



## January 2023 CHNewsletter

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# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



## From CBN Producer to Catholic Convert

By Andrea Garrett

I grew up in New England in a nominally Christian home. My father was a lapsed Catholic who married my mother, a lapsed Methodist.

### In the Beginning, God...

When they began having children, my folks had us baptized in the Methodist Church. They thought we should have some basic Christian formation, so when we moved to a town without a Methodist congregation, they took us to the nearest main-line Protestant church, which was a United Church of Christ. They enrolled us in Sunday School and dropped us off on Sunday mornings, while attending church services only sporadically themselves.

When I was 14, our church youth group was invited to attend a week-long Christian summer camp run by Fundamentalist Christians. There they talked about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and about praying the "sinner's prayer," things I'd never heard about. One evening, near the end of the week, they held a service where the Gospel message was explained in simple terms, and those of us who wanted to make a profession of faith were invited to come forward to the altar and pray to receive Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior and to be "born again." I was one of the first ones on my feet and made my way to the front of the chapel where I asked God to forgive my sins and invited Jesus into my heart.

Some of my friends went forward, as well, and we all knew something important had happened. Back in our home church, the language of being "born again" and praying to receive Christ into our

hearts were foreign concepts. My parents thought it was a phase and cautioned me not to go too overboard with my newfound religious zeal. Even the minister of our church was unenthusiastic, telling my friends and me that he didn't go along with all that "born again stuff." He encouraged us to continue attending church and our church's youth fellowship, and that was the end of it.

It was the first time I realized there were big differences in what various Christian denominations believed and taught. It was puzzling, but as I would do for the next 30-plus years, I put any concerns about those differences to the back of my mind.

Despite the tepid response at home, a seed had been planted, and I wanted to know more about the saving faith I had received. I asked my parents for a Bible, and that Christmas they gave me a copy of *The Living Bible*, an easy-to-understand paraphrase translation. I read it daily and prayed that God would lead me to Christians who believed the things I had been taught at summer camp.

My prayers were answered several years later, when I went away to college and became involved in campus ministry. The students there were from various denominational churches, but the common thread was that each one had a moment in time when they repented of their sins, accepted Christ into their lives, and became born-again believers.

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*Journeys Home*

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

My faith developed and grew over the next few years. In the early 1980s, when Christian television exploded across new cable and satellite networks nationwide, I visited a cousin from Virginia who worked for The Christian Broadcasting Network. He encouraged me to apply for a job there. I did, and a few months later, I was hired. Since I had no television background, my first job was as an administrative assistant. However, within a couple of years, I had transitioned to a researcher, writer, and finally producer.

### From New England to the Bible Belt

Moving from my small Massachusetts hometown to Virginia was a huge cultural shift. There were three churches in the town where I grew up: a Catholic Church, a United Church of Christ, and a Unitarian Church. In my new city of Virginia Beach, there were hundreds of churches from which to choose.

CBN is a non-denominational ministry, and the staff is made up of Christians from a variety of Christian traditions. My first few years with that ministry were spent church hopping, rarely staying at one church for more than a year. There were periods

of time when I didn't attend church at all, believing that I could function just fine in my faith on my own. I further justified my lapses in church attendance by telling myself that working at a ministry that has daily 30-minute chapel services for staff is plenty. Did I really need to attend church services each Sunday?

My church hopping and on-again-off-again church attendance ended when I met my future husband, Bill Garrett. Bill was raised Baptist but, like me, no longer had an allegiance to a particular denomination. After we married, we moved to a smaller town on the outskirts of the Hampton Roads area and settled in at a Reformed Presbyterian Church. For the first time in the more than ten years I had lived in Virginia, I joined this church with my husband, and we stayed there for almost 20 years.

### Cracks in the Foundation

The foundation of my Evangelical Christian faith began to crack in the early 2000s. The Reformed Presbyterian Church we attended taught us to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. But it also taught things that were different from what I had learned at evangelical churches I had attended. All of them believed in *sola Scriptura* — that the Bible alone is the source of authority for Christian faith and practice. But how the Bible was interpreted differed from one denomination to another. Our Presbyterian denomination taught Calvinist doctrine, which (among other things) affirms that God has predestined some people to be saved and others to eternal damnation.

The doctrine of predestination, as Calvinists taught it, never sat well with me, and like other Protestant doctrines that I either didn't fully understand or didn't fully accept, I put this one on a shelf. I told myself there were so many good things about my church — the preaching was excellent, the music was contemporary, and I made good friends and had wonderful Christian fellowship — that it didn't really matter if there were a few doctrines I disagreed with or struggled to understand. I figured these differences couldn't matter much to God either, since sincere Christians differed on many issues. Surely that meant these weren't necessarily essential to one's salvation. Since we all agreed on the core tenants of the faith, all would be well.

But the struggle intensified as time went on. The list of doctrines Christians couldn't agree on was long and ever-growing, and that bothered me. Why did some Christians believe in baptizing infants, while others said baptism must be by full immersion when someone made a profession of faith in Christ, usually around the age of 12 or older?

There were also differences in what Christians believed about what baptism accomplishes. Is it a sacrament that washes away Original Sin? Does it save a person's soul? Or is it merely an outward sign that a person's sins have already been washed away?

