



November 2014 CHNewsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



The Long Way Home...

By Kevin Wynn

I was raised Seventh-day Adventist (SDA). My father’s side of the family is all Adventist; my mother’s side of the family is all Southern Baptist. My mother converted for my father and, ironically, turned out to be a more committed Adventist than he was! Thus, my sister and I were raised in the Adventist Church.

I can remember a brown brick church that we used to pass just down the road from our church; it was a tall, gothic looking building that I instinctively recognized as a church. I remember asking my father if we could go to that church sometime. He told me that those people had very different beliefs than ours, and that they were “almost Catholic.” I learned at a young age that Catholic meant “bad” even though I didn’t understand why. If those people were Christian, I couldn’t understand how their beliefs could be so different that my father wouldn’t even be comfortable going into their building. A few times I remember asking what made Catholics different and the answers I received were tempered to whatever age I happened to be. As I matured, I was told that, according to an Adventist prophet, the Pope, the head of the Catholic Church, was actually the antichrist.

Trying to understand faith amidst turbulence

I was twelve years old when my parents got a divorce. Adventists don’t believe in divorce, and have a very similar understanding as Catholics

of the sanctity of marriage. Not long after that, as the sordid details of the break up were still coming out, my father got married again (to someone who apparently had been waiting in the wings). I was devastated and stopped taking anything he said too seriously. I started to wonder if there was anything to the “truth” I had been taught.

I need to give my mother credit for keeping it together through that difficult time. Had I not witnessed the faith with which she faced that situation, I might have walked away from the church forever. My father died suddenly of a heart attack at the young age of forty-four. I didn’t cry much about my father’s death at the time (although I have since). It was hard to find comfort in our faith, which pretty much consigned my dad to hell for having abandoned the faith to divorce my mom and remarry. The belief was that once you know the “truth” of the Adventist faith and then turn your back on it, you are lost. If you, through no fault of your own, were raised in another faith, and never came to know the “truth” of the Adventist teaching, you still had a chance at being saved. They would say “even Catholics might be saved”

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Journeys Home

...Journeys Home Continued...

if they were living according to the light that was revealed to them.” On the other hand, once you came to know the “truth,” you were responsible for acting on it. If you chose to ignore the teachings of the Adventist Church after you had been made aware of them, you were certainly lost. (I believe this is one reason why there are so few converts from the Adventist Church.)

However, because of another teaching of the Adventist Faith, I was sure that my father was not suffering any sort of punishment — yet. Adventist teach “soul sleep,” which means when you die you cease to *be* — period — until the resurrection.

Wanting to go deeper

I’m sure that any Protestants reading this are familiar with the term “revival.” The Adventist Church doesn’t hold revivals, as such; they have “Revelation seminars.” Whenever doubt starts to creep in, you can find a Revelation seminar to attend to get a booster shot of Adventism! When I was in high school I remember going to one that my church was holding at a local school. Revelation seminars are largely based on the Book of Revelation and usually last about one week. Every night, you are systematically drawn deeper into Adventist “Revealed Truth,” and, by the end you are either convinced that they are way off base, or that the Pope is actually the antichrist. These seminars make a very convincing argument. I even know of some former Catholics who have been drawn into believing this.

After the Revelation seminar, I was convinced that our church was the only way to heaven, and I wanted to lead others to understand the “truth.” I prayed and asked God to show me these things in the Bible, so that I could lead others to Him. I remember reading the Book of Revelation, trying to pick out the differ-

ent points from the seminar. I was starting to get very frustrated, because some of the things they talked about were in there, but they seemed to have been taken out of context. A basic reading of Revelation will show there are errors in the Adventist timing of all the events. However, at the time, I thought myself fortunate to have been born Adventist — because, there was no way I could have figured all this out on my own!

Confusion amidst revival

We had a wonderful preacher who made the Bible come alive for me. I greatly enjoyed his sermons. He had a son who was my age and we became good friends. Sometimes after church, I would go over to his house. On one occasion, I went to his refrigerator to get a drink and noticed a bottle of wine. Adventists are not supposed to drink. I couldn’t understand why our preacher would have wine in his home. I asked my friend about this. “Jesus drank wine,” he responded. I couldn’t believe what I was hearing! Some Protestant churches even use grape juice for communion, no matter what their stand on drinking, I argued. My friend pointed out a couple of Bible verses that clearly showed the wine they were drinking in Jesus’ day was fermented. Could the Bible be *wrong*? Not long after this, our preacher left and started his own church, taking a good percentage of our membership with him. This was something that was unheard of in the Adventist Church.

