



October 2009 Newsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

My Path to Rome

— Fr. Trevor Nicholls

I owe an immense debt of gratitude to my conservative Evangelical background. I was privileged to belong for many years to a fellowship which of its sort was, I am convinced, without peer in the Anglican Church. Within that fellowship, I was given many opportunities for Christian witness and service and to this day, I thank God for them.

Inevitably, however, in those pre-ecumenical days, I grew up with the Evangelicals' traditional suspicion of the Roman Church. Part of it, of course, was the Englishman's well-documented "Gunpowder, Treason and Plot" antipathy to Rome to which in due course my Evangelicalism added a theological framework. My knowledge of Catholicism was, in fact, mere garnishing to a massive ignorance although such ignorance seldom if ever proved a bar to criticism of the Church of Rome. In truth, mine was a small and highly insulated-ecclesiastical world; I knew very few Catholics personally and viewed those I did with rather more curiosity than genuine interest.

At first glance, it seems that my University days served only to reinforce this state of affairs. My membership of the Evangelical Christian Union, a growing interest in Reformed (i.e., Calvinistic) theology and always, as a background, my continuing happy connection with my home

parish, deepened my attachment to conservative Evangelicalism while adding to my anti-Roman sentiments. It was during this time that my parish priest challenged me to consider the possibility of ordination within the Church of England. The wheels turned and at the beginning of my final year at University I was recommended for training by the church's Advisory Board for ordained ministry. My decision to seek holy orders was taken in good faith and thereafter, obviously, it became an increasingly important part of the framework of my life.

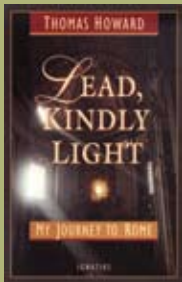
At the same time, however, changes were taking place in my way of thinking, under a variety of influences. My degree studies in History were giving me a much wider perspective on the Church. Moreover, simply by being at University meant that I was encountering other traditions both within and outside the Church of England. Thus long talks with the warden of my Hall of Residence, himself a very High Churchman, forced me increasingly to re-examine the basic presuppositions of my theology. Above all, I discovered at first hand some official Catholic teaching (in a book on the Council of Trent) regarding a subject dear to the hearts of all Evangelicals, namely, the authority and trustworthiness of the ...continued on page 2

Journeys Home

FEATURED RESOURCES

Lead Kindly Light

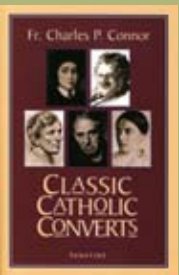
By Thomas Howard



Through his prolific and highly regarded writing, Thomas Howard's name is familiar to Protestants and Catholics alike, but many have never heard the story of his conversion to Catholicism. With grace, charm, and wit Dr. Howard describes his journey from Evangelicalism to Anglicanism and finally to the Church of Rome. In a world saturated with fashionable unbelief, Howard's testimony inspires and informs.

Classic Catholic Converts

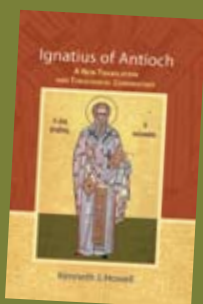
By Fr. Charles P. Connor



Classic Catholic Converts presents the compelling stories of over 25 well known converts to Catholicism from the 19th and 20th centuries including G. K. Chesterton and John Henry Newman. It tells of powerful testimonials to God's grace, the grace that led these men and woman to the fullness of the Catholic Church.

SPECIAL OFFER!

This fall, *CHNI* will be releasing the new expanded edition of Dr. Kenneth Howell's book *Ignatius of Antioch: A New Translation and Theological Commentary*. This new version will include his brand new translation and commentary of Ignatius' letters plus the letters of Polycarp. Therefore, we are offering a special deal on the first edition of *Ignatius of Antioch: A New Translation and Theological Commentary*. This book is an outstanding resource on the Apostolic Fathers to read for yourself and to give away to friends. Order your copies today at only \$5 each, while supplies last.



...Journeys Home Continued...

Holy Scriptures. Finding their statements on the Bible virtually indistinguishable from those contained in the most highly approved Evangelical doctrinal handbook was akin to discovering that a person whom you had always considered to be a rotter and a cad wasn't such a bad fellow after all; pleasing but also slightly unnerving.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, by the time I left University, my thinking on matters theological had about it a certain schizoid quality. On the one hand, my attachment to conservative Evangelicalism remained firm; indeed, perhaps ironically, my discovery of common ground with Roman Catholicism had, after the initial shock, served to strengthen it. At the same time, however, and hardly unsurprisingly, I was being led to question the very nature of the Evangelicalism I knew so well. In the year following graduation from University I began to wonder whether Evangelical views on human nature and the working of God's grace in human lives were not just a little too simple; in particular, I turned my attention to the conversion experience upon which Evangelicals place so much emphasis.

