



## August 2023 CHNewsletter

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# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

Journeys Home

## A Protestant Seeks Annulment

By Pam Mings

Raised as a Protestant in Arlington, Texas, my childhood was simple. It was in adulthood that things got complicated with different beliefs, different faiths, and a difficult marriage. Now, years later, living as empty nesters on an acreage just outside of a small eastern Texas town, I’d have to say that my life is pretty complete—and much simpler again.

Working at a Catholic non-profit organization for 13 years, helping those who are incapable of helping themselves, has been extremely rewarding. I also have a passion for writing and hope one day to establish an animal rescue haven, since God has blessed me with a deep love of animals. But, as is usually the case with life, things weren’t always so idyllic.



### A Troubled Marriage

But let’s back up to those earlier times and my painful marriage to an abusive man, whom I had determined to divorce.

As an adult living in the city of Arlington, whose attendance at the local Protestant church was sparse at best, I could recall some Scripture, but I would never be able to find it for you in the Bible. I usually recognized Scripture as soon as I heard it, but I could rarely quote it correctly. Except John 3:16, of course. So, when a particular Scripture—Luke 16:18: “Every one who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who

marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery”—dropped into my head that day as I sat pondering my life as a soon-to-be single mother, I was pretty surprised. Why would that Scripture, of all things, have popped into my head? I dismissed it immediately. Who knew that verse would end up being such a “God moment” that it would lead me in search of an annulment—as a Protestant!?

### That Old Time Religion

I was raised in church as a child of the ’60s. It was a little Baptist church, several blocks from our home, and I remember clearly holding my big sister’s hand while we walked to Sunday school, with my older brother walking beside us. My mother would

Continued on page 2 ➡

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

usually meet us for church an hour later, although daddy never did come. But as I got older, middle schoolish, I disliked going immensely. It seemed like the girls in our church were very cliquish, and I never felt welcome. I would beg my mom not to make me go. And eventually, she no longer did. Though as I grew into adulthood, those roots were still very much there.

When I was in my early twenties, my sister invited me to go with her to a new church she was attending. It was a small, spirit-filled Baptist church. I really liked the preacher and his wife. They were very down to earth, and his sermons were relatable. So, I attended occasional Sunday services. I also joined in on a couple of women's meetings during the weekdays. Several months later, while two months pregnant with my first child, I was baptized at that church.

We visited a couple of other churches as well. This was the early '80s, so spirit-filled churches and/or full-gospel churches were growing hugely in popularity. But, as it turned out, my attending church was no longer conducive to being married to an abusive, jealous husband. So, I decided it would be best to stop attending church altogether, for the time being.

Over the years, my three children would sometimes attend church with their friends. I would talk to them about Jesus, salvation, and prayer. Eventually, my children and I started attending a little Baptist church in the tiny East Texas town where we lived. But when both of my oldest children wanted to be baptized, the preacher refused, citing several reasons for postponement. He finally admitted that he didn't want to baptize them until we joined their church. It seemed the main focus was on "joining the church," to grow the church. His priorities troubled me.

There are always some things we are taught in church that we can't quite get our head around, but we are told to accept them

on faith. Of course, that's the very crux of following Christ: walking in faith. And I did it gladly, with my whole heart. But there were a few things I was taught in every Protestant church I attended that I had a hard time accepting. For instance, if we "asked but did not receive," then clearly, we had committed some sin. Another was "we aren't meant to suffer." Seriously? Again, they taught that great sin brings on suffering, like some kind of spiritual precept.

While I always had a problem accepting these teachings and practices, the biggest issue of all was "once saved, always saved." I adamantly refused to accept that. It did not make sense. But clearly my opinion was mine alone, because it was taught in every church I attended, and everyone I knew believed it and lived by it.

As I mentioned, I talked with my children a lot about Jesus when they were young, since it is our prime objective as a parent to help our children accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, and all that this entails. I found it extremely difficult when we would touch on the subject of "once you accept Jesus as your personal Savior, you are going to Heaven. Period. Nothing can ever take that grace away from you, nothing you could ever do can forfeit that privilege."

### Old Time Religion Gets Old

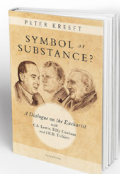
I really struggled with that. So much so that, one day, when my 14-year-old son broached the subject, I felt almost like I was betraying him with the usual answer.

"You mean all I have to do," he began, "is invite Jesus into my heart, and mean it, then someday, years later, if I just decide to go out and do all kinds of terrible stuff, I'm still going to Heaven?" I was literally nodding yes, while inside my head was a silent chant of "That is ridiculous! It makes no sense!" And while it did feel wrong to continue to tell my children

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

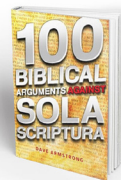
### SYMBOL OR SUBSTANCE? A DIALOGUE ON THE EUCHARIST BY DR. PETER KREEFT

In this engaging fictional conversation, Peter Kreeft gives credible voices to C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Billy Graham as they discuss one of the most contentious questions in the history of Christianity: Is Jesus symbolically or substantially present in the Eucharist? #3251 • \$16.95



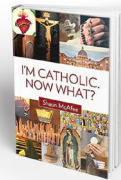
### 100 BIBLICAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST SOLA SCRIPTURA BY DAVE ARMSTRONG

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### I'M CATHOLIC. NOW WHAT? BY SHAUN MCAFEE

Now that you're officially a Catholic, you are probably wondering, "Now what?" This resource is ideal for new converts, people considering converting, and even for "cradle Catholics" who are interested in learning more about our Catholic Faith. #3256 • \$19.95



that, I was helpless to teach them anything different. It was all I had ever been taught—in every church, every revival, every church camp, even TV evangelists. Perhaps it was simply all the churches that I happened to attend, but I was unaware of any Christian faith that did not believe “once saved, always saved.” Little did I know...

