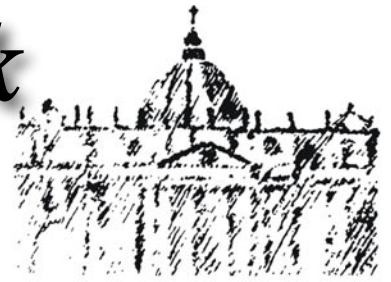


The Coming Home Network NEWSLETTER



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Journeys Home

“...and the land was broad, quiet, and peaceful;...”

By Gerald and Jennifer Tritle

Throughout our spiritual journey, Jennifer and I always seemed to be advancing in one direction while our Christian friends were reverting to others. When we left the Charismatic movement for modern Evangelicalism, our friends were becoming Pentecostal. When we transitioned to the Reformed Presbyterian Church, our friends were migrating to modern Evangelicalism. And, when our friends and acquaintances deserted Rome for Protestant Evangelicalism, we joyfully went.

Our hearts were confident as God's Holy Spirit led us (via Providence, the Scriptures, and reason) ultimately to leave the most conservative, Reformed, and historically Presbyterian sector of Protestantism (which unceasingly touts the Calvinistic tenets of the sixteenth century Protestant revolt) to join with the Pope, the bishops, and all of the saints of the Holy Catholic Church.

I was born in Springfield, Ohio, into a line of Lutherans whom I can trace to sixteenth century Germany. Baptized and confirmed into the Lutheran Church, I worshipped with my grandparents and parents in this liturgical and sacramental environment until I reached age seven. My parents then ceased attending church services, and we did not discuss religion in our home.

When I was twenty-two years old, a zealous Evangelical Christian presented the Gospel of Jesus Christ to me. Enlightened by the Holy Spirit, I consciously embraced Christ as Lord and joined the Assembly of God Church, a Pentecostal denomination. I devoured the Sacred Scriptures and Pentecostal theology and, ultimately, while maintaining my business vocation, became a lay minister. I never desired to become a full-time minister, but wanted, instead, to help build up the church while I lived out my faith in a business vocation.

Three years later, I transferred from the Assemblies of God to an independent Charismatic church that I believed was more aligned to the Scriptures' presentation of the early church in polity



and theology. From these early experiences, I came to appreciate the Charismatics' respect and zeal for understanding the Scriptures (although subjectively and Dispensationally interpreted). I also grew to pursue a right, authoritative church polity and an understanding of God's covenant with man. On the other hand, I became disenchanted with the Charismatics' errors of Dispensational theology, of a pietistic and pessimistic outlook on life and culture, and of a discipleship that produced ascetic, self-

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absorbed believers who focused continually on their own psyches.

Jennifer's relatives, on the other hand, immigrated to America from Italy during the 1940's. Then Catholic, they converted to Protestantism, joining the Christian Church of North America (the CCNA, an Italian Pentecostal Church). Her family's spiritual journey over several years included attending Nazarene, Free Methodist, Calvary Chapel, and Evangelical Free Churches. Jennifer was baptized at age ten, and, by age twenty, after having witnessed years of church infighting, pastoral immorality, and doctrinal immaturity, she became disillusioned with organized religion. The Holy Spirit intervened when she was twenty-one and opened her eyes to the fact that the Scriptures were the standard for faith and life and that God required obedience to them.

Jennifer and I met in 1986, when I was on a business trip to California. We were married in Ohio in 1988. We vowed in our marriage ceremony to love one another and to give ourselves to serving and blessing Christ's people, His Church. On our honeymoon in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, we met Pastor David Chilton, a noted Reformed scholar, who was ministering in a Charismatic church there. He taught us the glory of church history and her saints, the errors of Dispensationalism, and the need to train one's children diligently in the faith. We resonated with his message. It launched within both Jennifer and me a great desire to seek, to know, and to enjoy the righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit—the Kingdom of God—to which the Scriptures refer in Romans 14:11. God had graced us to seek the blessed land wherein, according to 1 Chronicles 4: 40, the children of Israel found rich, good pasture in a land that was broad, quiet, and peaceful, i.e., the Church. We had not yet found this land, but upon our return to Springfield, Jennifer started her new job as a clinical therapist. She partnered

with Steve White in working with male juvenile sex offenders. Steve and his wife were a lovely, peaceful, and knowledgeable Catholic couple.

