



April 2024 CHNewsletter

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THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

Journeys Home

"L" is for Love...

By Kenny Burchard

I grew up in an irreligious family. It's not that my parents didn't have religious beliefs; they did. They both grew up in nominally Catholic families but rejected their Catholic faith in their early teens. My dad eventually came to believe that religious people were mostly superstitious idiots, and my mom—on the other side of the spectrum—believed whatever the person in front of her was telling her until someone else told her something different.



Throughout my entire childhood, I witnessed my dad's even-handed mockery of *anything* religious and my mom's rather eclectic interest in *everything* religious. This polarity of perspectives shaped in me both suspicion and curiosity about religion.

When I conversed about religion with my parents, who had adopted me when I was eight months old, they would always tell me, "Your biological parents were Catholic, but rather than having you baptized as a Catholic, we feel that when you are old enough, you should decide for yourself what you want to believe."

My First Bible: Conspiracy and Curiosity

When I was in elementary school, my parents *did* allow my siblings and me to ride the neighborhood Sunday school bus that stopped

on the street in our small Denver neighborhood every Sunday on its way to the local Baptist church. For some reason, my parents, who were not on the same page about their own religious convictions, also thought that they should put a Bible in my Easter basket when I was eight years old.

It was a Sunday morning in April of 1977, and there it was, nestled in the basket between the candy eggs and jellybeans, the green plastic grass, and the paddle-ball toy—a small white gift-and-award *King James Bible*. I grabbed it right out of the basket and stared at it in awe. My very own Bible! I knew it was an important book, but had no idea why, so I asked my mom to give me the scoop. She announced, in a conspiratorial tone of voice, that the Bible was "an ancient religious book written by a group of men whose goal was to control the masses through religion."

My young brain wondered why she would want to give me such a book, but I was still curious about what it contained, so I set out to

Continued on page 2 ➡

...Journeys Home Continued...

read it. I got to Genesis chapter six or seven, lost interest, and put it on the shelf. As I got older, I would go through this exercise repeatedly, occasionally thumbing through the shiny pictures inside, scanning the chapters toward the end that had red letters in four of the books, but never really figuring out what I was reading. Well into my late teens, the Bible remained a mysterious book for me.

“Mormon Cindy,” Confusion, and a Crisis

My family moved from Denver to Salt Lake City when I was nine years old, and my parents allowed me to attend the Lutheran church with my cousin. This didn’t mean their attitude toward religion had changed. I still remember my dad mocking my Sunday School class’s performance of a Bible song and having it become a standard family joke because we all found it funny, even into adulthood.

Despite these experiences at home, living in Utah opened my eyes to the reality that religion could permeate an entire culture. In Utah, discussions about God, Jesus, the Bible, and innumerable related topics were as normal as talking about one’s favorite sports team or television program. This further awakened my curiosity and openness to religious dialogue.

When I entered junior high, many of my Latter-Day Saint (Mormon) friends began attending religious instruction at a nearby LDS seminary during school hours. I saw them carry their Bibles and other religious books with them, eager to learn about their faith.

During my junior year of high school, I began dating a beautiful LDS girl named Cindy who, upon discovering that I wasn’t a Mormon, asked me to attend a series of discussions with the Mormon missionaries in her home. When I told my mother about it, to my surprise she exhorted, “Just be sure that if you read the Book of Mormon, you give the Bible equal time.”

I had also begun taking a karate class from a man who

talked about being a “born again Christian.” He insisted that Mormonism was not “historic, orthodox Christianity.” I had no idea what that meant, but right away, I went from my crush on “Mormon Cindy” to a crisis. My pretty LDS girlfriend, her family, and all my Mormon friends at school were telling me their faith was the fullness of the truth, yet one of my mentors was telling me that not only was it not true, it wasn’t even Christianity! Again, my mother reminded me that I needed to make up my own mind, and my dad reminded me that no matter what decision I made, I’d still be landing in someone’s version of religious idiocy.

Born Again

During those days of crisis, my motives shifted dramatically from wanting to please my girlfriend, my karate teacher, and even my parents, to wanting answers in the simplest of terms: how could I know the truth, and how could I be sure I would end up in heaven when I died? On the evening of Thursday, July 24, 1986, I loaded up all the materials I had been collecting and took them with me to the Mormon temple in downtown Salt Lake City to talk with the missionaries there.

I found a temple missionary and asked him a simple question; “How can I know Mormonism is true, and how can I be sure I’ll go to heaven when I die?” He replied, “Many are called, but few are chosen,” then smiled and walked away. Confused and discouraged, I left too.

