

acquainted with the Roman Catholic version of the Bible, and in it were striking verses that contradicted my very beliefs and practices. God's Book said one thing, my Church said another. Who was right: the Roman Church or God? I eventually believed God's Word.

The monastic life and the sacraments prescribed by the Catholic Church did not help me to come to know Christ personally and find salvation. After twelve long years I escaped from the monastery, a lost sinner, without peace in my soul. In me there was still only the nature of "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." I needed a new nature, a new heart — "the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (*Eph 4:21-24*). That comes by trusting in Christ alone through God's grace in the new birth, not by monotonous repetition of prayers, penances, sacrifices and good works. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life... By him all that believe are justified from all things" (*John 3:3,36; Acts 13:38*).

### Trusting Christ Alone

I realized that the man-made sacraments of my church and my good works were all in vain toward salvation. They led to a false security. I turned my eyes upon Jesus. I ceased looking to myself and all my religious activities. I looked to Christ! I received him with all my heart and repented of my sins. At Calvary, he paid the sin debt that I owed. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God... The wages of sin is death; but *the gift of God* is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (*Rom 3:23; 6:23*). God's salvation is a gift: "the gift of God." It cannot be earned or worked for in any way by the sinner. It must be received as a free gift. Christ said, "I will *give* to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life *freely*" (*Rev 21:6*). All my sins were washed away. "The blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleanseth us from all sin" (*1 John 1:7*).

If you're trying to reach heaven by what you do, there's no way; for Jesus said, "I am the way" (*John 14:6*). "*Not by works of righteousness which we have done*, but according to his mercy he saves us" (*Titus 3:5*). I now have the peace of God in my soul, and you can, too. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (*Rom 5:1*). □

## Joseph Zacchello

### "I Could Not Serve Two Masters"

I was born in Venice, Italy, 22 March 1917. At the age of ten, I was sent to a Roman Catholic Seminary in Piacenza. After twelve years of study, I was ordained a priest, 22 October 1939. Two months later Cardinal R. Rossi, my superior, sent me to America as assistant pastor of the new Italian church of "Blessed Mother Cabrini" in Chicago. I remained there for four years, and later served in New York. I never questioned whether my sermons or instructions were against God's Word. My only worry and ambition was to please the Pope.

### "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"

One Sunday in February 1944 I was listening to the radio and accidentally turned on a Protestant church program. The pastor was giving his message. I was going to change the channel because I was not allowed to listen to Protestant sermons, but I was interested and kept on listening. My whole theology was shaken that afternoon by one Bible verse: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (*Acts 16:31*). Therefore, it was not "a sin against the Holy Spirit to believe that one was saved" as I had been taught.

### The Lord Rebukes Me

Filled with doubts about the Roman religion, I was beginning to worry about the teachings of the Bible more than about dogmas and decrees of the Pope. Every day poor people were giving me from five to thirty dollars for twenty minutes of ceremony called Mass, because I promised to free the souls of their relatives from the fires of purgatory. But every time I looked at the big crucifix upon the altar, it seemed to me that Christ was rebuking me, saying, "You are stealing money from poor, hard-working people by false promises. You teach doctrines against my word. Souls of believers do not go to a place of torment, because it is written, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus' (*Rom 8:1*); 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord... that they may rest from their labors' (*Rev 14:13*). The sacrifice of the cross need never be repeated; my sacrifice was complete, with the work of salvation 'finished' (*John 19:30*) and perfect, and proven by God in raising me

from the dead. 'For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified' (*Heb 10:14*). If you priests have the power of liberating souls from some place called 'purgatory' with Masses and indulgences, why do you wait for an offering? If you saw a dog burning in fire, you wouldn't wait for the owner to give you five dollars to rescue the dog and deliver it from the flames."

### God's Word is Sufficient

I was preaching that the Bible is not a sufficient rule of faith and practice but that we need the tradition and dogmas of the Church to understand the Scriptures. But again a voice within me was saying, "You preach against the Bible's teaching; you preach nonsense. If Christians need the Pope to understand the Scriptures, what do they need in order to understand the Pope?" The words of the Lord Jesus rang in my mind, "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (*Mark 7:9*). "Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition" (*Matt 15:6*). I knew in my heart that the way of salvation was not contained in the dogmas and traditions of the Church, but in God's Word: "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (*John 20:31*). The Scriptures are able to lead us to Christ: "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (*2 Tim 3:15*).

