



October 2011 Newsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



Crossing the Tiber

By Steve Ray

I can still smell the green vinyl of the used couch in our living room as I knelt with my mom, with my face buried in my hands and my nose pressed into the vinyl. She had decided I was old enough — after all I was four years old. She didn't want to wait any longer. She was eager.

When I was born I was taken to the front of Joy Road Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan, held aloft and dedicated to Christ. The thought of baptizing an infant was repugnant. Where do you find *that* in the Bible?

My parents had "found Christ" less than a year earlier. After twelve years of painful miscarriages my parents had discovered Jesus through the preaching of Billy Graham. The radio was on one morning as my mother was getting ready to go shopping. With keys in one hand and purse in the other she stopped in the kitchen before heading out the door. She heard something she'd never heard before.

She heard the compelling voice of Billy Graham passionately explaining the precious blood of Jesus that was shed on the cross. It was shed for my mom to pay for her sins. It could save her from hell and insure her a place in heaven. My mom, raised without any religion, heard John 3:16 for the first time: "For God so

loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

When I was older she told me that she had fallen on her knees on the kitchen floor. With tears rolling down her cheeks she "accepted Christ as her personal Lord and Savior and asked Him to come into her heart."

At the same time my dad thought he had cancer and was having a nervous breakdown. He went out on the front porch one night and after looking up to the stars he pleaded, "If there is a God up there, please reveal yourself to me. I don't know if you even exist, but if you do I need your help!" He then went to bed.

The next morning he went through his normal routine and ended up at his office at Ford Motor Company in Dearborn, Michigan. A friend walked up and said, "Charlie, can I tell you something?" My dad said, "Yes, of course, what is it?" The friend boldly proclaimed, "Charlie, you need Jesus Christ in your life." It had been less than twenty-four hours since the prayer of desperation.

Do you think it was a Catholic who approached my father? Unhappily, it was not. Catholics too often think their faith in Christ is a "personal thing; not ... continued on page 2

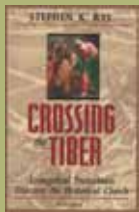
Journeys Home

EVANGELIZATION OUTREACH PACKAGE

In each monthly newsletter we feature resources chosen specifically to aid our members in evangelization. We encourage our members to take advantage of this month's **Evangelization Outreach Package**.

Crossing the Tiber

By Steve Ray



This is Steve Ray's exhilarating conversion story that relates how he overcame his hostility as a devout Baptist to the Catholic Church by a combination of serious Bible study and vast

research of the writings of the early Church Fathers. In addition to a moving account of their conversion that caused Ray and his wife to "cross the Tiber" to Rome, he offers an in-depth treatment of Baptism and the Eucharist in Scripture and the ancient Church.

Thoroughly documented with hundreds of footnotes, this contains perhaps the most complete compilation of biblical and patristic quotations and commentary available on Baptism and the Eucharist, as well as a detailed analysis of *sola scriptura* and Tradition.

Deep in Scripture Radio Program Special!



Steve Ray joins Marcus Grodi in this exceptional *Deep in Scripture* radio program as they discuss typology, how the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament, and the visible Church from the foundations of Judaism.

➤ For a donation of \$35, receive a *Deep in Scripture* CD.

➤ For a donation of \$50, receive *Crossing the Tiber*.

➤ For a donation of \$75, receive a *Deep in Scripture* CD and *Crossing the Tiber*.

...Journeys Home Continued...

something you talk about." But this Baptist friend had a different opinion: the Gospel of Christ *was* something you talked about and you talked about it to as many people as you possibly could. My father prayed the "Sinner's Prayer" with his friend. Within a matter of days my parents were members of Joy Road Baptist Church.

On my desk sits one of my most valuable possessions; a black leather, King James version, Scofield Reference Bible with gold gilded pages. Its pages are filled with notations, underlined verses, scribbled notes and comments. This was my father's first Bible and became one of the loves of his life. He wrote the date, May 1954, inside the cover.

After their dramatic conversions and much prayer I was born nine months later after twelve years of miscarriages. Two brothers followed.



Accepting Jesus

Now we are back to the green vinyl couch in our small house on Marlowe Street. Mom thought I was old enough to accept Christ as my own personal Lord and Savior. So after some coaching and explanations in words a four-year-old could understand, she led me in the Sinner's Prayer. I can still remember that moment, and the smell of old vinyl always brings that memory to the forefront of my mind.

