



November 2013 Newsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



Full Communion

By Fr. Donald Flumerfelt

Early Years

In my youth, my whole family was actively involved in many aspects of the United Church of Canada in Calgary, Alberta and in Montreal, Quebec. They were good and creative years. My call to ministry came while serving as a counselor for a church camp outside Montreal. One beautiful summer morning, the sun was dancing off the water and a gentle breeze was blowing. Our tent gathered for morning prayers and Bible study. Youth from a gang infested part of Montreal were under my care. They complained loudly in the middle of this holy time and said, "Let's do something else! This is a waste of time!"

In my spirit, I saw a great black, all-consuming hole for these boys with no spiritual reference point in their lives. I *had* to do something with the rest of my life to help people come to know such a gracious Creator. I spoke to the camp chaplain. He discouraged me from seeking full time ministry. He said, "If you feel the same way in three months, come back to me and we will talk again." In three months, I felt *exactly* the same way, so I began the process for acceptance as a candidate for ordination.

Candidate for ministry in the United Church

I began my academic training at Mt. Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick and I completed a Bachelor of Arts degree there. However, the real tests for preparation as a pastor came as I went out each summer to serve as a student pastor for the United

Church Mission Board. In Albert County, N.B., I became convicted that God holds His shepherds accountable for the immortal souls of those over whom they are given authority to shepherd (Ezekiel 34: 7-10) and that apart from Jesus we can do nothing (John 15:5). I was ministering to a woman who was dying from extremely painful brain cancer and I realized that my earthly wisdom was as chaff in the wind. This woman's friend came to pray for her and to remind her of Jesus's promises as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-18). I saw the peace of Christ come into her body from head to toe, giving her the ability to rest in Jesus. A few days later she died. For me, this experience set off a chain of events to establish a relationship with Jesus as Savior and Lord. My source of inspiration for preaching could no longer be evangelism and social services books, but the story of God's transforming love found in the Bible. I began to turn to Christ to guide my life and ministry.

Another summer mission led me to Kingston, Ontario, where I worked in two inner city parishes amongst the poor. From childhood, I identified with the biblical call to care for the oppressed, widows, and orphans. In 1969, I became the Executive Director of Queen's Volunteer Bureau, Kingston, Ontario. While in Kingston, it was a natural connection to enroll in the Bachelor of Theology course at Queen's Theological College, so I could complete my pre-requisites for ordination. I discovered that social justice ministry without the balance of a contemplative life of prayer could be very dangerous. *"Journeys Home" is continued on page 2* ➤

Journeys Home

...Journeys Home Continued...

Messianic Encounter with Christ

While at Queen's, my Old Testament professor challenged me to read the Bible, saying, "Ask God to show you *your* story with Him." As I read, I became jealous for the Jews' vibrant covenant relationship with their God. To learn more, I took biblical Hebrew and spent Fridays at Hillel House (the Jewish ministry on campus). Once again, I was discouraged. It was one thing to believe intellectually in a Creator who makes covenants with us, but quite another to be a part of a chosen people called to be the light of the world. I had to learn how the Jewish Jesus fit into God's eternal covenant with Israel and the world.

One night in November 1969, the Lord came to me in my brokenness and I had, what I would best describe as, a mystical experience. I found myself all alone. I had a sense that my life as I knew it was about to come to an end. Suddenly, I was aware that I was in a courtroom with someone on my right hand. The judge was before me and on his desk was a great pile of proofs of my failures. On my own I could not avoid a severe sentence. I had the sense of a kindly person on my right, interceding for me with the judge. Shortly thereafter the judge said to me, "You are free to go."

I skipped up the stairs to my bedroom with freedom in my soul. I fell on my knees beside my bed and pulled out my Bible. Weeping for joy, God showed me answers to the many dilemmas I faced. It was like the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the elders of Israel that God gave to Moses to assist him in leading the people of Israel in the desert (Numbers 11:14, 24-29). From that night onward, I read Scripture morning and evening, no longer as a series of disconnected theological concepts to be studied, but as the breath and hope of my life. A persistent question remained in my heart, "Who was this person who intervened for me?"

One day my eyes focussed on 1 John 2:1-2: "[B]ut if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." It was like a light went on in my soul! It was Jesus who spoke in my defense. It was Jesus who paid the price for my release and brought me into this new relationship with God. I am thankful for our Jewish ancestors, Jesus and the Apostles, who have shown me a God who desires an abiding covenant relationship with not only Israel but all the nations — including me. This covenantal faith relationship has helped me see the Catholic perspective on the activity of God in the sacraments. Our dear Lord is *all about grace!*

Two mores shifts toward Catholicism

THEOLOGICAL TURMOIL In North American seminaries during the 1960s, the philosophy of "God is dead" was popular. Theologians were attacking the validity of the Incarnation. Miracles were explained away in human terms. The truth of Jesus being both God and Man was reduced to Jesus simply being a man for others. The ancient creeds were changed for use in worship. Yet this was the very time when a loving God had broken into the darkness of my life, given me forgiveness and hope, and filled me with His Spirit. God was most certainly *not* dead for me. Jesus was, and still is, the healer of my soul.

