



April 2020 CHNewsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



Truth and True Food Leads to Peace

By Kelli Beaumont

My husband, James, was born and raised Catholic, but I had the good fortune of getting to evangelize him right out of the Catholic Church and turn him into a good Methodist, where we eventually served together as Methodist youth ministers. I believed that his Catholic upbringing lacked correct doctrinal teachings and biblical knowledge, centering instead on faithful Mass attendance and ceremonial practices, without understanding the realities behind them. The incorrect doctrinal teaching he received made my job of separating him from the Catholic Church all the easier. I saved him, so I thought, from a man-made tradition that taught a faithless works theology, fraught with paganism and superstition. He joined me in my Protestant enthusiasm, criticizing the Catholic Church.

You can imagine how dismayed we were when very dear friends of ours announced to us that they were walking away from Methodist ministry to join the Catholic Church! We shed tears for their souls. We immediately planned an overnight trip to visit them and save them from this treacherous mistake. From the outside, it would appear that this trip began my journey to the Catholic Church, but God had laid the foundations for this journey years earlier.

In early childhood, I had a natural attraction to the cross. It was through the cross that I first discovered who Jesus was. Close to 1980, at about age five, I wept sobbing tears to my closest non-family mentor, Mildred Monk, about what Jesus did on the cross, and she comforted me and guided me beautifully. Because of my simple love for Jesus' gift

on the cross, I wanted "one of those cross necklaces with Jesus on it." At about age eight, my grandmother took me shopping for a nice cross necklace, but she would not buy me one with Jesus on it, because "those are for the Catholics." She continued, "Catholics like to remember Him dead; we like to remember Him alive." This was the first "Catholic teaching" I received. To be sure to present the truth of my grandmother, she was the most wonderful and the biggest influence in my Christian faith. I owe my formation to her, Mrs. Monk, and many others in Centenary United Methodist Church. It just so happened my grandmother did not like the Catholic Church. She never spoke of the Catholic Church again, though, until I decided to become a Catholic at age 30.

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Journeys Home

...Journeys Home Continued...

My teen years and early twenties were packed with apologetics and biblical studies. I hungered so deeply for knowledge that it felt like I could never be satisfied. It was an aggressive hunger that stayed with me throughout that period. I fell into sin for a brief period, but my journey out of that caused me to grow deeper in my relationship to God and my desire to know absolute truth. My primary driving force for knowledge stemmed from the overwhelming number of different Christian denominations, all claiming that they follow the same Holy Spirit in how they interpret the same Bible. As a child, I had been ridiculed by other Protestant denominations for my Methodist beliefs. In college, I witnessed unhealthy debates between different Christian faith groups, and I actually participated in them. One thing I noticed was that every Christian denomination suddenly found unity in their aversion towards Catholicism. I became interested in the reasons for this, which led me into defending all Protestantism against the Catholic Church. I had turned to prominent Protestant theologians for knowledge of Catholic teachings, and I discovered that those teachings were in such opposition to what most Protestants do agree on that it was obvious to me Catholic teaching was grotesque heresy. I was driven to seek out anything that taught against Catholicism and build my arsenal of anti-Catholic arguments in this war for truth. Basically, I wanted to battle against false teachings so that people could know the real Jesus.

It never occurred to me that my sources were not credible. After all, the men I gained my information from came from several different Protestant denominations, received Master of Art degrees in things like Church History and Philosophy of Christian Thought, Doctorates in Ministry and Divinity, etc. These were supposed to be people I could trust to know everything needed to form an educated understanding of truth. I trusted them and devoured anything I could that they taught concerning Protestantism and Catholicism. I had an argument for every argument, a counter to every counter argument.

At the same time, though, there was an undercurrent of discomfort in the fact that these Protestant theologians also did not agree with each other. I needed to know which church was correct. How was I to protect myself from doctrinal error? I began deeply studying the Bible in order to find out what God wants Christians to believe in matters such as Baptism, communion, moral decisions, free will and predestination, etc. I wanted to do what was right in God's eyes, but working to save people from the Catholic Faith was my main focus by the time I met my husband in 1997.

He was easy to "save" from Catholicism. But looking back, I saved James from the Catholic Church by teaching him Catholic theology on salvation. I did not realize I was doing that, because neither of us actually knew what Catholicism taught on the subject. Everything I told him was based solely on Scripture, and it

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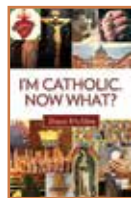
SUPPORT THE CHNETWORK!