Now came the task of raising this young boy to love Jesus and the Bible. It began with memorizing Bible verses. I was a rich little kid because my parents were smart. They paid me 50¢ for each Bible verse I memorized (I now do this for my grandchildren but the cost has gone up to \$1.00). Mom knew a young mind was fertile and supple and could memorize easily. After all, Proverbs reminds us that if you "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (22:6).

Of course John 3:16 was the first verse we memorized. It was the heart of the Bible and the perfect summary of the mind and heart of God in his relationship to his people. My brothers and I also learned to say the books of the Bible, the faster the better: "Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers...." We raced to see who could say them the fastest, keeping it under 15 seconds!

We never missed any of our church's events, especially not the ever anticipated Summer Vacation Bible School where prizes, ice cream, racing around, sticking flannel graph elephants onto Noah's ark, and all kinds of other fun stuff abounded.

My parents, though, moved between churches. My dad would question the pastor and disagree about biblical passages and theology. Through the years, our family attended Baptist churches, Reformed, Methodist, non-denominational, Charismatic and ultimately I ended up bouncing between an Evangelical Presbyterian and a Baptist church. It was great being a boy in a Baptist family in the 50s and early 60s.

But time marches on and interests march on as well. At fifteen years old my mind shifted to girls and motorcycles and the Beatles and other things upon which my parents frowned. The kids in our church youth group were not “cool” and I left them behind.

Just before the beginning of 12th grade, I heard Billy Graham on the television. I always had a soft spot in my heart for God that was never calloused over by my cultural rebellion. Mr. Graham’s compelling arguments sank deep into my heart followed by the mellow baritone voice of George Beverly Shea singing, “Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me.” That did it. I was out the door with tears running down my face. I walked down our long country driveway and I said to the Lord, “I am only seventeen years old but tonight I give my whole life to you!”

The Perfect Life

On the first day of 12th grade, a friend introduced me to a cute girl with long blond hair. Janet had just moved to Michigan from Costa Mesa California. She had been baptized as an infant and raised nominal Presbyterian. But that summer she had gone to a Bible study at school and had been led to a “new life in Christ.” She was baptized by Pastor Chuck Smith in Pirates Cove in the Pacific Ocean.

For those who don’t know Pastor Chuck Smith, he is the founder of Calvary Chapel. One of their boasts is that 80% of their members are ex-Catholics. My wife was quickly caught up in the excitement of her new Christian life.



She told me that God spoke to her for the first time in her life that morning. She heard “That is the man you’re going to marry.” But I had other goals and they no longer involved girls. I was now dedicated to Bible study, prayer

and preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to everyone. Four years later we did marry and it was the best thing I ever did. (We have now been married 34 years with four children and ten grandchildren and counting.)

Janet and I loved being Evangelical Protestant Christians. We home schooled our children, taught Bible studies, evangelized, and started our own very successful family business. With a great family, wonderful Evangelical friends, a flourishing business, a love for the Bible and evangelism, and a life full of joy we felt we had it made. All our family and friends were not only Protestant, but also anti-Catholic. To ever have a member of the family “go Catholic” would have been unthinkable, an egregious betrayal of the Christian faith and the family traditions. ... continued on page 4



DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

On EWTN radio with Marcus Grodi & Guests

Airs: Wednesdays @ 2:00 PM ET
Encores: Thursdays @ 1:00 AM ET
Sundays @ 7:00 AM ET

Be sure to check out *Deep in Scripture's* website, deepinscripture.com, where you can:

- **Watch** the program live or anytime afterwards.
- **Join** in a live discussion during each show.
- **Find** more information about the guests and the Scriptures being discussed.
- **Access** archives from previous *Deep in Scripture* shows.

Deep in Scripture Guests

October 5

Steve Ray*

October 12

Fr. John McCloskey*

October 19

TBD*

October 26

Jason Simon*



*This schedule is subject to change.



EWTN'S THE JOURNEY HOME

on television and radio, hosted
by Marcus Grodi, president of
CHNetwork

TELEVISION

Mondays at 8:00 PM ET

Encores: Tuesdays 1:00 & 9:00 AM ET

Thursdays 2:00 PM ET

Saturdays 11:00 PM ET

RADIO

Mondays at 8:00 PM ET

Encore: Saturdays 7:00 AM ET

Sundays 1:00 AM ET

October 3

Steve Ray*

Former Baptist

October 10

Bishop Frederick Campbell*

Bishop of Columbus, OH

October 17

Michael Coren*

The Journey Home in Canada

October 24

Jason Simon*

Former Evangelical Protestant

October 31

Caroline Rood*

Former Episcopalian

*This schedule is subject to change.