As I left the temple square, I was immediately drawn to the sound of singing coming from a group of people marching up the street behind a man carrying a huge wooden cross. I couldn’t believe it! I ran over to the group and asked the first guy I met what they were doing. A young “surfer dude” from California, David, smiled as he said, “We’re taking this city for Jesus Christ! What are *you* doing here?” I opened my bag of books and blurted out, “I’m looking for God!” We stared at

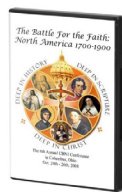
RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

THE ROAD FROM TOPEKA TO ROME

BY DR. PAUL THIGPEN

In this talk from our 2008 Deep in History conference, Dr. Paul Thigpen looks at the history of Pentecostalism in the United States, and how the mystery and mysticism at the heart of Charismatic prayer can be a pathway to following the Holy Spirit’s call into unity and truth in the Catholic Church.

#1253 - \$15.00 (DVD)

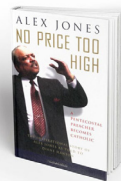


NO PRICE TOO HIGH

BY ALEX JONES

Alex Jones was an “on-fire” Pentecostal minister in Detroit who was a completely dedicated shepherd of his flock. Over time, he came to discover the truth and beauty of Catholicism. Alex began to share his findings with his congregation, and eventually he, and many of his members, joined the Catholic Church.

#3216 - \$16.95

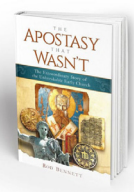


THE APOSTASY THAT WASN'T

BY ROD BENNETT

Rod Bennett follows up his bestseller *Four Witnesses* with an account of the historical events that led him out of his own belief that Christianity disappeared after the age of the apostles, and reappeared at the Reformation. Bennett details the early Church’s fight to preserve Christian orthodoxy even as powerful forces tried to destroy it.

#3197 - \$24.95



each other for a minute in excited disbelief; then, he asked me to step aside and sit with him on a bench in front of one of the buildings.

I told David about my experience with the LDS missionary and asked him the same questions: “How can I know the truth, and how can I know I’ll go to heaven when I die?” David took out his Bible and a small notepad and wrote down John 3:3 (“...you must be born again...”), John 3:16 (“...for God so loved the World...”), John 14:6 (“I am the way... truth...life”), and Romans 10:9 (“If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”). He said, “The simple answer is that you can know the truth by reading the Bible, and to be sure you’ll go to heaven you simply need to believe in and follow Jesus as your Lord and Savior.” Then he asked, “Would you like to pray and do that now?” I told him that I knew it was what I needed to do, but remembering my mom’s often-repeated words from my childhood, “You need to decide for yourself what you believe,” this was something I wanted to do alone.

The next night, after telling my parents and Cindy what had happened to me, I went to my karate teacher’s house to share the news with him. I had decided to be a “born again Christian.” I walked back to my car, and while sitting on the hood of my car in front of his house, I stared up into the night sky, praying aloud, “God I believe in you. I believe in Jesus. I want to serve you with my whole life. Please save me!” And then, like a flash flood, tears and joy filled me up, and I knew I would never be the same. In fact, that night, I knew my whole life had changed, and that I needed to serve God with my entire life. You could say that it was then that I first felt a call to ministry.

“Ignorance On Fire”

After my dramatic “born again” experience, I developed a ravenous appetite for theology, Christian preaching and teaching, and apologetics. I also began to listen to a daily radio program called *The Bible Answer Man*, hosted by the late Dr. Walter Martin. In this program, I “learned” that Mormons were wrong, Jehovah’s Witnesses were wrong, Seventh Day Adventists were wrong, and *especially*—CATHOLICS WERE WRONG!

What began as a deeply sincere quest for truth turned into what all my friends called my season of “ignorance on fire.” I attacked everything and everyone with whom I disagreed. I became an expert at tearing down the religious beliefs of others, and I learned that under no circumstances could I ever become Catholic. Catholicism, they taught me, was an apostate version of Christianity that had been corrected and restored to its original pristine doctrine and practice in the 1500s by men like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and many others. Though this sounded curiously like the “restorationist” claims of Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, I believed the people who were helping me, concluding that, like Mormonism, Catholicism was *not* Christianity, and that

most Catholics were *not* Christians. This was something I heard repeatedly and eventually taught from my own pulpit when I later became a pastor.

The conflict with my family and most friendships became so intense and constant that my parents forbade me to keep a Bible in the house, listen to Christian music or any kind of preaching/teaching on the radio inside the house (even with headphones on), or attend church. They further forbade me to be baptized until I turned 18. Even my karate teacher told me on many occasions that my way of talking and “sharing my faith” was actually driving people away. I interpreted it all as persecution, and the day after my 18th birthday, I moved out of the house.

