



## January 2024 CHNewsletter

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# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

Journeys Home

## Kyrie Eleison—Lord Have Mercy

By Rev. Mr. Dale Pollard

The title of my story is taken from the Penitential Rite of the Mass. It sums up accurately my relationship with the Lord as I’ve traveled this path into full communion with the Catholic Church and strained to listen to where the Holy Spirit was directing me. “Lord, have mercy,” is a note of gratitude to the Lord for His merciful goodness and direction, teaching me how to listen.

As the opening line of the Rule of St. Benedict states, “Listen carefully, my son, to the master’s instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart.” I’m writing this on the Memorial of St. Benedict, a fitting time to reflect and be thankful. So get ready for “lift-off” as my journey home into the fullness of the faith and service in the Catholic Church takes flight.



### The Early Years

I was born in 1957, at the dawn of the “space-age,” when the Russian satellite Sputnik set the Space Race in motion between the United States and the Soviet Union. Just south of Seattle, WA, where my brother, sister, and I were born, my father was employed as a Boeing engineer working in Space and Defense. This meant he worked on many projects related to Cold War issues and directly on the Saturn V main stage rocket, which eventually sent Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Michael Collins to the moon and safely home. Because of my father’s

work, we moved wherever Boeing sent us—from Seattle to Huntsville, back to Seattle, down to Cape Canaveral and Cocoa Beach, and then back to Seattle for good. My childhood was shaped by NASA and Boeing, interest in beauty and the arts, and the great outdoors. This background would help shape an unexpected pilgrimage into a strange, yet beautiful, world of grace, love, and wonder for me as an ex-Evangelical Protestant pastor, for my wife Diane, and our two teenage girls.

My memories of church life during my early childhood, mostly at a small Missouri Synod Lutheran Church in Huntsville, AL, are vague but important memories of loving people who treated both my siblings and my mother with kindness.

*Continued on page 2* ➤

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

(My father rarely attended.) My mother did a good job giving us a knowledge of God's existence and basic Christian morality formed from the Ten Commandments. Flannel graphics were a favorite of mine, especially before Sunday school classes began depicting rocket launches and safe re-entry instead of religious principles. One significant event from this time occurred on a Sunday after church, as I was watching a weekly program on a Christian television station. I remember this episode had to do with a family tragedy, and as I watched the program, the thought ran through my mind that, as an adult, I would like to be helping families with hardships and challenges. This experience still guides me.

As I grew older and began high school, my family's involvement in church waned. I became enthralled with the NFL and Sunday football. In short, we soon became "Christmas and Easter Christians" and neglected church life in general. If I had to describe where I was in my spiritual life at that time, I would say that I was a believer in God but didn't see how God could be interested in my life. I did believe Jesus was the Son of God, but I had no concept of what that meant or why it mattered. As for the Holy Spirit, somehow He was part of this, but how, I had no clue. In fact, my life after high school was rather confused and unguided. I had no idea where I was going or how to formulate a plan to get anywhere. Boeing and engineering didn't interest me; working at Boeing in any capacity didn't interest me; a career in business didn't interest me either.

For the first time in my life, I began to search for a purpose, a deeper meaning in life, and goals to pursue. College sounded like it could help provide an answer to these questions, so I effectively rolled the dice and wound up at Western Washington University in Bellingham, WA. I had no idea what I was going to study, but I was drawn to psychology and sociology.

### Ora et Labora—Prayer and Work

In 1978, I arrived at Western Washington University in Bellingham, WA, just south of the Canadian border and north

of Seattle, in the afterglow of the "Jesus Movement" of the late 60s and early 70s. I quickly became involved in campus ministry, previously unaware that such a thing even existed on college campuses. In the dormitories were numerous posters recruiting students to any number of secular and religious group meetings. One of those was for Campus Crusade for Christ, which I visited and became involved in for a short time with a friend I met on the crew team. Here I was introduced to the Four Spiritual Laws, and even helped my teammate lead people to Christ. One day, this same friend asked if I had ever visited a monastery. I had not, so he invited me to visit a Benedictine Abbey, just across the border in Mission, British Columbia, Canada, named Westminster Abbey. Here, I was introduced to a new world of beauty, peace, and prayer which would begin my long journey deeper into Jesus' heart and eventually into the Catholic Church.

The beauty of the monastery was stunning. Overlooking the Fraser River, with a north side view of Mt. Baker in Washington State, bald eagles flying overhead, and big timber all around, the impact of this first visit still remains with me many years later.

In fact, I have visited this monastery many times over the years and have brought groups up for retreats and study. Yet it was the beauty and artistry of one of the monks' works displayed in the chapel and around the monastery that focused my attention on God's creativity through human genius. The monk's name was Father Dunstan Massey, OSB, and he was quite well known as an artist around the Fraser River Valley. He specialized in concrete reliefs and frescos, and his artistry speaks to me of God's wonder. Indeed, his work was his prayer.

Father Dunston, the grandeur of creation, and other encounters with God through beauty became a gentle path deeper into His love and compassion, which would prove to be of immense consolation in the storms of life to come. The Benedictine Rule would become a huge influence on my life. St. Benedict's 12 Steps of Humility and their impact on the shaping of the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous became

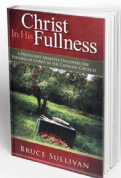
## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### CHRIST IN HIS FULLNESS

BY DEACON BRUCE SULLIVAN

Deacon Bruce Sullivan, a former Church of Christ minister, presents an in-depth study of the issues that people commonly wrestle with when they begin exploring the Catholic Church, and discusses how those questions played out in his own spiritual journey.

#3083 • \$12.95



### JOURNEYS HOME

THIRD REVISED EDITION

Deacon Tom Cabeen (former Jehovah's Witness elder), Deacon Joseph Pasquella (former Pentecostal pastor) and several other converts from a number of religious traditions share the stories of what led them to come home to the Catholic Faith.