Within a few months of our marriage, Jennifer and I mutually agreed upon our saving money and planning for a sabbatical for the following year. We desired to attend a Charismatic Bible school in East Texas where we could deepen our understanding of the Scriptures and the Kingdom of God. Our spiritual journey to date had left us without assurance that we were interpreting God and His will for our lives correctly. Knowing God and His way was desperately important to both

We purchased two hundred dollars worth of books that would, over the subsequent months, root us in the history of the church, in the theology of the creeds and confessions, in the knowledge of the Kingdom of God, and in the doctrines of the broader Protestant church.

of us, a desperation that seemed overly zealous and somewhat foolish to our friends. By the end of that sabbatical year, God had answered more of our prayers regarding His Kingdom: to put it bluntly, He showed us through our experience at the Bible school that the undisciplined and subjective nature of the Charismatic church was misguided. We saw that it lacked unity with the broader church, was substandard regarding theology, and was devoid of any historical roots prior to the early 1900's.

While preparing to return to Springfield, Ohio, on our last day in Texas, we visited a bookstore there and found several volumes by Reformed Presbyterians and Christian Reconstruction authors. The store manager was the wife of a minister who would become one of our Reformed Presbyterian mentors. We purchased two hundred dollars worth of books that would, over the subsequent months, root us in the history of the church, in the theology of the creeds and confessions, in the knowledge of the Kingdom of God, and

in the doctrines of the broader Protestant church. Jennifer and I were so distracted by all that God was teaching us, that we never considered that we were entrenched in an irrational Protestant bias. We were not consciously bigoted against Catholicism. The thought of embracing Catholicism simply did not occur to us. We had not discussed much about Catholicism with the Whites, and most of the other Catholics whom we knew at the time were cynical and unknowledgeable about the Church and the Scriptures.

After returning to Springfield in 1990, Jennifer and I, having left the Charismatic movement, had no church affiliation. We led a home Bible study in which we and others studied the Scriptures, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and Schaff's History of the Christian Church. Because we were not Catholic and were thus without the

protection of a Magisterium and an authority structure, we wrongly concluded that we needed to be in the Presbyterian church. We were extremely attracted to its polity of elder rule, its Reformation-based theology (much of which is grounded in the Scriptures), and its historical roots—all elements that are missing in Evangelical Protestantism. Confused by the existence of hundreds of Presbyterian denominations and thousands of church congregations, we called upon the mentor in Texas for help. He was a member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (RPCUS). He counseled us and the rest of our Bible study group to join the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), which, we all did in 1992.

We thought that our journey into the broad land was accomplished. We had found more of the Kingdom of God than we had ever known: spiritual authority, the faithful preaching of the Scriptures, and the organized and visible church in all of her, we believed, orthodox glory. The Reformation cries

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Weed'em & Reap

by Marcus Grodi



That's the name of our farm. *Weed'em & Reap*. So true, right? The problem, though, is that so far we mostly only reap weeds. I haven't erected an arched stone sign telling our neighbors our farm's name yet, because to do so would imply that we're serious about being a farm. I learned long ago, however, that I am far from worthy to be called a farmer.

What is our main crop, you ask? Well, our only intentional crop was Marilyn's strawberry patch, which did extremely well. Our bumper crops, however, were wild raspberries and black berries, but our largest showings were in Ironweed, spiceberries, stinging nettles, and multiflora rose.

Some of you might be impressed, but any farmer would know with a smirk that *Weed'em & Reap* Farm is being run by a disorganized, ignorant, displaced city-dweller. I could easily fill a book with the mistakes I've made (not knowing our goat was pregnant, burying my tractor axle deep in muck, and being thrown ankles over armpit by an escaped pig) but there have also been many victories, and we're learning a lot and enjoying the process together.

Picking berries is a fine example, and take it from me, more than a dozen quarts doesn't come easy. St. Paul reminds us in Romans 8

that, though we're heirs of Christ, this privilege comes "provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him" (8:17). The greatest blessings always come with suffering, and this is so true with harvesting bramble berries. Invariably the largest most luscious berries are deep within the brambles, and those pickers hurt! I swear there's demons in them berries, because the moment I stretch deep into a bush to pluck 2-3 berries, 2-3 picker branches wrap themselves around my back, locking me in until rescuers arrive. If you want to open the pores of your skin, picking berries is much more effective than any luffa sponge! I'm no biblical scholar, but I'm sure God added the pickers *after* the fall.