Through your donation to the CHNetwork, you become a partner in our ministry of assisting non-Catholic clergy and laity on the journey to the Catholic Church. As a thank you, we are delighted to offer the following resources to help enrich your faith.



Deep in Scripture CD

For many non-Catholics, the Catholic practices that surround Holy Week can seem foreign, or even excessive, such as the idea of venerating the cross, the fasting and silence, and the Vigil on Holy Saturday to welcome Easter. In this *Deep in Scripture* program, Marcus and JonMarc Grodi reflect on coming to love these traditions as former Presbyterians who are now Catholic, and how these observances don't run counter to the Bible, but rather follow the devotional trajectory of Scripture.



I'm Catholic. Now What? — By Shaun McAfee

The perfect gift for someone becoming Catholic at Easter or a Catholic wanting to go deeper in his faith! After Shaun McAfee became Catholic, he worried that he might not be a "good Catholic." He wanted to take part in the sacraments, really prepare for Mass, learn how to defend and even share his faith, and understand certain Catholic devotions. Yet he wasn't sure how to do any of this, or where to look for answers once RCIA was finished. If you or someone you know feels the same way, *I'm Catholic. Now What?* is the perfect resource. You'll learn about: how to get started as a new Catholic; customs, courtesies, rules, and traditions; prayer, devotion, and spirituality; Catholic life day-to-day; current issues in the Church and the world and much, much more.

\$35

Receive a *Deep in Scripture* CD for a donation of \$35.

\$50

Receive *I'm Catholic. Now What?* for a donation of \$50.

\$75

Receive a *Deep in Scripture* CD and *I'm Catholic. Now What?* for a donation of \$75.

— THESE RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY —

Obtain resources by returning the envelope included with your newsletter, calling 740-450-1175, or by going online to chnetwork.org/respond.

DAY OF REFLECTION

A Journey to the Catholic Faith with St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Saturday, June 13

8AM TO 3PM

***The National Shrine of
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton***

EMMITSBURG, MARYLAND



JOIN CHNETWORK STAFF & MEMBERS
on Saturday, June 13 for a day of
pilgrimage, prayer, and fellowship while
we reflect on the journey and visit the
relics of St. Elizabeth Seton, a Catholic
convert and the first U.S-born saint!

Space is limited, so please register soon.
The cost is \$45 per person, which includes
continental breakfast and lunch. Mass
will be celebrated, and there will be time
to visit the museum and nearby Lourdes
Shrine.

For more info, visit chnetwork.org/retreats.





10 Tips for Those Entering The Catholic Church This Easter

By Lorelei Savaryn

Four years ago this Easter Vigil, I entered the Catholic Church. Here are ten things I found helpful when approaching my reception into the Church. I hope they are helpful to any of you out there who will be becoming Catholic this year! Several of the items on this list are helpful for us all to remember, no matter how many years we have been a part of the Catholic Faith.

1

Go to Confession

This is a good idea for anyone as we approach Easter. Let us make sure we are turning towards God in our lives, with our choices and our heart, so we are ready to receive Him and celebrate the joys of Easter Sunday. Let us bring our struggles before God, and let Him help us change. Let us get right with our God.

2

Go to as Many Services as You Can

The days leading up to Easter Sunday can be a profoundly spiritual experience for someone entering the Catholic Church. Try to attend the Triduum services. They help put our faith into context as we approach this most significant celebration. It gives you time to pray, to connect with God, and to prepare your heart.

3

Look Around

When you stand in front of the congregation at the Easter Vigil in the moments after you are anointed with oil and confirmed into the Catholic Church, take a moment to look around you. Take a moment to appreciate that you are in full union with the Church established by Jesus Himself 2,000 years ago. The Church that has remained connected to its history and its source through apostolic succession. You are connected, in the most powerful way on earth, to the roots of your Christian Faith.

4

Take Pictures

I am so thankful to have pictures from the night of my Confirmation. I can just see the joy on my face. It takes me right back there, right back to that moment when I knew I was finally, and fully home — as much as I am going to be before heaven. Whatever your path to get here, it's worth record-

ing and remembering and celebrating. It's a hugely significant moment in your life. Document it.

5

Reflect

When my own Confirmation approached, I took some time to look back and was so thankful for all the bits and pieces along the way that led me to find peace, and truth, and such a firm foundation. So, take some time. What was your path like to get here? Was it smooth or difficult? Did you wrestle through doubts or did you walk a path of peace? Where do you see God's hand leading you? Who were the people who helped you along the way? How would you tell your story? However you got here, it's beautiful. It's amazing. Give it the weight it deserves, and be sure to give thanks.