#2522 • \$12.95

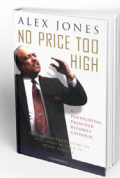


### NO PRICE TOO HIGH

BY DEACON ALEX JONES

The late Deacon Alex Jones was an "on-fire" Pentecostal minister in Detroit who ended up entering the Catholic Church in 2001, and bringing many members of his congregation with him. He shares the story behind what led him to embark on that journey and find his true spiritual home.

#3216 • \$16.95



patterns within the development of my ministry over the years. The Benedictine motto, “Ora et Labora” (prayer and work), is a simple and profound way to live and learn a life of prayer and devotion “one day at a time.”

I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and learned that, while I had become a good listener and loved to minister on the streets, in jails, and occasionally on campus, this was not the most employable degree. As a result, I spent a year doing carpentry with a friend. After this time, I was invited to intern with an Assemblies of God campus ministry (Chi Alpha) with the hope of being equipped enough to pioneer a campus group on a college campus that had a supporting church nearby desiring a new chapter. We studied from well-known works of Protestant Evangelical theologians, occasionally mixed with an Anglican and, very rarely, a Catholic spiritual perspective. We conducted street dramas, traveled to different parts of the western United States to help other campus ministries, led small groups, raised our own funds, and generally became confident that we could pioneer a campus group anywhere we were called. Soon, I would indeed be called upon to begin a new campus ministry, but I needed a partner to go on this adventure with me. Diane would become that partner.

Diane and I met when we were both college students. I didn't know her well in those years, but during this year of internship, our relationship began to flower. I admired her faith in Jesus, her prayer life, and her willingness to step out of her comfort zone in teaching, street ministry/drama, and planning outreach. Of course, I also thought she was cute.

At the end of our internship year, we were teamed up to start a campus group in Kearney, Nebraska at what was then known as Kearney State College. We set out on a cross-country adventure to another culture amidst the cornfields and hog farms of south-central Nebraska, right along the Platte River. Here, our relationship would be tried in the difficult circumstances of a new culture, an unfamiliar land with intense winters and springs, and of a longing for the big timber, mountains, and flowing water of the Pacific Northwest. Despite the difficulties, our two years spent in Nebraska were fruitful. The campus ministry grew, and Diane and I grew closer. We were engaged in Kearney. Then we said good-bye to our Nebraska friends and headed back to the Evergreen State to start our new life as a married couple.

During our time in Nebraska, we had become acquainted with many campus pastors from different denominations, all of whom were very helpful to us. What Diane and I quickly discovered, however, was that our internship in campus ministry fell short in equipping us to converse with them in matters of church history, theology, and much of pastoral ministry. As a result, I desired to go to seminary and learn about these different subjects. We needed to earn money for that to happen, though, so off we went to Alaska and Yukon to drive tour buses in the Great White North for two seasons before I took the plunge into seminary.

I began my studies at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, an interdenominational seminary begun by

two Anglican Professors from England—J.I. Packer and James Houston. This was a marvelous place to learn (and I must say that many themes introduced to us here eventually found their fulfillment in the Catholic Church). Over a four-year period, we learned about Church History, Christian Spirituality, Systematic Theology, Preaching, Pastoral Care, Greek, Hebrew, and most important to our journey, the Early Church Fathers and beauty. The Early Church Fathers introduced to us an intriguing world of commitment to the Eucharist, prayer, and tradition, aspects of the Church we would later come to understand in a truly Catholic perspective instead of a curious, but still Protestant, worldview. All this we received as God's gifts in our lives. It was a wonderful time of reception—a time of filling.

## **Memento Mori—Remember that You Will Die**

As I worked toward the completion of my Master's Degree in Theological Studies, I concentrated on Pastoral Care and Family Ministries. At this time, I was working in an addiction recovery center for adults and teens, helping families deal with recovery issues and treatment plans. Diane was working at a local nursing home and caring for a neglected population of elderly people. After graduation from seminary, I was eventually hired as an associate pastor with a large, local Assemblies of God church which functioned more like an Evangelical community church. This was the same church that sponsored the college campus group where Diane and I had interned. It was quite familiar to us and it was an honor to serve on staff. My duties included running counseling services and recovery groups, developing internships in pastoral care, expanding our local food pantry into a food bank, and partnering with community services in the county to help families. I enjoyed this work and felt called to care for people in distress. However, during the 16 years I worked at the church, there were three experiences, all having to do with personal trauma and loss, which drew us into a search for consolation and care which only the Catholic Church was able to provide.

The first of these experiences was the discovery of our infertility as a couple. Anyone who has been part of this journey knows what a loss and burden it can be for a couple totally open to children and wanting to raise a family. In this struggle, we found there really was nowhere we could turn to find comfort or solace. We knew of no groups, no people to talk with, and no support. We were alone, and our church had no resources to help us. Diane and I spent five years praying for God's direction amid this suffering. Were we to have children? Should we utilize artificial means to conceive? Is adoption for us? Where and how do we proceed with adoption? How are children to be part of our lives? These questions drove us deeper into prayer and into intense listening for God's guidance.

The Lord did indeed guide us and grant us comfort during these difficult years. We came to the firm conviction that the Lord wanted us to pursue adoption overseas in China. We were in the early wave of North Americans adopting Chinese orphans.





## A Note from JonMarc

Dear Friends of the CHNetwork,

MERRY CHRISTMAS! No, that's not a misprint. As many (but perhaps not all) readers of this newsletter may know, the Catholic Church celebrates the liturgical season of Christmas through the first week of January, concluding with the feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord. So, if you haven't yet put away the wreath, dragged the tree out to

the curb, packed the lights and ornaments back into the attic, or stopped eating Christmas cookies, worry not! You're just being liturgically appropriate. Well done!