### Megachurch Madness

The megachurch trend exploded in the 2000s. According to Lifeway Research, by 2020 there were approximately 1,750 megachurches in the United States with a regular weekend attendance of 2,000 or more. Most of these churches are indepen-

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The Coming Home  
Network International

*The Coming Home Network was established to help non-Catholic Christians, clergy and laity, to discover the truth and beauty of the Catholic Church and to make the journey home.*

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

dent, non-denominational churches. For years, I watched the rise of megachurches with a mixture of fascination and unease.

Some were “seeker-friendly” congregations that removed crosses and traded traditional pews for stadium seating to make Christianity feel more accessible and inviting. Others appealed to the consumer culture, touting rock-band style of worship, lobby coffee bars, or youth programs to draw in new members.

These megachurches tended to be personality-driven, led by charismatic pastors who became celebrities. The messages they preached seemed increasingly shallow with vague doctrines. These churches were run like businesses — consumer-driven entities with little moral, financial, or doctrinal accountability for the leadership.

Many friends and colleagues attended one of these large, non-denominational churches. When we would have conversations about the core beliefs of the Christian faith, I realized the doctrinal divide was growing increasingly wider. At my Christian workplace, we began to adhere to a “lowest common denominator” Christianity. Since there were so many different theologies floating around, we had to “agree to disagree” on an ever-growing number of doctrines.

### Worship or Emotional Manipulation?

The church we attended for nearly two decades had a basic format that included announcements, an opening prayer, 20 minutes of “praise and worship,” followed by a 45- to 50-minute sermon, a closing prayer, and a final worship song. Most churches I visited followed this same basic format.

I remember worship leaders who would encourage the congregation to “enter into” God’s presence. Worship, in the contemporary Protestant church context, meant singing a series of contemporary Christian songs, usually beginning with an upbeat, exuberant one and ending with a slow, heart-stirring one.

I don’t know if it was deliberate or not, but over time this began to feel like the worst kind of emotional manipulation. Some Sundays I felt the emotion and the music made me feel closer to God. Other times, though, I felt nothing. I wondered why I couldn’t seem to consistently “enter into” God’s presence, and “feel” forgiven and spiritually restored.

It dawned on me that much of my Christian life had been built on emotionalism. When the feelings were present, it seemed that God was present. When the emotions weren’t there, it seemed God was not there, either.

### Drawn to Liturgy

By 2015, I had begun investigating liturgical churches. I was intrigued by the rhythm and beauty of traditional, ancient forms of Christian worship and decided to visit a traditional Anglican Church that used an older form of the Book of Common Prayer, one published for the Episcopal Church in America in 1928. The prayers were beautiful, and I fell in love with the Anglican liturgy. At the time, I didn’t realize how very close the Anglican liturgy is to the Catholic liturgy. While I was gradually becoming more interested in exploring what Catholics believed, becoming one was

## TAX LETTERS

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still completely out of the question. I was a life-long Evangelical, and even though I did not consider myself particularly anti-Catholic, the Catholic Church seemed far too foreign. I still believed what I had been taught through the years: that Catholicism was filled with man-made traditions and that most Catholics probably were not saved. And while my Evangelical foundation was crumbling, Rome was still a bridge too far.

There was also my husband, Bill, to consider. He had lost interest in our Presbyterian church around the time I was transitioning out. However, his reasons were much different from mine. Throughout our marriage, Bill had attended church with me and had said and done all the “right” Christian things. But I came to realize his commitment was half-hearted, and when I began to struggle with Evangelical Christianity, it was easy for him to find excuses not to attend church at all.

When I found a home in traditional Anglicanism, Bill was happy for me and promised he would never stand in the way of my spiritual journey. My church was part of a small Anglican communion called The Anglican Catholic Church. Bill told me that, while he supported me in whatever church I wanted to be a part of, he said in no uncertain terms that I should never invite him to go to church with me because, as he said, “I will never enter a church that has the word ‘Catholic’ in its name.”

Bill and I had never been blessed with children, so there was no one else in our family to consider. If Bill was supportive of my spiritual exploration, that was good enough for me.

### The Year of Cancer

In early 2017, I was diagnosed with an invasive and aggressive form of breast cancer. Treatment consisted of months of chemotherapy, surgery, and radiation. Halfway through my “year of cancer,” Bill and I decided to move forward with a dream we’d had when he retired a year earlier. We wanted to buy an RV and explore the country. A cancer diagnosis brings the brevity of life into sharp focus, so we thought, why put it off? By the middle of June, we had a shiny new motor home in our driveway.

A few weeks later, Bill asked me if the priest at my church would come out to our house and bless the RV. I was stunned by the request, but said I would ask and was sure he would say yes.

Fr. Rob Whitaker came out to our house a few weeks later and prayed over our RV, complete with incense and holy water. He also stayed for lunch and a visit, where he and Bill talked at length about the Anglican faith.

To my surprise, a few Sundays later, Bill told me he wanted to come to church with me. While I was happy to have him join me, I truly thought he would not like it at all, and it would cement his pre-conceived biases against liturgical worship.