6

Get Connected with Other Converts

One of the things that helped me the most, both when things were good and when things were difficult in my transition to the Catholic Church, was being connected with other converts. Regardless of how similar or different our backgrounds were, I found I had so much in common with those who walked the path before I did. This gave me encouragement and strength. It still does to this day. This connection can take many forms. I read stories of converts in books like *Journeys Home*. I joined the Coming Home Network, which provides resources, community, and articles online and in print for those of us making our way back to Rome. Watch *Journey Home* episodes on EWTN. Keep an eye open for other converts in your parish. We all share a common bond. Let's continue to walk alongside each other even after Confirmation.

7

Go Big

One of the most fun things for me around the time of my Confirmation was getting caught up on my Catholic “swag.” I was so excited to receive some Rosaries. We got a Mary statue for our backyard. We also bought some books on the saints and put up a crucifix in our home as well as a holy water font. We had things blessed by a priest. So, if you are feeling inspired, add some of those items to your own life and home. They are tools to help us keep our faith in our hearts and minds at all times. They are tools to help us reflect, remember, and pray. And, at least in my case at the time, I had some serious catching up to do.

8

Study up on Easter Vigil

Friends, if you have never been to an Easter Vigil service before, it is amazing, beautiful, and symbolic. It is also long. It will help so much if you can take some time to understand what is happening and why at each part of the service. Here's a primer on the USCCB website: <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/triduum/roman-missal-and-the-easter-vigil.cfm>. I found I was able to embrace the beauty of the Catholic Church once I understood what it was. You will be able to get the most out of the service if you do too.

9

Be Patient

If you are already connected to your parish community — great! If you don't yet feel connected, I encourage you to keep pressing on. Sometimes it takes time to get to know people in a Catholic parish. This is a huge, global church. Depending on the background you are coming from, and depending on the parish you attend, many things might be different from what you're used to. There might not be an active home/small group structure, there might not be donuts and coffee after Mass. But there will be people there that you will connect with. It might just take some more time. My husband, JP,

and I have found some very dear friends in our parish and in the Catholic community in our town. We recognize people at Mass on Sunday and stay for a bit and chat. It didn't happen overnight, but somewhere between year 1 and year 2 we got there. We weren't feeling lonely anymore. Not only do I now know I'm spiritually home, but going to Mass actually feels like home in the way of the fact that our parish family is there with us too. Be patient. Connection will come.

10

Celebrate!

Whether you will be alone with your sponsor at Mass on Easter vigil, or if there will be pews filled with people who have come alongside you on that day, your reception into the Catholic Church is something to celebrate. Celebrate in whatever way is right for you. A dinner before Mass, some time in Adoration, taking a walk, announcing it to the world. Stay true to yourself, but celebrate. Celebrate the beauty of Easter, the beauty of our Faith, and the beauty of crossing the bridge into full unity with the Catholic Church. ■



LORELEI SAVARYN is a passionate Catholic convert, wife, mother, instructional coach, and author. She holds a B.A. in Creative Writing and an M.A. in Education. Her website, This Catholic Family, chronicles the Savaryn's faith and family life. This article first was published on This Catholic Family and is reprinted with permission. Her debut children's novel, The Circus of Stolen Dreams, releases Sept 1, 2020 from Penguin Random House/Philomel. Lorelei was a guest on The Journey Home in 2017. Her Journey Home program, as well as her written conversion story, can be accessed at www.chnetwork.org.

SUPPORT THE CHNETWORK!

Could you give \$25 a month or more to help support the CHNetwork as we help men and women come home to the Catholic Church?

The CHNetwork is able to automatically deduct monthly donations directly from your credit card, checking, or savings account. If you would like to set up an automatic monthly donation, please go to chnetwork.org/donate/ or complete this form and mail to:

CHNetwork Attention: Ann Moore

PO Box 8290

Zanesville, OH 43702

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

Your information

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☐ Yes! I wish to make a monthly donation of \$25.00 on auto-payment to help support the CHNetwork's ministry.

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☐ **Checking account** or ☐ **Savings account**

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Card number _____

Expiration date / CVV Code _____

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☐ MasterCard

☐ Discover

☐ AmericanExpress

CHNETWORK EVENTS

Please consider joining us for one of our upcoming CHNetwork events!

APRIL 27-30, 2020

CHNetwork retreat in Columbus, Ohio

June 13, 2020

Day of Reflection in Emmitsburg, Maryland

OCTOBER 12-15, 2020

CHNetwork retreat in Houston, Texas

Go to chnetwork.org, call 740-450-1175, or contact Ken Hensley at kenh@chnetwork.org to learn more.