As the Christmas season draws to a close, I wanted to share a few thoughts about the Epiphany of Our Lord. Our network is very much characterized by personal "epiphanies"—those moments, great and small, in which Our Lord chooses to reveal who He is, and in doing so reveals *who we are in Him*.

### Three Epiphanies

Epiphany is most commonly associated with the arrival of the Three Kings to visit the Christ Child. In Matthew 2:1-12, we hear that after their long journey following the mysterious star, the Magi finally find the baby Jesus in the arms of His mother, Mary. They bow down to Him in worship and reveal their gifts of "gold, frankincense, and myrrh." These gifts have traditionally been understood to reveal key aspects of Christ's identity—the gold indicating His kingship, the frankincense indicating His divinity, and the myrrh, an embalming agent, indicating the suffering He would endure in His passion and death for our salvation.

However, there are two more stories of epiphany that are traditionally highlighted during the close of the Christmas season. The first is the Baptism of the Lord which we celebrate on January 8th. In his Gospel account, St. Mark highlights Our Lord's encounter with John the Baptist, who had been prophesying the coming of one mightier than he, one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit! As Christ requests and receives baptism at the hands of John, a heavenly voice proclaims from the heavens: "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (Mk. 1:7-11).

The other epiphany traditionally recalled (though not explicitly celebrated) at this time is the Wedding Feast of Cana. In this Gospel story, the newlywed couple prematurely runs out of wine for their wedding guests. Mary brings their need to Jesus and instructs the servants to, "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5). Jesus miraculously transforms the jars of water into wine of a quality far beyond what they had been able to provide on their own.

In these and other epiphanies in the Gospels, Christ's identity as king, divine son of God, and savior is slowly revealed to us. In thus revealing Himself, Jesus also begins to unfold the truth of *who we are in Him*. Just as Jesus is the "beloved Son" of the Father, we too are beloved sons and daughters—so beloved that He would send His only Son to proclaim the kingdom, to heal and comfort, and ultimately, to lay down His life to save His people. We are a people who are loved and cherished by God, a

people whose water He will turn to wine if we only let Him.

### St. Simeon's Epiphany

A few years ago on Epiphany, my wife and I gathered our then 5 children together into one of their small bedrooms to pray Compline (Night Prayer) together. We had been working for about a year to incorporate this part of the Liturgy of the Hours into our daily routine as a family, and as a result, the older children had many of the recurring prayers and responses memorized, including the "Canticle of Simeon" which is prayed daily as part of Compline.

As we gathered to pray on the feast of the Epiphany that night, it occurred to me to tell the kids a story first: "There once was a holy man of God named Simeon who lived before Jesus was born—who spent his whole life waiting and praying for the coming of the Light." In the flickering light of our candles, I described the world without Jesus and the patient longing of this holy man, as my children sat quiet and captivated at a time when they would usually be restless and struggling to stay focused on our prayer. I described how one day this man was praying in the temple when a young couple arrived carrying a little baby boy that they had brought for consecration; how the heart of our holy man burned within him as he realized that this baby was the promised messiah, the king, the savior; and how this holy man, inspired by the Holy Spirit, suddenly found these words on his lips:

Lord, now you let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled: my own eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared in the sight of every people: a light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of your people Israel.

As I recited these words of St. Simeon, realization dawned on my children and they began to recite with me, eyes shining and smiles forming. They had to finish the prayer for me; I was brought to tears. In their own unique moment of epiphany which I was able to witness and participate in, but could never have planned, the meaning of those words came alive. They felt what it meant to live in a dark world anticipating the coming of the Lord and the joy of finally receiving that visit.

### Network of Epiphanies

We are a network of people who are connected by our own personal epiphanies of the Lord, large and small. Let us pray that we are given the grace to live in the light of these experiences and to continue to share the good news of the kingdom of God with the people around us. Let us pray also for the many members of the Coming Home Network who have experienced an epiphany that has prompted them to set out on a difficult journey, following the star toward a greater revelation and fullness of Our Lord's gratuitous outpouring of love upon His people.

In Christ,

JonMarc Grodi, Executive Director



“God sends us friends to be our firm support in the whirlpool of struggle. In the company of friends, we will find strength to attain our sublime ideal.” I love this quote from one of our older brothers in the faith, St. Maximillian Kolbe.