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# A Note from Jon Marc



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The new year is upon us and with it the natural and prudent impulse to reflect on where we are, how far and by which paths we have come, and what the future holds. Whatever is going on around us in the Church and the world, our primary prayer and task remains ever the same: *Lord, what is your will for my life? What are the next steps you are calling me to take?* Everyone reading this newsletter is in the same boat, whether a lifelong Catholic, a new convert to the Catholic Church, a participant in RCIA heading into the home stretch toward Easter, or a Protestant pastor or layperson just stepping out in faith to ask questions about the Church. With our eyes on Jesus Christ, we know that grace stands ready and in full sufficiency. It will not disappoint. The only question is whether we'll take the next step in the journey.

Discerning that next step is not always easy, and it is thus another point of commonality in all of our stories. The theme of this month's CHNewsletter is "No Man's Land" — a familiar idiom that my father has often used to describe a stage of the journey of conversion that we have seen time and time again in so many stories, often in stories we are observing in real-time. Here is how my father describes it: *"After I converted and started helping other clergy inquirers, I began using the phrase 'No Man's Land' to specifically describe a clergyman's dilemma when, after being on the Journey enough to 'know' he cannot go back, because of what he's learned; he also realized he cannot go forward, because he's come to realize what conversion would mean—loss of vocation, occupation, relationships, maybe marriage, and even self-image. He becomes stuck in the middle with no one to talk to from either side. This was the foundational reason I started 'the Network'. Men in this situation either didn't know who to talk to or they were inundated with conflicting advice. Their Protestant friends couldn't understand their new Catholic convictions, so they either attacked them with anti-Catholic apologetics, or withdrew from them as suspected papists. Catholics they approached were often either those not catechized in their own faith and thus unable to understand the desire to convert, OR those who in their zeal for the faith would encourage conversion but could offer no help or sympathy for a pastor's questions, either theoretical or practical. So 'No Man's Land' described a clergyman's 'pit of despair' out of which they could find no ladders."*

When the Holy Spirit leads us into a collision with some new truth, some deeper understanding of God and His will for our lives, we find that things cannot go back to the way they were. Yet, as our eyes and minds quickly jump to conclusions, the difficulties entailed by those

conclusions (real or imagined) can cause our resolve to falter. Like the Rich Young Ruler in the Gospel,

who just moments before was eagerly asking what he must do to inherit eternal life, we may catch a startling and unnerving glimpse of where the Lord may (or may not) be calling us to go — and we may hesitate in indecision, or even walk away in sadness.

It is easy to dismiss or oversimplify "No Man's Land" when looking at someone else's faith journey. We are all at times quick to judge or advise and yet slow to really empathize and to understand. The reality is that we have all been there and will be there again: hesitating in fear at where the Lord may be calling us to go. How do we keep our eyes on Christ and continue the difficult journey of discernment?

There are a couple of key virtues to keep in mind when navigating our own journey and helping and encouraging others with theirs. The first is the Theological virtue of Faith. Like St. Peter walking on the waves, we must keep our eyes on Jesus no matter what and encourage others to do the same. Worrying over the ultimate destination or about some step other than the one in front of us — seeing the wind and becoming afraid — is to allow our trust to slip from Our Lord and back to ourselves. We will sink. Hence, persevering in prayer and actively placing our trust in Jesus is of foundational importance to navigating whatever "No Man's Land" we may be encountering.

The other key virtue in "No Man's Land," as we build on the foundation of faith, is that of Prudence — the art of attending to reality and making good decisions. The virtue of prudence is, in a sense, a virtue of intellectual conversion — a turning *to* reality, especially when our fears or desires might be pulling us to look elsewhere. It is the virtue of keeping our eyes and ears, our minds and hearts open when we would prefer to close them. It is also the virtue of attention and of choice *right now* — choosing to pay attention and to engage with what is most important and what is God's will for us. Our Lord is almost always offering a simpler, smaller yoke and burden than those that we imagine in our fear and doubt.

Whenever we feel "stuck" waiting on clarity from the Lord, we must strive to remain faithful to the things He has already clearly given us. We must persevere in prayer. We must be working to repent of sin and to cultivate virtue. We must continue to love and care for our



JonMarc, Teresa, and Baby Prudence Grodi

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## A Note from JonMarc (continued)

spouses, to raise our children, to do our work, etc. Like the wise virgins in the parable, we must have our lamps lit and our vessels full of oil. It is from this place of faithful readiness that we can discern, prudently, the next step we are to take.

Many Protestant pastors and laypeople are in that same “No Man’s Land” that my father described above: convicted of the fundamental flaws in their Protestant theology, but still finding the idea of becoming Catholic to be crazy! That’s why the Coming Home Network

is here. We don’t “push, pull, or prod” anyone into becoming Catholic. Instead, we listen, we empathize, we share our own conversion stories, we answer questions, we pray, and we encourage everyone on the journey to simply keep their eyes on Jesus and to take it one step at a time.

Let us continue to pray for one another: that the Lord will lead each of us home, in His own best time and way.