The greatest blessings also always require patience. Psalm 37 states: "Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him...those who wait for the Lord shall possess the land" (37:7, 9). Berry picking is no different. Anyone in a hurry, to just "get it done so I can move on to something else," will invariably have three times the number of picker pricks, one third the number of good

berries or probably no berries at all, since they were spilt while running home (just ask my youngest son). If one relaxes and takes the time to carefully delight in the picking of each berry, the overall experience is always more rewarding. Take delight in everything you do. This is the advice of the psalmist: "Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart" (37:4).

You may have already gotten my drift, but our *journeys home* are a lot like berry picking. Be patient, take delight in the journey itself not just the end, accept and offer up the sufferings, and the luscious fruit of the fullness of the faith will be yours.

Certainly, every convert is a gift to the Church and represents a serious responsibility for her ... especially in the case of adults, such converts bring with them a kind of new energy, an enthusiasm for the faith, and a desire to see the Gospel lived out in the Church. They would be greatly disappointed if, having entered the ecclesial community, they were to find a life lacking fervor and without signs of renewal! We cannot preach conversion unless we ourselves are converted anew every day.

— John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 47

Clergy on the Journey

More and more ministers continue to phone and e-mail the CHN office. At this writing 85 new clergy have contacted us for assistance so far this year alone. One of the most consistent request we are asked for at the *CHNetwork* from non-catholic ministers and academics is not for answers to tough doctrinal questions, or for books and articles, but for prayer. Many of our members are earnestly seeking guidance from the Throne of Grace as they search to enter deeply into Christ's will and understand their relationship with His holy Church.

The Holy Spirit can use any circumstance to prompt a separated brother or sister to consider the Catholic Church. Take for example this statement from a Presbyterian seminarian:

"I noted that our (conservative) Presbyterian denomination recognized baptisms performed by the Roman Catholic Church as being valid. I could not synthesize this with the belief of the Church of Rome being the "harlot" in Revelation. I asked my pastor, and he informed me that the Reformers recognized the baptisms as valid. I objected to the fact that they did so before the anathemas of Trent - and since Rome had anathematized the Gospel (sola fide) they weren't a church at all but a synagogue of Satan. I couldn't get it to square up - but at some point I found myself watching EWTN, and I saw my first Mass. I was shocked! I heard more Scripture during the Mass than I did many Protestant services. I decided

I needed to at least read some things from a Roman Catholic perspective rather than the Roman Catholic perspective as told by a Protestant!"

—This seminarian asks for your prayers as he seeks and studies to learn the Truth.

Jeff and Jenny met while attending an evangelical university in the mid-west. In graduate school as they studied history, philosophy, theology, and particularly the Bible, they became increasingly concerned that they were not believing and living the historic Christian faith. They now ask for prayer as they step out in faith and follow their conscience into the Catholic Church. If they become Catholic, it is very likely that Jeff will loose his job at the evangelical Protestant university where he teaches. Pray that our Lord grants them the courage, strength and faith to step out and follow the path that He has set before them.

In closing I would like our members to please pray for another Jeff (who phoned me as I was writing this article) a United Methodist minister in Texas who has been studying the Catholic faith for about three years. He is seriously considering leaving his pastorate to come into full communion with the Catholic Church but he wants to do so on God's timing and in a way that would build up rather than scandalize the faith of his Methodist congregants. If the Catholic Church is really what it claims to be, out of love for his people, he would like as many as possible to understand and embrace the fullness of the Faith who would be open to it.

Please pray for your brothers and sisters!!

Jim Anderson
Primary Coordinator



Helping 'em Home

CHN Pilgrimages - Taking us Deep in History

May 2005 will play host to The Coming Home Network Internationals first Deep in History Pilgrimage – taking us back into the four hundred years of Franciscan history found in the Missions of New Mexico. I had the privilege of traveling to many of the New Mexico Missions, filming their walls of captured time, walking through missions-ruins alike, and resting in the great halls, that once held our Holy Mass.

In the mist desert and

barren land stands a centuries old oasis revealing the glory of God Son's through His Church. Pilgrims they where to this land, Franciscan Priests, sent deep into the desert to bring the Good News of Christ to all they encountered. Their missions stand as earthly relics of the glory God they brought to share.