SHARE THE NEWSLETTER!

The CHNetwork encourages members to make copies of the newsletter and distribute them to family and friends to encourage them to join our mailing list. They may also request to receive our mailings by using the response card included with this newsletter. We do ask that copies of the newsletter not be sold. Unless otherwise indicated, the contents of this newsletter are copyright © 2020 by the Coming Home Network International. All rights reserved.

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info@chnetwork.org



The Coming Home
Network International



www.chnetwork.org



THE
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NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE



Our online newsletter archive is new and improved! Visit <http://newsletter.chnetwork.org/bookcase/xdjce> or scan the QR code to view past newsletters. We do ask for a \$35 yearly donation to help cover the production costs of the newsletter.

ONLINE COMMUNITY



We have a great way for converts and journeyers to connect online! CHN's Online Community is the quickest and easiest way for people on the journey to Catholicism to connect with converts, as well as CHN staff, for fellowship on the journey home. We invite you to connect at community.chnetwork.org.

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



TELEVISION

Mondays at 8 PM ET — Encores: Tuesdays 2 AM ET, Thursdays 2 PM ET

The Best of The Journey Home: Sunday 7 PM ET

RADIO

Mondays at 8 PM ET — Encores: Saturdays 7 AM ET, Sundays 1 AM ET and 5 PM ET

The Best of The Journey Home: Monday-Friday 1 AM ET

April 6

Bishop Scott McCaig*
(former Presbyterian and Anglican)

April 13

Br. Martin Davis, OP*
(former United Methodist)
(re-air from 6/12/17)

April 20

Bobbyjon Bauman*
(former Presbyterian minister)

April 27

David Shawkan*
(former Muslim)
(re-air from 7/31/17)

May 4

David Mills*
(former Episcopalian)

*Schedule is subject to change.

To access the full archive of past Journey Home programs go to chnetwork.org/journey-home.

Joyful Journey Updates

From Angela, on the journey "Looking back, I see that my entire life (including going to seminary to be a Presbyterian pastor!) was leading here. I've felt drawn to the Church, Mary and the saints, and the Holy Father from childhood ... But until this summer, my will and my ego always hesitated. But, at last, through prayer, voracious reading, and watching others' stories — very powerfully including those on CHN — this summer, my heart bubbled over with peaceful certainty ... I've loved Jesus since my earliest memories, but learning about His Real Presence and the fullness of His truth in the Church has thrilled me with wonder and awe beyond measure ... Your videos and blog have been a tremendous blessing and encouragement as God has been calling me, and I thank you from the depths of my heart. You present the truth with such grace and true joy, and you've even helped me find the words and peace to talk about my conversion ... I'm sure there are so many of us out there who have been touched, nourished, and convicted by your work. I am thrilled beyond all measure to become Catholic."

From Chris, on the journey "I am happy to report that I just met with one of the local Catholic priests in my hometown yesterday. He

told me that I had a very good grasp of Catholic teaching on salvation and we both left our conversation with the understanding that I don't really need further study, I just need to act on the truth that God has already shown me. That being said, I told my wife last night that I would like to enter the Catholic Church. There are so many ways in which I feel like the veil has been lifted from eyes during this process. Time and time again, I would realize I didn't understand what Catholics actually taught about something. Bishop Fulton's saying really rang true for me: 'Millions of people hate the Catholic Church for what they think the church teaches, only hundreds of people hate the Catholic Church for what the Church actually teaches.'"

From Kenny, a former Pentecostal minister "Things are going well for me and my family as we continue to live in the joy of our Catholic Faith. We did come into full communion at the Easter Vigil and have steadily grown in our relationship with our parish ... It's an *alive* parish in so many wonderful ways. Since coming into the Church there have been many blessings to me and my family. My wife and I are retreat leaders this year in our parish's Christ Renews His Parish retreat. I have become

a lector at church. I have been asked to share on 'The Catholic Understanding of Scripture' at this year's RCIA class at our parish. This past month my sponsor took me to a silent retreat. We spent 2 days meditating on Ignatian spirituality. It helped me so much. I continue to delve into the Catholic Faith daily through prayer, confession, the Rosary, seeking the intercession of the holy ones, learning to pray the Daily Office (not every day), reading everything I can get my hands on, and spending time with fellow Catholics to learn and grow together. God is good! How could I *not* be Catholic?!!!!"