I had even heard different TV evangelists comment that if you are able to go out and sin again after accepting Christ into your heart, then you were never truly saved in the first place. That seems to imply that we will be perfect after accepting Christ and we are expected never to sin again! Knowing human weakness, that was completely unacceptable to me, as well. What about being Jesus to those in need, cultivating a strong prayer life, personal holiness, and forging and protecting an intimate relationship with Christ?

Eventually, my divorce proceeded, and I began to feel a massive weight slowly lifting from my shoulders as the finalization date drew near. According to the promise I had made to myself years earlier, my daughters and I began visiting different churches in the area. Once again, I was not very comfortable in them. The people were nice, but they really lacked warmth. We just needed to keep trying. We would find our church-fit eventually.

Then, as before, that same Scripture about divorce that had haunted me popped into my head. This was twice that the same Scripture came to me, and given the circumstance I was in, I definitely could not dismiss it as I had previously done.

### The Verse That Changed the Course

Once again, Luke 16:18: “...and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.” I had heard that verse spoken a few times in my life but had given it little thought. Nonetheless, whatever impression God wanted to make in me with that sudden spark of Scripture, it had worked.

After my divorce, I just wanted to be able to breathe. It had been many years of abuse, and the last thing I wanted to think about was getting married again. But somewhere, deep down inside, I knew one day I would. I wanted to experience the kind of marriage that God intended. I could only imagine a union so beautiful as that. There had to be a reason He had brought that Scripture to me, twice. I stressed over that incident for days, wanting to get it right. I even mentioned it to a couple of friends and family members, but not only did they insist that I was not interpreting it correctly, a couple of them seemed pretty offended that I had even brought it up.

My conclusion was that God’s plan for me was to never remarry. If that was God’s truth, drawn straight from Scripture, then I was glad to embrace it. For, through everything I had endured those past several years, Jesus accompanied me every step of the way. That was clear, and I was happy to sacrifice anything for Him.

Then, just as mysteriously as before, another word was now laid heavily upon me: annulment. Annul...what?? I didn’t understand the meaning of that word, and now it was suddenly right in my face. I had only heard it mentioned on TV, and if I remembered correctly, it was associated with “dissolving a marriage” (though, in reality, it means the Church determines

a marriage never to have been a valid sacrament) and, most assuredly, associated with Catholics. Catholic was a word I had heard rarely while growing up, and I was fortunate to have never heard a harsh word toward Catholics or their beliefs. I even had a fascination with nuns in their habits, priests in their collars, all seen on TV, of course. Also, why were there special days marked on the calendar that, as my mother told me, were “holidays for other churches”? Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, First Sunday of Lent. Every time I filled out a hospital form, there was always a line that asked your religion—yet right under it was always another line asking, “Are You Catholic?” Weren’t we all supposed to be the same thing? The Catholic Church always seemed to be set apart from all other faiths and denominations. Why? I had always wondered.

Why, indeed!

So, suffice to say, I was definitely not anti-Catholic. But at the same time, other than the fascination with the collars and habits, I knew nothing about Catholicism, and the Catholic Church was nowhere on my radar.

By now I was really flying blind. The only thing I knew for certain was that I had to find out more about that word, “annulment.” I figured there was only one thing to do: talk to my dear friend who lived just down the road. The only Catholic I had ever known.

My friend, Nancy, was fully aware of the kind of marriage I had been in and was supportive of everything I was going through. She was almost giddy when I told her that I felt like God was putting the word “annulment” heavily on my heart. I asked her to shed some light on what that actually was. Later, I would learn she was so excited because she felt sure that, when I went seeking an annulment, my journey would almost surely lead me straight into the Catholic Church.



**After my divorce, I just wanted to be able to breathe. It had been many years of abuse, and the last thing I wanted to think about was getting married again. But somewhere, deep down inside, I knew one day I would. I wanted to experience the kind of marriage that God intended. I could only imagine a union so beautiful as that.**

# A Note from Jon Marc



## Remembering the Journey

One of the things that has always drawn me to my father's work in the Coming Home Network and which continues to convict me of the importance of the mission to this day, is that in the CHNetwork we stand at the crossroads and encounter people who are—and who know they are—on the journey. Our apostolate exists to provide assistance, resources, prayer,

and encouragement as they take each next step forward. In the process of doing so, we are continually and powerfully reminded of the reality of the Christian life: we are all still on a journey.