Baptism and the Navy

Like many young men in the late 1980s, after watching *Top Gun*, I rushed to the local Navy recruitment office. I signed up for the delayed entry program and was told to report to boot camp in San Diego, California, on July 6th, 1987.

I moved into a friend’s house on June 5th—the day after I turned 18 and graduated from high school—and spent the month preceding my enlistment attending a local Vineyard Christian Fellowship. I visited my parents on the 4th of July, asked my mom to shave my head, and then asked her and my dad to come to church the next morning to watch me get baptized. They agreed. I was baptized in water, and the following morning, I flew to San Diego. By evening, I was finishing my first day of boot camp.

The Wild West of Evangelicalism

When I joined the Navy in 1987, I began what was an exciting time of discovering all the different kinds of Evangelical and Protestant churches out there, as it often is for many young new Christians. It seemed that so long as a person believed that the Bible was the Word of God, believed in the Trinity, believed that Jesus was divine and “the only way to God,” there were innumerable possibilities with respect to just about every other kind of belief that a Christian could embrace.

During the year that my parents would not allow me to go to church, I simply didn’t have an opportunity to know much about “church life” as a new Christian. Once I left home and discovered I could visit a different church every Sunday, I initially felt like a kid in a candy store.

There were churches that believed in the rapture (and others that didn’t), churches that believed in speaking in tongues (and others that didn’t), churches that believed in ordaining women (and others that didn’t), churches that believed you could lose your salvation (and others that didn’t), churches that believed in baptismal regeneration (and others that didn’t), and on and on. For every “true Christian church” that believed one thing, I could find another “true Christian church” in the same zip code that believed the exact opposite. All of these “Christianities,” as I came to see them, claimed to believe that the Bible alone was the sole infallible



A Note from JonMarc



Dear Friends,

Christ is risen and the Easter season has begun! For the next 50 days we celebrate our new life in the risen Christ as we look forward to the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. It is a time of special joy around the Coming Home Network as so many of our members are celebrating their entrance into full communion with the Catholic Church or commemorating their anniversary of doing so.

I have been reflecting recently on the "Road to Emmaus" experience (Lk 24:13-35) which we heard at Mass a few days after Easter this year. In this passage, we hear how two of Jesus' disciples are walking to the village of Emmaus in deep conversation about the events of Christ's passion and death—and of the bewildering reports of his missing body and an alleged angelic announcement of His resurrection. These disciples are met by Jesus on the road but are initially, mysteriously prevented from recognizing Him, although their hearts begin to burn within as Jesus scolds them for lack of belief. He proceeds to unlock for them the fullness of the scriptural prophecies regarding Himself. Finally, their eyes are opened at dinner when Jesus takes the bread, blesses it, and gives it to them—after which He mysteriously vanishes, leaving the astounded disciples to hurry back and give testimony to what they have seen and experienced.

This encounter with Christ on the road to Emmaus (as well as the famous painting of it by Robert Zünd which has been our header image for this newsletter for some time now) has become an emblematic image for me over the years when I think of the work of the Coming Home Network International. There are a few key connections between the two that I would like to share with you today.

FULLNESS

First, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we are a network of Christians who, long before we became Catholic, had come to know and love our Lord, Jesus Christ. In the mystery of God's grace and providence, so many members of the Coming Home Network initially heard the Gospel faithfully proclaimed by non-Catholic Christian family and friends. We praise God for all the many ways that He leads people into relationship with His Son. At the same time, we also believe that He has a greater fullness He wishes to give them in the teaching, tradition, and sacraments of the Catholic Church. We never presume to judge why a particular Christian's heart has not yet been opened to Catholicism. There is a mystery to the timing and movement of God's grace that we can't see. And so, we simply share our stories of finding the truth and beauty of Catholicism, and we pray for our separated brothers and sisters, that they may become open to the Catholic Church in God's good time.

STORY

Second, like the disciples who recognized Jesus' identity and presence in the breaking of the bread and who rushed back to tell their brothers and sisters the good news—we are a network of converts who seek to share our testimonies with others. One of the core values of the work of the CHNetwork has always been simply the power of

story. On *The Journey Home* program, in this newsletter, and through online videos and articles, so many converts have now shared their testimonies—stories of how Christ opened their hearts to a greater picture of the Gospel, leading them home to full communion with the Catholic Church.