...Journeys Home Continued...

We taught studies on how to evangelize and always had people in our home, though not all our visitors were Evangelicals. Mormon and Jehovah's Witness missionaries, atheists, New Agers, and Catholics were always targets for evangelism. We knew the best arguments and Bible verses to unleash on any one of them. Catholics were usually pretty easy to pick off the tree. They generally didn't know the Bible and from our perspective had no idea how to get saved. We believed Catholics prayed to Mary instead of Jesus, got to heaven by works instead of faith, and followed tradition instead of the Bible — in everything they were upside down.

Then it happened — we converted to the Catholic Church!

Problems Arise in Protestant Logic

People often ask, "What was it that made you willing to lose everything to become Catholic?" Protestants asked us, "Why would you leave biblical Christianity to follow the traditions of men in the Catholic Church?" Others asked, (and still do) "What did you see in the Catholic Church that made you want to leave everything you knew to begin such a radical new path in life?"

My answer is, "I saw *nothing* in the Catholic Church to make me want to be Catholic!" And the Catholics I knew were the biggest argument *against* the Catholic Church. Out of principle, neither my wife nor I had ever set foot in a Catholic Church. We had never met a Catholic priest or religious and, most unfortunate, we had never encountered a Catholic who could explain or defend their faith.

Our journey to the ancient Church began by seeing the problems within Protestantism — problems that were incurable (if these problems had been corrected, Protestantism would have had to become Catholic). Sometimes one has to realize they are very sick before they visit a doctor. Janet and I came to realize over time that something was dreadfully wrong with Protestantism. I will briefly explain the three "biggies" that hit us.

Problem Number One: Worship

Janet interrupted me one Sunday on our way home from the Baptist church saying, "I can't listen to preaching anymore and call it worship. Something is missing but I don't know what it is." In the nineteenth-century, Charles Haddock Spurgeon, one of our favorite preachers, had once said that no form of worship was higher than a good sermon. But Janet knew this was not correct. It was the first crack in a locked and bolted door. What was worship? Was it preaching? Was it loud music — "pump up the volume?" It seemed that Evangelicals did not know either since they were constantly trying all kinds of new worship services to entertain and inspire.

The act of worship has always involved offerings and sacrifice. Not just the offering basket passed back and forth through the pews but real sacrifice. Pagans, Jews, Hindus, early Christians — they all knew this. From the beginning of time people have brought a sacrifice or offering to the gods. The Jews offered sacrifices and we inherited their God. The Protestants had preaching but what did the early Church have?



Janet and I have since had the privilege of visiting the oldest churches in the world. We have visited and explored the first churches ever built in Israel, Egypt, Italy, Turkey and Greece. Every one of them had something in common with all the others. As the focal point in the front and center of every ancient church is an altar! An altar was always a place of sacrifice, and sacrifice was offered by a priest. In 1 Corinthians 10, St. Paul speaks of the sacrifice of Jews, pagans and Christians. All offer a sacrifice. Where was this in my Baptist church? We had exchanged the ancient model for a new religion. No longer a priest and an altar, but now we had a preacher in front of a podium. The Catholics had the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

And to my great amazement, the very first Christians believed the same thing about the Sunday sacrifice as the Catholics do today! The disciples of the Apostles referred to what we called "communion" as the very Body and Blood of Jesus, the same flesh that was nailed to the cross (see St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 6, 7, c. AD 110). The *Didache*, written during the New Testament period, calls the Eucharist a sacrifice and reminds the first century Christians to confess their sins (Confession) before offering their Sunday morning sacrifice (section 14).

Problem Number Two: The Bible Alone?

The second major difficulty Janet and I came across was "who speaks for God?" It is the Bible, correct? That is what I thought. But in my house I have thousands of books on the Bible. Each was bought to teach me what the Bible meant and how to properly interpret each page, especially difficult passages. I realized over time, however, that even among my close-knit circle of Evangelical Protestants we could not agree on significant issues. Should you baptize infants? My Baptist tradition said "absolutely NOT!" Yet my wife who was raised Presbyterian had a certificate of infant baptism in her files. Can you lose your salvation once you are born again? "In no circumstances" said my particular tradition. Yet citing alternate Scripture verses to defend their position, other Evangelicals said, "Of course you can lose your salvation if you deny Christ and chose a life of sin."