In 2005, some of us will have the chance to retrace the steps of these Men and Women of God. In essence, we will walk through time, as we take our steps into the history of our faith in the lands of New Mexico, the Land of Enchantment. Santa Fe's rich history; the story of Bishop Lamy, the miraculous staircase of Loreto, Chimayo; known as the Our Lady

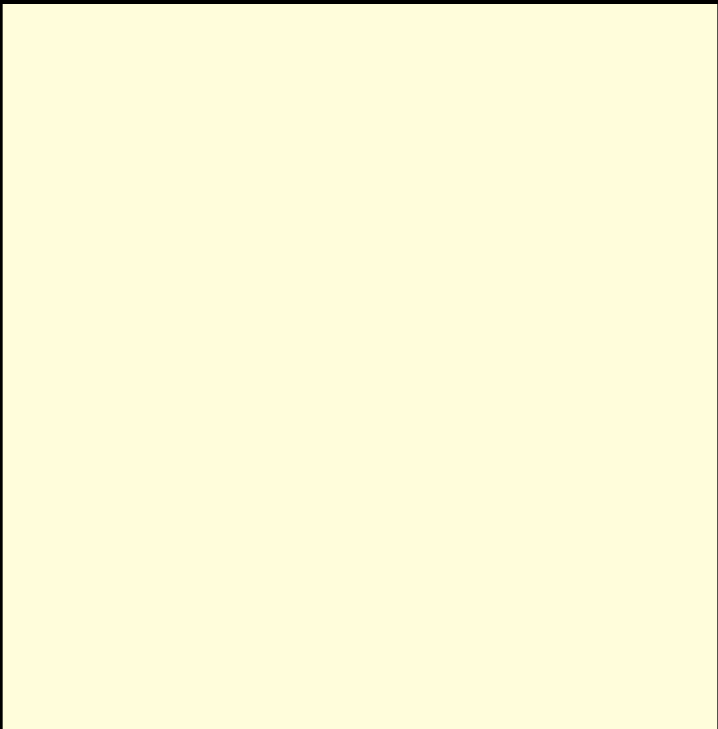
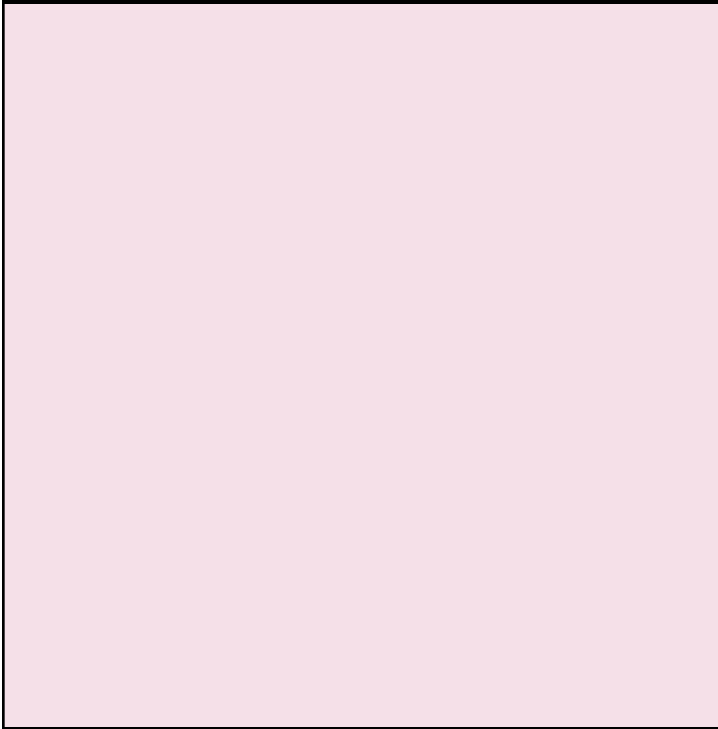
of Lourdes of America, Rancho's de Taos and many more.

For those interested I recommend reading Death Comes to an Archbishop, offering us insight to the world these men came to, and the struggles they faced. Mark May 2005 on your calendars and pray about your feet taking the steps of time into the History of the Catholic Church here in America.