PRESENCE

The third connection relates to the power of *presence* in the disciples' experience on the Emmaus road and in the many journeys of converts to the Catholic Church. To begin with, the disciples are walking along in fellowship. Even though they are perhaps discouraged and bewildered by the recent events, they stick together, pondering and discussing their faith. It is at this moment that Jesus shows up, fulfilling what He had promised them: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20) It is in the context of this great gift of Christ's presence that the disciples' hearts and minds are changed. As a result, they are able to more fully understand the Scriptures as well as the words and actions of Jesus. Finally, in the breaking of the bread—the Eucharist, the permanent and pre-eminent sacrament of Christ's presence among His people—their eyes are fully opened to not only His presence but the truth of His resurrection and the fulfillment of all He had promised.

So many of the inquirers who contact the Coming Home Network have known Jesus and lived faithful lives in fellowship with other Christians—and we believe that the Lord has been present and active in so many ways in these communities. We *also* believe that He has MORE He wants to give them by calling them into the Catholic Church—in particular, the gift of His presence, preeminent in the sacraments. Thus, like the disciples, we strive to faithfully proclaim our testimony of His gift of presence, and to those whom He has awakened by grace to journey toward the Catholic Church, we offer prayer, fellowship, resources, and encouragement along the way.

JOURNEY

Finally, I love the story of the Road to Emmaus because it depicts a *journey*—a journey during which the pilgrim travelers discuss, wrestle, listen, learn, and, as a result, are changed—and *then sent out* on the next part of the journey. The work of the Coming Home Network is about both the journey *to* the Catholic Church but also about the *great journey*—the continual conversion and imitation of Christ to which all of us have been called. As we know and frequently remind each other and the fellow disciples we minister to: becoming Catholic isn't the end of the journey but rather a new beginning. *IN* the Catholic Church, Christ wants to give you the grace of His presence to empower and embolden you to continue on with *the* journey—the journey ever deeper in prayer, ever higher in virtue, and ever further in carrying the Gospel message and the love of God to all ends of the earth.

As we continue this Easter journey toward the feast of Pentecost, may we be reminded of the great journey each of us has been called to embark upon with Christ. May we find a renewed gratitude for the fullness of truth and life Christ has given us through His Church; may we discover our own conversion stories and be emboldened to share them; may we practice the presence of God and give the gift of presence to the people around us; and may we remain people of the journey, pilgrims heading ever higher up and further in towards our home.

In Christ,


JonMarc Grodi

Community Question: Tithing

With tax deadlines looming in April and charitable contributions on the brain, we asked our members if the previous faith traditions and congregations they came from had specific teaching on tithing or financial obligations. Here is what a few of them shared:

A. C.

[For the Latter Day Saints,] it is a mandatory 10%. In fact, it's so mandatory that it's required to get into the highest heaven. You have to receive temple ordinances to get to the highest heaven, and you have to tithe 10% to get into the temple. So a 10% tithe is one of the major points on which your eternal destiny hinges. Also, we gave a "fast offering" every month that goes to the needs of those struggling in our congregation specifically. That is left to the discretion of the giver and is often based on how much money you save by fasting for two meals on the first Sunday of the month (an LDS tradition which is actually one of my favorites).

V. W.

When I was an Evangelical, we were taught to give ten percent. We had a lot of teaching about money. Occasionally we had some pretty guilt-inducing animated videos inflicted on us about tithing. A popular one was using the story of Cain and Abel as a lesson in tithing. Also it was said that unless you were a regular "ten-percenter,"

you would never be considered for the church eldership team. When I looked up Catholic teaching on giving, it made a lot more sense I'm glad to say!

T. K.

As a non-denominational Christian, tithing is 10% of your gross income. Giving is a representation and demonstration of your faith and following of Christ. And is one of the items of the checklist to become a member.

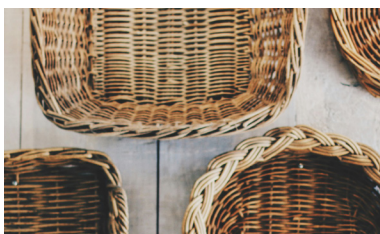
A. J.

My husband belonged to a church where the pastor mentioned tithes at every service. Scripture was read about giving and receiving 100 fold, and about God blessing those who tithed. Testimonies were given about how a raise was given at work or blessings were received due to being a faithful tither. It seemed like something from a prosperity-type gospel. Of the Catholic Churches I've attended, I've never heard tithing mentioned except once, and that was when there was the possibility of some of the smaller Churches being closed, including that particular church.

So what about Catholics? Is there a set amount one must tithe in the Church?

It turns out that your obligation to give, according to the Catholic Church, doesn't have a specific number or percentage attached to it. That may be in part because Catholicism has a wide socioeconomic range among Her membership, which includes people from both the wealthiest and poorest places on earth. But the Church DOES have something to say about the obligation to give, and it's detailed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* starting around paragraph 2041.

