Lk 8:21) or help her be

a mother to God’s fallen, struggling children? Could God not have rendered the Holy Child immaculate in the Blessed Virgin’s womb and given her the grace she needed minute by minute: to mother Him and to battle the impulses of a fallen heart? It was when I began to contemplate the meaning of Mary’s Immaculate Heart that light began to dawn, and with St. Augustine, my belief in the Church grew into understanding of her dogma: “Therefore do not seek to understand in order to believe, but believe that thou mayest understand.” Mary’s Immaculate Conception gave her the freedom and strength to truly guard the door of her heart (1 Pet 5:8) against the whisperings of Satan who stalks all the decisions of our lives with these haunting words: “did God truly say?” (Gn 3:1). Her holiness was not effortless. She clung to God’s grace, so that she was truly full of grace; we see in her question “how can this

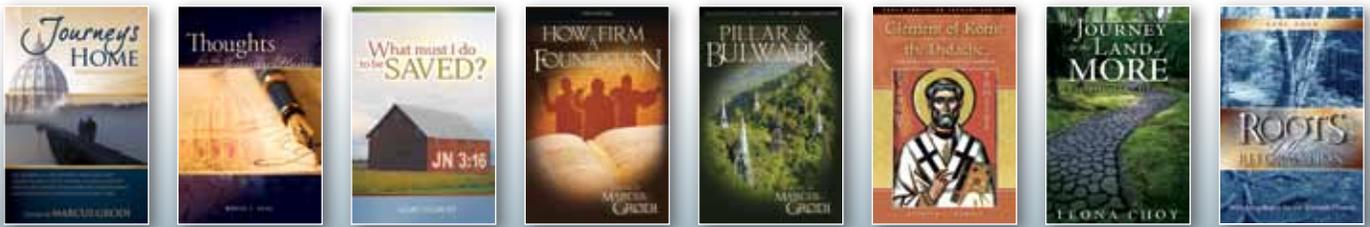
“ It was when I began to contemplate the meaning of Mary’s Immaculate Heart that light began to dawn, and with St. Augustine, my belief in the Church grew into understanding of her dogma...”



be...” (Lk 1:34) the habits of a strong and practiced holy heart. Her lifelong experience of *cooperating* with grace prepared her to say “Let it be with me according to your word” (Lk 1:38) and to become a spiritual mother to us all (Jn 19:27, Rev 12:17). The beauty and power of her self-giving became like the burning bush: a radiant, unconsumed witness to God’s longing to see holiness brought to birth once for all in Jesus and in the ongoing incarnation of His Body, the Church.

Blessed with hope

By the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25, 2012 (Tolkien had chosen that date for the destruction of the ring), both my husband and I had become convinced that the Catholic Church is who she says she is. We were incredibly thankful that, through all the reading and heartache of discovering the inherent tension between the founding tenets of Anglicanism and biblical



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...Journeys Home Continued...

ecclesiology, we were given the grace to walk together on this new journey. We were received into the Catholic Church on July 18th, 2012 through the North American Ordinate, the community sharing the liturgy shaped by Anglican tradition that has been constructed at Pope Benedict's invitation.

The heartbreaking work of sharing our conversion with our friends and family is only recently behind us. In Blessed John Henry Newman's autobiography, he described the years of conversion as "the *'infandum dolorem'* [Latin: unutterable grief] of years, in which the stars of this lower heaven were one by one going out" (*Apologia Pro Vita Sua*). I am certain that there were prayers of many in the communion of saints, some of whom I will never know, who lightened that journey and sped our steps. The metaphor of stars again brings Tolkien's Sam Gamgee to mind, as he labored through doubt and exhaustion on his quest:

There, peeping among the cloud-wrack above a dark tor high up in the mountains, Sam saw a white star twinkle for a while. The beauty of it smote his heart, as he looked up out of the forsaken land, and hope returned to him. For like a shaft, clear and cold, the thought pierced him that in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing; there was light and high beauty for ever beyond its reach. (*The Lord of the Rings*, book VI, chapter II, "The Land of Shadow")

While our lower heaven darkened, we were taught how to offer up our sufferings and were blessed with hope.

There is a dream-like quality to becoming Catholic as an Anglican. As the darkness of loss fades and the light of faith dawns, it is like waking up in the house I've lived in all my days and finding that there is so much more life in it than I have been shown. A bit like going through the wardrobe to Narnia. The "stately home" of creed and liturgy is familiar, but is becoming so much more vivid; it's as though long-loved statues and paintings can now come to life and speak and move to reveal so much more of their Creator's heart. All the prayers I have treasured are found in the Ordinate's Liturgy of the Eucharist, enriched with the full Catholic truth of the Eucharistic sacrifice and Real Presence. What seemed to be "private interpretations," such as my cherishing of Colossians 1:24 as a key to suffering, is no longer a simple tune I hum to myself, but the theme of great

symphonic variations such as St. John Paul II's *Salvifici Doloris*. We are so thankful for the faithfulness of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and Pope Francis to Jesus' commission to "strengthen your brethren" (Lk 22:32). The new depths of sacramental grace and the full communion of saints will sustain us as our story continues to unfold. We are only beginning to explore...

And therefore we also having so great a cloud of witnesses over our head, laying aside every weight and sin which surrounds us, let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us: Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2, *Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition*) ■



My husband, Jonathan, was ordained first to the transitional deaconate, then to the Catholic priesthood in May of 2013, on the memorial of St. Bede. He is actively fostering the New Evangelization. Our children were young adults at the time of our reception and they continued to attend our former parish at first. Our daughter began attending both the Ordinate and Anglican parishes for several months then chose to be received into full communion at Easter Vigil 2013. Our son is beginning to attend the Ordinate parish more regularly; I wonder what sort of tale he has fallen into?

BLOG

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