In Christ,  
JonMarc

## When We Were In “No Man’s Land”

By CHNetwork Staff



My first “No Man’s Land” experience happened in 2018, the second week I attended Mass after deciding to seriously investigate the claims of the Catholic Church. In that gathering, I was convinced that the prayer of the priest over the bread and wine brought about what St. Justin Martyr called its “transmutation” into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. I remember looking at that altar and whispering, “The Lord is truly here!” That prayer was immediately followed by a sense of overwhelming foreboding and worry as I began to call to mind all of the doctrinal issues that I still had — some of which I wondered whether I could or would ever overcome. As I drove away from Mass that day, I felt two powerful things at the same time. First, I thought, “I believe everything the Catholic Church says about the Eucharist.” I knew that I could never again take communion in a Protestant or Evangelical worship service. But second, I thought, “I know that if this is what I believe, I need to be Catholic, but I don’t know how I ever can be! God, help me!” And He did! But it was a journey. I could not go backward, but I did not know how to go forward. By God’s grace, he brought me all the way home! — **Kenny Burchard** — former Pentecostal minister (20 yrs)



Looking back, I believe the experience of having entered “No Man’s Land” began the moment I finished listening to Scott Hahn’s conversion story, removed my headphones and said to my wife Tina, “Scott has become Catholic.” Of course, I thought at that moment that I could most probably answer the arguments he had made. At the same time, I had this immediate feeling that somehow a corner had been turned in my life and that nothing would ever be the same. I had begun to question the foundation of my worldview as an Evangelical Protestant. I had been set back to square one. I had become curious about the claims of the Catholic Church, a curiosity that only increased in the days, months,

and years to follow. It’s like one day I was a Baptist pastor and the next day I no longer knew exactly what I was. One day I was headed in a clear direction, and the next day I was drifting about in the doldrums. It took me several years to find my destination. — **Ken Hensley** — former Baptist minister (11 yrs)



As a history major in college, I basically read my way into the Catholic Church. By the time I was 23, I had become convinced of the truth of the Catholic Faith. Sadly, I would spend three more years in “No Man’s Land”. In fact, I even applied and entered an Evangelical Protestant seminary knowing the truth of the teachings of the Catholic Church. Though I was, at that time, technically Lutheran, I was so convinced in my heart of the faith of the Church that, when I signed up for classes at my seminary, I would write “Catholic” when the form asked for my denomination. I reasoned that catechumens can be buried as Catholic if they die, so I could too. So, why did I wait for three long years to become Catholic? I was intimidated by the priests that I had met. It was nothing that they had done to cause me to fear approaching them. I held them in such high esteem because of my great respect of apostolic authority, given by Jesus Himself to the Apostles and their successors. I didn’t feel worthy to talk to a priest. Praise God that through his grace I was able to overcome my fears. What motivated me was the many divisions among my fellow seminarians, who belonged to over 55 denominations. I felt compelled to enter the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. During the summer after my freshman year in seminary, I approached a priest I knew and told him my story. He said that I was more than ready to enter the Church. According to him, I had catechized myself. The following month, the Feast of St. James, I was confirmed on July 25, 1981. — **Jim Anderson** — former Bible student and Protestant seminarian (three years in No Man’s Land) ■

# COMPASS

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## Conversion Is Like That

By Denise Bossert, Pastoral Care & Publications Coordinator



It seems like my dad always waited until nightfall to realize that he'd left his Bible on the podium at church. I enjoyed having a minister for a father, except in those moments. He'd casually lift his eyes from a bedtime snack and say, "Why don't you run down to the church, Sis, and get my Bible for me?" I'd roll my eyes and groan, "Oh, Dad." The idea of going into a church at night – by myself – just to fetch his Bible was not my idea of fun. It sounded more like a good way to see a ghost or something. If I hesitated further, Dad would smile and add, "If you do it, I'll let you be my daughter." After more eye-rolling, I'd pull myself out of the chair and trudge down the road to a darkened Presbyterian church and let myself inside.

Suddenly, I would shift gears, dashing full speed through the narthex and frantically feel along the far wall for light switches, the whole time praying, "Please, no angels. Please, no angels." Then, I'd run like a maniac to the platform, now praying that the Bible would be right where Dad had indicated so that I would lose no time to a search effort, and finally, Bible in hand, I'd run back down the aisle, hitting the light switch in one fluid motion, as I passed through the narthex and out the church doors. I would barely drop the pace as I headed for home.

Now that I'm older some things have changed. For starters, I'm Catholic now. If you look closely at my conversion, it's almost like Our Heavenly Father asked me to do the same thing my earthly father used to ask of me.

“

*The Lord says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you."* **PSALM 32:8**

”

"Sis, I want you to walk down this road where you'll find my Word Made Flesh." At that point, I probably rolled my eyes a bit. I know I asked the Lord, *Why me?* Why not ask my sister or brother? Or start with my husband, at least. The idea of becoming Catholic wasn't an easy road to go down alone.

Then, the Lord smiled and said, "I'll let you be my daughter." This time it was no joking matter. I reminded Him that I would probably make mistakes and look like an idiot sometimes as I fumble for the lights. But I want to please You, Lord. I want to follow You, wherever the journey leads me.

Conversion is like that.

The Father sends us on a mission. Sometimes fear of the unknown makes us want to say no, but we submit anyway. We dash in and dash out, seeking the first light switch we find, hoping to make it through the journey without experiencing anything that is too life-altering, when the way of real obedience is to walk at the Lord's pace and believe that to be enough and trust that it will not be too much. ■





**Nicole, currently non-denominational** I had been in such turmoil over a decision point of what I should do when I had reached out to CHN. I then realized that I had come too far & knew too much to turn back & forget all I had learned about the Catholic faith. I attribute this prompting & urging to the Holy Spirit. I am delighted to let you know that I have begun RCIA & my boys and I have been consistently attending St. Rose, our local parish. Thank you all for the prayers.