So, who interprets the Bible? Who is the arbiter when conflicts arise? How can I be certain? Ultimately I realized that within Protestantism it is up to me to decide these deep matters of theology and salvation. Did I have to become my own pope? This became a huge discussion.

I realized early on that the New Testament was not codified and closed as a collection of twenty-seven inspired books until the end of the fourth century. How did the early Christians know how to get saved, what to do on Sunday morning, or how to please God? And it was these early Christians *without a New Testament* who were eaten by lions, burned at the stake, and beheaded in front of cheering crowds. How could they follow Christ so faithfully without the "Bible alone?"

The Bible itself never promotes "Bible alone." We realized that *sola Scriptura* was unscriptural. The early Church had the Apostolic Tradition, bishops in the apostolic succession and, only later, a gradually recognized and collected New Testament. And where did the ... *continued on page 6*

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CHNetwork

Attention: Ann Moore
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Zanesville, OH 43702

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

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AmericanExpress

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Name _____

Signature _____

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Phone number _____

Email address _____



MARCUS GRODI'S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

October 1, 2011

Catholic at Heart-Catholic at Home? The Challenge!

Saint Gregory the Great Parish- Hamilton Square, NJ
www.stgregorythegreatchurch.org

October 21-21, 2011

**Stand Firm on Tradition
Deep in History conference**

Columbus, OH

<http://www.franciscanconferences.com/>
800-437-8368

NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE

Download and print full-color copies of all previous CHNetwork newsletters from our online archive.

Visit www.chnetwork.org/newsletter-archive.

UNSOLICITED MAIL

The Coming Home Network International would like to remind our members that we are unable to send unsolicited mail. Since our ministry exclusively responds to non-Catholic clergy and laity who initiate contact with us, we cannot add anyone to our mailing list or send materials unless they themselves first make a request. However, if you would like to have *CHNetwork* send materials with a gift card in your name, or if you have any questions about this policy, please contact our office at 740-450-1175.

NEWSLETTER COPIES

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...Journeys Home Continued...

authority to chose and close the canon of Scripture come from? As St. Augustine said, "I would not believe the holy Gospels if it were not for the authority of the Holy Catholic Church (*Against the Epistle of Manichaeus Called Fundamental*, 5, 6, c. AD 397).

St. Paul himself said that it was the church of the living God that was the pillar and bulwark of the truth, not the Bible (see 1 Timothy 3:15).

Problem Number Three: Morals

The third issue was no less monumental. What about morals? We had just returned from studying with Dr. Francis Schaeffer in Switzerland. *Time Magazine* referred to him as the missionary to the intellectual and he spoke uniquely to those searching for the truth. He was a Presbyterian minister, very evangelical, in the tradition of John Calvin and the Bible alone and faith alone persuasion. He encouraged us to return to America and speak out against abortion. This we did.

However, our first attempt met with dismal failure and disillusionment. The pastor told me to my face, "You will NOT talk about abortion in my church. We are here to get people saved and make disciples for Christ. We have no business being involved in politics and medicine. Plus, many women in this congregation are getting abortions and I am not going to allow you to rock the boat."

Something was seriously wrong with American Evangelicalism! I knew enough from my reading of history that ALL Christian traditions from the beginning of Christianity until the beginning of the 20th century condemned as sinful not only abortion but also contraceptives. Had God changed his mind? Who spoke for God in this matter?

It did not take a rocket scientist to realize that among the thousands of Protestant traditions, sects, churches, and denominations that one could find a group to fit any idea of morals desired. Maybe someone had had an abortion and didn't want to feel guilty. They could find a church to tickle their ears. What if someone were more concerned about a good music ministry than morals? No problem, the mega-church down the road might fit that customized request with no problem.

I realized that many Americans decide on their church the same way they choose their restaurant at lunch time. We drive down Main Street and on one side of the street is Burger King, McDonalds, KFC and Pizza Hut. What I feel like today determines what restaurant I choose.

Now it is Sunday morning and I drive down Main Street again. On the other side of the street I find Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Mormon and so on. How do I choose where to go? Again it is very simple. What do I feel like this morning? Do I want good preaching or a good children's ministry? Do I want a pastor who meddles in my choices or someone who makes me feel good? Americans sadly too often pick their church the same way they pick their restaurant!