From Lori, a new convert "I just wanted to tell you that my husband and I will be received into the Church this month! We've been meeting with the priest and told him about the journey we've been on. I attended a lot of the RCIA but my husband and I both have read our way into the Church. I cannot thank you enough for all of your emails with answers and links for me to read. I just cry when I think about God's grace and how He has gently brought me along. The Coming Home Network, *The Journey Home*, Marcus Grodi, Ken Hensley, Dr. David Anders, and you have been such a blessing and instrumental in our coming home." ■



DEEP IN SCRIPTURE!

In our latest *Deep in Scripture* series, former Presbyterian pastor Marcus Grodi and former Baptist pastor Ken Hensley have been doing a deep dive into the Epistle of St. James. For both of them, coming from a Reformed theological tradition, there was some difficulty figuring out just how to preach on this letter that Martin Luther himself referred to as an "Epistle of straw!"

This new series of *Deep in Scripture* episodes is available on YouTube and Podbean, so check them out and feel free to weigh in on the conversation!

To listen or watch, visit **deepinscripture.com**.

Prayer List



Clergy

- For a Presbyterian pastor in Brazil who is strongly drawn to the Church and wants to become Catholic but is struggling with the certain fallout that is to come, that he will have the faith to not turn back.
- For Joshua, who is convinced of the truth of Catholicism but has no support from his family, that the Lord will give him peace and joy and the courage to follow Him.
- For the wife of a minister in the south, that she will be able to find good, local support for her journey.
- For the wife of a Baptist pastor to have clarity and peace as to how to best move forward with her deep desire to become Catholic.
- For Chris, a former Anglican seminarian, that the Lord may guide his journey to the Church and future vocational possibilities.
- For Jeremy, a non-denominational minister in Arizona, that his RCIA experience may be a blessing to him.
- For Eduardo, who has resigned his pastorate and now faces the daunting work of figuring out how to pay the bills and support his family, that he will find suitable employment.
- For Calvin, a Church of Christ minister, that he may continue on the path that our Lord Jesus has set before him to full communion with the Catholic Church.
- For Joshua, a minister in the midwest, that his family may become open to his journey to the Catholic Faith.

■ For Father Mark, a priest of the Church of England, that the Holy Spirit may lead him home to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

■ For Richard, a minister in the south, that the Lord Jesus would give him the courage to give up his ministerial credentials and fully enter into the Catholic Faith.

■ For Bob, a Baptist minister, that he may find friends who can answer his questions about Scripture, the Church, and the Magisterium.

■ For Aaron, a Lutheran minister, that he may be granted the grace to continue on the path toward the fullness of the Catholic Faith.

■ For a former Jehovah's Witness lay minister in Florida, that he may enter into the joy of the Catholic Faith.

■ For a Southern Baptist seminarian, that his wife may become open to his journey to the Catholic Church.

Laity

■ For Amelia, that her return to Mass will bring her healing and peace.

■ For an Evangelical in the south who is planning to begin RCIA but is struggling with not being able to receive communion in the Protestant church.

■ For a Pentecostal in the midwest who is moving forward with her desire to become Catholic despite her husband's lack of interest, that they will be able to support each other in their faith journeys.

■ For a former Evangelical who has returned to the Church but is lonely and doesn't have Catholic friends, that she will be able to make good, faith-filled connections.

■ For Claire who is reading and studying the Bible and considering how to move forward with her journey.

■ For a Southern Baptist who is very drawn to the Catholic Church, that her husband will be open and receptive to her journey.

■ For Carrie, that she will be able to attend Mass and find good support for her interest in the Catholic Faith.

■ For a woman who is torn between Mormonism and Catholicism, that she will have a clear path in her journey.

■ For Melanie as she shares with her friends her love for the Catholic Church.

■ For a non-denominational Christian who is trying to find the right time to tell her family of her faith journey and interest in becoming Catholic.

■ For an Anglican in Colorado who is very drawn to the Catholic Church but has an annulment issue that is preventing her from moving forward.

■ For Zachary, who is in RCIA and loving it and is looking forward to being received into the Church this Easter Vigil.

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. We use only first names or general descriptions to preserve privacy.

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...Journeys Home Continued...

► “Journeys Home” continued from page 2

made sense to his discerning heart. It fit in with my Methodist upbringing because John Wesley’s teachings on salvation were very similar to Catholic teachings — so much so, he was often accused of being a Catholic sympathizer.

James and I were married in 1999, and he made a wonderful Methodist. I loved having a husband serving in ministry alongside me. I truly cherish my upbringing and service in the United Methodist Church. Neither of us was ordained, but his education in finance and my background in education and family studies proved helpful within the structure of the United Methodist Church. We eventually served together as youth ministers, which leads me back to the part of this testimony concerning our closest Methodist friends.