From the age of about eleven I had been taught that being baptized did not make one a Christian, nor did Christian parents or a Christian home, not even regular attendance at church. What was necessary was a personal decision to follow Jesus Christ, to accept Him as Lord and Savior, "to invite Him into your heart," to commit one's life to Him. The result of this teaching was that many of us grew up in an atmosphere where ninety-nine sermons out of a hundred were in essence calls to this initial commitment and preachers and teachers would tend to treat life-long worshippers as if they were heathens fresh off the streets.

Now, I could see, as I still can, the value of preaching for decision. Indeed, bearing in mind the state of society today, the value of this approach may be said to have increased rather than the opposite. Yet leaving aside for a moment the disparagement of Baptism and the other Sacraments, certain things just didn't add up. For example, many of those who made 'decisions' did not seem to maintain their discipleship for very long while in any case, the perfervid atmosphere in which much evangelistic work took place created its own problems. Conversely, a little thought and observation soon revealed that the steadiest members of any congregation or fellowship enjoyed the advantage of a positively Christian home or else, at the very least, the encouragement of parents sympathetic to the church.

On a different tack, I began to take a greater interest in the Evangelical obsession with the Church of the Apostolic Age, the feeling that if only we could somehow recreate or at least recapture its spirit, then all would be well. It is a beguiling prospect, entirely to be expected, given the Evangelical attitude to the Scriptures and at one time or another the majority of Evangelicals, myself included, succumb to its allure. When, much later, I read Monsignor Ronald Knox's superb *Enthusiasm*, I saw that men have been fascinated by the Church of the first century since the second. For some – perhaps the majority – it is a question of trying to form a 'pure' church; for others, a quest for what appears as the power and success of the New Testament communities. History reveals, however, in ways painful for their clarity, that sooner or later the quest ends in failure.

These and similar considerations were reinforced in my mind from what at that time was a most unlikely source. One day I stumbled across an article by Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge (*himself a subsequent convert to Catholicism but at that time known as an agnostic and left-leaning journalist, broadcaster and social commentator*) in the *New Statesman*. This brief piece reminded me and other readers that the life-span of many Protestant sects had been relatively short, while the Church of Rome, whose demise had for centuries been regularly forecast and in some quarters devoutly wished for, had nonetheless survived to witness the collapse, metaphorical and literal, of countless 'Bethels' and 'Shilohs'. The same article had some rather unflattering things to say about the state of the Church of England but at the time I overlooked these.

By the time I reached Theological College to begin my proximate studies prior to Ordination, I was becoming increasingly interested in the Church of Rome but still in a rather detached way. A book by the Principal, for example, entitled *What is Man?* gave me what I would now call a truly Catholic view of human personality. It rescued me from a certain incipient rationalism and helped me to understand not just the evil within man (of which my early teaching and personal experience had left me in no doubt anyway) but also illuminated humankind's wonderful powers and potential. Reading it, I recalled one of the many late-night conversations with the aforementioned Hall Warden during which he reminded me, rather sharply I recall, that the Bible does **not** begin at the third chapter of Genesis. Directly and indirectly, *What is Man?* showed me the meaning of the phrase 'image of God' and thereby added a new dimension to my thinking.

At the same time, the lectures I attended on the New Testament, the finest I heard on any subject during my student days, also made me take a fresh and much more critical look at evangelical assumptions about Christian life, belief and behaviour. Looking at the Scriptures over a period of time it struck me that from our point of view there were a number of significant 'loose ends' - verses, phrases, attitudes, and actions - which just could not be tied in with the Evangelical picture of Christian life that had been painted for me.

The linchpin of our position was the simple equation that conservative Evangelicalism equals Apostolic Christianity. Yet the more I read the New Testament the more I realized that this equation did not balance. I saw, for instance, that on the subject of grace it was necessary not only to take in the lessons of Ephesians 2 but also those provided by our Lord's spittle, St. Paul's handkerchief, or even St. Peter's shadow. Or again, it was one thing to preach strong sermons on the Epistle to the Galatians and another thing altogether to reconcile (within a traditional Evangelical *schema*) the Apostle's action in Acts 16.3. The battle cry 'unscriptural' that I had often used in theological argument began to take on the appearance of a two-edged weapon.