### Coming to Christ Alone by Faith

I was teaching my people to go to Mary, to the saints, instead of going directly to Christ, even though I knew his promise and invitation was: "*Come unto me*, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (*Matt 11:28*). "He that *cometh to me* I will in no wise cast out" (*John 6:37*). It was as though the voice of Christ within me would not keep silent—"Who died for sinners upon the cross? Who paid the sin debt by shedding his blood? Was it Mary? Was it the saints? You and many other priests do not believe in scapulars, novenas, rosaries, statues, candles, but you continue to keep them in your churches because you say simple peo-

ple need simple things to remind them of God. You keep them because they are a good source of income. You make merchandise of the souls of men! It is written: 'Through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not' (*2 Peter 2:3*). Believers should adore me in spirit and in truth. Destroy these idols; teach your people to pray, and come only to me with believing hearts."

### God Alone Forgives Sin

Where my doubts were really tormenting me was inside the confessional box. People were coming to me, kneeling before me, confessing their sins to me. And I, with a sign of the cross, was promising that I had the power to forgive their sins. I, a sinner, a man, was taking God's place, God's right, and that terrible voice was penetrating me, saying, "You are depriving God of his glory. Sinners must go to God, not to you, if they would obtain forgiveness of their sins. It is God they have sinned against. Therefore, to God alone they must make confession and seek forgiveness."

These Scriptures were constantly in my mind: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (*Matt 1:21*). "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (*Acts 4:12*). "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (*1 John 1:9*). "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (*1 John 2:1*). "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (*1 Tim 2:5*).

### One Master: The Lord Jesus Christ

The question of staying in the Roman Catholic Church ceased to be. There was no alternative. No longer could I serve two masters: the Pope and Christ. It was either submit to the traditions with all my heart and ignore the Bible, or trust God's infallible Word and disregard the teachings of men. I left the Roman priesthood and the Catholic religion in 1944, and since have been used of God to evangelize Roman Catholics pointing them to Christ, and Christ alone. □

## José Rico

### Life Begins for a Jesuit Priest

There is something in the soul of the Spaniard that makes him instinctively react against Protestantism. From the reign of Charles V and Philip II onward, the history of Spain is filled with religious episodes, battles, decrees of faith, and the Inquisition. Thus when the Pope told the Spanish clergy that Latin America is the mission field for Spanish priests, it was a clarion call to me.

I soon learned that Latin America is a new and different world in every sense of the word. In San Paulo, Brazil, later in Argentina, and finally in Chile, I saw the Protestant chapel alongside the Roman Catholic Church, claiming the right of social recognition. From my prejudiced viewpoint, this was an intolerable abuse. Evangelical literature began to reach me. I read it with disgust. Later I read some Protestant books that I had dared to place in my private library. The mortal hatred that I had up to that time against Protestantism began to fade. I saw clearly that Protestantism is not what it is said to be, nor what it is taught to be in Roman Catholic halls of theological learning. The evangelical books were full of profound teaching drawn from the Bible.

Unforeseen circumstances took me from Chile to Bolivia. A few months later I was appointed to the honorable position of National Counselor to the Roman Catholic student organization called the JEC. There, I not only had opportunity to get acquainted with evangelical books and tracts, but also to meet some strong evangelicals.

### A Study in the Book of Hebrews

My Catholic faith and priesthood were close to irreparable shipwreck. I wanted to make some supreme effort to save them. I began to write a book called *The Priest and the Host*, and I went to the book of Hebrews for inspiration, but I failed to find there the Roman Catholic priesthood that I was looking for. The only priest spoken of was Jesus Christ, who “once in the end of the world... put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (*Heb 9:26*). Christ, his priesthood and his sacrifice is exalted in that epistle over all of the old covenant. I read that he “needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for

his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself” (*Heb 7:27*). This startled me, and I began to feel uneasy. I understood for the first time that his sacrifice was a one-time sacrificial offering at Calvary, in itself sufficient to reconcile sinners to God.

I began to see that the “Holy Sacrifice of the Mass” was a fallacy and completely irrelevant. If the “sacrifice” I daily offered as a priest was meaningless, then my “priesthood” which existed for the purpose of offering that sacrifice was likewise meaningless. As I continued to read, these realizations were all confirmed by God’s Word: “But this man [Jesus], after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God: from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified... Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin” (*Heb 10:12-14, 18*).