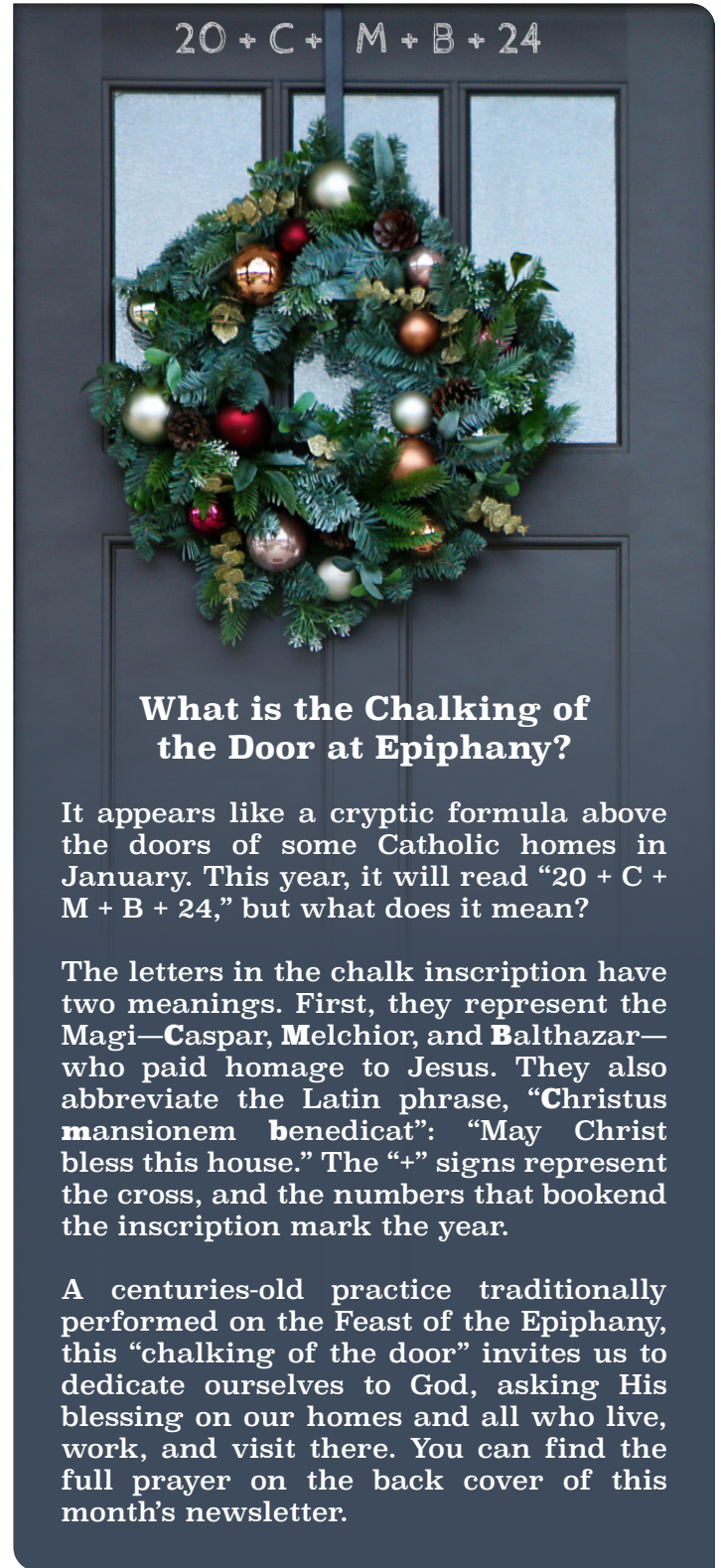
This journey of faith we are all on consists of so many mountaintop experiences, as well as the low valleys of loneliness at times. It is an experience best lived out with others, especially others who understand. No one in our lives can support us more perfectly than those who are traveling the same path.

I will never forget my first CHNetwork retreat. There was a gentleman present who remarked that he felt like he had found “his people.” That has remained with me ever since. I have attended several retreats since my first one in 2019, and I can honestly say I come away each time blessed by the whole experience. These moments sharing how God has worked in our lives, praying together, celebrating Mass together, laughing and crying together, have built the foundation for lifelong friendships.

The 2023 fall retreat in Georgia was truly incredible. I absolutely loved getting to meet so many people in person whom I had gotten to know through our Online Community. It was so fun for Ken, Jim, and I to witness the friendships between so many of our members that began online come together in person at this retreat. It felt very full circle.

Our mission at CHN is to inspire, encourage, and support one another as we grow in our own understanding and living of the Catholic faith. We invite and encourage fellow converts and inquirers to join us in our online community, including our Friday Fellowship gatherings and a few new online events that are coming soon. We are also blessed to be able to host two in-person retreats every year. My hope is that you will have an opportunity to attend one. Please consider joining us this spring for our retreat at Maria Stein, Ohio. I would love to meet you there!

*Melissa Slagle is a Pastoral Care Coordinator for CHNetwork.*



### What is the Chalking of the Door at Epiphany?

It appears like a cryptic formula above the doors of some Catholic homes in January. This year, it will read “20 + C + M + B + 24,” but what does it mean?

The letters in the chalk inscription have two meanings. First, they represent the Magi—**C**aspar, **M**elchior, and **B**althazar—who paid homage to Jesus. They also abbreviate the Latin phrase, “**C**hristus **m**ansionem **b**enedicat”: “May Christ bless this house.” The “+” signs represent the cross, and the numbers that bookend the inscription mark the year.

A centuries-old practice traditionally performed on the Feast of the Epiphany, this “chalking of the door” invites us to dedicate ourselves to God, asking His blessing on our homes and all who live, work, and visit there. You can find the full prayer on the back cover of this month’s newsletter.

## CHNETWORK 2024 SPRING RETREAT

April 22<sup>nd</sup> — 25<sup>th</sup> at Maria Stein Spiritual Center in Ohio

*Learn more or sign up today at [chnetwork.org/retreats](https://chnetwork.org/retreats)*







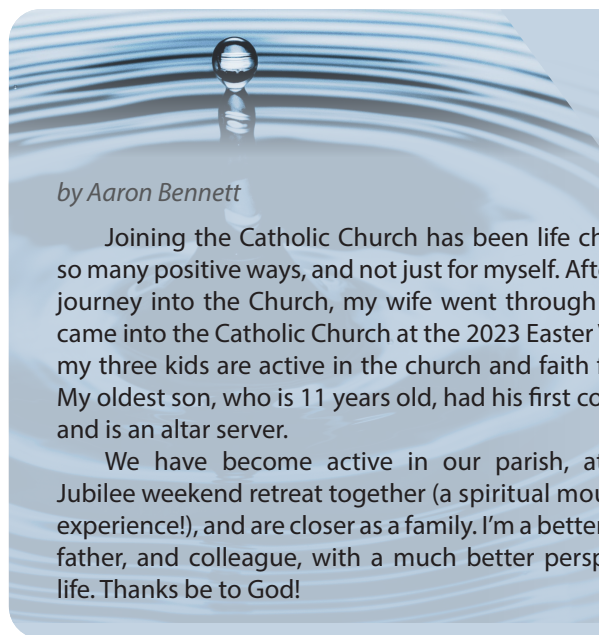
# Joyful Journey Updates

From Jim B., a former Baptist pastor

I was delighted to receive from CHN that wonderful prayer book, St. Augustine medal, and prayer card! It really cheered me up during a challenging week. I had been going to Eucharistic Adoration and wondering, are there any specific prayers for this? And the book you sent has some such prayers, along with many others. Needless to say, it will be a welcome resource. The St. Augustine medal is interesting because I have an unread copy of the *Confessions* on my shelf. I guess I know what the Lord wants me to read next!