A New Catholic Friend Rattles My Cage

These three were not the only issues. But worship, Scripture, and morals were right up there on top of the heap. We did not see any solution. I began to question the foundations for the faith altogether. Had I gone much further, a form of agnosticism might have set in.

At this very moment in our lives a long-time Evangelical friend and pastor announced to us, “Steve, my wife and I have decided to join the Catholic Church.” Janet and I were stunned. I immediately blurted out, “Al, that is the stupidest thing I’ve ever heard; you are way too smart to be a Catholic!”

This friend, Al Kresta, is now a well-known commentator on Catholic radio, a speaker and author. We are still best friends and I never cease thanking him for being there at the right time to rattle my cage and force me to look in a new direction.

Our first response though, was to study and prove him wrong. Janet and I decided we would mount a defense. Al knew the Bible as well as I did so to collect an array of Bible verses would prove ineffective. A better strategy had to be found. Ah, that’s it! We’ll go back in history to the first Christians and prove to Al that primitive and apostolic Christianity was Protestant! There were no pope-mobiles or processing Cardinals, no Vatican or Ecumenical Councils.

Surprise, surprise! We were not prepared for what we discovered. But first, why were we never encouraged to read the Fathers of the Church? We had always stated, “The Fathers are not inspired; the Bible is inspired and that’s all we need.” But this new finding was a real eye-opener. These first Christians lived, preached, worshiped and died before the New Testament was even in existence. They were authentic witnesses to the life, tradition, and practice of the Apostles themselves. They still had the apostolic voices ringing in their ears.

On New Year’s Eve of 1993, our Baptist friends had us over for two reasons: to usher in the new year and to try and save us from our lunacy. We had been studying the early Church for months now and they saw the effect it was having upon us. They wanted to talk and talk we did. In the midst of the conversation I stood up and asked my friend, “Do you realize that if you and I had seen Jesus crucified and risen from the dead we would have never read the Gospel of John?” He retorted, “Why not?” I replied, “Because it wasn’t written until about 100 AD and we would have been dead long before that. Jim, how did the first Christians live and practice Christianity without the New Testament?”

On the way home I was quiet for a long time. Janet asked, “What are you thinking?” I said, “This is getting very scary; the more we argue against the Catholic Church the more I realize we are backing ourselves right in the front door!”

The next day was January 1, 1994. It was a delightful day with no phone calls or business. We had no interest in football either. At this point we were consumed with our quandary — what is the Church? ... *continued on page 8*

2011 DEEP IN HISTORY CONFERENCE

Stand Firm On Tradition: *The Role of Sacred Tradition in the Life of the Church*

Oct 21-23, 2011 — Columbus, Ohio

The same Holy Spirit who inspired the authors of Sacred Scripture to write, inspired the apostles and their successors to preach from generation to generation. Thus, the Word of God is handed down through what the Church calls Sacred Tradition.

What exactly does Sacred Tradition teach us? Why does Tradition hold such authority? And who distinguishes between traditions and Tradition?

At this year’s Deep in History Conference, we’ll dig into the Old Testament roots of Tradition. We’ll discover what the New Testament and Church Fathers teach us about it. We’ll see how the legacy of Tradition unfolded through major historical events such as the Reformation and Vatican II. And we’ll look at the part it plays in our own lives today.

The Coming Home Network International in partnership with Franciscan University of Steubenville invites you to join us for a weekend that will deepen your knowledge of your Catholic faith, as we get to the heart of Tradition in the Catholic Church.

Speakers

Marcus Grodi
Dr. Scott Hahn
Dr. Theresa Farnan
Mark Shea
Bishop Frederick F. Campbell
Roy Schoeman
Dr. Paul Thigpen
Dr. Kenneth Howell
Father Ray Ryland
Monsignor Frank Lane

In addition to inspiring talks our weekend will include daily Mass, adoration, confession, and fellowship, and a panel discussion that will be taped for EWTN’s *The Journey Home*.

To register:

Call: 800-437-8368

Visit: www.franciscanconferences.com

THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

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...Journeys Home Continued...

What does God expect of us? Where did the Bible come from? Could the Catholic Church possibly be the Church Jesus founded and promised to build?

We had tackled all the obstacles one at a time: the Pope, Mary, purgatory, priests, confession, the Eucharist, faith alone, Bible alone and many more and it was all coming to a head. We had books open all over the living room floor. We were asking questions and reading passages aloud to each other. Then it happened: I began to sob. I closed all my books and sat on the floor crying like a baby. With great concern my wonderful wife asked, "Steve, what is wrong?" I responded through my tears, "Nothing is wrong ... I just realized, I am a Catholic!" She responded, "Oh good grief" but she said the same thing as I did less than twenty-four hours later.