As Christians, we know that in this life we are always a people who are “on the way.” We haven't arrived, we are not yet all that God has created and called us to be, and we will only move forward to the degree that we keep this crucial fact in mind. The thing is, when we forget this crucial fact—when we stray either into a prideful presumption of having “arrived” or a slothful complacency about the need for active and ongoing conversion—we don't stand still. On the contrary, to quote Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange: **“In the ways of God, he who does not progress loses ground.”** (*The Three Ways of the Spiritual Life*) A big part of not “backsliding” is recognizing and holding fast in humility to the reality: *I am still on the journey, and I am not yet home.*

We're all familiar with Christ telling the scribes and Pharisees, who were skeptical of his choice of dinner companions, that he had “[come] not to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Matthew 9:13). But have you ever considered the irony of this exchange? There weren't (and aren't) really two such categories of people in the crowd that day, for “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23). In reality, there were (and are) simply those sinners who knew they were sinners and thus desired (and asked for, and received!) healing and salvation, and there were (and are) those sinners who count themselves among “the righteous”. One can almost imagine the twinkle in Our Lord's eye as he uttered that simple and profound truth that only a few had ears to hear that day.

Do you and I actually believe that we need a savior? That we are sinners? That we remain on a journey? If we don't—and this is a terrifying thought—we are placing ourselves outside the circle of people that Christ came to call, to heal, to save, and to sanctify.

It is for this reason I am so glad to be a part of this network of journeyers helping and encouraging fellow journeyers! I need to be reminded: I too am still on the journey home.

I hope the stories you read in this newsletter and hear on

*The Journey Home* program are as continually impactful for you as they are for me.

## Praying for Those Who Have Gone Astray

Remembering that we are on the journey in this life helps us to be appropriately humble and realistic about our own need for continuing conversion. But it also helps us to maintain the right attitude toward other people that are or have fallen away from faith.

On the one hand, we know from our own lives just how desperately we stand in need of God's continual mercy and grace, and thus we never presume that someone else is just “okay” and not in need of hearing the fullness of the Gospel. On the other hand, we don't presume to know that someone who has fallen away or not (yet) come to Christ is “lost”. Rather, we keep in mind that they too are on a journey and are being pursued by the “Hound of Heaven.” We entrust them to God, we charitably witness to them as best as we can, and we patiently and purposefully pray for them as part of our own continuing journey.

This month we celebrate a couple of great saints who can inspire, encourage, and intercede for us in this regard: the great convert and theologian, St. Augustine and his mother, St. Monica, who continually prayed for his conversion during his many years astray. Saint Monica is a great witness to the power of patient, purposeful prayer for family members who are astray, and her son's life and works are witness to the immense fruit that can come of it—in God's own providential time.

If you, like I and so many members of the network, have friends and family that are apart from the faith, take some time this month to get to know St. Monica and St. Augustine. Also, I would encourage you to revisit the Journey Home episode that aired earlier this year with Fr. Sebastian Walshe, in which he shared some great insights on this topic of helping our children (and others) stay Catholic and come back if they have strayed. I think you'll find his wisdom especially practical and encouraging. Find Fr. Sebastian's episode, as well as our full Journey Home archive, at [chnetwork.org/journey-home](http://chnetwork.org/journey-home).

## OCIA Begins Soon!

At many parishes around the country, September is the time when OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation for Adults, formerly known as RCIA) classes start up again, and thus it marks for many Coming Home Network members the beginning of the “home stretch” of their journey towards reception into the Catholic Church. Thus, it is a good time to increase our prayer for these pilgrims and to reach out to make sure they have resources and encouragement for this big step.

If you yourself are getting ready to start OCIA, please let us

# Converts Share Advice for New Catholics

Becoming Catholic is certainly exciting, but the journey doesn't end when someone enters the Church; in many ways, that's when the real adventure begins!

We asked some of our "veteran" convert members about their advice for new Catholics who are still making their way through their first year in the Church. Here's what some of them had to say:

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"You will still have freakout moments and Protestant knee jerk reactions. Relax. The Holy Spirit has got you. And you generally find Catholic fellowship through ministry and service groups. Catholics are doers first and talkers second. You may have to be more of the initiative taker than you are used to. Don't be afraid to explore the devotional prayer riches of the Church to go deep with the Holy Trinity. Mary and the Saints will become your mother and your loved companions on your continuing journey. The angels will be watching over you and fighting to defend you against the principalities and powers of darkness."  
—Howard H., *CHNetwork Community Moderator*

**"God always meets us where we are. He'll do the same with you. Don't get in a hurry to figure everything out. Listen, learn, observe and above all, be prayerful."** —Jeff B.

"I came back into the Catholic Church over 20 years ago now. When I made the decision to become Catholic, I still had some reservations - still a little Protestant blood in my veins, and so I never thought I would be very much into the rosary or even the intercession of the saints, but I understood that these things are personal, and it's okay that not everyone is into every devotion to the same extent. So on the one hand, give yourself

permission not to have to be like other people and not to force your devotional life into someone else's mold. On the other hand, it turns out now I am into the rosary and the intercession of the saints, and all the stuff I had reservations about, so like others have said, just let the Holy Spirit take his time with you and go where he leads...If you're into apologetics, then by all means learn...but if those debates give you anxiety, then give yourself permission not to have to keep up with all that stuff—it's ok to let that stuff go for now and just enjoy being Catholic...Tap into the JOY of our faith, and ride that wave for a while—that's okay!"