LITURGICAL Even during my undergraduate years at Mt. Allison, I was aware of a great tradition of "pulpit orators" in the United Church. In Montreal, I lived next door to one of the most celebrated of these preachers. I considered him my spiritual grandfather. He often gave me books to read from his vast library. "Pulpit orators" addressed many subjects, but did not necessarily help parishioners come to know the saving love of God through the systematic reading and preaching of God's Word. *"Journeys Home" is continued on page 5* ➤

EWTVN'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

November 4

Brian Nelson*
Former Christian Reformed Church

November 11

Steven Lawson*
Revert, Former Agnostic

November 18

The Journey Home International

November 25

Biff Rocha*
Revert

*Schedule is subject to change.

From Wittenberg to Washington: the Ongoing Relevance of the Protestant Reformation

By Dr. Kenneth J. Howell



For many in American culture, the Protestant Reformation seems as irrelevant as the cave paintings of the Cro-Magnons. The twenty-first century seems a far cry from 1517 when Martin Luther nailed the ninety-five theses to the door of St. Mary's Church in Wittenberg, Germany. So irrelevant does it seem that some Protestant seminarians just beginning their theological studies couldn't say in what century the Protestant Reformation occurred. Yet, a longer and broader knowledge of history shows that the Reformation that occurred almost five hundred years ago has profoundly affected the Western world in which we live.

As Christians stand in the early years of the twenty-first century, they see a world full of contradictions. Almost two-thirds of the inhabitants of the planet claim some form of Christianity. While Christianity is growing dramatically in the southern hemisphere, it is losing significant ground in the North. Both Europe and the Americas have seen dramatic drops in church attendance since the Second World War. All around us the voice of secularism proclaims freedom from religion at the same time that this past summer witnessed over a million young adults flooding Rio de Janeiro for World Youth Day.

As careful observers scan the twentieth century—a century proclaimed at its outset as “The Christian Century”—the social landscape reveals the growth of totalitarian regimes like Fascism and Communism, the slaughter of millions of innocents in two world wars and the genocides of the Balkans and Africa (Uganda, Sudan, Rwanda). The century that was heralded as one of unparalleled peace has proven to be an unspeakable horror.

Christians have been understandably shaken. From 1800 to 1950, Protestant churches welcomed an unprecedented wave of missionary activity and at the same time a proliferation of denominational labels. From 1950 to 2000, many thoughtful Christians have almost despaired at the growing secularism and even outright atheism promoted by cultural elites. One Evangelical observer laconically announced, “America has rejected our values.” A clear ingredient in this assessment is the documented change in attitudes among American Christians from a clear identification with the institutional norms of churches to a privatization of religious belief bordering on spiritual narcissism.

A Relevant Reformation?

Do these dark shadows mixed with occasional lights have anything to do with the Reformation in the sixteenth century? One historian at the University of Notre Dame thinks so. Brad S. Gregory's hefty volume *The Unintended Reformation* (2012) gives a broad sweep from the sixteenth century to the present to argue that what Luther, Calvin, and other Reformers would have thought unthinkable has in fact transpired. Whether Gregory is right in every detail, he offers a compelling historical narrative that every thinking Christian must engage.

Gregory argues that the Reformation unleashed a spirit of individualism that led to the privatization of religion centuries later. He contends that through the subsequent transmutation of ideas the implicit revolt against authority in the sixteenth century had the consequence of championing the separation of individual faith from institutional norms. For Gregory, where the West is today had its implicit origins in the Protestant Reformation.

On the surface, it is difficult to accept Brad Gregory's historical linkage. Neither Luther nor Calvin championed the idea of private interpretation of the Bible or of the doctrines of the Christian faith. Both Lutherans and Calvinists banded together to produce their own confessions (creeds) of faith. The Lutherans sought a united faith in the *Augsburg Confession* (1530) and the *Formula of Concord* (1580). The Reformed (i.e. Calvinists) announced their faith and church order from the *Helvetic Confessions* (1536 & 1564) to the *Canons of the Synod of Dordt* (1619) and the *Westminster Confession* (1642), all in an effort to bring unity to the Protestant cause. Yet, a deeper look makes Gregory's thesis more plausible than it seems at first. By 1650, one hundred and twenty years after the Lutheran's *Augsburg Confession*, Europe was irrevocably divided. In England alone there were hundreds of small sects proclaiming a “true form of Christianity.” That diversity of faith and order was brought to the New World and found fertile soil in the American colonies. The social ideal of a *Corpus Christianum* that had existed in Medieval Europe was now gone.

The Reformation introduced in seed form the idea of individual liberty. Though liberty of conscience has deep roots in biblical faith and the earlier Christian tradition, it was never interpreted to mean that individual judgment was the arbiter of truth. What truth was for one, it was for all. When Luther proclaimed, “Here I stand; I can do none other,” he sought to base his grasp of truth on the clear teaching of Scripture, but he unwittingly opened a can of worms. Though traditionally minded Lutherans would disagree, modern secularists look at Luther as a forerunner of individual liberty ready to jettison religious dictates in favor of heroic individualism.