Very early in 2005, they called us to say that they had decided to leave a thriving ordained Methodist ministry to become Catholic. They lived two hours from us, so we packed up our baby and toddler and headed to their house that next weekend.

Our friends welcomed us with open arms and minds. The husband said it was exactly what he needed — a chance to put his new Catholic faith to the test in a lively debate with solidly grounded Protestant friends. What if he was wrong for throwing his Methodist ministry career away to join the Catholic Church, with no possible career opportunities in sight, all while trying to provide for his six kids (at the time) and a wife? This would be his chance to find out. He respected our intellect, knowing it was going to be a long night. And it was.

At the time, I was an enthusiastic debater. James looked forward to joining forces and winning this battle for the sake of our friends. It did not take long for the debate to begin. Our first topic? *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone). I had won this battle before against Catholic acquaintances. I started out fine, but not long into it, I had the theological rug jerked out from underneath me. How could I have been so blind! I was in shock. I hid everything I was feeling, and for the remainder of the night, I largely stayed silent.

Leading up to this point, I had discovered quite by accident that the Bible refers to an incident not found in the Bible, and in order to understand what was going on, a person must look outside the Bible. The incident is found in Jude, verse 9, and reads, “But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you.’” I was studying ways of rebuking the devil, and wanting to know more, I turned to a passage in Deuteronomy where Moses was buried, expecting to read a little about this exchange between St. Michael and the devil, but it was not there. I was purposefully avoiding Bible commentaries, so I had reached an impasse to further understanding based on Scripture alone. If I wanted to know what this inspired biblical author was talking about, I would need to read an ancient book, *The Assumption of Moses*, that contains the story which the biblical author refers to. Basically, to understand the Bible I was being forced outside the Bible. This particular verse may not be an issue for most people, but God laid it heavily on my mind. Why would the Bible force

me outside the Bible? We should not need to look elsewhere for understanding. I had been contemplating this issue for months prior to debating Catholicism with our friends, so when our friend said, “How can we say ‘Bible alone’? The printing press wasn’t even invented for the first 1,500 years of Christianity.” Wow! For the first time I realized that for 1,500 years Christians *had* to look outside the Bible for understanding because they did not have easy access to the Bible! I no longer wanted to talk; God spiritually woke me up at that moment. “Listen! Listen!” And I did. James was confused by my silence. He kept up the debate independent of me all through the night, but inside he felt like his battle buddy had deserted him. He wondered why I had not at least backed him up on what he was saying. He never stopped to ask me; he just went on from topic to topic, losing the debate one step at a time. As for me, my heart was in a mess. I stayed calm and played with the baby, and I just repeated over and over in my head what was said that took me off my feet.

Our Protestant arguments that had served us so well over the years crumbled with each topic, and our friend had loads of Bible verses to back up everything he was saying. With the *correct* understanding of subjects like purgatory and apostolic succession, combined with relevant Scripture verses, I saw no way to win the battle and save my friends. My anxiety was through the roof. For the first time, I was hearing correctly articulated Catholic teaching from knowledgeable people as opposed to misconceptions and misrepresentations of Catholic teaching like I’d received over the years.

Since I had spent years loading my mind with an anti-Catholic education that now seemed incorrect, I felt like I was somehow losing my identity. I should not have learned about the Catholic Faith from Protestants. I should not have learned about the Catholic Faith from a Catholic who did not know his or her faith. But these were my only sources. I never once looked for truth in the right place. For the sake of intellectual integrity, I should have studied the Catholic Faith from Catholic sources, because then I would have known what was actually taught in the Catholic Church; then, if I disagreed, I would have disagreed with factual teachings and not false information, which is what many Protestant arguments against Catholicism are largely based on. This was by far the most heartbreaking thing for me. I actually hurt daily over this, but the pain I was feeling the night of this great debate was far worse. It was clear my arguments were built on sand.

The ride home that next evening was a long one. The baby did not want to be in her car seat and cried the whole two hours without stopping, which did not allow James and me any time to discuss what happened back at our friends’ house. Once home, there was no time for discussion before bed. I was alone in my thoughts as I tried to fall asleep. I felt overwhelmed by the realization that Jesus did not give us a book as His sole authority over doctrinal correctness. He never even alludes to this in any of the records of His spoken words. When I was a kid, I looked at all the different Christian denominations with disparagement, because I learned early on that every denomination disagrees with every other denomination, yet

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they all used the same Bible in their intellectual battles against each other. By age 11 or 12, I was confident that all these denominations were the devil's work — divide and conquer.