That information is included in what are called the Precepts of the Church—essentially the "bare minimum" obligations for a Catholic. Giving is addressed in the fifth one:



1. You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor.
2. You shall confess your sins at least once a year.
3. You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.
4. "You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church" (primarily Ash Wednesday and Good Friday).
5. You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church.

You'll often hear Catholics refer to three ways to fulfill that 5th Precept: *Time*, *Talent*, and *Treasure*. What that means is that you can provide for the Church's needs by giving *time* to help out in various efforts or works, *talent* in the sense that you bring your personal gifts and skills and offer them in some way for the building up of the Church, and *treasure*, meaning financial support in whatever way you discern God is asking of you.



"Give something, however small, to the one in need. For it is not small to one who has nothing. Neither is it small to God, if we have given what we could."

ST. GREGORY NAZIANZEN



Joyful Journey Updates

From Jonathan W., former Church of Christ Pastor

I was raised in a Protestant tradition that makes all of the same exclusive claims as the Catholic Church. My first love had always been history, and the weak historical continuity (and even weaker explanations) within my former tradition always bothered me. When I discovered the historical and theological richness of the Church, I finally found the joy I'd always read about in Scripture, but never really known.

From Fr. Scott W., former Anglican Priest

God has blessed me so much that I really at times find it hard to believe. Once ordained I was placed in Cleburne, Texas. When I came we were in the middle of Covid and we had 19 at my first Mass. Mass was, at that time, held in a rented school auditorium and lunchroom, and the church supplies were all kept in a rolling altar that was packed and unpacked every Sunday. Fast forward to today and the church owns an 11,500 sq. ft. campus and is about to start a remodel! We also own 15 acres

of land to the west of the city, and we were just bequeathed a house that we will use for the parsonage. Hard to believe what God has done! We are also growing...sometimes too fast! We now have over 300 souls in our care, and 50 of those are below 18. Our congregation age is probably averaging around 40. We are well on our way to stability. Additionally, out of 18 years in ministry, this is likely the happiest I have been, all in a short three-year tenure.

From Elijah N., former Methodist Seminarian

As a seminarian, the clearest call to pick up a cross and follow Jesus I have ever experienced was the call to communion with His Church. As He promised, on the other side of this little death was even more abundant life. I was received last summer on the feast of Corpus Christi, and I am now pursuing a legal career with hopes of serving the Church where ever our Lord leads me. The Eucharist will always be worth it!

Do you have an update on your journey to share with us? Send it to info@chnetwork.org.

The Resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in Christ, a faith believed and lived as the central truth by the first Christian community; handed on as fundamental by Tradition; established by the documents of the New Testament; and preached as an essential part of the Paschal mystery along with the cross:

**Christ is risen from the dead! Dying, he conquered death;
To the dead, he has given life.**

—CCC 638



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, April 1

Rachel Lu

Former Latter Day Saint

Orig. Air Date 2/24/20

Monday, April 8

Nora Jensen

Former Wiccan

Monday, April 15

Greg & Jennifer Willits

Cradle Catholic and Former Worldwide Church of God Member

Monday, April 22

Phillip Campbell

Revert from Pentecostalism

Monday, April 29

Fr. Jeffrey Kirby

Former nominal Catholic

Monday, May 4

Dan Venezia

Former nominal Catholic

Schedule is subject to change.

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



Susan Dansand
CHNetwork Donor since 2019 - 4 Years

PARTNERS IN *Mission*

Compass Monthly Partner Since
November of 2022

I was baptized Presbyterian. Though we seldom went to church, my mother told me about Jesus on the cross when I was five, and I was in love! At eight, I happened to go to Vacation Bible School, and was so excited! That Christmas, I got my first Bible, which I *loved* to read. I still didn't have a church at this point, but I thought, who needed a church?

Ten years later I fell in love with a boy, but I didn't really know the limits that should be set with him. I certainly needed a church *now* to teach me what it meant to create a loving relationship in the eyes of God, but where could I look?

It was around this time that a news article criticizing Pope Paul VI for his stand against birth control caught my eye. "Didn't the Pope know better?" they argued. The whole world thought they could tell him how it ought to be. However, the "World" (with a capital W) had killed Jesus. I knew I had to choose the Pope instead of the "World"! So, I shared my desire to become Catholic with the priest at the parish I was attending on Ash Wednesday of 1972, and on Palm Sunday, I entered the Church.