—Dr. Jim Papandrea

**"Never think you've 'arrived' either in knowledge or charity. There's literally no end to the treasures available to us in the Church."** —Jeffrey J.

"Devote yourself to the Word of God and the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist. Keep your eyes focused on Jesus and do not allow the failings of others to distract your relationship with God or his holy Church."

—Jim Anderson, *CHNetwork*

"Never allow yourself to be content with becoming a mere Easter Catholic. By God's grace, keep the fires of zeal burning daily. Do not allow even one day to go by without acknowledging your unending need for God. Do not neglect your first love."  
—Bill L.

**"The first thirty years are the hardest."**  
—Brother Rex, *Little Portion Hermitage*

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Whether you're a new convert, or have been in the Church for thirty years or more, we hope that some of this wisdom from our members is an encouragement to you on your journey of faith. And if you're starting up RCIA this Fall and will be entering the Church in the next year, we would love to hear from you along the way! Please don't hesitate to email us with updates on your journey through [info@chnetwork.org](mailto:info@chnetwork.org), or share them in our Online Community, which you can find at [community.chnetwork.org](http://community.chnetwork.org).

know! And even if not, this is a great time of the year to let us know how things are going on your own spiritual journey. Do you have questions about the Catholic faith and/or are there any ways we can particularly pray or be of assistance? Please send our team an update at [info@chnetwork.org](mailto:info@chnetwork.org).

Additionally, if you know of anyone who will be attending, assisting, or leading OCIA this year, invite them to check out [CHNetwork.org/OCIA](http://CHNetwork.org/OCIA) to sign up for this newsletter and to download some supplemental resources our team has put together.

With that, enjoy this edition of the CHNewsletter and as always, know of our prayers for you—whichever stage of the journey you happen to be on right now. Please keep our team and fellow members of the CHNetwork in your prayers as well.

In Christ,



JonMarc Grodi



# Joyful Journey Updates

## Drew H.

Ten years ago, I'd been a devout Christian Scientist for more than forty years, but, prompted by the loss of a friend, I began to question some of its teachings. My faith was then, and still is to a large extent, an intellectual faith. Gradually I grew away from Christian Science and found my way home into the Church that Christ Jesus established—I was baptized and confirmed at the parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Ottawa, during the Easter Vigil of 2019. I love the liturgy, the Church Fathers, the various spiritualities of Benedict, Dominic, Ignatius and Bernard of Clairvaux, and I look forward eagerly to the vast amount I still have to discover—and, by the way, that intellectual faith I started with is steadily, and gently, becoming also a faith of the heart. ■

## Brett R.

Becoming Catholic was one of the greatest moments of my life! When I received the Eucharist for the first time, I felt a love that I can only equate with a love of a family member. I feel blessed every day to be part of the Catholic family and the fullness of faith that

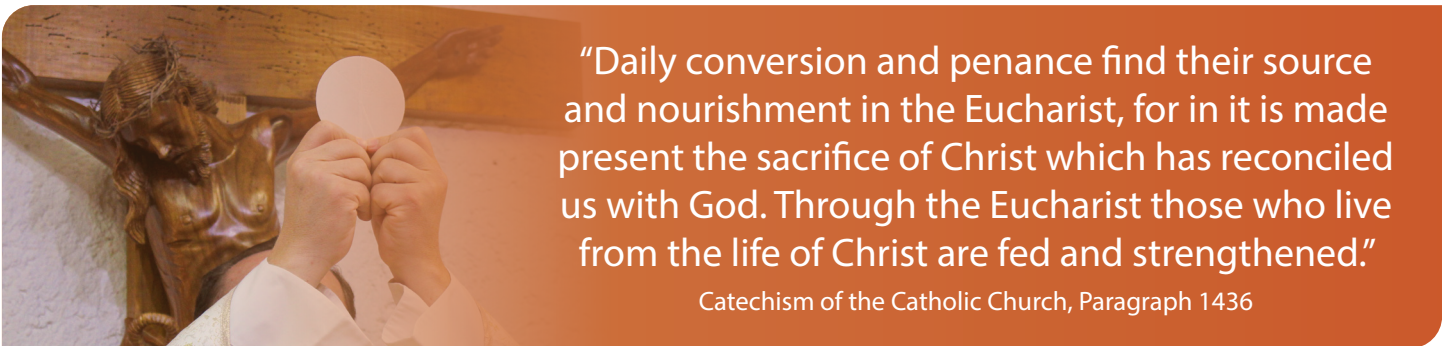
it offers. It's been three years and I feel like my faith is still growing and I love being Catholic! I will always be grateful to the Coming Home Network for their help on my faith journey—a journey that led me to a wonderful destination of beauty, truth and goodness called the Catholic Church. ■

## Rebecca K. (entered the Church Easter 2022)

Once I started my journey, I was able to enter an RCIA class immediately. Finding the beauty and depth of the Catholic faith has made my love of God deeper and more wonderful than anything else in my almost 70 years of knowing him. I have truly found my home.