By the time I was a young adult, I did not feel that any denomination understood truth one hundred percent, but I thought one hundred percent of all doctrinal truth was contained in the Bible. I rested my belief solely on Scripture alone, and I believed it was the one tool given to all Christianity throughout history for that purpose. Through the Bible, we could find Christian unity if we could just figure out the right way to interpret it. The Bible was my only authority, my security from following doctrinal error. I had devoted my life to finding truth through the Bible alone. Now I had come to realize that this was never meant to be, and that Jesus would not have let 1,500 years of history go by with His followers lacking easy access to the Bible if it were the only means of authority on truth.

Besides, illiteracy was widespread throughout history. How were Christians preserved from error? More importantly, how was I myself supposed to be preserved from error? The thousands of different Christian denominations, all claiming they follow the same Bible, was the added testimony that there was another way that Jesus intended for us to follow to know the truth. But what was it?

I cried into my pillow thinking over these things. I finally fell asleep, and I remember the moment I woke up the next morning. I sat up in bed; it was sunny outside. Even though I was not yet in agreement with Catholicism, I somehow instantly knew that God's authority related somehow to the Pope. I said out loud to myself, "I love my Pope." It was an utterance that came from the Holy Spirit and gave me peace, but I still mistrusted Catholicism at that point.

The next day, James and I unloaded to one another all that we were experiencing. He now understood my silence during the debating, and I learned that he was intrigued with our friends' explanations. He had come home with three books, *Born Fundamentalist*, *Born Again Catholic* by David B. Currie, *Rome Sweet Home* by Scott and Kimberly Hahn, and *Journeys Home* by Marcus Grodi. He was ready to start reading; I was not.

I needed something outside all the standard pathways. I needed numbers. James was at the computer, so I asked him to look up populations of religious groups. Out of these numbers, one realization in particular pressed in hard on me. At the time, if you added up all the different Protestant denominations, including all the ones that some would not consider "Christian," the Catholic Church was more than double in size compared to all those denominations combined. Combined! I was left to ponder that fact, while I went back to my daily activities of motherhood and housework. I had no interest in reading those "brainwashing" books that our friends had given us.

James, on the other hand, started right away. Within hours, he came out of the bedroom with tears in his eyes, telling me I *had* to read this chapter. Up until this time, James never knew my most recent prayers at the communion rail in our Methodist Church. Along my journey through my anti-Catholic education,

I had learned that Catholics believe the bread and wine become Christ's Body and Blood, and that Catholics believe they are truly eating His Flesh and drinking His Blood. To me, this was heresy, idolatry, and gross. I had understood this belief to be invented by Catholics centuries ago, during a time when sensationalism and superstition dominated the religious world. But for some reason, out of all the Catholic teachings I thought I understood, this one became something I craved. Over the course of about three years, this hunger was growing, until I found myself begging God at every communion rail to change the bread and juice I was about to receive into His real Flesh and Blood. I would silently call out to God, "Please, Lord! Please, do this for me! I know it is not right, or natural, but I want this from You!"

It got to a point where I was shedding tears on the communion rail every Communion Sunday, begging God for this special gift. I do believe this hunger was a gift from Him. He pursued me, and I longed to be united to Jesus in this way. James had no hint about any of this. I find it to be divine intervention that the chapter that James wanted to share with me was chapter two from David Currie's book, "Communion and the Real Presence."

Currie starts off pointing out the exactness of Jesus' words at the Last Supper, "This is my body" (Matthew 26:26). I take a literal approach to scriptural interpretation, unless it is obvious that something is meant allegorically. I had never considered Jesus' words at the Last Supper to be literal, yet there is no reason in Scripture to see His words as anything other than literal truth. From there, Currie leads the reader through John 6. He provides the full text of Jesus' sermon, removing the other dialogue, and allows Christ's own words to speak for themselves (Currie, pp 36-37). I had never paid that much attention to this sermon, even though it is one of the longest recorded of Jesus. Everything in John 6, which took place during Passover, likely one year prior to the Crucifixion, supports a literal interpretation of Jesus' words, "This is my body This is my blood."

The most telling part of John 6 is verse 66, which is the first time recorded in Scripture that disciples walk away from following Jesus because this teaching is too hard. What struck me is that He allowed them to leave. He did not try to add further explanation about an analogy He was trying to make, but rather, He kept emphasizing that we will need to eat ("chew" in the original Greek) His flesh if we were to have eternal life (ibid, pg 38). He repeats this several times and says His Flesh is food indeed and His Blood is drink indeed (see Jn 6:55).