I called my friend Al Kresta (the same person I had called stupid a year earlier) and said, "Happy New Year, Al. Guess what? I'm a Catholic!" There was silence on the other end of the phone. "Al, are you there?" "Yeah," he replied, "but I don't think I heard you correctly, what did you just say?" After I explained he replied, "You are the last one I thought would ever say that!"

Then he asked me a question for which I was certainly not prepared: "Steve, tomorrow is Sunday, how would you like to go to Mass with us?"

I stopped dead in my tracks and froze. It had never dawned on me that if I would read my way into the Catholic Church I would have to some day go to a Catholic Mass! Old sentiments die hard and I had lots of them about the Catholic Mass.

I covered the phone and related to my wife what Al had asked. She responded as cool as a cucumber, "Tell him we will go but we will leave the kids at home, we want to get there late, sit in the back row and leave early." (People have jokingly told us we were real American Catholics from our first day.)

Al did not keep his promise and we ended up arriving at Mass early and we sat in the front of the church. I will never forget that morning. Tears welled up in my eyes for the second time in two days as I watched an apostolic man process up the aisle. I had never seen a priest up close before, but I knew exactly what he was. Janet was weeping too. We wept at every Mass for the next six years and still do.

On Pentecost Sunday, May 22, 1994, Janet and I, along with our entire immediate family, were received into the Catholic Church. We have never looked back. ■



The complete story of Steve Ray's journey to the Catholic Church can be read in his book Crossing the Tiber: Evangelical Protestants Discover the Historical Church published by Ignatius Press. To learn more about Steve's work please visit his website at www.CatholicConvert.com. This month Steve will be a guest on the Journey Home TV program and the Deep in Scripture radio program.



By Marcus Grodi

DEFRAGGING

Our Minds

How does one determine truth? This was the core of my own journey to the Church, and though I won't repeat the details here, I must admit this journey, for me at least, did not cease once I became Catholic. I knew my old Protestant ways of determining truth did not work and led only to a cacophony of conflicting opinions that divides Christians from other Christians. But then once inside the gates of the Church, I was sadly stymied by the unexpected breadth of opinions and sad divisions amongst Catholics. To some people these divisions seem no different than the divisions amongst Protestants. For others these divisions have caused them to leave the Church and return to the more comfortable confusion of their past. Then there are those who are not happy with the bishops and have begun defining a Catholicism on their own terms.

But how are Catholics to determine what is true when we are surrounded by so many seemingly faithful Catholics with conflicting opinions and lifestyles? Allow me to approach this quest with the illustration of a personal experience—of my own ignorance.

About fifteen years ago, when my wife, Marilyn, and I were but three years Catholic, we had a Christmas party at our home in Steubenville that many of our Catholic friends attended. At one point in the evening I was standing in the kitchen enjoying a beverage of preference with four theology and philosophy professors from Franciscan University. They were carrying on a lofty discussion, using terms my brain had never heard nor could wrap its flimsy muscles around. To be a part of the conversation, from time to time, loosened by my beverage of choice, I would interject a point of comic relief, maybe something I felt was particularly enlightening from the latest *Far Side* or *Calvin & Hobbs* comic strips. My interruptions, however, were generally met with blank silent stares, until they returned to their conversation, as if I was the butler imposing the mundane into a discussion of substance. I know my friends did not intend ridicule (they were probably just being kind) but when the party was over, I retreated alone to my office in the basement, wondering if I'd ever "get it" enough to hold my own in such a conversation.

I had come into the Church in search of truth, because I knew that the Bible *alone* was not sufficient to know what is true, but now that I was in the Church, I was so inundated with **Truth** at so many levels, I frankly felt I was drowning.

I turned my computer on to play my favorite computer game: Disc Defrag. Now you computer geeks out there know that I'm being tongue in cheek. Disc Defrag was not a game; it was a utilities program that defragmented a computer's hard drive.

Think of a computer hard drive like a small library. All the books should be in nice order, arranged according to subject, title, and author, so that when you want to find something, you know exactly where to look. But suppose over time, people have added or replaced books to the library at random, not paying attention to subject, title, or author, just stuffing the books in willy-nilly, even sometimes taking the books apart, placing one half randomly in one place, and the other half in another place. The library would become a mess, nearly unusable, almost useless to find anything. What would have to be done to make the library useful again? A librarian would need to go in and rearrange the books, putting back together all the halves, according to the intended order: subject, title, author.