How is it that from Catholic pulpits it is preached that the Mass is the bloodless renewal of the very sacrifice of the cross if this epistle teaches that there is no possibility of repeating that which Christ did *once and for all*? And of what value is a “bloodless sacrifice” if God’s Word says, “without shedding of blood is no remission”? (*Heb 9:22*). Christ, “having obtained eternal redemption” for every believer, is now “able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (*Heb 7:25; 9:12*).

I saw how false the Catholic teaching of purgatory was because Christ “by himself purged our sins” (*Heb 1:3*). If Christ purges our sins, how is it that souls that are saved have to go to purgatory to be purified? This Roman Catholic doctrine is not once mentioned in the Bible. Instead of God remembering our sins and punishing us for them in purgatory, he plainly declares: “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more!” (*Heb 10:17*). When I finished my study in Hebrews I felt that an invisible hand had stripped me of my vestments and my priestly character. I realized that every Christian shares a part in the New Testament priesthood: “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (*1 Peter 2:5*).

## Jesus — The Only Way

After this, God brought into my life a young pastor who was filled with the Scriptures and a profound love for Christ, Samuel Joshua Smith, the Director of the Indian Bible Institute in La Paz. His conversation illuminated my mind, dispelled my doubts, and comforted my heart to the point of making it valiant. It was on my second visit with him that he asked: “What keeps you from receiving Christ as your only and all-sufficient Savior?” I felt my heart melt with a happiness that choked me with emotion, while tears ran down my cheeks. Nothing more was needed! I received Christ with full conviction.

Christ became my only Savior, for none other had died on the cross for me. He also became my all-sufficient Saviour, because his blood is able to wash away all my sin. How miserably the rites, ceremonies and human traditions of Romanism had failed to cleanse me. It was only then that I understood what Jesus meant when he said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (*John 14:6*). I asked forgiveness for having wandered for so many years in darkness, and I was determined to walk in the light of Christ Jesus. From that moment I knew that I was “a new creature in Christ” (*2 Cor 5:17*). I realized at the same time that God had justified me and lifted the enormous burden from my heart that until that moment had mercilessly weighted me down (*Luke 18:13, 14*). I had “passed from death unto life” (*John 5:24*).

It was done. God delivered me completely from Romanism. He broke the cords that held me prisoner for so long. Soon after, I arrived at the evangelical church in Miraflores, La Paz. What a bright afternoon it was! I quickly took off my gown. Dressed in civilian clothes, I sat down to a cup of tea and entered into the simple, spiritual, intimate conversation with the brethren, feeling as though I had known them all my life. The tragedy that existed throughout my nineteen long years in the priesthood had finally come to an end. □

## the story of 3 Catholic Priests

### Gregory Adams

#### “Christ Alone is the Way”

Born of Roman Catholic parents in Saskatchewan, Canada, I was brought up strictly in the Catholic faith. From my early youth I tried to be good, yet I continued to fall progressively into sin. With the rest of the crowd, I was headed to perdition. I was told that if I became a monk and priest I could avoid sin and be more certain of my salvation. I entered the Basilian Order of monks, received the long black robe and an adopted monastic name of “Saint Hilarion the Great,” and made my vows. As a monk student I was called “Brother Hilarion” and after ordination “Father Hilarion.”

How eager I was to serve the Lord! By leading a monastic life I thought I was doing just that. I performed all my monastic duties to the last rule. I whipped myself every Wednesday and Friday evening till at times my back bled. In penance I sometimes would kiss the floor. Often I ate my meager meal kneeling down on the floor, or I completely deprived myself of food. I did many forms of penance for I was truly seeking salvation. I was taught that I could eventually merit heaven. I did not know that God’s Word said, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God: not of works, least any man should boast*” (*Eph 2:8, 9*).

After years of studies and manual labor in the monastery, I was ordained a priest. I served five parishes in the Lamont, Alberta area, said Mass every day, heard confession, recited the rosary to Mary, had devotions to many saints, recited the breviary of formula prayers each day, and, as a monk, performed my penance more fervently than ever. Yet these did not satisfy my weary soul. I was in even deeper distress of soul than when I was young.

#### God’s Book and My Church

Among the studies for the priesthood we had three textbooks on the Bible, but not the Bible. After I was ordained a priest, I became