Our new preacher was straight out of the seminary. He preached a good sermon, though, and followed Adventist teaching to the letter. He was also the new teacher of our Sabbath School class. With my newfound conviction that what our church taught might be wrong,

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FEATURED RESOURCES



What Did Jesus REALLY Say about the End of the World? (DVD)

— By Marcus Grodi & David B. Currie

In this two-part DVD discussion, Marcus Grodi and David B. Currie discuss the confusion that exists today about what Jesus predicted concerning the end of the world. Did Jesus predict that He would return to completely judge the world within a generation? Were Paul and Peter wrong about when the final eschaton would come? Did they believe the world would end in their lifetimes? Marcus and David also discuss the confusion that exists today about the Great Tribulation. Will the Rapture occur at any moment? Will that event inaugurate a 7-year tribulation that refocuses on Israel and the Temple?

\$35

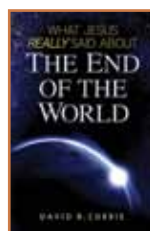
Receive *What Did Jesus REALLY Say about the End of the World?* (DVD) for a donation of \$35.

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Receive *What Jesus Really Said About the End of the World* (book) for a donation of \$50.

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Receive *What Did Jesus REALLY Say about the End of the World?* (DVD) and *What Jesus Really Said About the End of the World* (book) for a donation of \$75.



What Jesus Really Said About the End of the World (Book)

— By David B. Currie

With global events sparking bold predictions by Christian preachers and New Age gurus alike about the imminent end times, popular author and speaker David B. Currie has conducted a thorough study of what Jesus actually tells us about the end of the age and His Second Coming.

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St. John Chrysostom: The Golden Voice of Love*

By Kenneth J. Howell, Ph.D.

Though the month of September is now past, the fourteenth of that month is a day to remember. It is filled with celestial graces for those who can perceive and receive them. It was on September 14th that one of the most celebrated martyrs of the African church offered up his life for Christ, for his gospel, and for his Church. On that day St. Cyprian of Carthage died for the integrity and unity of the Church. If saints in heaven could anguish, he would still be reeling from the corruption and disunity among those called Christians. September fourteenth also celebrates the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross that marks St. Helena's transporting of the true cross of Christ from the Holy Land to Rome. And that same day in 407 AD witnessed the greatest preacher of the Greek-speaking church dying on his way to permanent exile near the Black Sea. St. John Chrysostom (ca. 346-407) is celebrated in the East as one of the three great Hierarchs of Byzantine Christianity.



Like St. Augustine in the western church, St. John Chrysostom left us more words than any other Greek-speaking Church Father. His homilies and speeches are some of the most extensive commentaries on Scripture that we possess from antiquity. This son of Antioch was born around 346 to Christian parents who ensured their son's success by sending him to one of the greatest pagan orators of late antiquity, Libanius. John put his training to good use when he decided to retreat to a cave in the wilderness outside Antioch where he committed large portions of the Old Testament to memory. This memory served him well in preaching at Antioch as a deacon and then a priest. In 397, Chrysostom was consecrated the Patriarch of Constantinople, the capital of the eastern Empire, where he found high acclaim from many people but also angered many in the royal household.

St. John Chrysostom is called the Doctor of the Eucharist in the western church and with good reason. Although he never devoted a homily to the subject per se, the majority of his homilies eventually end up introducing the Eucharist as a way of applying the biblical text to his hearers. As a consequence, he wrote more on the Eucharist than any other eastern Church Father, but he always did so by emphasizing the liturgical home of the Eucharist. In keeping with an emphasis evident in other eastern Fathers, Chrysostom always portrays the liturgy as the union of heaven and earth.

The Divine Liturgy brings into one the earthly and the heavenly Church so that heaven, with all its citizens, are among the faithful on earth. In turn, the earthly Church at liturgy participates in the eternal praise of God offered by the angels and saints above. One of John's favorite scriptural passages was Isaiah 6:1-7 from which the Church, both East and West, has taken

the Sanctus ("Holy, Holy, Holy"). In his *Homily Six on Isaiah*, Chrysostom glories in this union of heaven and earth:

Did you recognize this sound? Is it ours or the Seraphim's? It is in fact ours and the Seraphim's. This is because Christ destroyed the dividing wall of partition when he made peace between the things in heaven and on earth. It is because he made them both one. This hymn was first known only in heaven but the Master deemed it right to descend to the earth and to bring down this melody to us. This great high priest, when he stands at this holy table offering rational worship and lifting up the bloodless sacrifice, he is not simply calling on us for this praise. When he spoke to the Cherubim and reminded the Seraphim, he commanded everyone to send up this most awesome sound, thereby drawing our understanding away from the earth by the memory of this united chorus. He all but cried out to each of us, "you sing with the Seraphim, you stand with the Seraphim, flap your wings with them, and with them fly around the royal throne."