My ordination and entry into parish life obviously brought their own immediate concerns, although as it happened, there was to be little respite from the type of theological questioning that had exercised me with increasing force over the previous few years.

Before elucidating further, however, I think it is worthwhile to summarize my views vis-à-vis the Church of Rome as they existed at this time. I had by then a fair knowledge of Catholicism and had long since passed the stage when I regarded the Bishop of Rome to be the Anti-Christ. It struck ...continued on page 4

NEWSLETTER COPIES



CHNI encourages members to make copies of the newsletter and distribute to friends, family, church groups, etc. We do ask that copies of the newsletter not be sold. CHNI and the authors reserve all rights and permissions.



DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

On EWTN radio with Marcus Grodi & Guests

Wednesdays **LIVE** at 9:00 PM EDT
Encore: Sundays @ 7 AM EDT

Join Marcus and his weekly guest as they discuss "what verses have inspired us to follow Jesus Christ?"

For more information and a link to watch the program LIVE online go to
www.deepinscripture.com

Deep in Scripture Guests for October:

October 7
Fr. Joseph Anthony
Giambrone*

October 21
Francis Beckwith*

October 14
Reverend Brother
James Dominic Brent*

October 28
Rob Bennett*

**This schedule is subject to change*



EWTN'S THE JOURNEY HOME

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

TELEVISION

Mondays **LIVE** at 8:00 PM EDT

Encores: Tuesdays 1:00 & 10:00 AM EDT

Thursdays 2:00 PM EDT

Saturdays 11:00 PM EDT

RADIO

Mondays **LIVE** at 8:00 PM EDT

Encores: Wednesdays 2:00 PM EDT

Saturdays 7:00 PM EDT

October 5

Dr. Scott Carson*

Former Episcopalian

October 12

Fr. Trevor Nicholls*

Former Anglican priest

October 19

*The Journey Home in Scandinavia**

October 26

David Twellman*

Former United Methodist

**This schedule is subject to change*



...Journeys Home Continued...

me as morally and intellectually indefensible to label as evil something which was manifestly good. At the first National Evangelical Anglican Congress held in April 1967, I sought out the official Catholic observer, Fr. Bernard Leeming, and quietly spent as much time as possible in his company. A month later I was at Heythrop College near Oxford, then the center of Jesuit academic life in England, where I spent a week attending worship and lectures and meeting the Jesuit fathers. I glimpsed there something quite beyond anything I had experienced before; it was, quite literally, a glimpse into another world.

Yet for all this, my reading and study of Catholicism, the first-hand knowledge I now possessed of Roman theology and practice, it all remained something of an enigma to me. My knowledge was by turns interesting, even fascinating but puzzling and occasionally worrying and formed no coherent pattern in my mind. It was still Evangelicalism which, in spite of all the blows I had dealt it, remained a system to which I gave assent, though with hindsight I am disposed to think that my assent was more emotional than intellectual.

Ironically, it was only days after my ordination to the diaconate that I began to see in vague outline the answer to my problem. One Saturday morning I received a visit from a young man who came to clean the windows of the clergy house where I was living. He was a Jehovah's Witness and once his work was done he and I would share a pot of tea and some theological discussion. Not surprisingly given his religious affiliation, our discussion focused upon the Holy Trinity and in the light of our conversations certain facts of significance emerged.

First, the fact that two people both claim the authority of Scripture (as he and I did) gives by itself no guarantee that they will reach the same conclusions in questions of doctrine. Looking beyond the problems arising from the use of different Bible translations, what will really count is the theological key they employ to unlock the Scriptures, the doctrinal framework which they have already formed (or inherited) which colors their views of the sacred text.

Thus, my Jehovah's Witness friend, with his prior view that our Lord is a created being could furnish the texts necessary to support his beliefs. I for my part was able to provide to my satisfaction although not his, the scriptural evidence for the traditional position while accommodating to orthodoxy those texts – the basis of his arguments – which *prima facie* seemed to tell against it.

As I increasingly came to see, there were two problems involved. The first concerned the interpretation of Scripture, the second (and linked to it) was the process by which Christian doctrine had taken shape in history. Already in my discussion with the Jehovah's Witness I had been obliged to fall back on such statements as "but this is what the vast majority of Christians have always believed," a perfectly accurate and valid statement but hardly the Evangelical's traditional riposte "the Bible says". What I had done – and I realized the fact at once – was to shift the debate on to quite different ground. Newman's words in the *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* came to mind, namely, that the sacred text was never intended to teach doctrine but only to prove it and that if we would learn doctrine, we must have recourse to the formularies of the Church, especially the Creeds.