The more I read about the Church, the more I know I have to learn. Catholicism is truly so rich I sometimes feel overcome by the beauty of our liturgy, history, and beliefs. If anyone had told me three years ago I would say prayers for the dead every day, I would have scoffed. Now my day wouldn't be complete without those prayers. ■

*Do you have an update on your journey to share with us? Send it to [info@chnetwork.org](mailto:info@chnetwork.org).*



“Daily conversion and penance find their source and nourishment in the Eucharist, for in it is made present the sacrifice of Christ which has reconciled us with God. Through the Eucharist those who live from the life of Christ are fed and strengthened.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraph 1436

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



### TELEVISION

Mon. 8PM ET—Encores: Tues. 1AM ET, Thurs. 2PM ET  
*The Best of The Journey Home*: Sat. 6PM ET

### RADIO

Mon. 8PM ET—Encores: Sat. 7 AM ET, Sun. 1 AM ET and 5 PM ET  
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Monday, August 7

**Jon Sorensen, C.O.O.,  
Catholic Answers**

*Former Agnostic*

Monday, August 14

**Sr. Julia Mary  
Darrenkamp, FSP**

*Former Evangelical  
Protestant*

Monday, August 21

**Dr. Benjamin Lewis**

*Former Methodist*

Monday, August 28

**Dr. Tory Baucum**

*Former Episcopalian priest*

*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)

# COMPASS

## SUPPORT THE CHNETWORK!

Join **COMPASS** — an ever-growing community of donors who give a monthly gift of \$10-\$100 (or more) to support the CHNetwork as we help to guide men and women who are coming home to the Catholic Church.

## BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR

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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.*



Fr. Michael Moore  
Donor since Aug. 2003 - 20 years.

I grew up in Oregon, the most secular state in the union. My parents were both secular. I can remember attending a church only once in my childhood, for the wedding of a colleague of my father.

In high school, a Christian friend spent the night with me. We, of course, stayed up late talking, and he talked to me about Christ and the Bible. I regarded myself as an atheist and opposed everything he said. Afterward, though, I began to think about God seriously for the first time. I began reading an old King James Bible we had in the house. Soon I started praying and believing. I began to change my life in certain ways, but did not tell anyone about my faith.

I figured that when I moved away to college, I would begin attending a church. God had a different plan. Shortly before my senior year, I happened to be watching television when they interrupted my program to announce the election of Pope John Paul I. This was my first contact with the Catholic faith.

After this I began reading in the encyclopedia about Christianity (my parents were both librarians, hence all the books in the house). I discovered that the Catholic Church has existed since the time of Christ, while the other Christian churches in our area originated 1500 years later. I also came to know that "the Church" is an authoritative interpreter of Scripture. I appreciated the need for this, as I was well aware of the variations in faith among the different churches.

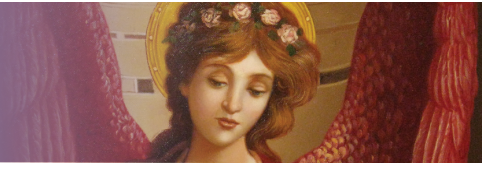
I began attending Mass shortly before graduation from high school and was baptized and confirmed at Easter as a freshman in college. More prayer and education resulted in my ordination to the priesthood in the country of Slovakia in 1997 (long story).

Returning to the U.S.A. in 2000 (because there are lots of priests in eastern Europe), I discovered The Coming Home Network. I was overjoyed to discover a group dedicated to helping non-Catholic pastors come home to the Catholic faith. Perhaps my own conversion makes me sympathetic to other Christians who are convinced that the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus and who want to join.

We cannot all be famous preachers. But all of us can use our abilities and our material goods to further Christ's kingdom. Helping non-Catholic clergy to enter the Church is a tremendous way of doing this. ■

*Fr. Moore is the pastor of St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles Catholic Church in Lemoore, CA. He has been a donor to CHNetwork since May of 2003 (20 years!). If you would like to join Fr. Moore as a partner in our mission, you can share a one-time gift or become part of our ever-growing family of monthly donors by visiting [www.chnetwork.org/compass](http://www.chnetwork.org/compass), or return the enclosed envelope indicating your one-time or monthly giving amount.*

# Prayer List



## Clergy

■ **For Craig, a Methodist pastor** born, baptized and raised Catholic who was received into the Church during our CHN retreat last year.

■ **For Leonard, the pastor of an independent Protestant Church**, who over many years has come to the truth and beauty of the Catholic Church and is asking the Lord to help him discern his future.

■ **For Jeremiah, an Evangelical pastor** struggling deeply with how he would make a living and support his family if he were to leave his current position to become Catholic.

■ **For Phillip, a former Protestant minister** who made the decision to enter the Catholic Church this past Easter Vigil, that he may walk closely with Jesus and inspire his family to follow the path he has taken.

■ **For James, a Baptist pastor** who finally shared with his congregation that he will be leaving soon to become Catholic, and has a new job lined up and is preparing to move very soon, that the Lord will lead him as he leads his family along this new road.

■ **For Phil, an Evangelical missionary** working in a foreign country who finds himself drawn back to the Catholic Church in which he was baptized and raised and is concerned that the mission would suffer if he and his wife were to leave it.