In Christ, His servant and yours,

Robert Rodgers
Helpers Network &
CHN Events Coordinator
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Catholics And The Eucharist: Is Jesus' Body Really Present?

By Gregory Oatis



THE CHALLENGE: When Jesus promised to give us his body, he was speaking symbolically, as he was when he described himself as a vine and his believers as branches. Nowhere do the scriptures detail the Catholic understanding of Communion being Jesus' "body, soul and divinity."

Actually, Jesus was clearer and more explicit concerning his real and living Presence in the Eucharist than he was on any other teaching. In fact, he nearly lost all of his followers because of his insistence on the matter.

In Chapter 6 of his Gospel, St. John relates a dramatic sequence in which this precise question is explored in depth.

The day after the multiplication of the loaves and fishes finds the Lord's followers hungry again. So Jesus tells them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst" (v. 35).

At this point, one might argue that Christ was speaking symbolically. After all, he did indeed once compare himself to a vine, and his followers to branches. Yet no one interprets that teaching literally, right?

But we soon see that this teaching of the Bread of Life is different. And the difference does not sit well with his followers. "The Jews murmured about him because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven...'" (v. 41).

These skeptics would have been satisfied if Jesus had backed off his disturbing claim by making it clear that he was only speaking symbolically.

Instead, he pressed the point, saying, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink" (53-54).

"True," as opposed to merely "symbolic" – a distinction that was not lost on the murmurers. Because after that further clarification, they had even more difficulty believing him: "This saying is hard; who can accept it?" (60).

But he pressed his point further still. "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (63).

Whereupon, the scriptures tell us, almost all of the disciples present that day turned their backs on Jesus: "As a result of this, many [of] his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him" (66).

They could not accept his teaching on the Bread of Life. Indeed, it is at this point that Jesus refers to Judas Iscariot as a "devil" (70), so it is likely that even Judas' betrayal was linked to a lack of faith in the Eucharist.

The difficulty the disciples had in grasping this teaching stems from the precise fact that this is not another parable to be "explained" like the vine and the branches, or the sower and the seed. The Eucharist *is* Jesus' Body and Blood, just as he says.

There is an even more serious problem with the symbolic interpretation. The term, "eat my flesh," is in fact used symbolically in scripture. It means, "revile me" or "destroy me" (Ps. 27:2; Micah 3:2; Is. 9:18, Rev. 17:6, etc.) So if Jesus did intend to speak metaphorically,

his choice of words would have been hopelessly confusing to his followers.

Further, we see St. Paul affirming the sacred Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, saying, "...whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:27).

Being judged guilty of someone's "body and blood" is a clear reference to murder. How could anyone be guilty of murder for violating a mere symbol?

Not surprisingly, the Early Church Fathers also affirm the Real Presence. St. Ignatius of Antioch, who would have learned the faith from either St. John or St. Peter, or both, writes in 110 A.D., "Take care, then, to use one Eucharist, so that whatever you do, you do according to God: for there is one Flesh of our Lord Jesus, and one cup in the union of his Blood..."

It is worth nothing that this teaching is so fundamental to our heritage that not a single Christian voice was raised to question it for well over a thousand years.

Mr. Oatis is author of the book, 'Catholic Doctrine in Scripture: A Guide To The Verses That Are Key To Affirming The Faith', published by CH Resources. It is available at your local Catholic bookseller, or by calling toll-free: 877-455-3208.

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of “Sola Fide” and “Sola Scriptura” were faithfully taught, and we took church membership vows to honor those tenets. Unbiblical ecclesiastical traditions were nixed, so we thought. Our three children – Jedidiah, Josiah, and Sarah (ages thirteen, ten, and nine respectively as of this writing) – were baptized in the OPC. Three years later, I became a Ruling Elder and the following year I began to train to become a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. In 1997, I earned a Masters of Divinity Degree (M. Div.) from Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, the most conservative seminary servicing the OPC. My enjoyable studies were steeped in Church history, the ancient Greek and Hebrew languages, and the development of theology. I especially loved studying the Catechism of the Catholic Church due to its rich presentation of the early and medieval Church Fathers.