This is what Disc Defrag did. Over time, as a computer was used, programs and files were opened, modified, added, erased, all to and from the computer hard drive, the library if you will, and often without any discernible order. As a result, the disc library became fragmented, disordered, and the computer would slow, slow, slooow down. But then Disc Defrag could straighten it all out. It would completely evaluate the condition of the disc, measure the level of disorder and defragmentation, and then through a process of cut & paste, put all the programs and files in a proper working order—an order predetermined and programmed into the computer by computer technicians who knew far more than I did about how a computer ought to work. The programs and files were rearranged into a proper grid, putting the most basic programs first, then the secondary programs, and on and on until the least important less essential files.

Now the reason I considered this a "game" was because the computer gave a visual representation of this process: you could watch as the computer rearranged, moved, and sometimes deleted little multicolored boxes, bringing a haphazard collage of tiny specks of colors into nicely arranged, large, ordered blocks of colors. In the end the library was back in working order, and the computer could operate efficiently.

... continued on page 10

That night I sat watching the program Defrag my computer, watching the little colored boxes disappear from one place show up temporarily in another place and then finally reappear in their proper place, in working order with all the other programs and files.

And as I watched, I wished that somehow I could do that to my brain—to defrag the mess of random images, information, memories, and knowledge I'd picked up over the years, from uncountable sources, some trustworthy, some not so, some despicable and sinful. Oh, that I could rearrange my memory and my conscience into a more efficient, functioning, living machine, but how is this to be done? What criteria would I use to rearrange all of my knowledge, to put it into sensible working order? What criteria would I use to set priorities; which information is most basic and true, fundamental; which information is less so and therefore subordinate; and which information should be cast aside as unnecessary or untrustworthy or downright destructive to my life and soul?

As a Protestant I would have answered the Bible *alone*. Or as a Presbyterian I might have answered biblical Theology. But as I sat there, a fairly new Catholic, reflecting on the conversation that had driven me to the solitude of my basement, I came to a new conclusion (for me) that the grid that put everything in proper order was philosophy: to understand the Bible and theology and all of life correctly and in the right order, one's thinking and conscience must be built upon the grid of good trustworthy philosophy. And this is what I assumed, within the context of faithful Catholic teaching of course, for many years after. I would share my insight, this illustration of defragging our minds with philosophy, with my philosophy friends, and would receive in return a good hearty "at-a-boy" slap on the back!

But then, as I matured in the faith, reading and growing in Catholic teaching and philosophy, I came to the realization that my conclusion concerning philosophy was insufficient—as my previous conclusions that Scripture *alone* was insufficient or that right theology was insufficient—because I discovered that good faithful Catholics don't always agree on philosophy. Some are Thomists, some Augustinian, some Suarezists; others are Personalists or Phenomenologists, even Existentialists; and among these camps there are countless divisions as to which ideas are essential or non-essential. I became disheartened to discover that among Catholic philosophers there isn't one essential philosophical grid upon which to arrange and order all truth. In fact, I discovered that there are divisions within the membership of the Church among otherwise faithful believing Catholics, based primarily upon their different philosophical understandings of truth and how to determine what is true; Catholics who lift themselves up above the Magisterium:

believing they understand truth better than the bishops in union with Peter.

So if the corrective grid isn't the Bible *alone* or theology or philosophy, what is it? Or is there one? Are we left to our selves to order our thinking and our consciences?

It is here that I more fully and humbly came to realize and appreciate the truth that every good Catholic knows, or at least should know, and in fact which draws near every convert to make their journey home. And at first mention of this, most Protestant listeners will cringe back in horror and disgust, even more so than the thought that philosophy could be any kind of trustworthy grid of truth. At first mention of what I now more fully appreciate as this gift of truthful and trustworthy order, some of you may wonder, "Wait, how does that help? Isn't that just as subjective and intangible as the Bible alone, or biblical theology, or philosophy?" And my answer to that is no, not at all, if one trusts that Jesus established the Church—the pillar and bulwark of the truth—and established her Magisterium built upon the rock of Peter, guided and protected by the promised Holy Spirit.