Please convey my thanks to all at CHN. Your continued prayers, even after I had told you, "No, I guess I'm not interested," have borne rich fruit. I continue to grow in the Catholic faith, and in love with the Real Presence, the Mass, frequent confession, etc. Many thanks to you all! ■

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



## RIPPLE EFFECT

by Aaron Bennett

Joining the Catholic Church has been life changing in so many positive ways, and not just for myself. After my own journey into the Church, my wife went through OCIA and came into the Catholic Church at the 2023 Easter Vigil. Now, my three kids are active in the church and faith formation. My oldest son, who is 11 years old, had his first communion and is an altar server.

We have become active in our parish, attended a Jubilee weekend retreat together (a spiritual mountain top experience!), and are closer as a family. I'm a better husband, father, and colleague, with a much better perspective on life. Thanks be to God!

What has really blown me away is that my parents, longtime Southern Baptists who were very upset when I announced I was exploring Catholicism two years ago, have seen how life altering the Catholic Church has been for me. My parents grew to accept my decision, and in a completely unexpected turn of events, started attending OCIA just a few weeks ago! They have been attending Mass with us as a family as well! They still have a way to go, so your prayers for them (John and Cynthia Bennett) would be greatly appreciated.

I am in such a better place when compared to where I was a few years ago, and I'm so thankful to those at the Coming Home Network for being part of my journey.

**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  
*The Best of The Journey Home*: Mon.–Fri. 1 AM ET

Monday, Jan. 1

**Allison Dreher**

*Former Baptist*

*Original Air Date 2/3/20*

Monday, Jan. 8

**Jennifer Southers**

*Former Quaker*

Monday, Jan. 15

**Michael Mason**

*Former Evangelical Protestant*

Monday, Jan. 22

**André & Angèle Regnier**

*Catholic Revert and Former Lutheran*

Monday, Jan. 29

**Fr. Richard Wilson**

*Former Episcopal Priest*

Monday, Feb. 5

**Justin Hibbard**

*Former Evangelical Minister*

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)



### Rick & Linda Cole Compass Donors since 2022—1 Year

# PARTNERS IN *Mission*

I was born into an Irish Catholic family in Montana. From my earliest memories I considered my Catholic faith the most important part of my life. I attended Mass every day in school, and even considered becoming a priest in high school. Since there were many priests at our parish, though, I thought I could help the Church more as a layman. Then, in my late 20's I met my future wife, Linda, who was an evangelical Christian.

We had many discussions about faith both before and after marriage. Linda went through RCIA 3 times before she was convinced to convert by our pastor. I learned much during that 5 year process. Linda was devoted to her beliefs, and I discovered good things about our Protestant brethren. Her journey reminded me, though, that I hadn't done what I had thought about back in high school. I began to research details about the Catholic faith through books, television, and online resources. If I was going to pursue a greater faith in my life, I wanted to do it right.

I came across EWTN and eventually *The Journey Home*, though I passed over it a number of times before finally watching an episode. Inspired by the interview, I found hundreds of episodes on YouTube! I began reviewing past programs, impressed that many interviews were with non-Catholic clergy. The stories featured individuals who searched long and hard for the faith God wanted them to have. Most were consumed with finding the truth about Jesus. I felt that passion should be used to reach more people in and out of the church. This inspired me to contribute to CHNetwork and talk to all the wonderful people there.

As I pursued my newfound zeal for sharing the faith, my focus primarily became recruiting good Catholic men to the evangelization effort, including reminding those who had wandered away what they were missing. These men, then, would be encouraged to reach out to those outside the Church as the opportunity presented itself.

While pursuing this new direction, I began supporting CHNetwork with regular giving. I have had wonderful exchanges with JonMarc Grodi, Kenny Burchard, Matt Swaim, and others at the Network. The CHNetwork resources are a wonderful way to excite others about our faith and serve as a model for how to encourage others to make a difference. I pass out extra copies of the Coming Home Newsletter, make copies of applicable stories, and encourage others to watch *The Journey Home*. It has become my primary tool for evangelization. ■

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The Coming Home  
Network International

*CHNetwork was founded to help men and women, clergy and laity, from every background imaginable, discover the truth and beauty of the Catholic Church.*

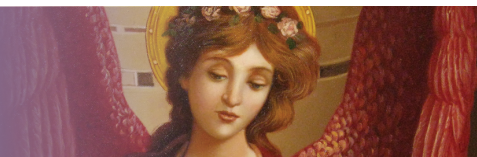
*Rick and Linda Cole have been supporting the mission of The Coming Home Network since September of 2022. In addition to regular gifts, they have generously helped with micro-campaigns and contributed to The Shepherds' Fund, assisting pastors on their journey into the Church. To join them with a monthly or a one-time gift, please visit us at [chnetwork.org/donate](http://chnetwork.org/donate) or use the enclosed envelope.*

## TAX LETTERS

Tax letters for 2023 contributions will be e-mailed to donors who have email addresses on file. If you would like to receive your tax letter by postal mail, please contact **Ann Moore** at [ann@chnetwork.org](mailto:ann@chnetwork.org) or 740.450.1175 x101.