Naturally, this line of thought raised questions about the Creeds themselves; whether they are merely man-made constructions that can be set aside more or less at will, or, rather, formulations which although couched in human



language with all its limitations, should nonetheless enshrine truth, sacred and eternal. Within Anglicanism, both points of view were held; Evangelicals regarded the Creeds as very much secondary to the Scriptures although in the event none to my knowledge would deny creedal statements pertaining to the Godhead. Phrases such as 'one baptism for the forgiveness of sins' they would, however, interpret according to their own theological principles. In my own case, talking with the Jehovah's Witness, I found that ideas of Creeds, if not always the language, came across quite adequately. It was hardly necessary to dwell upon "Eternally Begotten of the Father" to be reminded that my friend held that there had been a time when the Son had **not** existed. Some years later, when I read Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, I met his famous dictum that doctrine is never defined until it is violated. In those Saturday morning discussions, I could gain some faint inkling of how doctrine had been formed in the struggles of the Church with heterodox opinions.

A move to another parish brought to an abrupt end my theological debates with the Arian brother but they left a deep impression upon me. Over the course of those few weeks I had come to see that all mainline Christians live under a vast umbrella of Catholic doctrine, including, of course, the Trinitarian but extending far beyond it, and which like the air we breathe, we simply took for granted. Moreover, it could not truthfully be said that much of that doctrine lay on the surface of Scripture. "Obvious once stated," to borrow another phrase from Newman, but I had failed to see how significant was the entire process that had led to their initial statement by the Church.

As I intimated much earlier, Evangelicalism is simply not large enough to cope with the world as it is; ***its vision of reality is fatally flawed***. My experience as both Anglican layman and cleric revealed that this fundamental flaw inevitable forces most Evangelicals into adopting one of two positions. Either they retain a nominal adherence to Evangelical theological and moral principles while in practice pursuing a far less rigidly Evangelical path, or, they cling fiercely (and sincerely) to strict Evangelical principles, turning a blind eye to the anomalies and thereby creating fellowships whose members are bound together as much by psychology as theology.

About the time that I commenced my second assignment, in west London, I realized that I now stood outside the Evangelical mainstream. My links with it were now almost solely through times, places and people who remained dear to me; my intellectual commitment had well-nigh gone. Within a short time it was to disappear altogether.

The second Sunday of Advent is kept in many Evangelical churches as "Bible Sunday" and this is usually reflected in the sermons. At Evening Prayer on Advent II 1970, I preached a sermon on the Interpretation of Scripture, designed to complement one preached in the morning on the Authority of Scripture. (Sermon subjects were chosen early in the preceding week). I had been unable to find in any of my Evangelical books adequate answers to the questions I was asking myself and all the incipient theological problems of the previous three years came back to haunt me with a vengeance. I spent one of the most wretched half hours of my life attempting to answer on behalf of the congregation questions which were really all mine.

I left the pulpit in something approaching turmoil. That my Evangelical authorities had failed me in this particular matter was ...continued on page 6



MARCUS GRODI'S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

December 5, 2009

Prayer Breakfast Benefiting the Pilgrim
Center of Hope

Omni Hotel - San Antonio, TX

Tickets: 210-521-3377, trust@catholic.org, or
<http://tinyurl.com/ComeSeeMarcus>

December 11-12, 2009

Diocese of Toledo, OH

"History of the Catholic Church in America"

email: mccr@toledolink.com

January 9-16, 2010

KWKY Catholic Radio Cruise

7-Day Eastern Caribbean Cruise

www.catholicradiocruise.com

Be sure to tell them you heard about it from
The Coming Home Network by typing "CHN"

QUO VADIS NEWS

www.quovadis youth.org

The Coming Home Network International's youth apostolate Quo Vadis was established to provide peer support for the children of clergy of other faiths who are either on the journey to the Catholic Church or have already been received into the Church. If you are a young person who is interested in the Catholic faith or if you are a young person who would like to share your Catholic faith with others we invite you to discover Quo Vadis.

Interested in learning more?

Quo Vadis has a web site, www.quovadis youth.org with information about the network and ways to become involved. If you would like to learn more about Quo Vadis, or you have a question about the Catholic faith you are welcome to contact Mary Clare Piecynski.

Mary Clare Piecynski

maryp@chnetwork.org
740-450-1175 ext. 105

DEEP IN HISTORY MP3s

The Coming Home Network International

is pleased to announce that MP3s of our recent *The Catholic Paul* conference are now available for download online.

All past *Deep in History* conference talks are also available in MP3 format through our website. Go to www.chresources.com to download the MP3s. Each talk costs \$5.