The absolutely unique character of the Divine Liturgy, then, implies that there is no other place or moment in the life of the Christian where he or she can experience the realities of heaven so objectively, so intensely. And the uniqueness of divine worship lies in the irreplaceable fact of the Eucharist as the fullness of the Son of God. In several of his homilies on the life of Christ, St. John affirms that the Christian today has the same access to Jesus Christ as those who encountered Him when He was on earth. The events of Jesus's life — miracles, teachings, healings — are all available to one who receives Him in the Eucharist.

*This article appeared in *Crisis Magazine Online*, www.crisismagazine.com, in a slightly modified form.

Such an auspicious event calls for the Christian to be well prepared for Holy Communion. While John Chrysostom eventually will mention all the moral virtues, his overwhelming focus falls on the problem of the lack of forgiveness and an embittered heart. As a master spiritual guide, John saw that the root of bitterness could destroy a pure heart and soil it with the filth of hate. To receive Christ in the Eucharist means to receive Love itself and the only disposition proper to such an act is a heart open to Love. “Christ always commands us to be pure of heart because this mystery of the Eucharist is a mystery of peace” (*Homily Fifty on Matthew*).

Chrysostom had learned well the lessons of the cross, how Jesus had prayed for those who crucified Him. In his sermon *On the Cross and the Thief*, St. John urged his hearers to imitate the Savior’s example by praying for their enemies. On numerous occasions he returns to this theme with the hope that their hearts would expand with love. He juxtaposes two words which capture the essence of forgiveness. He calls all to “put away enmity and pusillanimity” because the former inevitably leads to the latter. What is the difference between people that are generous, open-minded, and giving (i.e. magnanimous) and those who are selfish, self-interested, and closed off from others (i.e. pusillanimous)? Enmity, hatred, and anger shrink the soul and close it off from the enormous love for humanity that flows from the heart of God.

In numerous homilies, the golden-tongued St. John urges his congregation to extend the forgiveness of Christ to those who hate them. In his first *Homily on the Betrayal of Judas* Chrysostom emphasizes that Jesus washed Judas’s feet along with the other disciples; He allowed him to partake of that first Eucharist and let him share in the communal life of the apostolic band. In the end, Christ shed His own blood for Judas, that blood which Judas betrayed for thirty pieces of silver. The example of Judas underscores how Christ’s love for humanity must become the rule of our life as well. He applies this lesson to the reception of the Holy Eucharist by urging that no one should come to the Holy Table with the evil heart of Judas. What would that mean in their lives — and ours? It means banishing all enmity from the Christian heart:

If anyone has something against an enemy, expel the anger, heal the wound, banish the enmity that you may receive healing from the table. You are coming to an awesome and holy sacrifice... Has your enemy wounded you as Judas did Christ. Rather, Christ gave his blood poured out for the salvation of those who poured out his blood. What do you have to say equal to that? If you don’t forgive your enemy, it is not so much him you wrong but yourself. For you have hurt Christ many times in the present life. It is yourself that you have made unforgiveable for a defense on the coming day. There is nothing that God so hates as a man nursing grudges, as a heart swelling with pride, as a soul inflamed with anger.

John expresses God’s love in a wide variety of vocabulary but none is more his own than *philanthropia*. Almost all of his homilies close with a wish that his flock would be filled with “the

grace and love for humanity (*philanthropia*) of Jesus Christ.” Used only two times in the New Testament — *agape* is the usual word — *philanthropia* (love of humanity) expresses for Chrysostom the essence of the divine disposition toward the fallen human race. Part of the reason may be that in Greco-Roman culture *philanthropia* (Latin *benignitas*) was supposed to be a leading virtue of rulers. Chrysostom often uses the term “Master” of both the Father and the Son. So, as an implied call to virtue for earthly rulers, John focuses on God’s love for humanity because God is the ultimate Master of all. In His benevolence, Jesus Christ opens the door of forgiveness for all. The benevolence of God is unbounding.

God’s love for the human race must be expressed in one’s use of material wealth. By the time Chrysostom arrived in Constantinople in 397, the capital of the eastern empire was full of elaborate churches to an even greater measure than his native Antioch which boasted of some beautiful structures. Many wealthy people, it seems, were fond of bestowing their gifts on the churches as a display of their benevolent spirit. John viewed this as a two-edged sword. While never directly discouraging such generosity among believers, as time went on, the Patriarch emphasized the greater gifts of caring for the poor and needy. The way to lavish gifts on Christ and the Church was by lavishing gifts on the poor.

In his *Homily Fifty on Matthew* Chrysostom unites his view of the liturgy as the union with heaven and earth with his exhortation to care for the poor, “So let’s fix our eyes, not on bringing golden vessels, but on things arising from righteous works... for the Church is not forged in a gold or silver shop but in the festal assembly of angels. Souls are what we need. And God permits gold and silver for the sake of souls.” John’s love of the Eucharist is only matched by his love of the Christian’s self-oblation. He asks how we can honor the Body of Christ and answers unequivocally, “So, you too, honor him with the honor that he commanded, namely, to lavish wealth on the poor. God does not need golden vessels but golden souls.”