■ **For David, a Protestant academic** who has decided to leave his teaching position to enter the Catholic Church and is concerned about how he will make a living.

■ **For Michael, a Protestant seminarian** who began reading the Early Church Fathers, left the seminary, and is entering the Catholic Church.

■ **For Jeffrey, an Anglican priest** who wants to become Catholic but has

several difficult personal hurdles that would have to be cleared on the way.

■ **For Dylan, a student at a Protestant seminary** whose eyes have been opened to the errors in his historical tradition, and who is having a hard time finding people to discuss his ideas with without defensiveness.

■ **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 Wieslaw, a former Evangelical pastor** who was received with his wife into the Church last year, who has been asked now to do some teaching in the Church 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.

## Laity

■ **For Linda, a Presbyterian**, and health issues involving her heart condition, as well as for new housing.

■ **For Amity, a newly confirmed Catholic**, for discernment regarding a possible change in her current job as she possibly seeks a full-time position in ministry.

■ **For Leigh, a Methodist**, that her family and friends will be charitable with her regarding her interest in Catholicism.

■ **For Elizabeth, a Baptist**, that her family and friends will be understanding and charitable as she begins this new journey of faith.

■ **For Alyssa, an Evangelical**, for family unity as she seeks to come home to the Church, and for discernment in joining RCIA this year.

■ **For Leslie, a convert from Texas**, to be able to get a new wheelchair lift for her son so he can come to Mass.

■ **For Yasmin, a newly confirmed Catholic**, that she will find consolation

and rest in the Lord as she is in a part of the world where the Church is under great attack.

■ **For Marilyn, a Lutheran**, who is seeking guidance as she and her husband move forward in their journey toward confirmation.

■ **For Frederick and his wife, Latter-day Saints in Oregon**, that the Lord Jesus would guide them to the fullness of the Faith.

■ **For Sam, a United Methodist**, that his great love for Christ would draw him to the altar of his loving Lord.

■ **For Tyson, a member of the Christian & Missionary Alliance in Nevada**, that his many curiosities about the Catholic faith will lead him home to the Church founded by Jesus.

■ **For Marty, a Charismatic in Nebraska**, that our Lord would soften his father's heart toward the Catholic Church.

■ **For Jesse, a member of the Salvation Army in Nebraska**, that the Eucharistic Presence of our Lord Jesus that he feels in Catholic churches would call him to meet Jesus in the Mass.

■ **For David, a member of a Community Church in Ohio**, that he would respond to the Holy Spirit's call to him to return to full communion with the Catholic Church.

■ **For James, a Southern Baptist in Arkansas**, that his interest in the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Rosary would point him to Jesus and his holy Catholic Church.

■ **For Wayne, a Congregationalist in Michigan**, that the process of learning the teachings of the Catholic faith would not become overwhelming for him.

■ **For Ross, a Quaker**, that his interest in the social teachings of the Catholic Church would inspire in him a desire to accept the fullness of the truth taught by the Church.





**Recently, one of our members who is exploring the Church asked CHNetwork's Matt Swaim about how to respond to loved ones who were upset about his decision to become Catholic. Here's a portion of what Matt shared with him:**

Thank you for all of your great questions—I identify with so many parts of your story! Interestingly enough, in terms of my own journey, I'd done so much exploring of big Christian questions at the time that when I finally settled on Catholicism, some of my loved ones mostly just left me alone at first, thinking I was merely going through another weird theological phase. That weird theological phase has lasted nearly two decades at this point...

If I can give one piece of advice—one thing that I wish I'd done differently at the time—I'd say be more patient with your loved ones. When I became Catholic, for a lot of people in my world, it was the first time that any of them had given even the slightest thought as to what Catholicism was or how it worked. I'd been sitting on these questions for years, and they got hit in the face with them all at once when I announced I was becoming Catholic. It's an enormous amount of info to swallow, but on top of that, it's an entirely different way of looking at the universe. I wish I had recognized that at the time and gone easier on them!

What I've found is that those first few years were REALLY hard, because not only was I learning how to be Catholic, my family was also learning how to engage a Catholic. There were a lot of awkward moments! But interestingly enough, over time, a lot of those family members have watched their own churches and denominations sway in the breeze and be rocked by instability and uncertainty, whereas I've pretty much stayed put. And I think over time, that stability I've found in the Church, even with all the craziness that's constantly going on with Her members, has been more of a witness by far than any of the arguments I've tried to make.

Plus—and I DEFINITELY learned this the hard way—you're a prophet without honor in your own country. You've come back to Nazareth as a Catholic, and everyone remembers you as the carpenter's son. This is a tough thing to realize, but if your family is going to thaw toward Catholicism, it will probably be because of somebody besides you. So pray for that somebody to come into their lives, like St. Monica prayed for her son St. Augustine until St. Ambrose showed up! It may be that your family needs to hear these things from a person who they don't have an emotional backstory with, who they can be rational with in conversation without descending into tears and drama.

I will definitely be keeping you and your family in prayer. Believe me, so many of us know exactly what you're going through, because many of us have gone through, and continue to go through it, ourselves. You are not alone.