My seminary studies and my extra historical and ecclesiastical studies with Jennifer broadened our theological and ethical outlook. I learned a great deal about Catholicism, having studied the Church Fathers, the Creeds and Confessions, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Jennifer and I were exhilarated with all that we had been learning, and our zeal infected many of our lay-brethren in the church. Delighting in God’s will, we were forming intimate fellowship with many families who seemed fervent for the faith. In addition, I taught a series from the Book of Ecclesiastes that to this day changed Jennifer and me. From that book we learned that we did not need to be overly righteous or religious about life (Eccl 7:16). We could relax and eat, drink, and be merry while submitting to the fear of God and the keeping His Commandments (Eccl. 12:13). We realized that God did not require us to be able to split every doctrinal hair in order to please Him. We assessed our lives and agreed that our journey to date had made us overly narrow theologically, too legalistic, too pietistic, overly critical of others and other churches, anti-Catholic (although

we believed that there were Christians in the Catholic Church), and devoid of a zeal to perform good works out of a warm heart of love. We saw ourselves becoming what we did not want to become and what we clearly saw in the Scriptures that Christ detested.

We repented thoroughly to God. Christ, we realized was not as concerned about what we believed exactly as He was concerned about our charity toward all of mankind. The parables that we had thoroughly studied about the sheep and the goats and about the poor and the needy were illuminating our minds and correcting our thoughts. We realized that we could continue in my original calling to work in my business vocation and to serve others and that this would please God as much as would full-time ministry. In addition, each day we were more and more feeling the need to burst out of the fetters that our elders placed on us. We were serving the church twenty to thirty hours per week, and we were exhausted. They were merciless about giving us any reprieve. In addition we were feeling the need to be OUTSIDE of the church’s four walls to serve Christ and to build our own lives: to serve in a soup kitchen, to bake for the neighbors, to provide free tutoring for a child, to enroll our children in community affairs, and to pursue creative ventures. But verbally and non-verbally, the elders communicated to us their displeasure in our newfound liberty and trajectory.

We subsequently made a collaborative decision not to pursue a pastorate in the OPC. This was the beginning of sorrows. In 2000, not having found a suitable congregation to join and yet equipped with the qualifications, ministerial experience, sponsorship, and desire to begin a less legalistic and more merciful Reformed church in Springfield, Ohio, we joined with our mentor minister in the RPCUS to begin pastoring a new church: Springfield Reformed Presbyterian Church. Our church published a popular website that was a portal to the entire Reformed community

The OPC that we left learned of our

new congregation and the sponsoring RPCUS denomination. Though Springfield had no Reformed church, and though the nearest OPC church was about 35 miles away, the OPC church feared that their parishioners would travel that distance to Springfield to partake of a former elder’s ministry. The RPCUS graciously requested that the OPC allow the Springfield church to come into the RPCUS without incident. The OPC, after much discourse, refused to do so. Because of this our church became a member of the Association of Free Reformed Churches.

Although our church seemed free and clear of the most sectarian portions of Presbyterianism, we were beginning to note that these several judicatories were basically doing “what was right in [their] own eyes” (Judges 21:25). Not only was all of this an example of disunity, but also my family had to bear my verdict of excommunication, a result of a humiliating and public church trial. The judgment of excommunication means that that session of elders ruled me an “infidel” or an “unbeliever” to be shunned. Families and friends with whom we had spent countless ministry and friendship hours no longer spoke to us, fearing punishment if they disobeyed the elders. Nearly ten years of relationships and emotions were annihilated. We were ousted and ostracized because we failed to adhere to the Protestant ministerial traditions—the traditions of those who were first schismatic over 400 years ago. We ministered, published, worked, and persevered for nearly four years at Springfield Reformed Church.

Our church grew, and we served our community. We urged the flock to be rich in good works. Nevertheless, as we witnessed the continued disunity and hateful infighting among many members of the Reformed community locally and nationally, Jennifer and I began to become disenchanted with Reformed Presbyterianism and Protestantism altogether. A crisis point in our spiritual journey home to Rome had arrived.

While teaching a series on the jus-

tification of the saints to my church (what became my last Protestant teaching series), I returned to my studies of the doctrines of Protestantism and the Catholic Church that I had learned in seminary. Norman Shepherd and other theologians seeking Protestant and Catholic dialogue sparked my consideration of the legitimacy of Roman Catholicism. While pouring over Protestant and Catholic dogma, I lost my theological moorings. I began to vacillate back and forth between wanting to remain Protestant and wanting to join the broad fellowship of Roman Catholicism which I saw as “deep in Scripture, deep in tradition, and deep in history” (a quote from the “Coming Home” website, which I had been perusing). At first, I would spend days holding to Protestantism and minutes holding to Catholicism.