The golden voice of John Chrysostom reminds us that the journey of faith is all of a piece. Worship in the Divine Liturgy is an expression of love for the limitless love of the Redeemer, for His *philanthropia*. The experience of worship in the liturgy opens the soul to the deepest reality of who God is for the Eucharist pours God’s love for the human race into each soul. That same love moves the Christian to live in solidarity with all, but especially with the unfortunate and needy. The generosity of heart that gives freely to the less fortunate is the same love that seeks forgiveness from the Lord and gives that same forgiveness to others. Just as the liturgy is a service of praise in the milieu of love leading to union, so caring for the needy is a service, a liturgy, of peace in the milieu of love leading to union with all humanity. ■

KENNETH J. HOWELL has published two books on the Church Fathers and is currently preparing a book of translations of St. John Chrysostom’s homilies on the life of Christ as well as another on St. Cyprian of Carthage.

Reflections on my Journey Home

By Michael Cousineau

Michael will be a guest on the *The Journey Home* program November 17. Tune into EWTN to learn more about Michael's return to the Catholic Church after 30 years in the Assemblies of God.

After leaving the Catholic Church for 30 years, a friend of mine, seemingly out of nowhere, asked me a question that would change my life. The question was, "are Catholics OK?...I don't like the Catholic system." You will have a chance to hear the story of how I left the Catholic Church and why I came back, as EWTN will soon broadcast my three and a half year battle back into the Church on *The Journey Home* program.

From when the question was posed until my return, I can honestly say the research I did was continuous. You could say I exhausted myself attempting to find the truth. Knowing there are 33,000 Christian denominations, the task of who defines and holds the truth is not as easy as it might seem.

There are many points of contention among churches. Obviously, they all can't be right. Which church is right and how did we get to this point was my goal.

With the enormous amount of research I did, I not only concluded the Catholic Church was given "the keys to the kingdom," but I also developed a passion to share the truth of the Catholic Church with others. To put it simply, I have concluded, "Protestants think they are

right, but they are not...Catholics are right, but they don't know why."

We need to change that! My prayer is to have every Catholic an engaged, participating member of the Church that Jesus started. Imagine that — Jesus Himself started the Catholic Church. Who started the other denominations and why becomes a fair question (and often a helpful springboard for conversation with non-Catholics).

We now live in a world where church attendance is at an all-time low. According to the latest research, Mass attendance in Spain is less than 20%. It is about 35% in Italy. France, the eldest daughter of the Church, is at 12% attendance. Adult Catholics in the USA who attend Mass regularly are at 24%. This is why the New Evangelization calls on every Catholic to "become a missionary."

My parish gave me the opportunity to teach an apologetics class. It is my hope that the class inspires Catholics to know their faith better and to share it with others. If you have the chance, I would encourage you to commit to learning your faith more deeply (see if there is an apologetics class in your area, or if there is some way you could further your knowledge with personal study). We all know someone who has left the Catholic Church. We need to be equipped to share our faith and help them understand better the beauty and truth contained within the Catholic Faith.

Cardinal Newman, a former Anglican minister said, "to be steeped in history is to cease to be Protestant." I have found this to be absolutely true. I am glad to be home in the Catholic Church and to have the privilege with sharing my faith in my parish and community. ■

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



TELEVISION

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

RADIO

Mondays at 8:00 PM ET — Encores: Saturdays 7 AM ET, Sundays 1 AM ET, Sundays 5 PM ET
The Best of the Journey Home: Monday-Thursday 12 AM ET

November 3

Dr. Matthew Cabeen*
 Former Evangelical

November 10

Dale Ahlquist*
 Former Baptist

November 17

Mike Cousineau*
 Revert, Former Assemblies of God

November 24

Fr. Greg Paffel*
 Revert, Former Assemblies of God

*Schedule is subject to change.

News from the Hermitage

By Br. Rex Anthony Norris | LittlePortionHermitage.org



By the time you read this article the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi (October 4) will have come and gone. Happy (belated) Feast Day!

St. Francis died on October 3rd, 1226. On or about October 3rd Franciscans and Franciscan-minded people around the world gather together in groups large and small to commemorate the saint's *Transitus* — his "passing over" — from this life to life everlasting. So too, on or near his feast day, many people bring their pets to a local parish for the Blessing of the Animals, a prayer service designed to thank God for the gift of their favorite pets, to invoke His blessing on them and to ask St. Francis to watch over our pets during the coming year. (St. Francis is the patron saint of pets, after all.)