SPOUSES NETWORK

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

The *Spouses Network* exists to aid and provide fellowship for the spouses of clergy on the journey to the Catholic Church as well as those who are new Catholics. The mission of the *Spouses Network* is that through one-on-one assistance given by spouses of clergy who have embraced the Catholic faith, clergy spouses who are on the journey to Catholicism or have recently become Catholic will find a source of friendship, support, and increased love of Jesus Christ and His Church.

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

If you would like more information or if you feel called to become a part of this apostolate please contact Mary Clare Piecynski by e-mail at maryp@chnetwork.org or by phone at 740-450-1175 ext 105.

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

...Journeys Home Continued...

hardly surprising, since the Protestant view of the inspired text is that it is both perspicuous and sufficient. Beyond certain simple ground rules, the Christian, who possesses the Holy Spirit, needs no other guidance. Leaving aside spiritual judgments regarding the aforementioned Jehovah's Witness for whom, as I have indicated, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity had been far from clear on the surface of the New Testament, many years of attending and leading Bible Studies had provided ample proof that even with the best will in the world, even the most sincere and godly of souls could all too easily grasp the wrong end of the theological stick when reading the sacred text. All of a sudden I felt that I had no real, certain ground for believing anything, not even that the Bible was the Word of God.

This time, I could not let the matter drop. By now I had already begun to see that the answer to my difficulties lay in a very real sense beyond the Scriptures, in a subject about which, considering the amount of time I had spent studying it, my understanding remained sorely lacking, namely, Church History. Truth to tell, anyone with an Evangelical background such as mine is likely to find himself in difficulties at this point, simply because the tenor of so much ecclesiastical history is at variance with his own theological thinking. Constrained by his principles and doctrines, the Evangelical is obliged to don theological seven-league boots in order to traverse the Christian centuries, leaping from St. Paul to St. Augustine, from St. Augustine to Luther and Calvin. With the possibility of a slight detour via St. Anselm, returning via one or two of the heretical sects of the Medieval period, the vast area remaining is virtually *terra incognita*.

Not that these facts bother most Evangelicals; they hardly bothered me when I studied History at University and Theological College. If one has the Scriptures (so we reasoned) what more is necessary? If certain, nay the majority, of the Fathers and later Saints did not fit into a mold recognizably Evangelical, not matter; that was their loss! In truth, I am quite certain that when pressed on this point, most of us would have been forced to concede that we shared the idea, propounded by a member of the Plymouth Brethren whom I met about this time, that when the last Apostle died, the Church began at once to drift into error. (Given that, in Newman's words, "to be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant," there is a certain mad logic in this position).

I now saw that this view of history was hopelessly, ridiculously, facile. History had obviously provided the milieu in which the great doctrines of Christianity had unfolded. The Evangelicals' fear of 'Tradition' as the enemy of a pure biblical faith had blinded me to the way in which the Church had drawn out doctrines from the Bible in response to the attacks of heretics. The process is clearly visible in the development of the Trinitarian formulae and on the assumption that these doctrines are in a meaningful way 'true' (which, as I have already said, no Evangelical would deny) how may one logically deny the truth of other doctrines that come to us on precisely the same grounds? If one accepts the *Homousion* of Chalcedon, why not the *Theotokos* of Ephesus?

All that you have read thus far and more I laid before my Bishop not too long after the debacle of Advent II. I spent the intervening time reading as much Catholic theology as I could find and I was rapidly reaching the conclusion that, as Chesterton put it, "Rome was right."

On the matter of the Bible and its interpretation, which remained my prime concern, I realized that it was not a question of whether the authority of God's Word written can or cannot be limited by another authority, i.e. the Church, but, as Fr. Louis Bouyer puts it, *"a question of determining in what actual conditions established by God Himself as the author of scripture, their sovereign authority can be upheld in practice."* Or again, *"it is not a question of knowing if we ought or ought not to add another authority to the Word of God and so diminish the latter, but of knowing the conditions in which God who inspired the Scriptures, entrusted them to the Church."*

The fundamental weakness of the Evangelical approach to Roman Catholicism lies in its insistence upon terrier-like attacks on individual doctrines rather than an attempt to grasp the central core of the Catholic position, namely, that 'the truth as it is in Christ Jesus' has been committed to a body of responsible men, *"invested"* (to quote Bouyer again) *"for that purpose with the very authority of their Master."* (2) The visible basis of the Roman claim is the undeniable historical continuity of the Catholic Church with the primitive Church. Insofar as Evangelicals hold the 'drift into error' theory of ecclesiastical history, with its frequent concomitant idea that after the Apostolic age, Gospel truth subsisted in fragments amongst the various sects that ranged themselves around and against the Catholic Church, they must surely ask the question whether it is not more reasonable to suppose (as Newman puts it) that Almighty God, having vouchsafed to Mankind a Revelation of Himself, should not have taken steps to protect it from substantial error (*Essay on Development*).