A Europe divided by creed and the wars of religion in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries forced its Christian population into toleration of religious difference but at the same time undermined the idea of seeking truth in religion. Religion was relegated to the subjective. John Locke at the end of the seventeenth century canonized the idea by advocating the right of private interpretation of Scripture and the radical separation of government from religious creeds. Religion couldn't unify so government had to. Government could only control the outward and observable and religion could only be held inwardly and privately.

“From Wittenberg to Washington” is continued on page 4 ➤

Fallout from the Reformation

Locke hoped, like all Enlightenment figures, that reason would prove to be the substitute for religion. Such hope was only possible because the medieval philosophers and theologians had extolled reason and faith as two wings that fly up to God. With the severing of reason from faith, now the pure light of reason could guide social agreement and produce harmony where religious creeds had failed. Enlightenment was, according to Immanuel Kant, the liberation of humanity from a self-imposed authoritarianism. However, social consensus appealing to reason proved easier to achieve in theory than in practice. The only answer was to relegate more of private belief to the realm of the subjective while managing the social order through positive law. Thus was born the idea of a liberal society.

By the nineteenth century, liberalism had become common fare. Liberalism is a difficult concept to pinpoint because it has shifted meaning so many times throughout history. *Liberalis*, of course, means free, but in the context of the nineteenth century it had both social and religious uses. In its social use, liberalism embraced the notion of progress, often inevitable progress. This belief explains the optimism many felt at the outset of the twentieth century. It was to be a century of unprecedented progress. This is still heard in the idiom of being on the right or wrong side of history. It assumes that history is progressing toward some predetermined goal, a goal of individual liberty.

The religious use of liberalism became synonymous with creedal indifference, that one creed is as good as another. That idea, accepted as axiomatic today, is the heritage of ancestors most Americans have never heard of. In the beginning of the twentieth century the Protestant ecumenical movement began as an attempt to overcome or to put aside creedal distinctions among the churches. Though the movement miserably failed, faith in religious indifference endured and flourishes today.

What our nineteenth century forbearers did not believe, however, was that morality was entirely subjective. Religion was subjective but morality could be based on social agreement. Their faith in moral agreement was based on two things. Europe and the Americas still held to a generally “Christian” morality even if the grounds for that morality were being undermined. Society appeared stable because most agreed with the morality contained in the Bible. And what was still undecided could be negotiated on the basis of the reasonable goodwill of reasonable people.

Coming Home to Roost?

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed dramatic changes in the religious culture of Europe and of North America. The slow evolution of secularization growing through three centuries came to something of a climax when Protestant churches divided into “liberal” and “conservative” phalanxes. As many mainline churches adopted moral positions newly proclaimed by secular culture, traditionally minded Christians broke off and began new churches within each theological tradition. This was complemented by the dramatic growth of non-denominational churches that shed the skin of tradition and confessional identity. These churches often lacked the theological coherence resident in older Protestant churches.

Still, deep in the Christian heart lies a yearning for unity. Various church bodies on both sides of the cultural divide sought greater outward expression of unity. The 1980s saw the emergence of various church mergers which endure to this day. Liberal and conservative Christian circles, however, still had something in common, adherence to an idea of individualism that was colored by a growing subjectivism in moral teachings as well as in the purely theological.

In the United States, the climate of religious and moral individualism devolved into pure subjectivism. No longer could one claim moral high ground for certain beliefs. The Catholic Church was largely spared from this growing subjectivism as long as its members defined their beliefs by the institutional norms of the Church. The controversy over birth control in the late 1960s, however, changed all that. The widespread dissent among Catholics over sexual ethics was fed by the moral relativism espoused in the larger culture. Prior to 1950 people used to say, “I am Catholic and therefore I believe A, B, and C.” Now, after the separation of personal belief from institution people say, “I am Catholic but I believe not-A, not-B, and not-C.” Outspoken dissenters from Church teaching in both the laity and the clergy espouse moral positions indistinguishable from the liberal wing of Protestantism.

I think Luther, Calvin, and other Reformers would be horrified if they saw what has happened in the disintegration of cultural values. Yet, there seems to be a conceptual link between the individualism of the sixteenth century and that of today. We live in a culture that has not only rejected Christian values but that also does not have the mental tools to find moral truth. They lack those tools because they have never been taught them. And they have never been taught them because their teachers did not believe that morality could be divinely given or rationally adjudicated. It is not that they don’t believe certain moral truths. They don’t believe in the concept of moral truth at all. When the idea of truth and its pursuit is gone, all that is left is power.