One of the readings that is almost always heard during the *Transitus* or the Blessing of the Animals is a piece of poetry written by St. Francis himself. Known variously as *The Canticle of Brother Sun* or *The Canticle of Creation*, St. Francis uses the poem to celebrate the goodness of God and invited creation itself to praise God. Below is the Canticle for your spiritual edification.

*Most High, all powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor,
and all blessing.
To You alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no man is worthy to mention Your name.
Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures,
especially through my lord Brother Sun,
who brings the day; and you give light through him.
And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor!
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.*

*Praise be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon
and the stars, in heaven you formed them
clear and precious and beautiful.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene,
and every kind of weather through which
You give sustenance to Your creatures.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom you light the night and he is beautiful
and playful and robust and strong.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains us and governs us and who produces
varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.
Praised be You, my Lord,
through those who give pardon for Your love,
and bear infirmity and tribulation.
Blessed are those who endure in peace
for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.
Praised be You, my Lord,
through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whom no living man can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death will
find in Your most holy will,
for the second death shall do them no harm.
Praise and bless my Lord,
and give Him thanks
and serve Him with great humility.*
AMEN ■

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Please contact Ann at 740-450-1175 or ann@chnetwork.org if you have any questions or concerns.

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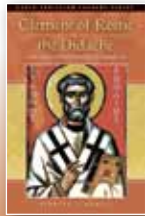
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Visit www.chresources.com or call 740-450-1175 for these and other great resources to learn more about the Catholic Faith.

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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.

MARCUS GRODI'S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

November 8, 2014

Evangelization Conference
Archdiocese of St. Louis
Cardinal Rigali Center

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.

STAY CONNECTED BY EMAIL!

We have a number of email lists that may be helpful and spiritually edifying to you: Conversion Story Email Club, The Journey Home Program, Deep in Scripture Radio, Deep in History Videos, and more. Visit www.CHNetwork.org/email to customize your email subscription and stay connected with your favorite CHNetwork content.

BECOMING DEEP IN HISTORY

Are you a Christian living in continuity or discontinuity? In this month's free featured Deep in History talk, former Presbyterian pastor Dr. Kenneth Howell discusses the importance of and strategy for learning and living deep in the history of Christianity.

Watch and discuss at www.CHNetwork.org/members



DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Listen to Marcus Grodi and Dr. Kenneth Howell on the Deep in Scripture radio program on Saturdays at 11:00am ET and Sundays at 2:00pm ET on EWTN Radio Two. Please visit our website www.deepinscripture.com for live feed, archived programs, and further information.

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CHNetwork encourages members to make copies of the newsletter and distribute to family and friend. We do ask that copies of the newsletter not be sold. Unless otherwise indicated, the contents of this newsletter are Copyright © 2014 by the Coming Home Network International. All rights reserved.

Prayer List



Clergy

- For a Baptist minister in Saskatchewan, Canada, that the grace of God through Jesus Christ would enable him to overcome the obstacles he sees blocking his entry into the Catholic Church.
- For Ken, a Reformed minister, that he and his wife may find the guidance they desire to assist them to enter into full-communion with the Catholic Church.
- For a Lutheran seminarian in the Midwest, who recently began his studies, that he may receive the gifts of wisdom and prudence from the Spirit to know how best to follow God's call to the Catholic Church.
- For a Pentecostal minister in Oklahoma, that the Lord may guide him to know his vocation in the Catholic Church.
- For Charles, a Non-denominational minister, that he may discover the fullness of truth in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
- For a Southern Baptist missionary couple in Africa, that God would help them in learning a new language as He guides them into full communion with the holy Catholic Church.

■ For Harry, a former Baptist minister, in thanksgiving for his recent reception into the Catholic Church.

Laitiy

- For a woman on the East Coast, that she is able to find the help and healing she needs.
- For Joan, who is frustrated over the response she has had at the parish level.
- For a woman in Georgia, that she will be able to fulfill her desire to become Catholic.
- For Doug to know the best timing as to when to proceed with his journey into the Catholic Church.
- For John, as he begins instructional classes and is continually drawn to the Catholic Faith.
- For a recent convert who is struggling with understanding Marian doctrines.
- For a Southern Baptist who is beginning RCIA and hoping that her husband becomes more open to her desire to be Catholic.
- For Ruth who is working through her questions and concerns about the Faith.
- For Mike, as he is drawn towards Catholicism and is sharing the fruits of his study with others.
- For Logan who is starting RCIA and is looking forward to going deeper with his journey.
- For Dwayne, who feels strongly called to become Catholic but is concerned about the repercussions of conversion.
- For Renee, that God answer her prayer and give her clear direction as how to proceed with her faith journey.
- For Jennifer, that her husband be more supportive of her journey.
- For the wife of a minister who wishes to become Catholic but doesn't want to cause difficulties with her husband's congregation.
- For Donna, that she continues to seek the Lord and His guidance for her journey.