Peace,  
Matt Swaim  
Director of Outreach

## ST. MONICA SODALITY PRAYER FOR FALLEN-AWAY CATHOLICS

Eternal and merciful Father, I give You thanks for the gift of Your Divine Son Who suffered, died and rose for all mankind. I thank You also for my Catholic Faith and ask Your help that I may grow in fidelity by prayer, by works of charity and penance, by reflection on Your Word, and by regular participation in the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist.

“You gave Saint Monica a spirit of selfless love manifested in her constant prayer for the conversion of her son Augustine. Inspired by boundless confidence in Your power to move hearts, and by the success of her prayer. I ask the grace to imitate her constancy in my prayer for [name(s)] who no longer share(s) in the intimate life of Your Catholic family. Grant through my prayer and witness that (he/she/they) may be open to the promptings of Your Holy Spirit, and return to loving union with Your Church. Grant also that my prayer be ever hopeful and that I may never judge another, for You alone can read hearts. I ask this through Christ, our Lord.  
Amen.

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

She and her husband traveled out of the country annually for their business, which was exactly where they were headed early the following morning, but she assured me we'd discuss annulments when she returned. I found that somewhat disappointing, because I was so anxious to find out about this "annulment" thing.

As always, when they went out of the country, I was to take care of their house, the plants, and the horses—though, according to Nancy, their new ranch hand, Ken, would be taking over the care of the horses for the winter. About one week after they left the country, I met Ken. He was Catholic and went to church with Nancy. He was the choir director there, but Ken was not just Catholic. He was excited to be Catholic! He talked about how he came into the church and about Catholicism—my new word—with exuberance. He was like a walking billboard for the Catholic faith. He was also charismatic, personable, and humorous. I wasn't sure of most of what he was saying or any of those new Catholic terms.

During the month that followed, while my friend was out of the country, I saw Ken a couple of times a week, and we quickly became friends, both making it clear that we would only be friends. We helped each other with our various duties on Nancy's ranch, and Ken continued to share about the Catholic Church.

Then, on the first Sunday of Nancy's return, off we went to her Catholic church where, after Mass, she introduced me to the priest.

The priest and I immediately began to discuss annulments. He explained the process; possibly long and arduous, he warned. That was fine with me. There really wasn't a question of *Do I want to do this?* or *Is this really necessary?* I knew it was where God had led me. So, I certainly wasn't going to question it. The priest also left me with the offer of perhaps attending a few RCIA classes, that I might better understand the Church's reasoning behind an annulment.

### RCIA, a Road Dotted With Grace

It would be several months before the next RCIA class began; several months of continuing to attend Mass with Nancy and still not understanding most of it, though Nancy walked me through it faithfully every Sunday, and of course, Ken stood at the front of the church directing the choir.

There was something about that little church nestled in the small town of Canton, Texas. Everyone I met was friendly, and I felt welcomed. But there was something else. Something I could feel. Something that was not at any other church where I had been. I suspected that maybe the Holy Spirit was just stronger in that church for some reason. Whatever it was, I was increasingly drawn to it.

During this time of awaiting RCIA class, Ken and I hung out more and more; from riding to church together to quick trips to Wal-Mart, and of course, to the theater, still keeping our friendship on a friends-only level; we were adamant about

it. He said very little about the annulment I was seeking, even though he had gone through one himself.

By the time RCIA class started, my divorce was final and now I was going to learn all about annulments and the difference between a divorce and an annulment. But those simple classes would be anything but simple. Much to my shock, it turned out that everything else I was learning was absolutely jaw dropping. I was hearing answers. Answers!...to the many issues I had with certain Protestant things I'd been taught. Oh! to hear that we will suffer at times in our lives, but that we have the opportunity to offer it up and ask for it to be received by Jesus and used for the good of the Church and the whole world! Now this was a teaching that resonated, made sense, elevated suffering to an efficacious, redemptive, and profound offering of love. I would never view suffering the same way again. And, yes, I even learned of a solid rebuttal for "once saved, always saved" which, along with the enlightenment about suffering, aligned perfectly with Purgatory.

It was like hearing big wooden puzzle pieces suddenly dropping into place. I was so excited I could hardly sleep each night after class. I just wanted to share it with everyone. That's when the glaring difference between Catholicism and Protestantism truly came to light for me. Unfortunately, the excitement I felt, the desire I had to share what I'd learned and to let everyone in on this huge discovery I had made—these things would be rejected by some. Protestant family and friends were not particularly interested in hearing all about my new journey. Except for my brother letting me know that he was not happy about my looking into Catholicism, everyone pretty much kept their opinions to themselves.

It would seem that, somewhere along the way, I was beginning to see myself in the Catholic Church. As with many converts, some of the things I questioned were praying to the saints, confession, and the Magisterium. I had absolutely no problem accepting the high honor of Mary, praying to her, or the Eucharist or even Purgatory. Especially Purgatory. That is something that made sense to me. While the words in the Bible, Old Testament pointing to the New Testament, were suddenly coming alive, the depth, truth, and beauty of the Eucharist and of Mary were also being confirmed in my spirit. I was seeing these things with fresh eyes, allowing myself to see them as the incredible love story that they truly are.