**Becky, a recent Catholic and convert from Pentecostalism** My first Catholic book about Joan of Arc (my patron saint) came to me when I was 14 years old and inspired me to be a bravely righteous woman. At the time I attended a Pentecostal Protestant church and only knew that this brave woman was led by God. At 23 I was invited to a Catholic service. It was a beautiful service, and I have deeply respected the Church since. When my daughter attended a Catholic school in grade 7, I was also introduced to another facet of the church. At these three junctions, I could have invested further, and possibly converted then. It would have helped me so very much, and I would have experienced the

comfort and the feeling of being home that I now experience.

Regardless, I am grateful to be here now.

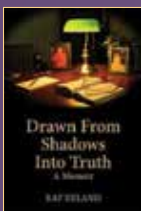
Many difficulties have come to my life since I converted - which I fully expected. The past year has been difficult, both personally and professionally. If not for the Church, I am certain that I would not have made it. The journey began in earnest in 2016, when I was invited by another Catholic coworker to attend services at his church. I have the Hallow and Amen phone apps and watch some YouTube programs by Catholic people. These programs have helped build my [spiritual] foundation.

**From Margaret, a convert of four years** I never knew I could be so happy and looking back I can see I've always been Catholic in my heart. God just kept pulling me. I didn't convert lightly, it was a four-year study, prayer, talking with friends, (a) journey that ended with me meeting the right people at the right time that enrolled me in the program. Thank you so much for your continued remembrance of me; it's very meaningful to me.

**From Debbie, a recent convert** I wanted to give y'all an update about my spiritual journey and how happy I am being Catholic. I was confirmed into the Roman Catholic Church during Easter this past April. It was so amazing to FINALLY be able to partake of the Eucharist. I cried the whole duration of the Communion section of the Mass. I couldn't control it. The tears just started, and I felt so grateful to our Lord Jesus for the sacrifice that He made and how, through God's grace, I was able to partake of His body and blood. I am a professional violinist, so I have been playing for our 'Night of Adoration' each month at my parish. I am also joining the choir for our 9:45am Mass each week, as voice was my minor in college, and I am thrilled to be singing again in the Lord's house. . . . I am reading a lot of literature by Dr. Scott Hahn and Bishop Barron. Both of them have helped me along the way to becoming Catholic. I love to pray the Rosary, but my favorite prayer is 'Divine Mercy.' I have the app on my phone, along with the Hallow app, so I don't have to pray alone. God bless all of you! ■

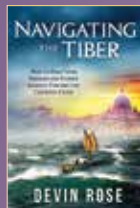
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In this book, Devin Rose shows you how to help your friends and family members make the "crossing" to Rome by journeying with them, offering the information, arguments, and most of all the prayerful support they'll need to reach their spiritual home. (Item #3211)

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Kenneth Howell's pursuit of truth, goodness, and love gradually led him into a world he had only vaguely glimpsed from afar. It was a world filled with things he had always longed for. It was the fullness of truth, the Catholic Church. (Item #3190)

# Prayer List

## Clergy

- **For Dylan, a student at a Protestant seminary** whose eyes have been opened to the errors in his historical tradition and is having a hard time finding people to discuss his ideas with without defensiveness sabotaging the conversations.
- **For Hunter, a Protestant seminary student** who is quickly becoming convinced that Catholicism is true, that the Lord will help him to navigate his next steps.
- **For Grant, a non-denominational minister** on a journey toward the Church but struggling with a few of the Church's teachings, in particular the Marian dogmas, as well as the question of how he will support his family if he leaves the ministry to become Catholic.
- **For Greg, a Methodist minister** who feels strongly drawn to the Catholic Church and yet also feels strongly drawn to be a pastor.
- **For John, a Baptist pastor** who has been attracted to Catholicism for some time but is turned off by some of the things he sees happening in the Church.
- **For Darshak, who resigned his Protestant ministry** in 2020 and found a new job and is excited about moving toward entering the Church, that the Lord will give him wisdom as he leads his family and bless him financially so that he can support them.
- **For Wieslaw, an Evangelical pastor** who was received with his wife into the Church this year and is asking for prayer for their son Kamil and his wife and daughter, Natalia and Maja, that they will all be united in one Church.
- **For Ken, a Baptist pastor** who is drawn to the Church and seeking wisdom and guidance on how best to proceed in an environment where very few will understand what he is coming to believe.
- **For Christopher, a former Mennonite pastor** who has just recently been received into the Church with his wife and children, that he might be filled with joy and hope upon realizing that God has called him to lead others to the Church as well.

- **For Mark, an Anglican priest** who is studying Catholic theology but has many questions, especially about the Church's teachings on Mary.
- **For Philip, a Pentecostal pastor** convinced of the truth of the Catholic faith and struggling to communicate to his wife what he has learned.
- **For Michael, an Episcopal priest** seeking full communion with the Catholic Church and exploring possible ordination as a Catholic priest.
- **For Calvin, a Protestant pastor** convinced of the truth of the Catholic faith and having a very difficult time leading his family to see what he sees.