If Luther, Calvin, and other Reformers were here today, what would they say is the solution to our cultural malaise? If they could see how individualism and subjectivism have undermined everything Christian, what would they propose to do? One can only speculate but perhaps their solution would not be far from what Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI suggested. During the eight years (2005-2013) of his papacy he consistently called Europe (and the Americas) back to its Christian roots and reaffirmed the primacy of Truth. He spoke of the “Dictatorship of Relativism” as destroying not only faith but even reason. The latter would surprise even the advocates of the Enlightenment who trusted reason implicitly but the evidence is undeniable. From the hallowed halls of Harvard to the white walls of Washington, reasonable discourse is vanishing from the public square. The loss of reason follows quickly on the heels of diminished faith. The important question is not whether the Reformation caused today’s relativism; it certainly did not do so directly. Yet, individualism in seed form was present in Wittenberg, Geneva, and later Boston. That underlying reality of the Reformation still lives in an extreme form today. The solution seems to lie in the direction of the public nature of Truth. ■

The Face of Jesus?

By Marcus Grodi

This article originally appeared on Marcus Grodi's blog www.fromourbackporch.com. You can see the full-color photos online at www.fromourbackporch.com/2013/08/29/the-face-of-jesus.



Do you see Him in the picture to the right? I was just sitting down to relax on our back porch, after splitting a cord of firewood for the winter, with beverage of choice in hand, when I

noticed a face of someone looking at me from the trees! I took a double take and then a third, a couple gulps of my beverage of choice, and, sure enough, the face was still there!

I called my youngest son to come out of the basement, away from his computerized war game, and see. At first he didn't, but then, in time, he saw, and said, matter-a-factly, "Wow", and returned downstairs to his game.

I called my wife to come out and see! She looked, saw nothing. Then when I more carefully directed her attention, she saw, but said, "Jesus? Looks more like the Jolly Green Giant," and went inside to finish cooking dinner.

I sent the picture to some friends and most couldn't see him, but my middle son, who's discerning priesthood, replied, "Whoa!"

Do you see Him yet?

I remember once, driving in my car listening to the radio, and hearing about a man who was storing his George Foreman grill in his refrigerator because he clearly saw the face of Jesus in the congealed grease! We've all had people show us pictures of Jesus in cloud formations or heard of people seeing the face of Jesus or Mary in the rocks of a hillside or the dented side of an oil storage tank. What do we do with this stuff?

Once Jesus healed a man who was deaf and couldn't speak. Afterwards, He charged the man "to tell no one" (Mark 6:36). Of course, the now hearing and speaking man was beside himself with joy, and "the more [Jesus] charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it." Biblical scholars have called this the Messianic Secret, or, as the footnotes in the RSVCE explain, "Knowing their nationalistic views about the Messiah to come, Jesus wished to avoid a tumult" (note for Mark 5:43).

This certainly is plausible, but I have always understood this differently: the healing of the man was primarily for him and his personal spiritual benefit, and not really for anyone else, for the purpose and power of the miracle too often loses its meaning in the telling. Certainly the man's friends and family were probably impressed by what happened, but did they too quickly see everything in political Messianic terms, and miss the point of it: God, through this man, Jesus, had touched this deaf and speechless man because God loved him! God wanted this otherwise discouraged and lost man to know that the distant Creator of the Universe loved him personally! On the days that followed, were they all caught up in proclaiming Jesus as their long awaited political savior, or did the miracle cause them to fall to their knees in recognition of the proof of the reality and love of God?

Do you see Him yet? Maybe the picture below will help. What's funny is that when I pointed out to my middle son where I "saw the face of Jesus," he said, "No, that's not where I see him! He's to the right of that, in the specks of light coming through the leaves. See the crown of thorns? His wounds? His mournful eyes?" And I looked, and yes, I could kind of make what he was seeing. "You mean, kind of south east of the duck?" God tries to reach each of us in different ways.

Now, I don't want a stream of buses descending upon the peacefulness of our farm! Because, frankly, I think this "miracle" was intended only for me. I had lately been feeling a bit of discouragement, particularly about whether there was any altruistic purpose to focusing so much time and effort into this

farm! And as I sat, sweating, grumbling, close to swearing, there He was.

He has done this many times in my life, in a myriad of different ways, "miraculously appearing," giving a glimpse of His love and nearness, just to remind me that He is here and very, very real.

Once, years ago, I was skiing, and poised on the pinnacle of the tallest slope, ready to descend through a freezing low-visibility fog, and as I reached up to lower my goggles, I accidentally bumped my eyes and both contacts popped



Member's Section

out onto the snow! I CANNOT SEE WITHOUT EITHER GLASSES OR CONTACTS! How was I ever to get down? I dropped to my knees, uttered a quick desperate prayer, "Please, please Jesus, help me!" And wouldn't you know it? I immediately found both contacts in the snow!! This was nothing short of a miracle! No one else was all that impressed—it lost its power and meaning in the telling—but I knew: it was Jesus reminding me just how close He is to all of us. And I thanked and praised Him! It was no coincidence; it was not because of my skills at finding needles in haystacks; it was the gentle nudge of His love.