Over time, the Bible also made clear to me the workings of, and need for, the Magisterium. Eventually, too, I came to

**"If you believe what you like in the Gospel, and reject what you don't like, it is not the Gospel you believe, but yourself."**

**ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, FEAST DAY: AUGUST 28**

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

understand the huge role that the saints play in our lives every single day, coming to think of them as family. After all, even as Protestants, we never discounted the roles of the Archangels Gabriel or Michael. So why would we ever see the other saints in any lesser light? What a beautiful discovery!

Halfway into that RCIA year, I knew where I wanted to be. I knew where God was leading me. There was way too much truth and eye-opening discovery in this new word, Catholicism, to ignore. I was going to be Catholic.... I was home!

But also, barely halfway into the year, the RCIA instructor at that time was going through many health problems—on top of losing her husband—and as a result, she was out of class a lot. We had substitute instructors, cancelled classes, and later I would realize that a few important topics had been missed during that year.

The RCIA class in and of itself was amazing. I felt great love and comfort among my fellow converts and instructors. RCIA is a convert's first glimpse into the Catholic faith, which makes it all the more compelling. The very first words our instructor spoke were to explain who founded some of the various faith denominations: Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, etc. Then, when she said the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ himself, everything in my world shifted. The depths that the instructors go to in order to equip us with knowledge, with an armor of truth, knows no bounds. Not only was it evident that the instructors were eloquently led by the Holy Spirit, but the very presence of the Holy Spirit was overwhelming to me at times. I attend RCIA classes quite often to this day, and I am still always taken aback at how the instructors can take two thousand years steeped in rich history and profound glory and mold them into something that a simple layperson like me can actually grasp and understand.

On the Sunday that we were all to go to the Cathedral for the Rite of Acceptance, we candidates were in a little room, waiting for the moment when we would enter the Cathedral. I glanced at the table in front of me, and there were a couple of pamphlets there. Lone pamphlets, just sitting in the middle of the table. I couldn't help but notice that the picture of the saint on the pamphlet was a little girl. Just as I reached for it we were called into the Cathedral, so I stuck the pamphlet into the black abyss of my purse.

Weeks passed, and at last it was Easter Vigil. I watched as the two people I had gone through RCIA class with came into full union with the Catholic Church. It was exciting to see, quite emotional.

At last, after waiting almost eighteen months for my annulment to be finalized, the Sunday came when I was to be confirmed into the Church. I was beyond excited about being able to receive the Eucharist for the first time. As I stood at the doorway of the nave, about to proceed down the aisle behind the priest, one of the deacons asked for the name of my Patron Saint, as they write it on a sticker and put it on your chest.

"My what"? I asked, with the deer-in-the-headlights look on my face.

"Your Patron Saint. What is the name of your Patron Saint?"

I said earlier that a few things had been completely omitted in my RCIA class due to the unforeseen confusion of the stop-gap teaching during our instructor's difficult year and many crises. So here I was, just staring at the deacon, not knowing what to say. Finally, I told him I didn't know what he was talking about. He then gave me a quick 30-second tutorial on the subject.

"Do you not know about any saints at all?"

I stood shaking my head No...then remembered the little pamphlet I had grabbed off the table at the Rite of Acceptance. A pamphlet I had never even looked at afterwards.

I said, "Well, I have heard of one saint. A little girl. She had a very odd last name. But I don't know anything about her."

The deacon smiled and asked me, "Was it Maria Goretti?"

"Yes," I nodded. "I think that was it."

"Do you want her to be your Patron Saint?"

I nodded. Who else would I choose? I knew of no one else.

He quickly wrote down her name, I slapped it on my shirt, and down the aisle we went.

I was confirmed. I received the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of my Savior for the first time. At that moment, I knew I would never regret seeking that annulment and finding the Catholic Church; I also knew I would never be the same.

### No Longer Saintless

I thought about that Sunday I stood at that doorway, saintless. Then it occurred to me that I had not yet read about the little girl saint. My Patron Saint. I thought I might want to find out about her. So, I pulled out the pitiful pamphlet (now dogeared from its mileage in my purse) and read it. Tears filled my eyes in an instant. Her story was exactly what I needed. The tears tumbled. Once again, I was completely overwhelmed by my Jesus and His all-encompassing love for me.

Maria Goretti is a saint of abused people.

I know beyond a shadow of any doubt that every single unexplainable moment and circumstance during that time of my life, from the Scripture laid on my heart all the way to the pamphlet with the little girl's picture on it, and all the moments in between, were beautifully and perfectly orchestrated by my Jesus.

God meant for me to find the Catholic Church....I believe it always has been His will. And a happy sidenote: the ranch hand/choir director, Ken, and I have been happily married for 17 years. ■

*Pam Mings was born and raised in Arlington, Texas. For the past 33 years, she has called the little East Texas town of Van her home. She and her husband of 17 years have six children between them and seven grandchildren. She converted to Catholicism in 2004. Pam has worked at a Catholic non-profit organization for many years and teaches Faith Formation and Sacramental classes at her parish. Pam also loves the outdoors, boating, and hopes to one day turn her acreage into an animal rescue haven.*

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