It wasn't until decades later that I watched *The Journey Home* on EWTN and realized, "I am not alone! There actually are other converts out there!" I learned about the Coming Home Network, and began receiving their monthly newsletter. When the CHNetwork Online Community was launched several years later, I immediately became a member. It is there that I, with hundreds of others just like me, have found community, friendship, help, answers, and encouragement in this great adventure of living life as a Catholic!

I have been supporting the CHNetwork as much as I can since 2019, and in 2022, I was able to begin giving monthly through COMPASS. If you are able, please join me in supporting this mission of God's grace to pilgrims on the journey! God is, Himself, the ultimate Gift and Giver!! Let Him use you as a channel of His graces. ■

Susan Dansand is a moderator on the CHNetwork's Online Community. She has been a Partner in Mission since 2019, and a monthly donor through COMPASS since 2022. To join her in supporting the CHNetwork, return the enclosed envelope, or give online at chnetwork.org/donate

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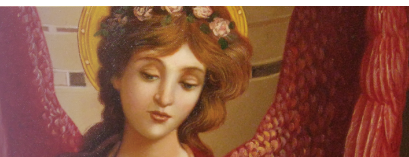
The Coming Home
Network International

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

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 or 740.450.1175 x101.

Prayer List



Clergy

- **For Nathan, an Assemblies of God pastor** who is convinced that he will need to become Catholic and is struggling with the effect this will have on his family and his ability to support them once he leaves the Protestant ministry.
- **For Andrew, a Baptist seminary graduate** who has begun studying Catholic teaching and finds himself drawn toward the Church and wanting to learn more, that the Holy Spirit will continue to lead him.
- **For Glen, a Methodist pastor** deeply troubled by what he sees happening in his denomination, who finds himself drawn to explore the Catholic Church but fearful of all this would mean for his family, as well as his sense of vocation and employment.
- **For Elijah, a former Methodist seminarian** who was received into the Catholic Church on the Feast of Corpus Christi 2023 and is in the process of rethinking his entire future, including the possibility of going to law school.
- **For Houston, a former Methodist pastor** who resigned his ministry last year and was welcomed into the Catholic Church this past year.
- **For Tim, a Lutheran pastor** who finds himself drawn to the Church and wonders how he would make a living for his family if he were to become Catholic, especially since his wife is not on the same journey as him.
- **For Brent, an Evangelical pastor** drawn to the beauty and truth of the Catholic Church who is 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 the Episcopal clergy and enter the Church.

- **For Ralph, an Evangelical pastor** beginning to explore Catholic teaching and seeking instruction with the CHNetwork.
- **For David, a Methodist pastor** who is meeting with a Catholic priest, involved in OCIA, and preparing to resign his pastoral ministry this summer.
- **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 continues to struggle with how to bring his family along.
- **For David, an Anglo-Catholic priest** who wants to enter into full communion with the Church but struggles with some of the things taking place in the hierarchy of the Church, especially in Germany.

Laity

- **For Harold, an Evangelical Christian**, that he may find good answers to his many questions about the Catholic faith.
- **For Daniel, raised Catholic**, that the Holy Spirit would guide him as he works through his many questions about returning to the Catholic Church.
- **For Donald, a Southern Baptist**, that his journey to the Holy Eucharist, which began in the Holy Land, may reach its goal.
- **For Brandon**, that as he reads the Bible and the *Catechism* throughout this year, the Holy Spirit would give him a longing to come into full communion with the Catholic Church.
- **For Ronald, a Lutheran**, that our Lord Jesus would assist him as he seeks the fullness of God's truth.
- **For Luke, a Free Methodist**, that God would send a good Catholic friend to accompany him on his journey.
- **For Peter, a former Seventh-day Adventist**, that he may find the grace to return to the Catholic Church in which he was originally baptized.
- **For Mark, a disillusioned Episcopalian**, that he may find grace and truth in the Catholic Church.
- **For Richard, a Non-denominational Christian**, that our Lord Jesus would grant him clarity and dispel his confusion about the Catholic Church.
- **For Chris, raised Catholic**, that all roadblocks and obstacles that inhibit him for returning home to the Church be cleared away.
- **For John, a Presbyterian**, that he may find a faithful Catholic in his area who will assist him on his journey to the Church.
- **For Ginger, a Universalist**, that she may find guidance to a supportive parish as she begins OCIA next fall.
- **For Carla, a recent convert**, that the Lord may grant her harmony in her family and peace and unity in her marriage.
- **For Suzanne, a Non-denominational Christian**, that she may experience a strengthening in her belief in the Eucharist and harmony in her household, and that her daughter may have the courage to continue her journey into the Church.
- **For Abby, an Episcopalian**, that she may have the commitment needed to complete OCIA.
- **For Kyra, a Presbyterian**, that she may receive physical healing from a serious illness, an increase in faith, and comfort as she bears her suffering.
- **For Peyton, who is being confirmed soon**, that she may find community in her new parish and become more comfortable with the liturgical seasons.
- **For Sarah, an Orthodox Christian on the journey**, that she, her husband, and her son will be received into the Church, and for an increase of trust in the Lord.