If these miracles, like the face of Jesus in our trees—and, yes, Marilyn was right, in this particular instance, He does seem to have come in the image of the Jolly Green Giant—if these miracles are meant primarily as private, personal re-

mindings of God's intimacy, then why am I proclaiming this to you in this CHNewsletter? Because I believe God is doing this to every one of us all the time. The question is are we looking for Him, and do we recognize Him, and His miraculous interventions, or just writing everything off as coincidences or figments of our imagination?

Brother Rex (a diocesan hermit who works part-time for the CHNetwork as a prayer partner and counselor) sent me this wonderful quote in response to the picture:

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God,
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;
The rest sit round and pluck blackberries.

- from *Aurora Leigh* by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Nicholson & Lee, eds. The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse. 1917.

That's it! Are we just plucking berries, or recognizing and enjoying the intimacy of God?

Oh, and one more thing, in the picture below, do you see the green angel hovering over our farm? ■



NEWSLETTER DONATION

Our monthly 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, making it possible for our staff to be available to help others on the journey, manage our studio and internet outreach, as well as the production and distribution of the CHNewsletter. Thank you for your support!

FEATURED RESOURCES

That They May All Be One: The Catholic Church and Ecumenism DVD — Fr. Ray Ryland



Ryland

In this DVD, 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.

\$35

For a donation of \$35, receive *That They May All Be One*.

\$50

For a donation of \$50, receive *The Path to Rome*.

\$75

For a donation of \$75, receive *That They May All Be One* and *The Path to Rome*.

The Path to Rome — Fr. Dwight Longenecker



The Path to Rome contains the stories of Christians who have struggled, thought and sacrificed much to finally find their home in the Catholic Church. Some have 'come home to Rome' before the current troubles to rock the Church of England, indeed many of the new Catholics who tell their story

here are Christians who have never been Anglicans, or only passed through Anglicanism on their way to Rome. Each chapter weaves an individual's conversion story into a wider issue of ecumenical concern, and with contributions from housewives, former bishops, well-known academics and former Protestant pastors, there is a wide range of viewpoints and interests.

— THESE PREMIUMS ARE AVAILABLE FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY —

Staff Update

By Jim Anderson



On the weekend of August 23-25, 2013 I was blessed to be able to participate in a "Converts' Conference," in Hünfeld, Germany, hosted by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and moderated by the superior of the monastery, Fr. Martin Wolf, OMI. The gathering was for former non-Catholic ministers and theologians, their spouses, and those still on the journey to full-communion with the Catholic Church.

Seventeen people participated in the events, seven convert ministers, including two who are now priests and one a deacon, and four who are still on the journey to the Church as well as spouses. Several people gave excellent talks, including Fr. Augustus Sander, OSB, a former Lutheran minister; Fr. Martin Wolf, OMI; Bishop Karl-Heinz Diez, Auxiliary Bishop of Fulda; Ingo Heinrich, a former Baptist minister; and Andreas Theurer, a former Lutheran minister. Andreas Theurer had a very interesting story to share. While still a Lutheran pastor, though on the journey to the Catholic faith, he published a book entitled *Warum Werden Wir Nicht Katholisch?*

(*Why Are We Not Catholic?*). His superiors in the Lutheran denomination where he served were not amused and he was dismissed from his ministry. He and his wife are now very happy Catholics. Unfortunately, his book is not yet available in English. The greatest joy to come from the conference was the encouragement these men and women had in learning that they are not alone in their struggles for the fullness of the Faith. Plans are already in motion for another conference next year. ■



Hünfeld, Germany © Hesse1309

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MARCUS GRODI'S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

November 16, 2013

Great Lakes Catholic Men's Conference
DeKalb, Illinois
mensconf@thetalk.org
1-888-849-2282

NEWSLETTER COPIES

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Prayer List



Clergy

■ For a Church of Christ minister in Texas who is searching for the truth, that the Spirit of God would guide him to the fullness of the truth in the Catholic Faith.

■ For Brian, a Baptist minister in Tennessee, that he may find employment and a new home which will enable him to enter the Catholic Church.

■ For a Lutheran minister in West Virginia, that the Holy Spirit would increase his desire to come into full-communion with the Catholic Church.

■ For Henry, a Reformed minister in Michigan, that his love for Catholic spirituality would give him an ever increasing hunger to receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

■ For a consecrated Lutheran deacon in Florida, that God would grant him the grace to return to the Catholic Church of his youth.

■ For an Episcopal priest and her husband in Connecticut, that, in response to their knocking on the door of the Catholic Church, Jesus would open to them and escort them home.

■ For Roger, a Presbyterian minister in North Carolina, that his desire for valid sacraments would be fulfilled in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

■ For Aaron, a Non-denominational minister in Virginia, that the Lord Jesus would increase his desire for the truth found only in the Catholic Faith.

■ For Scott, a former Episcopal priest, and a recent Catholic convert, that he will find full-time employment by which to support his family.

Laity

■ For Joseph, a former Catholic, that he will have the courage to return to the Catholic Faith soon.

■ For Carol, who is continuing to consider becoming a Catholic.

■ For Joseph, in Nebraska, who is going through RCIA and plans to attend a Catholic college.