Everything Currie wrote in this chapter played a part in my understanding, but I became convinced when he pointed out that "In the early Church, everyone who wrote anything about the Eucharist believed in the Real Presence of Christ" (ibid, p 41). Currie gave examples, one of which was from Ignatius of Antioch (c. AD 107), which proves this doctrine was not created by men in the Dark Ages of history; this doctrine was believed all along. At this point, I became aware that what I had been craving in Holy Communion was something I could have. I was not weird for craving it; I was being called to it. John 6:44a says, "No

...Journeys Home Continued...

one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.” Believing in the miracle of Holy Communion in the Catholic Church, that the bread and wine become Christ’s actual Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity is challenging to modern reason, but biblically, historically, and personally I could no longer deny this miracle. This is the point at which I joined my husband in a desire to learn more. It was almost the beginning of Lent 2005, and we slept an average of five hours a night for the next couple of months, devoting ourselves to reading and researching.

With each quest for knowledge about different aspects of the Church, I discovered little by little that what I *thought* the Catholic Church taught was incorrect, and what the Catholic Church *actually* taught was what I had believed from my years of studying the Bible in search of truth. The doctrines about papal authority and the Magisterium were new concepts for me, but I knew the Scripture that supported papal authority and the Magisterium, and for me, it came alive in a way it never had before. Phrases like “laying on of hands” had a significant meaning I had previously overlooked (see 2 Tim 1:6; Acts 6:6). Matthew 16:13-20 has no better explanation than what is found in Catholicism. Protestant teachings and commentary have to go to great lengths to explain against the Catholic claim to Peter’s authority granted to Him by Christ. If a person reads it plainly without outside influence, it is clear that Peter is granted special authority. The simple facts of how many times Peter is written about, compared to all the other Apostles, and that he is always listed first (and understanding that “first” was not ordinal, but a position of rank) were exciting discoveries. Some aspects of God’s justice eluded me until I heard the truth about purgatory.

One by one, James and I picked apart each doctrine. One answered question led to the next, and eventually I had enough answers. I could find no reason to continue to remain in protest of the Catholic Faith. My personal war against the Catholic Church was over, and I was anxious to receive Jesus in the Eucharist.

It was the beginning of Holy Week when James and I made our realization. He was sitting on the floor in front of me. He kept saying, “I need to go back. I could just go to confession and go back to the Church. It’s that easy for me.” He was in tears, and I believe he was close to doing just that, but he decided to wait for me. I did not ask him. I could never have asked him to wait, but he wanted to go through RCIA with me. We interviewed a local priest for two hours during Holy Week in order to hear consistency between what is written and what is spoken by an actual ordained minister. From that interview, I was invited to join a fast-paced RCIA class that the bishop had approved for a couple of long-time Catholic Church attenders. It began not long after Easter, and I was received into the Catholic Church that summer, June 25, 2005.

James and I both received the Eucharist together, unexpectedly on our knees, because the priest walked to us first, before anyone lined up, and offered us the Body and Blood of Jesus. About a year prior to this moment, God spoke to me while in the

middle of worship in the Methodist Church. As the preacher was reading the Beatitudes and read, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Lk 6:21 NIV), I thought, “I hunger and thirst,” remembering the unsatisfied hunger I mentioned earlier. God said to me, “You are about to be filled!” I could feel His excitement! Now, my mysterious hunger was satisfied in that moment of receiving Christ in the Eucharist. I was filled! I kept trying to satisfy it through filling my mind with more information, but it was satisfied directly into my body and soul and continues to be.

I was excited to be Catholic, and James was excited to be back home, but we had no one to celebrate with. No close friends were happy for us. My family was heartbroken. But I had peace that surpassed all understanding, and it was a beautiful day.

It has been 14 years since I was received into the Catholic Church, and I have experienced many different emotions along the way. I have hurt deeply because of the separation I used to feel from my extended family. Through the years, they have become used to my being Catholic, so it doesn’t pain me as badly now. It still hurts, though, since I long daily for Christian unity. I have experienced anger towards Protestant Christian experts, and I have allowed God to help me overcome this. I have been confused over my role as a reconciler to the Catholic Faith — not knowing what to share, how to share, or even if I should. Mostly, though, I have experienced overwhelming peace. I no longer worry about being in error. I can embrace every aspect of Jesus and my faith with complete trust, and because of that, I enjoy my relationship with Jesus far more than ever before.

James and I are now homeschooling parents of five wonderfully Catholic kids. We teach junior high in our Parish School of Religion, and my family serves in various ways during the Mass. Now, after having 14 years to contemplate my Catholic Faith, God is calling me to step out a bit further, although I do not yet know what that will look like. ■



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