# Prayer List



## Clergy

■ **For John, a Baptist pastor** who is becoming convinced that he needs to become Catholic. He wonders how he will have the courage to do it and lead his family into the Church.

■ **For Walter, a former Assemblies of God pastor** who was welcomed into full communion with the Church at the Easter Vigil this year with his wife and is already developing a parish ministry to serve families who have dependents with intellectual disabilities.

■ **For Andy, a former Evangelical pastor** who has left the ministry and found work, but continues to attend the same church with his wife and kids and struggles to find a way to discuss the things he now believes.

■ **For Sergio, a Christian Reformed preacher** who is struggling a great deal with feeling that he may have moved too quickly when he left his ministry to enter the Church while still working through many issues, doctrinal, personal, and vocational.

■ **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 of those who know him will understand what he is coming to believe.

■ **For Jeff, an Episcopal priest** who has been on a journey toward the Church for a number of years and is praying for an opportunity to enter the Catholic priesthood through the Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter.

■ **For Ben, a former Nazarene pastor** who was received into the Church this past Easter Vigil but has been struggling to bring his family along.

■ **For Elijah, a former Methodist seminarian** who was received into the Catholic Church on the Feast of Corpus Christi and is in the process of rethinking his entire future.

■ **For David, an Anglo-Catholic priest** who wants to enter into full communion with the Church but is concerned with some of the things taking place in the hierarchy of the Church, including the German bishops.

■ **For Brent, an Evangelical pastor** drawn to the beauty and truth of the Catholic Church and beginning to contemplate the reality that the Holy Spirit is drawing him to leave his pastoral ministry to become Catholic.

■ **For Paul, an Episcopal priest** who wants to become Catholic and is looking for a teaching position that could support his family should he leave his position in the Episcopal clergy to enter the Church.

■ **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 and to lead his family home.

■ **For Francis, a Pentecostal minister** in Ohio, and his wife, that their many misconceptions about the Catholic Church would be healed and they return rejoicing to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Laity

■ **For John, an Episcopalian** in Florida, that our Lord Jesus would open his heart to all the truth concerning his mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary.

■ **For Jeremy, a Presbyterian** in OCIA who plans to enter the Church at Easter, that the Holy Spirit guide his journey.

■ **For Christopher, a former member of the Christian & Missionary Alliance** in California, that he may find the grace and healing of our Lord Jesus in the Catholic Church.

■ **For David, a Quaker**, that the journey he began on the Camino de

Santiago would lead him to the altar of our Lord Jesus Christ.

■ **For Joe, a Baptist** in Virginia, that he may find answers to his many questions about the teachings of the Catholic Church.

■ **For a Missouri Synod Lutheran** in Florida, that, as he continues to read the Catechism and the Bible, our Lord would guide him to the fullness of the truth in the Catholic faith.

■ **For Brandon, a member of Calvary Chapel** in Texas, that his wife would become open to consider the truths of Catholic teaching.

■ **For Mark, a Lutheran** in Florida, that he and his entire family may find a welcoming home in the Catholic Church.

■ **For Larry, a Presbyterian**, that our Lord Jesus would heal the wounds he experienced in the Catholic Church and bring him home to the holy sacraments of our Lord Jesus.

■ **For Erin, a member of the Assemblies of God** in need of discernment as she makes her way home to the Church, for her children and husband as they continue their own faith journey, and for family unity in the faith.

■ **For Sandra, a Baptist**, that she would find comfort and patience as she waits to be able to receive Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

■ **For Britt, a Methodist** in need of discernment and guidance to make the right choice for herself and her family, and prayers to not feel overwhelmed by all she does not understand or know.

■ **For Michelle, a Church of Christ member**, that the Lord would provide for her family's health and well-being, and open doors for her.

■ **For Lenore, a Methodist** who desires marital unity in the faith.

■ **For Nataki, a non-denominational Christian**, to find clarity as she begins her journey.



# DISCOVERING DEVASAHAYAM

Feast Day: January 14<sup>th</sup>

by Rakhi McCormick, Communications Coordinator



There are no coincidences in the story of God, not even the way I stumbled upon the life of St. Devasahayam.

Growing up Hindu, I had no idea Catholic Indians existed. I knew about St. Mother Teresa and her work with the poorest of the poor in my ancestral city, but I never made the connection to the existence of Catholics among people of Indian ancestry. I certainly had no

inkling that further south, a man known as Devasahayam Pillai was on the road to sainthood.

Born Neelakanda Pillai in 1712 to an upper-caste Hindu family, he served as a high ranking court official for the Hindu king in Travancore. It was there he encountered Captain Eustachius DeLannoy, a Dutch naval officer and prisoner of war helping modernize the king's army in exchange for a pardon after his capture. DeLannoy, a devout Catholic, would befriend Neelakanda over the course of their work together, and eventually help him understand suffering through the lens of the Christian faith.

Neelakanda was struggling with a devastating span of severe material losses negatively impacting his standing. He performed many rituals attempting to placate the Hindu gods but found no relief. He felt he was being punished by God, but could not understand why. Upon witnessing his despair, Captain DeLannoy consoled him, sharing with him the story of Job from the Scriptures. Through this encounter, Neelakanda gained a new perspective on suffering, deeply moved by Job's example of trust in God despite his own misery.

This understanding transformed Neelakanda's life. He came to believe in the truth of the Christian faith and was baptized in 1745, taking the name Devasahayam, meaning "Lazarus" or "God is my help" in Malayalam, his native tongue. He also dropped the name Pillai, which was a caste designation, a system he now disavowed. His conversion lowered his social status significantly. Only those of the lowest castes were permitted to convert in Travancore, and he had now joined their ranks regardless of any previous upper caste affiliation. In fact, his prior standing made it all the more scandalous.