The Power of a Good Story

There is a reason the Bible is known as the “greatest story ever told”. Long before the printing press and the availability of the written word for all to access, our ancestors in faith passed down the truth of God’s beauty, wisdom, love, and mercy toward us through their own stories of encounter.

We know of our family history through the lived experience of those who wandered through the desert with Moses, who boarded the ark Noah built, who heard about the promise made to Abraham and told their stories through the generations. We know of God’s fidelity and redemption through the stories of the prophets who didn’t sugarcoat the infidelity of man. Yes, we know the facts—the number of cubits and thread counts and all the materials that went into the creating the ark and priestly vestments. More importantly, though, these stories reveal to us the heart of God the Father, who patiently and persistently calls His children home to Himself through the ages.

We hear Jesus use stories and parables to explain and unveil the Kingdom of God to his disciples and all who would listen. Even after the Resurrection, we see Jesus continue to patiently reveal the Father’s plan to those who, having witnessed the crucifixion, still couldn’t see the fulfillment of God’s promise through the risen Christ. More than this, we begin to know the heart of Christ, the promise of mercy, and the power of the Holy Spirit, through the stories of the Gospel writers and the first apostles. We witness the fulfillment of God’s promise through the experiences of those who walked with Christ on earth and continued to preach the Gospel following his passion, death, resurrection, and ascension—

often to their own earthly demise.

The story doesn’t end there, though. Through the centuries, we have the stories of countless men and women who have continued to show us what it means to live out the Gospel, what it means to love God and neighbor, what it means to pursue a life of heroic virtue in imitation of Christ. We know the everlasting power of the saving grace that lies in Christ through His Church empowered by the Holy Spirit because of the stories of the saints throughout the last two millennia. We know the truth of the faith through their experiences and testimony. And yet, that, too, is not the end.

The story continues with each of us. The goodness of God continues to be proclaimed in the movement of our own lives. The fruit of Christ’s sacrifice for us—His tender mercy and compassion and love—continues to be revealed in our encounters with the steadfast sacramental life of the Church despite (or perhaps through) our suffering and wandering.

No story is insignificant. Each one is another chapter—however long or short—in the overarching story of God, the only story worth sharing again and again.

We would love to hear YOUR story of conversion. Visit chnetwork.org/submissions to see our submission guidelines, or email us at info@chnetwork.org.

You expired, O Jesus, but the source of life gushed forth for souls and an ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world. O Fount of Life, unfathomable Divine Mercy, envelop the whole world and empty Yourself out upon us. O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of mercy for us, I trust in You.

3 o’clock Prayer for Divine Mercy (Divine Mercy Sunday: April 7, 2024)

JOIN US ON OUR NEXT DEEP IN HISTORY PILGRIMAGE IN POLAND

SEPTEMBER 2-13, 2024

With Ken Hensley, Kenny Burchard, & Msgr. Jeffrey Steenson

Explore the beauty of one of the most historically Catholic countries in the world as we visit some of the great cities of Poland (including Warsaw, Częstochowa, Zakopane, and beautiful Krakow) with a focus on the truth, history, and beauty of the Catholic Church.

We will pray and celebrate Mass in some of the most beautiful churches in the world as we learn about some of the great saints of our faith: St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Faustina, St. Edith Stein, and especially Pope St. John Paul II.

Please consider joining us! It will be a wonderful time for us to share our stories and forge life-long friendships as we experience the power of Catholic Poland.

Cost*: \$5,628/person based on 30 participants & double occupancy. Find complete details, including a full itinerary and registration forms, at chnetwork.org/poland.

*Price listed is for cash/check transactions. There will be a 5% surcharge added for credit transactions. Land only rates are also available.



source of truth, and that *their* particular version of biblical truth was the *most* correct one. I also fell into that mindset.

In practical terms, my sense was that Evangelical Protestantism was basically an exercise in trying to get the most correct understanding of the Bible, and then finding a church or denomination that agreed with me (and the biblical teachers, authors, and commentators who I preferred to listen to and read).