■ For Martha, who strives to go deeper in her life as a Catholic and would like to be able to connect with more Catholics in her area.

■ For Jamie, that her family come to understand her desire to become Catholic and that she be able to go forward with her faith journey.

■ For Tara's family as they discern God's will for their faith walk.

■ For Ana, a convert, and her struggles in her continuing faith journey.

■ For John, in Louisiana, who is struggling to understand the Catholic Faith.

■ For Natalie, who is developing a Catholic prayer life and contemplates becoming a full member of the Catholic Church.

■ For Linda who feels she can't go forward with her interest in the Catholic Church at this time, that God gives her clarity and peace in her discernment.

■ For Kenny and her husband as they look into the Catholic Faith.

■ For Mat and his family to depend more fully on God's providential design and listen to His voice as they discern where their faith journey is leading them.

■ For Mark, that he is able to find a good spiritual advisor.

■ For Reba and her family, that they journey towards a deeper relationship with Christ and His Church.

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)

Chaplain, Fr. Ray Ryland (former Anglican priest)

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)

Publications and Laity Coordinator, Mary Clare Pieczynski

Communications Coordinator, JonMarc Grodi

Financial Assistant, Wendy Hart (former United Methodist)

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...Journeys Home Continued...

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I prepared a paper while at Queen’s on “Preaching the Church Year,” with the help of the Dean of the Anglican Cathedral in Kingston, Ontario. I concluded (and still believe) that the focus of the preaching ministry should never be on the preacher but on the person of Jesus crucified and how He is risen and present even as we meet for Mass today. Pulpit orators present self-conceived ideas about Scripture drawing attention to their eloquence. I wished to help people enter into a deepening relationship of trust with the God of saving love revealed in God’s Word. In so doing I began to see the power of the Church Year to guide a pilgrim people through the trials of this life.

Appreciation for the Eucharist Grows

God prepared my heart to be ready to join a missionary team, not just to be a solitary firebrand for faith. In the summer of 1970, I joined a team of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship students reaching out to youth in trouble with the law through drug abuse. It was on this team that I met my future wife, Julia Smith. Julia was a very well-grounded Presbyterian woman who was considering full time work in the Church.

I left Queen’s in the fall of 1970 and went to work in a Jewish General Insurance brokerage. Julia graduated from Carleton University and returned to Montreal to work. While we dated, we grew increasingly hungry for midweek communion and found an Anglican Church across the street from my office where we could go. That became our weekly date with supper afterwards at a Montreal bistro. A deeper sense of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist came when Julia and I were invited by my Jewish boss to attend his family Passover Seder supper. For the next 25 years, I studied and experimented with the use of the Seder meal in parish life as God’s visible lesson helping us understand what He was doing in the Passover Lamb. God’s instruction was to observe this rite as a perpetual ordinance (Exodus 12:24). In Jesus’s offering of Himself as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” I came to understand the abrogation of God’s perpetual ordinance (Hebrews 10:8-10). We are faced with a critical question: Given that God’s covenant is eternal, then why would He allow the destruction of the center of sacrifice for Israel (the temple) unless He offered a better way? He offered a complete sacrifice in the body of His Son. As a Catholic, I give thanks that every time we celebrate Eucharist, we celebrate the sacrifice the Lamb offered for us. Jesus Himself fulfills the promise of His Presence under the appearance of bread and wine.

During that same period of time, we found a number of Anglican priests who were wonderful Bible teachers and enthusiastic to evangelize. Eventually, we connected with one such priest in Verdun, Quebec. The priest asked us to be youth group leaders. Julia and I attended his weekly Bible studies and have carried on that practice in every parish I have served. It was this priest who prepared us for confirmation in the Anglican

Church and encouraged me to see the Bishop of Montreal to become an Anglican priest.

Once confirmed, I was interviewed by a committee that recommended candidates for ordination to the bishop. I felt so strongly that Julia and I could grow in faith and offer useful service for the Lord through the Anglican Church that I quit my job as a Life Insurance underwriter, enrolled in Montreal Diocesan Theological College, paid off my United Church academic loans, and began using my savings to pay for tuition until the Bishop approved my candidacy. The approval of the Lord came to me when I received, *on the same day*, a letter from United Church thanking me for repaying my student loans and wishing me well in the future and a letter from the Anglican Theological College welcoming me to its student body and setting a date for orientation!

Ministry in Sacraments and Prayer

As a seminarian, I was sent out to visit in the parish and came upon a man with a brain tumor. He was in pain and dying. I came back to my priest and asked if we could take some oil, lay hands on him, and pray for healing. The priest said “no, we only pray for the sick at the communion table on Sunday.” Sadly, the man died before Sunday. I felt that the core of ministry was being shifted from a preacher/counselor to one who exercised sacramental ministry.

I became involved in an interdenominational ministry called the Order of St. Luke (OSL). Its goal was to restore the ministry of healing to the church. OSL members were pastoral visitors, pastors, religious, doctors, nurses, and hospital staff. There was a biblical study course for six months and a number of books to read for those who wished to be members. With OSL I had the opportunity to be involved in liturgical rites of healing at the local parish and conference level. It was truly a blessed time of learning.