Despite this, Devasahayam began living his new Christian faith openly within the palace, as well as denouncing the injustices of the caste system. He associated freely with members of lower castes and argued against the superstitions of the Brahmins. Many fellow soldiers converted. This angered the ruling class and other Hindus, including his own family. When the rulers ordered the

persecution and exile of Christians, Devasahayam offered himself as their first prisoner. Having repeatedly refused to renounce Christ, he was eventually branded a traitor, imprisoned, tortured, and banished to a forest for three years where he was beaten daily. Devasahayam remained steadfast in faith, despite his suffering, trusting in God. Those who encountered him were moved by his kind and joyful demeanor amid humiliating persecution.

After three years of torture and three failed death sentences, Devasahayam was martyred secretly in 1752. St. Devasahayam became the first Indian layman and convert to be canonized by the Roman Catholic Church on May 15, 2022.

Having no connection to the Indian Catholic or South Indian community, I hadn't even heard the name Devasahayam Pillai until the week prior to his canonization, which also happened to be the week I was heading to the Coming Home Network to record an episode of *The Journey Home*. God's timing is perfect. In encountering his story at this particular time, it put a new lens on my own, which I was still quite nervous to share. In my mind, it didn't measure up to the deep theological exploration of others. Discovering St. Devasahayam when I did helped me understand more completely that Christ draws us each into the fullness of His presence uniquely, no one road greater than the other.

While my story of conversion didn't resemble an intellectual dissection of faith, it was a response to encountering suffering in my life, like St. Devasahayam. I may not have jumped head first into the book of Job, but the Catholic understanding of human suffering and solidarity with those who suffer became a great consolation in my own anguish. Plus, like St. Devasahayam, I too had irreconcilable objections to the caste system, having witnessed its devastating effects firsthand. I could not wrap my head around a God (or gods) who would create some people to be worthless. This wrestling led me into the arms of Jesus through the Catholic Church — first, by encountering him in the "least," and then, by encountering him in the Eucharist, the ultimate demonstration of sacrificial love by a God who chose to suffer with and for us. As I continue to walk this journey of faith, St. Devasahayam has become a close companion to my justice-seeking heart, reminding me that Jesus always meets us in our suffering and rejection.

St. Devasahayam, pray for us.

**"O Jesus, do not abandon me!  
O Beloved Mother Mary, help  
me! Into Your hands, Lord, I  
commend my spirit."**

*Final prayer of St. Devasahayam*

“I will go peaceably and firmly to the Catholic Church: for if Faith is so important to our salvation, I will seek it where true Faith first began, seek it among those who received it from God Himself.”

ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON, FEAST DAY: JANUARY 4<sup>TH</sup>

Due to the one-child policy instituted by the Communist government, many “unwanted” female babies were either aborted, victims of infanticide, or sent to crowded orphanages where they were cared for as well as they could be by the staff. Describing the adventures of this adoption experience would require an additional story; suffice it to say we traveled to China without a child and two weeks later came back with our eight-month-old daughter, Amy. Two years later, we would head to Vladivostok, Russia, to adopt our youngest daughter, Anna, also eight months old. As we settled into life as a new family of four, we were surprised that the pain of infertility was overwhelmed by the joy of adopting our children. Every family is a miracle; ours is no exception.

As the years passed, we nurtured our family and our ministry, building a community of care and outreach in the church. In time, the mission of the church became obscured, and growing a church in numbers became the top priority. In the midst of this change, the second of three losses occurred in our lives—the sudden death of my mother due to cancer. She was the hub of the family, and her death brought about profound changes in my extended family. This was a time of confusion and deep grief. Coupled with the changes in the church, we found ourselves longing once again for solace and community, but found none. We were searching intently for a deeper meaning and purpose of the people of God and church worship.

This search steered me into a doctoral program in urban leadership and spiritual formation at Bakke Graduate University (based in Seattle at the time, now based in Dallas). In this program, we learned more about the spirituality and leadership of serving the needs of the poor in urban settings, of creating communities of care and outreach, and of diving into the mystery and majesty of human interaction in the act of ministering care in God’s compassion. I would often pray in the St. Ignatius chapel at Seattle University and found this space compelling, drawing me toward beauty and prayer. Here, I discovered many more contemporary Catholic authors and people who became heroes to me. Diane and I were also drawn to Celtic Catholic spirituality and the “thin places” of the world, those places where heaven and earth are thinly veiled to one another. We had no idea that this would be the perfect description of the Catholic Mass, but the journey was beginning to take on new dimensions for us. It was also here that I came across a wonderful quote

from G.K. Chesterton in his masterpiece, *Orthodoxy*, giving us insight to the Christian life.

Christianity satisfies suddenly and perfectly man’s ancestral instinct for being the right way up; satisfies it supremely in this; that by its creed joy becomes something gigantic and sadness something special and small.... Joy, which is the small publicity of the pagan, is the gigantic secret of the Christian.” (G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1996. p. 239.)

In 2007, I graduated with a Doctor of Ministry in Transformation Leadership and Spiritual Formation and soon after discerned that my time at the Assemblies of God church was coming to an end. Through a series of many staff changes and circumstances, Diane and I knew that our hearts were being pulled somewhere else, though where that would be, we did not know. We knew our view of the communion service was changing, that the Lord was somehow present in ways we couldn’t articulate.

Our view of Mary was changing also. We knew that Protestants didn’t understand her or her role in salvation history. They could not help us answer the question of what her role was, and what our relationship with her ought to be. We knew it had to be more than a casual appreciation for her at Christmas.

One final issue that we could not resolve was the issue of authority. With so many opinions about Holy Scripture, what or whom were we to trust, and why should we trust them?

I resigned my position, which for a career pastor can be devastating with the loss of income, an uncertain future, the disappearance of community and friends, and vanishing support networks. This was the third of the losses that would send us into a “desert wandering” for five years, until one Christmas Eve when our world was turned upside down.