What is that one trustworthy grid upon which we can build our lives, correctly order our thinking, and form our conscience? Sacred Tradition. But how can we know Sacred Tradition? Do I need to read all the Early Church Fathers, all the conciliar documents beginning with Nicea, all papal pronouncements, etc., etc? No, trusting the Church's Magisterium, believing in humility that she knows better than we do that which is essential for us to believe and upon which to form our consciences, we must accept the gift she has given us for this purpose at this time in the life of the Church. That gift is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. This is crucial and important. If we reject the present *Catechism* because we prefer a previous one, or because we think the new one has changed what was said before, then we are lifting ourselves up above the Magisterium of the Church, thinking we know better than the Church, and essentially doubting that the Church is still being guided by the Holy Spirit. We are therefore setting ourselves up as the sole, trustworthy grid for determining what is true.

The reality is that if we died tonight and stood before God, and if being a good faithful Catholic makes any difference to our entrance into heaven, then the criterion will not be what it meant to be a good faithful Catholic 100 or 50 or even 25 years ago, or what it might be 25, 50, or 100 years in the future. What is essential is whether we are a good faithful Catholic, a trustworthy, humble, holy follower of Jesus Christ, today. And how can we know that? What has the Church given us to help us know precisely what this is, how to defrag our minds, to put ... *continued on page 11*

everything in order, to move to the front those things that are essential, to move to the side the less essential, to put everything into the right context, to determine which things, ideas, and actions need to be set aside and cast out of our lives, and maybe most important of all, what things, ideas, and ideals are worth dying for? For this, the Church has given us the *Catechism*, in which she states: "This catechism aims at presenting an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church's Tradition. Its

principal sources are the Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy, and the Church's Magisterium. and her liturgy" (para. 11). Read it; know it; pray it; live it. ■

I invite you to go to www.chnetwork.org/blog to share your thoughts on this article. — Marcus

SPECIAL OFFER

If you do not currently have a copy of the *Catechism* and would like to purchase a copy, please contact the Coming Home Network International at 740-450-1175 or go to CHResources.com.

Prayer List

Clergy

- For James, a Southern Baptist minister in Arizona, that his great love for the Catholic Church would, by the Holy Spirit, lead him into its full-communion.
- For a former United Methodist minister in Illinois, that his brother's reception into the Catholic Church would lead him to seek God's will for himself.
- For an Anglican bishop in Mexico, that he may be granted his heart's desire, full-communion with the See of St. Peter.
- For David, a Baptist seminarian in Alabama, that his interest in learning more of the teachings of the Catholic faith would instill an ever deepening love for the fullness of the Truth.
- For the wife of a United Methodist minister in Maryland who wishes to be Catholic, but whose husband is uninterested.
- For a Christian Reformed pastor who is learning more about the Catholic faith and is not sure where his faith journey will lead.

- For Robert, a United Methodist youth minister in Florida, that his studies may draw him into the heart of the Church founded by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lay

- For Linda to be healed from her numerous health problems and the stress within her family relationships.
- For Melissa and her husband as they discern God's leading as they contemplate entering the Catholic Church.
- For Sandra, that she may partake in the fullness of Christ's Sacraments.
- For Jill, a former Catholic, that the Holy Spirit will help break down the barriers preventing her from returning to the Catholic Church.
- For a Baptist couple, new to hearing the truths of the Catholic faith, that our Lord will lead them into the fullness He established.
- For Kathleen's husband to receive the necessary grace to have his eyes and heart opened to the fullness of the Catholic faith.



- For the repose of Charles' soul, may the God he served during his life welcome him into the heavenly kingdom.
- For Linda as she prays and listens to God's call in order to know where He is leading her.
- For a young man's healing from his pornography addiction.
- For Nicholas, a six-year-old, who is suffering from a brain tumor.
- For Christy and her husband as they journey towards the fullness of truth, that Jesus gives them the strength to persevere as they also experience a share in His sufferings.

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.

The Coming Home Network International

PO Box 8290

Zanesville, OH 43702

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

GET INVOLVED!

The Coming Home Network International encourages members to assist in our mission this month to help non-Catholic clergy and laity come home to the Catholic Church in the following ways:

1

Get the October 2011 "Evangelization Outreach Package," specifically designed to provide our members with excellent material to deepen their understanding of the faith and in turn pass it along to non-Catholic family and friends. For more information, see page 2 of this newsletter.

2

Tune into the *Deep in Scripture* radio program on Wednesday afternoon's to hear Marcus Grodi's special guests discuss Scripture passages that led them to the Catholic Church. See page 3 for more information.



3

Remember the CHNetwork's intentions in one Mass this month.