In every issue we include timely prayer concerns from the membership. All members are encouraged to pray at least one hour each month before the Blessed Sacrament for the needs, both general and specific, of the CHNetwork and its members and supporters.

Please submit all prayer requests and answers to CHNetwork Prayer List, PO Box 8290, Zanesville, OH 43702 or email prayer requests to prayers@chnetwork.org.

We use only first names to preserve privacy.

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

President/Founder, Marcus Grodi (former Presbyterian pastor)

Chief Operating Officer, Kevin Lowry (former Presbyterian)

Resident Theologian, Dr. Kenneth Howell (former Presbyterian pastor)

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

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

Financial Coordinator, Ann Moore

IT/Facilities Coordinator, Bill Bateson (former Mormon)

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(Treasurer), Dr. Marian Schuda (Director), Donald Brey (Director)

...Journeys Home Continued...

► “Journeys Home” continued from page 2

it was not long before we butted heads. I just wanted to be shown from the Bible exactly why we believe what we believe.

Seventh-day Adventists keep the Levitical dietary laws, but when I was reading a familiar passage from 1 Timothy 4, I was struck by verses 4 and 5: “For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” Verse 6 goes on to say, “if thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, Thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ...” I sincerely wanted to be a good witness for Christ to others. I brought this perceived discrepancy to the attention of our class. Shouldn’t we be free to eat anything as long as we asked God’s blessing and gave thanks for it? Our preacher didn’t know how to respond. We agreed to continue the discussion the following week. At our next class, I had come prepared with other supporting texts. Among them 1 Corinthians 10:25 and the texts my friend had pointed out about the wine that Jesus was drinking. When I tried to pick up the discussion where we had left off, our preacher informed me that we had spent enough time on that. We would be moving on to a new topic. I don’t think I ever went back to his class.

Later, I began making a “Witnessing Bible,” in which I wrote out each of our Adventist beliefs on the blank pages in the back of the Bible. I started gathering the verses used to support each one. As I assembled our supporting texts, I began to realize that they didn’t in fact say what I thought that they did.

I still thought the Adventist Church was mostly right, though. They were certainly the only church that was keeping the biblical seventh-day Sabbath, so where else could I go? The Adventist Church had books written on how keeping Saturday is the seal of God on His true end-time church. Adventists make keeping Sunday the equivalent of receiving the “mark of the beast.” They have also been convinced (for the last 150 years or so) that they are personally living in the last days of earth’s history. That belief can have serious consequences on your psyche. When I was going to grade school, I remember our teachers telling us we probably wouldn’t have time to grow up and have families of our own. As a result, I hadn’t given a lot of thought to getting married. I just assumed Jesus would return any day now, so why bother. I also didn’t want to have any young children when we entered the Tribulation. Adventists don’t believe in the Rapture, so if you are living at that time you would have to run to the hills to avoid persecution. I have also seen the affects that this thinking has had on the older generations in the Adventist Church. Imagine that you have lived your whole life believing you were “not going to die.” Sometime very soon, most likely in the next 5 to 10 years Jesus would return and you would pass into Glory without seeing death. That is a comforting, pacifying belief until you wake up one morning and you are 70 years old. I have seen the faith crisis that comes from realizing way too late in life that you are actually going to die someday. It can be devastating and leave you feeling abandoned by God. I woke up one morning

on my 25th birthday and realized that I probably should start thinking about getting married and raising a family.

Just in case Jesus doesn’t return in my lifetime...

I met my wife the night a mutual friend had convinced us to attend an Adventist singles’ party. Marrying within our faith was important to both of us. My wife, Julie, was a devoted Adventist. She was taken to church the day after she was born. Her mother was the church organist for many years. Julie was the youngest of seven siblings, and every week her family would occupy the front row of their church.

Julie and I started attending the church she had grown up in and she was very happy about returning to her old church, so I didn’t feel the need to share my doubts about our faith with her at the time. My wife has a beautiful voice and, since she was a little girl, she would often sing for special music in the church. Not long after we started going back to her old church they got a new music director with very different ideas about the musical program. Special music was now a thing of the past. This had been Julie’s church since the day after she was born, and the church we were married in; now, she didn’t feel like they had a place for her anymore.

Gradually, we stopped going to church at all. This is where our journey home began, although it would take us another 10 years to get there.

Rationally defensible beliefs

One day, I came across an Adventist website whose author was making arguments against Catholicism. At the end of the page there was a link called “A Catholic rebuttal,” with a disclaimer that warned this link would actually take the reader to a Catholic website. I thought to myself, *This should be interesting.* I didn’t see how Catholics could possibly answer the accusations made against them. However, I was impressed with the Catholic answers to the Adventist claims. Rather than making counter accusations, as I had expected, they presented their beliefs and explained them in a rational manner. This Church seemed different than the way in which the Adventist Church had presented it to me. I decided to study the history of the SDA Church for myself and find out where we had gotten it wrong.