My family loves Christmas. As part of our Christmas tradition, we would attend a Christmas Eve service somewhere in the county. Diane thought we needed a new experience of Christmas Eve as a family, so in her wisdom and attentiveness to the Holy Spirit, she suggested we attend Children’s Mass at Sacred Heart Parish, just up the hill from the church where I used to be employed. This sounded like a good idea to me, since I had been in the parish church occasionally to pray and look at



the beauty of the sanctuary, statues, and candles. So, off we went to Children's Mass. We had no idea what to expect, but knew the kids would be cute, Christmas carols would be sung, and hopefully English (and very little Latin) would be spoken. We were right! The kids were cute, Christmas carols that we knew were sung, everything in the church was decorated beautifully, and very little Latin was used. We were stunned!

We left that Mass wondering what the Lord was doing. While there, my eyes became fixed on the crucifix in the front of the church. It seemed that Jesus was speaking directly to me, saying that He knew the pains and sorrows of humanity, and more than that, the pains and sorrows my family and I had endured. He was saying that here, in the Mass, in the Catholic Church, our search for deeper meaning and purpose would find its answers. Here, Mary would be our Blessed Mother. Here, living water would finally quench our thirst.

We stayed away from the church, and from Mass, for two weeks trying to sort it out. We were a bit numb, but Diane and I were convinced that God was ushering us into full communion with the Catholic Church. We asked the girls if they desired to attend with us, and even if they desired to explore the possibility of becoming Catholic; they were game to try. So that we could become better prepared for this further adventure, we felt the need to find out more about the Church, if we could. We went to our local Barnes & Noble and found a book which became incredibly helpful to us, *Catholicism for Dummies*. We still refer to this book from time to time! Eventually, we were introduced to the parish priest. We invited him over to our house to pepper him with questions, attended RCIA, and prepared to enter the Church at the Easter Vigil in 2012.

Entering into full communion with the Church has been an oasis for us. Our journey has not been so much a wrestling with doctrine and tradition as it has been discovering where consolation, beauty, and joy manifest Jesus' love on earth in the most deeply personal and authentic way. We have been overwhelmed by Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist, the love of our Triune God and our Blessed Mother, and the wonder and beauty of the Church unfolding before us.

Why enter the Church in this time of trial and scandal? Perhaps it was precisely because of these wounds that the Lord led us here, to help tend to a Church that needs renewal, strength, and care.

A few years after our entrance into the Church, I started inquiring into the Diaconate upon the encouragement of our parish staff, not knowing what that entailed. It was a whole new world of potential pastoral involvement, and I wasn't quite sure if I was up to the challenge. I told Diane, my wife,

that unless someone approached me at coffee and donuts after Mass, I would forgo the honor. As I sat enjoying my donut and coffee after Mass, our parish priest made a beeline to me, telling me I needed to apply. I felt this was the Lord's prompting! So I applied, was interviewed along with Diane, and entered the formation process, which was quite challenging on every level.

In the second year of formation, we were graced with attending a Coming Home Network retreat at the Archbishop Brunett Retreat Center in Federal Way, WA, which was our home for formation throughout the years. The retreat was wonderful and life-giving, thanks to Jim Anderson, Ken Hensley, and Monsignor Steenson! On December 19, 2020, in the middle of the COVID pandemic, I was ordained a permanent deacon of the Catholic Church. It had been quite a journey!

In the years since my ordination, I have been impressed with the immense prayerfulness of God's people and gained a growing love of the saints, especially St. Joseph and our Blessed Mother. I am filled with wonder as I serve the Mass and am thankful for the Divine Office, praying for the profound needs of the Church worldwide. I have also become a regular follower of *On the Journey with Matt, Ken, and Kenny* on the CHNetwork website, finding their insights helpful in the challenges of the diaconate.

Serving as a deacon in the Church has brought me great fulfillment. Along with preparing and preaching homilies at Mass, it is one of my joys to pray for those who have died and to help those who struggle with loss to find a way home. My current role offers many opportunities to minister to bereaved families and pray for the souls of the dead as they are committed to God's good earth, one of the corporal acts of mercy. This work brings me back to St. Benedict. One of the disciplines of the Benedictine Rule is to remember that we all will die, Memento Mori. It is not a morbid preoccupation with death, but a daily discipline to remind ourselves that our lives are short and need to be filled by the Holy Spirit with virtue, humility, and fortitude—the love of God.

Blessings to you on your own journey home!  
Kyrie Eleison! ■

“(I)n the Catholic Church, our search for deeper meaning and purpose would find its answers. Here, Mary would be our Blessed Mother. Here, living water would finally quench our thirst.”

*Rev. Mr. Dale Pollard is a deacon in the Archdiocese of Seattle. He and his wife Diane are grateful parents and grandparents, serving at their home parish of Sacred Heart Church in Bellingham, WA, as well as ministering to the isolated, bereaved, and vulnerable of their community. Dale is a former guest on the Journey Home program, and the couple has been a monthly donor to the Coming Home Network for many years.*

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



*Read more about the Epiphany  
House Blessing on pg 5*

## EPIPHANY HOUSE BLESSING

Chalk Inscription Above Door

20 + C + M + B + 24

**Leader:** Peace be to this house, and to all who enter here.  
**People:** Amen.

**Leader:** May all who come to our home this year rejoice to find Christ living among us; and may we seek and serve, in everyone we meet, that same Jesus who is your incarnate Word, now and forever. Amen.

**As participants take turns writing the chalk inscription above the door, the leader says:**

The three Wise Men—Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar—followed the star to Bethlehem and the child Jesus two thousand and twenty-four years ago. May Christ bless our home, and remain with us throughout the new year. Amen.

Pray the Our Father together to close.