The Body of Christ

My ancestors have always been very musical. I follow in that path as a composer, singer, and instrumentalist. Hence, when the music of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal burst forth from Ann Arbor, the St. Louis Jesuits, and inter-denominational charismatic fellowships, I was right in the midst of it, being filled with joy and passing it on. Contemporary music was used to embolden the Body of Christ by strong hymns of faith and hope and Scriptures set to song. Worship in many Anglican Churches in Canada was transformed by such vibrant music. I remember being chastised by the Holy Spirit for my evangelical intransigence for the song “I am the Bread of Life.” He showed me that it came from John 6. Years later when Catholic Bishop Luke Bouchard taught on John 6 at Newman Theological College, Edmonton, Alberta, I came to understand that it was not optional to believe Jesus’s teaching that the fruit of eating His Body and drinking His Blood is eternal life.

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Jesus was willing to start all over again, even with His Apostles if they walked away from Him on this point. Thankfully, Peter spoke for the rest of the Apostles when he said, “To whom shall we go for you have the words of eternal life?” (John 6:68). It was that song and Bishop Luke’s teaching that helped me accept the first of three great hurdles to Catholic conversion: the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, the place of Mary, and the centrality of Peter as first amongst the Apostles.

The Place of Mary

Through the Charismatic Renewal I came to know many Catholic believers on fire for Jesus. For many years, I attended the weekly meeting of Our Lady of the Valley Prayer group in Chilliwack, BC — especially when they were offering Life in the Spirit seminars. I had attended my first Seminar at St. Mary’s Anglican Church in Beaconsfield, Quebec (1977), which was led by charismatic Anglicans. There were not any doctrinal concerns for me at that time. I was confused, however, by the request of Catholic charismatics for Mary to intercede for them. I thought only Jesus did that.

Then in 1995, two things happened to clear up my concerns. I spent a weekend at a couple’s cabin. The wife offered to teach me how to say the rosary. I remember with great vigor saying to her, “I am a Protestant. I do not do such things!” The next day full of faith, this woman humbly taught me to say the rosary using her father’s rosary. She gave the rosary to me and said, “As you feel led, use this in your prayers.” I did use it — for many years! I learned that Anglicans say the rosary, also. Anglicans even have places of devotion to Mary. I came to see: “Who could be a better model for us of being filled with the Holy Spirit than Mary?”

My wife and I completed catechetical studies with Oblate Bishop Denis Croteau and were given the freedom to do further Catholic studies at Newman College. I learned some critical things about the honor, not the worship, we give to Mary. The early Church Fathers and their councils defined the role of Mary. This was all new to me. Why the intense concern for Mary? Was she *Christotokos* (Christ bearer) or *Theotokos* (God bearer)? Without the early Church affirming that Mary in fact bore the Son of God, as *Theotokos*, Jesus would have been relegated to just another teacher who was either a liar or a lunatic (as C.S. Lewis once said). Mary’s favor with God and her humble willingness to be in union with God’s will, mirrored how her Son would fulfill the Father’s will on the cross. Mary bore the Savior of the world. Because of her role in God’s plan, it was entirely logical that the Church would declare the two Marian dogmas (her Immaculate Conception and Assumption into Heaven) to be believed by every Catholic everywhere. John Cardinal Henry Newman’s preaching helped me understand this.

In the same year (1995), I attended the 40-day Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius at the Jesuit Retreat House in Guelph, Ontario. Central to Ignatius’s exercises is what he calls “colloquies,” or prayer conversations, between you and the Father, you and

Jesus, and you and Mary. I had never conversed with Mary in prayer before. One day, sitting all alone before the Blessed Sacrament, I felt Mary come to me as a warm and inviting mother. I heard her say in my heart, “Don, come sit on my lap and tell me what is troubling you.” I spiritually did what she asked and I was overjoyed. I had never experienced maternal love quite like that all my life. I wept in thanksgiving. As a pastor, now I have seen Mary’s assistance to help the dying to leave this earth without fear, especially as I pray the Glorious Mysteries with them.

Petrine Authority

When dealing with St. Peter’s authority, there was great urgency in my life to find “*full communion*.” As a priest in the worldwide Anglican Communion, I had looked to the Scriptures, the bishops, the first five ecumenical Councils of the Church, the Prayer Book, and reason to be bulwarks in matters of faith and morals. In the last ten years of my ministry as an Anglican, I saw the authority of bishops eroded by synodical government made up of clergy and lay people who were less and less biblically literate, making decisions about faith and morals that were increasingly swayed by political and societal values, not derived from the Gospel. I saw church discipline inconsistently used and an arrogance of diocesan bishops to do what is right in their own eyes, regardless of the effect on the worldwide Anglican Communion. This has caused in my lifetime a terrible schism between dear friends and fellow Christians. There was no central core of belief; all was up for democratic vote.