A study of the Adventist tradition didn’t take very long. There was a preacher named William Miller who was going around convincing people that he had deciphered the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation (the original Revelation seminars). He claimed the world was coming to an end in October 1844. What happened next came to be known as the “Great Disappointment,” and most of Miller’s followers went back to their former congregations. Miller admitted he had been wrong, and returned to his former church as a lay member. There were about one hundred believers, however, that couldn’t admit Miller had been wrong. They believed something *had* happened in 1844. Since nothing visibly happened on earth, something must have

taken place in heaven. This is the basis for the Adventist faith. It was not long before a member of that group was claiming to be a prophet, confirming all the answers they were coming up with. At this point I started asking myself, *If I had been alive during this time, which group would I have been in?* Matthew 24:36 — “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only” — came to mind. If only God knows when the end will come, why would I listen to anyone who thought they had figured it out? I would have probably been a member of one of those other churches, waiting for my friends to realize their mistake and come back. But *which* church? What was my religious heritage?

Which church?

I found out that, of the little group that became the Adventist Church, most had come from the Methodist tradition. I thought maybe this was my heritage. I began to study the Methodist Church. I discovered that the Methodists had started as a movement within the Church of England. Therefore, I decided to find out where that church came from. This took me back to the English Reformation. I decided that some king wanting a divorce was not a valid reason to start a church, so I started looking at the other churches that had come out of the Continental Reformation. I felt Luther hadn't gone far enough and, in fact, wasn't even trying to start his own church. Thus, I concluded that Calvin probably was the closest to getting it right. I started looking for a church that was based on his theology.

I searched for a Presbyterian church in our area. I found one in a beautiful old building that reminded me a lot of the church my father didn't want to visit when I was a child. I set up a meeting with the pastor to discuss the things I had been studying and answer a few questions I had about Calvin's teachings. There were five points to Calvin's teachings, I learned, and I wasn't on board with all of them yet. I told the pastor in our meeting that I believed at the time of the Reformation the Church was defiantly in need of reform. I didn't, however, think that just anyone was free to decide what the Bible meant to them personally and to start their own church. He told me that what I said sounded very Presbyterian and that I didn't have to agree with all of the five points to start attending their church. I loved the liturgy in the Presbyterian church and the sanctuary reminded me a lot of the church I had grown up in.

My wife didn't attend with me at the beginning, but she didn't mind that I was going, since we weren't going to any other church at the time. I don't think she or any of my Adventist friends took me too seriously — they thought this was just a phase. However, I made several friends there, and eventually my wife started at-

tending, too. Since Julie wasn't ready to give up on the church she had grown up in yet, I never transferred my membership.

Who had the authority to transfer the Sabbath?

In my studies, I had learned a lot of things about our Adventist prophetess, Ellen G. White, and shared them with my wife. We were both convinced that she wasn't a true prophetess, but the Saturday Sabbath was the only thing Julie still held on to. Through Church history, I understood that the Christian Sabbath was Sunday — if it hadn't been for 1800 years of Sunday-keeping Christians, the Adventist Church would have had nothing to break away *from!* I wanted to continue to look into this issue for my wife's sake, so that we could be united. I found a Christian apologetics website and started my research. I saw the need for some definitive authority in the Church, and the Presbyterian Church didn't seem to have that.

Then a thought occurred to me: *If the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, when did that happen, and under what authority did it claim to have the right to do so?* As I studied my way through the early Church Fathers (whose writings were at least contemporary with the books of the New Testament), I found that the early Church was, in fact, the Catholic

Church! The Catholic Church got its authority from the Apostles who had received the authority from Christ Himself. Honoring the Lord's Day went all the way back to at least the middle of the first century. Most of the apostles were still alive at this time. That's much earlier than the Adventist Church claimed that Catholics changed the day. I understood that if the Apostles had changed the day, it was certainly within their authority to do so (Matthew 16:18-19). I started wondering if there was anyone today who could claim to have that same authority that Jesus passed on to His Apostles.

“Why do you watch that nonsense?”

I started reading everything I could about the Catholic Church, and discovered EWTN on our local cable network. I would get up early before work and watch. I greatly enjoyed watching *The Journey Home*. Witnessing how the Spirit had led others out of the denominations they had grown up in and home to the Church Jesus founded on the Apostles. Sometimes I would think to myself, I wonder what my story would sound like if I ever made it home. I also loved to watch anything with Scott Hahn. I had reached the point in my journey where I wasn't Catholic yet, but I wasn't comfortable being anything else either. I had shared none of this with my wife. Sometimes Julie would get upset with me when I would leave the TV in the living room

“ I had reached the point in my journey where I wasn't Catholic yet, but I wasn't comfortable being anything else either. ”

...Journeys Home Continued...

tuned to EWTN. She would get up, turn the TV on, and see Mother Angelica praying the rosary (or something equally offensive to Adventist sensibilities). She would say: “Why do you watch that nonsense? If you are going to watch that channel at least change it before you leave for work.” Then one day she said, “I like that feisty old nun. I watched one of her shows today.” I could tell that the Spirit was working on her heart.