As I expected my Bishop proved extremely kind and sympathetic though anxious, naturally, that I should not act precipitously. In the event, I wasn't prepared to go either. Perhaps I had reached that stage described by Chesterton, when a man who has moved so fast towards the Church finds himself for a time running away from it. In early 1972 I received the offer of a Living in the Diocese of Exeter, a position which held out the prospect of a multi-faceted freedom I much desired. I had to face the possibility that I was under a huge delusion so far as Rome was concerned; moreover, the situation in which I had spent two years as a curate was not of a sort to render calm and rational decision-making very easy. The step I was contemplating was so drastic and would involve such a dramatic break with my past, not to mention the purely logistical difficulties it would occasion for myself and my family that it only seemed sensible to proceed with the utmost caution. Moreover, I was much affected by a saying of the great Tractarian John Keble, that *"if the Church of England were to fail altogether, yet it would be found in my parish."* A moment's reflection illuminates the uncertainty reflected in that statement, but for the next three years I used it as sort of a watchword for my ministry until I could no longer continue as a member of the Established Church.

As I prepared to make my exit, I had two major concerns. The first was the effect my decision would have upon those whom I had served as a minister of Word and Sacrament, especially in the parish of which I had been the pastor. This is, I think, always a concern for someone who finds himself in a position like mine.

...continued on page 8



***Tentative* SCHEDULE**

FRIDAY — OCT. 23RD

- 3:30 Travelers Mass ~ Fr. Ray Ryland
- 5:00 Dinner
- 7:00 A Verse I Never Saw ~ Marcus Grodi
- 8:15 The Issue of Authority in Early Christianity
~ Dr. Kenneth Howell
- 9:15 Social

SATURDAY — OCT. 24TH

- 8:00 Morning Prayer
- 8:30 Mass
- 9:30 Breakfast
- 11:00 Peter and the Keys ~ Steve Ray
- 12:00 Jewish Roots of the Papacy ~ Dr. Brant Pitre
- 1:00 Lunch
- 2:30 Authority through the Trinity ~ Msgr. Frank Lane
- 3:30 Spiritual Authority—Who Needs It?
~ Dr. Paul Thigpen
- 4:30 The Issue of Authority in the Protestant and Catholic Reformations ~ Dr. Kenneth Howell
- 5:30 Dinner
- 7:30 What Connects Nicaea and Vatican II:
Ecumenical Councils and the Magisterium
~ Archbishop Michael Sheehan
- 8:30 Understanding our Father: The Power of
Prayer and the Eucharist ~ Dr. Scott Hahn
- 9:45 Adoration

SUNDAY — OCT. 25TH

- 8:00 Morning Prayer
- 8:30 Mass ~ Archbishop Michael Sheehan
- 9:30 Breakfast
- 11:00 So Great a Remedy for So Great an Evil
~ Fr. Ray Ryland
- 12:00 Panel Discussion
- 1:30 Finish

THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTL'

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Dr. Paul Thigpen (*former Evangelical Pastor*)

Dr. Charles Feicht (*revert from Evangelicalism*)

...Journeys Home Continued...

The second concern is even more obvious. I had to accept that a change of Communion would preclude me from a ministry to which I had felt called by God and as a Roman Catholic layman I know that my 'original' vocation will continue to shape my life. I have no desire to blot out my Anglican years, much less do I wish to give the impression, despite any of my comments above, that I bear malice toward the Church of England. Looking back, my wife Marion and I can thank God for a myriad of happy memories and many wonderful friendships formed during those years.

One of my memories as a child was that of the Variety (*Vaudeville*) or circus artist whose act consisted of spinning plates on a large number of poles. The Church is the divine plate-spinner, keeping in place the manifold truths of God, ensuring that none falls out of sight and each is in its proper place relative to all the others. It is a gigantic balancing act, performed throughout the centuries and throughout the world. No other Christian body comes anywhere near achieving this almost incredible feat.

A second image relates to an individual's actual approach towards the moment when he makes his submission to the Catholic Church. It is of a person walking down a corridor of distorting mirrors of the sort found in fairgrounds or amusement arcades. They throw back distorted images of the person and of the world. Yet these particular mirrors distort in diminishing degrees; as the person moves from one mirror to the next, the reflections slowly become clearer, until by the time he reaches the last one, when the mirror reflects a perfect image and he sees himself and everything else with startling clarity.