I began to search diligently for the gift that would bring unity to the Church. Bishop Croteau gave me a very well-reasoned paper on Petrine authority written by a former Lutheran bishop who had become a Catholic. After reading his paper and every reference to Peter in the Scriptures, I came to a number of conclusions. Jesus consistently chose Peter as the first amongst many disciples and when He named the Apostles (Matt 10:2). Jesus personally mentored Simon, the Rock. Peter witnessed Jesus raise the dead and Jesus invited him to the Mount of Transfiguration, in the same way that Moses brought Joshua up on the mountain to learn how to lead God’s people. Jesus trained Peter to face his times of weakness by telling him to expect to be sifted by Satan and later to strengthen the brethren (Luke 22:31-34). After Peter’s failures, Jesus reinstates Peter as the leader amongst the Apostles (John 21). The crowning touch is the unique role Peter plays in the proclamation of Jesus as the Son of God: Jesus tells Peter he will hold the keys of the Kingdom (Matt 16:18). It is this inspiration of the Holy Spirit, declared by Jesus, that gives Peter his unifying role as leader of the Apostles. In Acts 2:14-36, Peter speaks for the Apostles to the people of Jerusalem after the descent of the Holy Spirit. It is to Peter that St. Paul comes to receive the right hand of fellowship and apostolic approval for his continued work of evangelism (Acts 15: 7-11; Gal 1:18; 2:9). During this time, Bishop Denis studied the *Catechism of*



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the Catholic Church with Julia and me and encouraged us to read books by recent Catholic converts.

Meditating on all this settled my soul. My desire for “full communion” could find its home in the Catholic Church with the Pope and Magisterium as a gift of God for unity of the Church in all ages, with Mary as my spiritual Mother, and with the daily presence of Jesus abiding in me through the Eucharist.

Living the Mysteries

In our diocese we have a wonderful retreat center called Trappers Lake Spirituality Center just outside Yellowknife, NWT. In the heart of the center is a tepee-like structure where all gatherings and teachings take place during conferences. Both Julia and I felt that if Bishop Denis wanted to send us off to Newman College for two years to complete any requirements laid down by Archbishop Tonnos for the Congregation of Faith, we wanted to do so as Catholics. We wished to be in full communion with our brothers and sisters in the Catholic Faith by being confirmed and by making our verbal ascent to the teachings of the Magisterium. We invited our friends from many different denominations to be with us during that confirmation ceremony held in the Teepee. During the summer, we came back to the diocese and worked as lay missionaries in missions, including the Dene people.

I never told my Anglican evangelical or charismatic friends that I had been using the rosary in my private devotions until November 2006 when I received a papal indult from Pope Benedict XVI giving me permission to be ordained as a married priest. I phoned my friend who had given me that rosary back in 1995 and told her I had been using it all these years. She said, “Don’t you know whose rosary that is? It is a rosary of St. Benedict! He has been protecting you all these years and leading you to this point.” She sent me the inscriptions on the front and back of the Benedict medal attached to my Benedictine rosary. I was amazed and deeply touched.

Once Pope Benedict XVI gave approval for my ordination, I was able to have my Diaconal Ordination in a native community called Ft. Good Hope in the central part of Northwest Territories. They had never seen an ordination in over 100 years of existence as a mission in our diocese. One of our permanent deacons was able to share about the meaning and mission of the Order of Deacon (perhaps sowing seeds for new leaders

amongst the Dene). That night I went over to a 92-year-old woman and gave her a big hug and let her see my new collar. She had prayed her “beads” with Mary every day for three years, so I could become a priest.

One week later Bishop Denis ordained me a priest at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church in Yellowknife (Feb 18, 2007). It was awesome to have my hands folded in obedience into the hands of my bishop (as St. Francis taught) and anointed for service. My final words of thanks at the Ordination Mass were thanks to my wife for her support in ministry for many, many years; thanks to the eight bishops who placed confidence in me to pastor in their dioceses; and to the Dene people that I would be one of the first of hopefully many diocesan priests to serve in Denende.

Each Sunday, Julia and I joyfully experience an awesome mystery. As each person comes forward to receive the Body of our Lord, we realize that we are united as members of a living Body, with Christ abiding in us, on earth and in heaven: full communion (Rev 5:9-10) which includes the Franciscan view of communion with all creation (Rev 5:11-14). Celebrating Mass is no longer centered on my personality, but its focus is being *in persona Christi*. Every day, God sends us out as Catholics with new challenges and graces to achieve justice balanced by prayer fulfilled by the whole Body of the baptised. ■



FR. DONALD FLUMERFLET and his wife, Julia, have three children: Joshua, Joseph, and Bethany. He is father-in-law to Pamela Schrawen (Joshua’s wife) and grandparent to Nathan and Gabriel. Donald served for 29 years as a priest in the Anglican Church of Canada in four different dioceses. Donald presently lives in Hay River, Northwest Territories with his wife, Julia, and serves as the first married Diocesan priest of the missionary Roman Catholic Diocese of Mackenzie-Ft. Smith.

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