In 2013, Julie’s health took a turn for the worse. She had breathing problems and spent five days in the ICU and two more in the hospital, before they let her come home — without knowing what was causing it! A week later she was back in the hospital, and they wouldn’t let her leave without being on oxygen.

By this time, I was convinced that joining the Catholic Church was the right thing to do. I didn’t want to put it off any longer. I knew that if something happened to Julie, I would regret having put it off. I had watched enough EWTN to know I would have to go through Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) first. I let my wife know what I was planning to do. She was upset, but a Baptist friend of Julie’s could tell this was something I needed to do, and encouraged my wife not to stand in the way. “I think Catholics are sincere Christians,” her friend said, “They just don’t really understand grace.” (Honestly, I can say I didn’t understand grace until I met our Lord in the Eucharist.)

Julie and I called our local church and learned the next RCIA classes were starting in a month (which gave my wife a little time to adjust to this idea). We started attending Mass at St. Francis Church together. It was different at first, but the service was beautiful. There was a lot happening that we didn’t seem to be “in” on. I hadn’t admitted to my wife that I still had one concern about becoming Catholic. I was not sure about the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Although, I was certain that the priest could actually forgive sins in Jesus’ name (John 20:23), I just was not certain I would be able to go through with the *confession* part of the process. I didn’t know if I would be able to share with someone else every time I didn’t live up to Christ’s example. At the first Mass we attended, however, as Christ was made present in the Eucharist, I had an overwhelming sense of peace about going to Confession. I could hear Christ’s words to Paul in my mind, “My grace is sufficient.” As a Protestant, I had always assumed “Communion” meant a communion with our fellow Christians. Suddenly I understood. It should mean a Communion with our Lord. I understood Christ’s words, for the first time: “I will never leave you or forsake you.” He never has!

Julie agreed to go to RCIA classes with me. I didn’t know it at the time but she had an ulterior motive. She told me later that she assumed I would figure out Catholics were wrong, and she wanted to be there to “pick up the pieces” and lead me back to the Adventist Church. After we had gone for a month or so, she started to realize that might not happen. Then, the reality of the situation hit her: her husband was going to become Catholic — and she was *not* okay with that. She started to resist going to Mass. We always made it but a couple of times we left early. Every time she got up and walked out of the church, I would follow

her out to the car, and we would leave. I diligently prayed for her, and I asked God for His help and guidance. I didn’t know what else to do. The last time she wanted to leave, I told her I needed to stay. She asked for the keys and walked out. I stayed and prayed like I had never prayed before. I wasn’t sure if I was going to have a ride home when I walked out of the church. A few minutes later, she came back and dropped the keys on the seat next to me. She said, “Well, you’re taking me to hell; I might as well enjoy the ride.”

I didn’t want her to feel that way.

In His Church — together

A few weeks later we were discussing God’s covenants in the RCIA class, and it was then that Julie had her “Ah-ha!” moment. The Adventist Church had always tried to place us squarely under the Old Covenant. Something someone said in class got her attention: the Old Covenant had a beginning and an end. The Old Covenant had to have come to an end to make way for the New. Now, the things she was hearing in class started to make sense to her.

I could sense that there was still something holding her back, though; and I didn’t know what it was. My wife had always had a hot/cold relationship with my mother. Julie desperately wanted her approval. Although completely unbeknownst to me, my mother was putting a lot of pressure on Julie to bring me back to the Adventist Church. Eventually, at Christmastime — sparing the details — my family betrayed my wife’s trust for the last time. It is truly regrettable that it happened that way, but no longer caring about what my mother wanted, Julie committed wholeheartedly to joining the Catholic Church with me.

On April 19th, 2014, at the Easter vigil, that is exactly what we did! The Easter Vigil happened to coincide with my wife’s birthday, and even though the Church had recognized our marriage as valid, we restated our wedding vows in front of the congregation. The whole vigil was exhausting, but it had a strangely familiar feel to it. I remember looking around the church shortly after receiving our First Communion, taking it all in and thinking, “We finally made it home.” Thanks be to God! ■



KEVIN WYNN was born in Atlanta, GA and was raised in the Adventist faith. He was a soldier in the US Army from 1984 to 1987 and has worked as a mechanic for most of his professional life. Kevin and Julie were married in 1994. They attended RCIA and joined the Catholic Church together at the Easter Vigil in 2014. They currently attend St. Francis of Assisi in Cartersville, GA.

BLOG

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