## Laity

- **For Jason, a Baptist in Indiana**, that he might receive what he is seeing in the truths and graces found in the Catholic Church.
- **For Mark, a Non-denominational Evangelical in Florida**, that he and his wife would find grace and peace in the Catholic faith.
- **For Scott, a Lutheran in Illinois**, that he and his wife will find their true home in the Catholic Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- **For Joe, a Baptist in Virginia**, that, as he as his wife continue to attend Mass, they both will become eager to enter into full-communion with the Church.
- **For Justin, an Anglican in the United Kingdom**, that his growing hunger for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist would draw him to the Banquet of the Lord.
- **For Todd, a Presbyterian in New Jersey**, that the fullness of grace and truth that he sees witnessed by the Catholic Church will draw him Home.
- **For John, an Episcopalian in Florida**, that the Holy Spirit will guide him and his wife through a joyful RCIA journey.
- **For Shawn, a Southern Baptist in Tennessee**, that the witness of others who have become Catholic would bring him back Home to the Church.
- **For Mark, a Lutheran in Florida**, that, like many in his family, he may be granted grace through the Catholic Church as he draws closer to the day he is all the way home.
- **For Ashley, a former Anglican**, who has started RCIA, that she sees the classes all the way through and that she receives healing for her heart.
- **For Lindsey, a former Evangelical** whose parents are hard-core Protestant and reject the Catholic faith. They do not want Lindsey to become Catholic, making it extremely difficult to go to catechism classes, that our Lord will pour graces into her life and the lives of her parents.
- **For Jack, a non-denominational Christian**, who is on the journey and rejoining RCIA in January. He began RCIA a few years ago but stopped when he realized he would need an annulment from his first marriage over 35 years ago. He is ready to begin the difficult work of pursuing an annulment. May he find this path forward to be paved with grace and marked by the distinct presence of the Holy Spirit.
- **For Steven, a Baptist** who prays that the holidays will be a time of celebrating Christ's coming, but who also worries about extended family in light of his faith journey, that the graces of Christmas will continue to draw all men (and women) to Christ and His Church.
- **For A.P., from the Church of Christ**, that as she attends her first RCIA classes, that her ears will be opened and she will learn with humility and be given an openness to the Church's authority.
- **For Jeremy, a Presbyterian on the journey**, with gratitude that he was able to recently receive his first Sacrament—that of Reconciliation. May our Lord continue to draw him to the Eucharist with arms of love.



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.



# Overheard

## AROUND THE STAFF WATERCOOLER

Our just-response as Christians, which we call Catholic social justice, is effective and appropriate to the degree that it grows up with prudence especially, but also with courage and temperance. In fact, the Catholic German Philosopher, Josef Pieper, wrote about this in his book. And he says that all other moral virtue depends upon this virtue of right-reason in action — prudence — for whatever is *good* must first be informed by what is *true*. — **SETH PAINE**, *Developer of Web & New Media, CHN*

In this conversation, Seth was chatting with another staff member about the proper place for and proper formation and execution of social justice actions. As happens every day around the office, Seth mentioned the title of a book and another staff member wanted to know more, because we all know that God likes to use random book titles that come up organically in conversations as a venue for grace along the spiritual journey. The ever-prudent Seth was quick to share, “It’s *The Four Cardinal Virtues* by Josef Pieper.” Here is a snippet from the book:

*“No Dictum in traditional Christian doctrine strikes such a note of strangeness to the ears of contemporaries, even contemporary Christians, as this one: that the virtue of prudence is the mold, and “mother” of all other cardinal virtues, of justice, fortitude, and temperance. In other words, none but the prudent man can be just, brave, and temperate, and the good man is good in so far as he is prudent” (3).*

Our Executive Director JonMarc Grodi loves the virtue of prudence so much that he and his wife named one of their six children after the virtue. Josef Pieper would approve! ■

“

*It has never been either practical or useful to leave all things and follow Christ. And yet it is spiritually prudent.*

— **THOMAS MERTON**  
(from *The Monastic Journey*)

”



## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

TONY & DEBBIE FAUL — 5 YEARS (SINCE 2017)



I was raised a cradle Catholic, baptized shortly after I was born in 1958. As a boy, I thought of Mass as an obligation...but I obediently set about checking off the boxes for First Communion and Confirmation because that is what one did in those days. During my years as a young man in college, a full career in military service, and through the storms of marital failure, my Catholic faith was subsumed and eclipsed by inconsistency, emptiness, and darkness.

In 1992, through love shown to me by a Protestant couple, my faith awakened again, and for 20 years I sojourned in the world of non-denominational, generic Protestant Christianity. In my occasional interactions with Catholics during this time, I often thought, “They’re just going through the motions.” My mother, on the other hand, remained a devout Catholic. While in her living room during a visit to her home in 2013, we were watching EWTN, and *The Journey Home* program came on. I was stunned to hear stories from Protestant clergy leaving everything they had known and learned and converting to the Catholic faith! I binge-watched episodes of the program on YouTube and often felt like I was taking a masterclass in comparative religion, denominationalism, Catholic apologetics, Church history, and theology. The Lord recaptured my heart,

and I returned to the Catholic Faith in 2015.