When a man starts out on the road to the Catholic Church, nothing seems very clear; the images are distorted and incomplete and he cannot always relate what he sees to the present state of his knowledge. Yet the closer he moves toward the Church, the clearer everything becomes, until he reaches that final mirror when, though he will realize that there remains much for him to learn, what he *can* see he sees with absolute clarity.

In fact at that point, he realizes two things. The first is that all along the distortion has been not in the mirrors but in himself; the second is that the last mirror happens also to be a door, through which he must pass. For one brief moment, the reflection disappears altogether; faith replaces sight and he has to take a tiny but immensely significant step into the unknown. How that step is described and what we find when we have taken it will to some extent vary from person to person but for Marion and myself it has been like coming home. ■



*Fr. Trevor Nicholls is a former Episcopal priest who was received into the Catholic Church in December 1975. Fr Nicholls was ordained a Catholic priest in 1990. He will be a guest on **The Journey Home** program on October 12.*

Prayer List



Clergy

■ For John, a Southern Baptist military chaplain, that the Lord would continue to guide his studies as he learns more of the riches of Catholic truth.

■ For Mark, a former United Methodist minister, his wife and children, that God would anoint them with deep and profound healing and that all may be rectified.

■ For Diane, a Presbyterian minister, that the Holy Spirit would guide each and every step of her investigation of the teachings of the Catholic Church.

■ For Nick, a teacher at an Evangelical school in Oregon, that he may be able to continue to teach and inspire his students after he becomes a Catholic Christian.

■ For Walter, a Pentecostal minister in Indiana, that the Holy Spirit would open his heart and mind to not just the truths of the Catholic faith but also the many graces that Jesus wishes to shower into his life.

■ For Charley, a Baptist lay minister in Wisconsin, that he and his wife would be given a Catholic heart as well as head.

■ For a Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod pastor in Wisconsin, that he may find the fullness of the truth of Christ's Church as it has been faithfully preserved by his promise throughout the centuries.

■ For Bonnie, a Baptist lay minister in West Virginia, that she may receive the grace to be open to all that God wishes to offer her in communion with his Catholic Church.

■ For Mark, a professor of Theology at an Evangelical college, that God would grant him the wisdom to know how best to seek out full communion with the Catholic Church and then wisely invest his teaching talents to the edification of Christ's Body.

■ For Larry, a former Lutheran pastor in Illinois, that he may come to understand that to fulfill his desire to be truly an Evangelical Catholic God is calling him to come into full communion with the successor of St. Peter.

■ For Fr. Darling and Fr. Brady's needs and personal strength to accomplish the works ahead of them.

Lay

■ For Jeanie who has breast cancer and is facing a double breast removal.

■ For John who has an inoperable optic nerve growth blurring his left eye vision.

■ For Laura, a Southern Baptist, that she will allow herself to commune with the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

■ For Jay, to embrace the Catholic Church.

■ For Chris and his sisters to praise God as Catholics.

■ For Patrick, a non-practicing Catholic, sympathetic to communism, to embrace the truth.

■ For Connie who is interested in becoming Catholic but doesn't have family support in this matter.

■ For Olivia that God surround her with his grace and for her parents that they come to the fullness of truth within the Catholic Church.

■ For a lady who has given up her Catholic faith; that she returns to the fullness of truth.

■ For Leah and her recovery from surgery.

■ For all the members of *Quo Vadis*, that God grant these young people the grace to follow the convictions of their conscience.

■ For each person on the journey to the Catholic Church, may the Almighty Father bring them lovingly home.

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 in general and specific of the *CHNetwork*, its members, and supporters.

Please submit all prayer requests & answers to:
CHN Prayer List
P. O. Box 8290
Zanesville, OH 43702

You may also email your prayer requests to:
prayers@chnetwork.org

We use only first names to preserve anonymity.

GUARDING *the* DEPOSIT OF FAITH

In last month's newsletter, I addressed the problem that arises when people say that they believe that something is true simply because the Church has declared it to be so. When we understand this to mean that we trust the Church to faithfully discern, preserve, and declare the truth about something, then this is accurate, but if we understand this to mean that something is simply true because the Church has so declared it to be, then we have twisted both the Church's authority and her reason for existence. As Pope John Paul II stated in the opening sentence of his introduction to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "guarding the deposit of faith is the mission which the Lord entrusted to his Church and which she fulfills in every age."