Then, I would wake up Protestant in the morning and become a convinced Catholic

at night. I was angry that my spiritual journey had come to this major confusion. My poor wife, while waiting for me to land, longed for our family to be rightly planted and rested in Christ’s church. She would have continued in our church if I had desired it, but she did not want me to continue ministering as a pastor if I were so frustrated and unhappy.

Before crossing the Tiber to Rome, we rationally came to some conclusions. First, Jennifer and I realized that Protestantism was not honest, as it purported, with all of the Scriptures regarding justification by works (James 2:24). For us, “Sola Fide” was now out. Also, I found that the Scriptures themselves were a part of Church (i.e., Catholic Church) tradition and even spoke of the reception of Church tradition, therefore, making the phrase “Sola Scriptura” not only unscriptural, but unethical. So, “Sola Scriptura” was out too. Moreover, Church tradition and Sacred Scripture compose the Deposit of Faith handed to us by the Fathers. My eyes were opened

to the fact that Protestants reject the Pope in lieu of establishing their own smaller popes (Independent churches) and curia (Presbyterian Churches).

Furthermore, I was deeply frustrated that Protestants, no matter how large the denominations, cannot work out theological or ministerial unity among themselves, to the detriment of the growth of the entire church. Their pursuits of what has been called the “narcissism of small [doctrinal] differences,” will be their collective doom. I, should I continue ministering, along with every other Protestant pastor or bishop, would always be relegated to re-inventing the wheel of polity and ministerial infrastructure. How, in this divided and schismatic enterprise called Protestantism, could I ever work to minister effectively to those in Africa, Croatia, or

... I realized that Protestantism was not honest, as it purported, with all of the Scriptures regarding justification by works (James 2:24). For us, “Sola Fide” was now out.

Cincinnati for that matter?

Finally, I saw and understood that, according to St. Peter’s words recorded in Acts 10:34-35, God accepts WHOEVER fears Him and works righteousness. The Roman Catholic Church teaches and lives this. The Protestants add on theological particulars that go beyond what God Himself requires.

I pondered the major reforms of Roman Catholicism since the sixteenth century. I began to acknowledge the fervent love for Christ and His Word exhibited by the Catholic Church. I wanted a unified, international, and historically legitimate church that embraced the historic creeds and confessions. I believed in Trent over and against the Reformed Creeds, and, I realized that I was no longer fighting the ecclesiastical wars of the sixteenth century. Those wars are over; their combatants dead, although, as the Catholic Catechism, Protestants are “in many ways joined” to the Catholic Church.

We contacted our Catholic friends, the Whites, to tell them of our deci-

sion. They eventually became our sponsors into St. Teresa Catholic Church in Springfield, Ohio.

Our transition to Roman Catholicism was emotional and difficult, but ultimately healing. I drafted a letter to my presbyter, my original mentor, stating my intentions to demit the ministry of the Springfield church and to join the Roman Catholic Church. My plan was to continue preaching for six weeks to allow me to help the parishioners to transition to other churches, including the Catholic Church should any desire to do so. Within one evening, the presbyter called each parishioner personally and told them that I, now an “idolatrous papist,” was defecting to the “Sicilian pit” of Rome and was not worthy to be their pastor for a single day longer. This devastated the congregation and

me. Given that I was obviously fired, I visited my own church one more Sunday, trying to explain my transition to Roman

Catholicism and to offer my help to them. The weeping among the congregation was great—and brief. The crying turned to anger and name calling within but a few days. The church dissolved fourteen weeks later. Even though I lost church income, I had kept my professional job and thus avoided problematic entanglements and financial difficulties while making this transition.

In November, 2003, my family joined our parish’s RCIA and CCD classes, and during the 2004 Easter Vigil, Jennifer, my three children, and I were confirmed into the Catholic Church and partook of our First Communion. Father Richard Walling was a great comfort to me, a man whose name was then “mud” and whose reputation as a Protestant “schismatic” and “defector to Rome” was published abroad in print and on the Internet. The pain and wounds not with standing, God, through much tribulation, had driven my family out of narrow and harrowing trials and into the broad and blessed land of His Catholic Church.

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