Following my reversion, I continued to access the amazing content on the CHNetwork website and monthly Newsletter, and in 2015 I attended my first in-person CHNetwork event. It was at these events that I saw first-hand how Protestant ministers were being drawn into the Church, and how the CHNetwork staff were caring for them. I became a donor that year and every year since, and we try to go to every CHNetwork retreat we can. We also became charter (and monthly) donors to the *Shepherds’ Fund* this year, having seen with our own eyes what an impact this ministry has on non-Catholic ministers. I hope every faithful Catholic reading my story will join us in financially supporting this life-changing apostolate.

(Tony’s written story is available at <https://chnetwork.org/story/military-brat-returns-catholic-faith-youth/>)

*Tony Faul began supporting CHNetwork with a monthly gift in 2017. He and his wife Debbie are charter (and monthly) donors to the Shepherds’ Fund. If you would like to join them to become a monthly or one-time donor, use the enclosed envelope, or give online at [chnetwork.org/donate](https://chnetwork.org/donate) ■*

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

Imagine my shock, then, when we left church and he said he enjoyed it. He came back the next week, and the next, and suddenly he was attending every week. Bill was the kind of guy who thoroughly researched things he was interested in, so he began delving into the history of the ancient Church. His research had him investigating both the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church, along with the Anglican Church.

### Changing Theology

Unlike my slow crawl to understand certain theological truths, Bill grasped fundamental Catholic teachings with lightning speed. The first was his grasp of the Eucharist. He quickly and enthusiastically embraced belief in the Real Presence of Christ and what that meant for him personally and the Church.

The second major theological domino to fall was his life-long understanding of baptism. Bill was baptized at age 26 after making a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as a Baptist. He saw baptism as purely symbolic, something one did as an act of obedience after coming to faith. Our Reformed Presbyterian Church baptized infants, something Bill had never understood or supported, but Presbyterians don't believe in baptismal regeneration or that baptism cleanses the infant from the stain of Original Sin. Through baptism, Presbyterians are receiving the child into the church to be "Covenant Children." In the Reformed tradition, baptism replaces circumcision as a sign of faith and covenant with God.

However, as we studied together, we both concluded that baptism does cleanse us from Original Sin, and it does save us.

Within six months of attending the Anglican Catholic Church with me, Bill was pushing for both of us to be confirmed in the ACC. In June of 2018, we entered the church together.

### We're Not Protestant — But Are We Catholic?

While I had changed greatly over the years, I saw even bigger changes in Bill. He became a different person after entering the Anglican Catholic Church. He would tell me later that it was a true conversion experience — that he had never really known

Christ as he now did. I saw it as a miracle. While Bill was content with Anglican tradition, I still felt pulled toward Rome.

While neither of us considered ourselves Protestants any longer, were we truly Catholic? The answer was complicated, and yet at the same time simple. Although we embraced many Catholic practices, we were not part of the one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of the Nicene Creed. I continued to feel a pull toward the Catholic Church and believed in my heart that, at some point, I would enter it. But since Bill was content to be an Anglican, it seemed now was not the time.

### COVID Changes Everything

Our ACC congregation was tiny, but when COVID shut down in-person worship in early 2020, it was devastating. For several weeks, we met online via Zoom. Then, gradually, we transitioned to meeting in homes and live streaming the service on Facebook. By the end of 2020, however, our numbers had shrunk to just a handful of regular attendees, and we had serious concerns about the future of our church.

In September of 2020, I decided (with Bill's blessing) to enroll in RCIA classes. I did so for two reasons. Although I had done a lot of personal study about the Catholic Church for several years, I wanted to take the classes to explore the faith more fully and to have lingering questions answered. The other reason was that I couldn't escape the nagging feeling that things were about to change, and that our Anglican congregation might be forced to fold. I knew that taking RCIA classes didn't obligate me to enter the Church at the end of the process, but I wanted to make sure I was ready if the Lord led me in that direction. While Bill did not want to join me at RCIA, he was also beginning to look more seriously at the Catholic Church. I had resolved most of my earlier objections to certain Catholic beliefs, but Bill still had some obstacles. Like many Protestants who are looking at the Catholic Church, the issues of the papacy and the role of Mary and the saints were Bill's biggest hurdles.

*Continued on page 11* ➤

**EWTN'S THE JOURNEY HOME** on television & radio, hosted by JonMarc Grodi, CHNetwork Executive Director



#### TELEVISION

Mondays at 8 PM ET — Encores: Tuesdays 1 AM ET, Thursdays 2 PM ET  
*The Best of The Journey Home*: Saturday 6 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

**January 2**

Arthur Lohsen\*  
Former Lutheran (re-air from 11/11/19)

**January 9**

Fr. Sebastian Walshe, O. Praem\*  
Former Lutheran

**January 16**

Rachel Bulman\*  
Former Pentecostal

**January 23**

Lauren De Witt\*  
Former Baptist

**January 30**

Sam Guzman\*  
Former Baptist

\*Schedule is subject to change.

To access the full archive of past *Journey Home* programs go to [chnetwork.org/journey-home](http://chnetwork.org/journey-home).