This Deposit of Faith, or the Apostolic Tradition, is defined in the new *Compendium of the Catechism* as "the transmission of the message of Christ, brought about from the very beginnings of Christianity by means of preaching, bearing witness, institutions, worship, and inspired writings" (CCCC, 12).

From the very beginnings of Christianity the devil has actively tried to stop, destroy, ridicule, and especially water down this Deposit of Faith by "flooding the market" with counterfeits. Understanding both the Church's efforts to preserve this Truth and the Enemy's efforts to destroy it helps us understand how this Deposit of Truth has passed through the generations from Jesus to you and me.

To describe this in detail would require, of course, far more space than this newsletter allows, but the following is a stab at how at least I have come to understand the history of this transmission of the Deposit of Faith.

Jesus said to those who had chosen to follow Him, both at His direct request and in response to His preaching: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32).

But how were future generations to know "his word" so that they could "continue in" it? For this He chose twelve apostles, with one, Simon Peter, appointed as their head (Matthew 10:1-4; 16:18-19). He then promised to send them the Counselor, Holy Spirit. To them specifically He said that the Holy Spirit would "teach you all things," "bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you," "guide you into all the truth," "declare to you the things that are to come," and finally that with this inspired information, the Apostles were to be His witnesses (John 14:25-26; 25:26-27; 16:13-14). With the promise of His continual presence and authority, He charged them to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the

Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).

The Apostles and their disciples, eventually joined by Saint Paul and others, then went forth preaching and witnessing to the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the truth about Him as they were instructed by the Holy Spirit.

This oral preaching was the primary source and means of the spread of the Gospel message, the passing along of the very words of and stories about Jesus, during the earliest years of the Church, which was also how Saint Paul himself received the truth: "Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast — unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received..." (1 Cor 15:1-3). This is how Sacred Tradition was described in the Second Vatican Council document, *Dei Verbum*: "Sacred Tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ

the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known" (D.V., 9).

Very quickly, however, the devil began attacking the Truth by "flooding the market" with confusion through the rise of false teachers teaching counterfeit gospels. We see this in the presence of the Judaizers in the Book of Acts and the other references of false teachers in Galatians, 1 and 2 Timothy, etc.

The rising influence of these false teachers made it imperative that the faithful leaders and bishops no longer wait until they were physically present to challenge these counterfeits, especially for leaders like Paul and John who were either in chains or exile. Instead they resorted to warning and exhorting as well as affirming their young Christian congregations by letter. This became the core for what we call the New Testament, and Saint Paul strongly instructed his "separated brethren" to hold firmly to the traditions they had been taught "either by word of mouth or by letter" (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

In instructions to his assistant, Timothy, Saint Paul gives us an example of how the Apostles ensured that this oral and written tradition was to pass to future generations: "...what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:1-2).

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This entire process was summarized by Saint Clement, bishop of Rome, in his late first century pastoral letter to the Christians in Corinth:

"The apostles have preached the Gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ was sent forth from God. Christ therefore was sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ. Both these appointments, then, were made in an orderly way, according to the will of God. Having therefore received their orders, and being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and established in the word of God, with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand and thus preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits [of their labors], having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who should afterwards believe. Nor was this any new thing, since indeed many ages before it was written concerning bishops and deacons. For thus saith the Scripture a certain place, 'I will appoint their bishops in righteousness, and their deacons in faith' (First Clement, XLII).

The devil, of course, was not through trying to prevent the Truth from being received and believed. During the first

centuries of the Church, besides trying to destroy the Church through a series of persecutions, he continued to "flood the market" with hundreds of counterfeit Gospels and writings. Some of these were very believable, and even convinced Christian leaders as well as laity in their authenticity, but as the impact of heretical teachings nearly derailed the Deposit through the rise and spread of Arianism, the Church took definitive steps to ensure that future generations would be able to "continue" and "know" the word of Christ. Along with the important Councils of Nicea and Constantinople, the Councils of Rome, Carthage, and Hippo in the last decade of the fourth century defined the Canon of Scripture.

As a result, through the constant protection, preservation, and proclamation of the Apostolic Tradition, written and oral, throughout the centuries by the Magisterium of the Church in union with the Bishop of Rome, we can today be confident that, aided by grace, we can "continue" in the word of Christ. Abandon the authoritative teaching of the Church, and we have no way of knowing whether we are correctly hearing or following Christ. Thank you, Lord, for the blessing of your Church.

—Sincerely In Christ, Marcus Grodi ■



The Pillar & Bulwark of the Truth

REGISTRATION FORM

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If you are a member of the clergy on the journey to the Catholic Church and need financial assistance to attend the conference please contact Jim Anderson
jjm@chnetwork.org or 800-664-5110.

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