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

By the beginning of March of 2021, I had to put RCIA on hold. Bill's 90-year-old mother, who was living with us at the time and declining in health, became very ill, and we began hospice care for her in our home. On March 21, she passed away. Around the same time that we were caring for his mother, Bill began feeling ill. His symptoms were non-specific, and he chalked them up to the stress of caring for his mother, an upended sleep and meal schedule, seasonal allergies, and a host of other benign causes. By the middle of May, however, it was clear that something was seriously wrong. A trip to the ER turned into a hospital stay for tests and a diagnosis of Stage IV cancer.

We were stunned. Presented with options, it quickly became clear that, barring a miracle, this was not going to end well. The cancer was terminal, and the doctors we consulted told us that treatment at this stage would only make Bill miserable, and might not extend his life by much, if at all.

We chose to trust God, bring Bill home, and enter hospice. In a surreal turn of events, the same hospice team that had cared for my mother-in-law less than three months earlier was now heading up the care for my dear husband.

### "Peaceful and Pleasant"

Bill's time in hospice care was brief — only ten days — but it was profound. When word of his condition went out, friends, clergy, neighbors, family, and former colleagues descended on our home to pray with Bill, to sing over him, to read Scripture to him, and to say good-bye. Bill was lucid and able to visit with everyone who came to see him, because he was not in pain and therefore refused any medication that might have made him unable to interact with his many visitors.

Our Anglican priest came and gave him the last rites. I'm not completely sure, but I believe Holy Communion was the last food and drink he consumed on earth. Two days before he passed, Bill looked at me and said, "I never would have thought that dying would be so peaceful and pleasant." He died in my arms at peace and full of faith on June 3, 2021.

### Gifts of Passage

When a loved one dies in friendship with God, our Lord gives us gifts, if we're able to recognize them through our sorrow. God did not give us a lot of time from Bill's diagnosis to his death, but He gave us enough time, and that was a gift. There was time to say the things that needed to be said, for wishes to be made known, and most of all, time for Bill to be ready to be ushered into His presence. Bill died full of faith, trusting in God's mercy, grace, and goodness. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes this as a "happy death." And it was, thanks to peace.

### I Enter the Church — and a Final Gift

It became clear that the COVID pandemic had changed our Anglican congregation permanently. That, coupled with the changes that occurred in my own life, convinced me that it was time for me to enter the Catholic Church, which I did on August 28, 2021.

I could honestly say I accepted and affirmed the teachings of the Church, so I had no hesitation about becoming Catholic. But there were certain things I still didn't fully understand. One of those things was Purgatory.

I had read several books about Purgatory, and it made sense that God might require further cleansing of our souls in an intermediate state of some kind, but I still wrestled with understanding of such a foreign concept. After Bill was gone, I prayed — asking God to help me with it. Was Bill experiencing Purgatory right now? Was he fully in God's presence? I didn't know.

A couple of months after I entered the Church, I was engaged in an email conversation with a colleague who is a cradle Catholic. He lives and works in another city, and while he and I had met several times while working together, he had never met Bill and knew nothing about our spiritual journey.

At the end of his email, he asked how I was doing and told me that he prayed for me and for Bill every day. I wrote back and quipped, "How Catholic of you to pray for the dead!" Then I explained that I had converted a few months earlier and appreciated that he was praying for Bill — something I was also doing.

He wrote back, congratulating me on entering the Church and said he hadn't planned to tell me this, because he didn't know how it would be received. He said that every day he prayed the Rosary, and when he did, he prayed that his father and grandparents, who had all passed away, would go to heaven. He also had begun praying for Bill during his Rosary prayers. He said that, one day, when he prayed for Bill, he had a strong sense, a "word" from the Lord, to use an Evangelical term, that "Bill is already there." It was a final gift that gave me such peace.

### Endings and New Beginnings

My journey home was long and circuitous. After years of searching, questioning, and church-hopping, I finally can say I am home. I'm thankful for my Evangelical background, which introduced me to Christ, instilled in me a passion for the Bible, and planted a love for God in my heart. I'm also grateful that, when I began searching for more, I found the Catholic Church. ■



ANDREA GARRETT'S home parish is *St. Mary of the Presentation in Suffolk, Virginia*, where she is an active member of the Women's Club and volunteers with the RCIA ministry. Since becoming Catholic, she's developed an interest in Catholic apologetics and hopes to use her gifts as a writer and public speaker to help others to find their way home to the Catholic Church.

Continue the **JOURNEY**

Please visit [CHNetwork.org/converts](https://CHNetwork.org/converts) to comment on and share this or one of hundreds of other powerful testimonies!



**The Coming Home Network International**

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# SAVE THE DATES!

**JANUARY 10-25**

*Join the CHN staff in  
praying fifteen days for  
Christian Unity*

[chnetwork.org/unity](http://chnetwork.org/unity)

**FEBRUARY 2**

*Ash Wednesday,  
beginning of Lent*



**MARCH 13-16**

*Spring CHN retreat,  
Cincinnati, Ohio*



**EVENING OF  
THURS. APRIL 6 –  
SAT. APRIL 8**



*Triduum*

**APRIL 9**

*Easter Sunday*



**APRIL 21-MAY 2**

*CHN Holy Land  
pilgrimage*



**AUGUST 14**

*Vigil of the Feast of  
the Assumption & CHN  
meetup in Carey, Ohio*



**OCTOBER 16-19**

*Fall CHN retreat,  
Conyers, Georgia*



**DECEMBER 3**

*Advent begins*