From my understanding of the Bible, gifts of the Holy Spirit like prophecy, healing, and speaking in tongues were still available and operating in the lives of Christians, just as they were in the Bible. So, I found my theological home among Charismatics and Pentecostals. The problem was that many of my fellow Pentecostals and Charismatics disagreed wildly about how these gifts became available to people, how to use them, and how to determine their legitimacy. Over time, my initial excitement began to feel more like I was a lone gunman in the wild west! It was me, Jesus, and my Bible (or rather, my interpretation of it).

Marriage, Ministry, and More Anti-Catholicism

Toward the end of my six-year enlistment in the Navy, I met my wife, MaryJo, on the island of Okinawa. I was serving on a Marine Corps base, and she, a pastor's daughter, was a missionary at the Youth With A Mission base. When we began our relationship, we both felt a call to be together and to devote our lives to ministry.

During my final year of naval service, I began taking extension courses from Moody Bible Institute. Just over a year after leaving the Navy, MaryJo and I moved back to Salt Lake City and began attending the church that had brought those "March for Jesus" missionaries to town that I had met back in 1986. At the age of twenty-four, I became an associate pastor in that church, remaining in full-time pastoral work in three different congregations for the next twenty years.

The lead pastor of that Assemblies of God church often spoke out against both Mormonism and Catholicism in his sermons. He himself was a fallen-away Catholic who "got *truly* saved" and discovered what he called *real Christianity* after watching a movie about the rapture at a local Evangelical youth group when he was a teen. His sermons often contained what I eventually called "hint of lime anti-Catholicism," because there was always a hint of anti-Catholic rhetoric in almost every bite. This reinforced my own anti-Catholic bias and gave me even more ammunition when trying to get Catholics out of their religion and into ours. I also discovered,

in every congregation I served, that many of the members had grown up in nominally Catholic families, "found Jesus" in a Protestant church, and ultimately became anti-Catholic. In hindsight, I found that much of my own anti-Catholic sentiments and understanding of Catholicism came from listening to their stories.

Leaving the Mayhem—Three Watershed Moments

In 2010, nine years into my twelve-year tenure as the lead pastor of our Foursquare Gospel Church in central California, I had the opportunity to attend a biblical seminary at no cost. Three things happened to me during that time in seminary that would change the whole course of my spiritual life, and ultimately, set the stage for my conversion to the Catholic Church.

The first happened when I received my international ordination. During the ordination service, surrounded by fellow Foursquare ministers and an elder in our church who were laying hands on me, I began to think, "What right do these men have to lay hands on me and ordain me to the ministry? What does ordination even mean? Where do they get their authority to do this? Who gave it to them, and to those who laid hands on them?" The question slipped into a kind of infinite regress, and as I stood there to receive the highest level of ordination possible in my denomination, I could not bring myself to believe that any of these men had any legitimate authority to ordain anyone!

The second occurred in my New Testament program in seminary when, during one of his lectures, my professor remarked, "Of course, we know before the New Testament was formally canonized in the fourth century, there was a fully functional, evangelizing, and growing Church that was spreading all over the world. In fact, it was not until after the council of Nicaea that there was universal agreement about which books should be included in the New Testament."

While I already knew this was true, I had honestly never sat still long enough to think through the implications. I wanted to be a "Bible teaching pastor" because I thought that was the ideal. But what I learned was that, for hundreds of years, there was no universal agreement among Christians about which books even went into the Bible. In fact, many Christian communities were growing, flourishing, and spreading the good news of Jesus before they ever had access to many of the books of the Bible that I took for granted;



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many Christians in the first generations of the Church's existence never even knew that some of the New Testament books existed! How was this possible, not just during the time of the first apostles, but for over two centuries after the last apostle had died? Something else had to be holding the Church together. But what was it?

The final thing took place during my course in the book of Acts in my last year of seminary. I had decided to study the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, and as one of my questions for further dialogue at the end of my study, I asked if the Church in Acts 15—the one that could speak definitively about issues of doctrine and heresy, and which had the power to bind all Christians to the same doctrine and practice—was still present in the world today. My professors and most of my friends and colleagues all had the same answer—no. It was up to each congregation, each denomination, and ultimately, up to each Christian to determine for themselves what the Bible taught, and to do their best to find fellowship with other believers who shared those same convictions. In that moment, I saw Evangelicalism and Protestantism as a shattered pane of glass—irreparably broken into a million disparate pieces. I resigned from pastoring and left evangelical Christianity just before my final semester of seminary in November 2013. I was, however, not yet Catholic.

The “Four L’s” of my Catholic Conversion

It wasn't until five years after I had left pastoral ministry altogether, and several years of wandering through varied church involvement, that I experienced what I now call the “four L's” of my conversion to Catholicism.

The first “L” is *LOCUTION*. That's a Catholic word that, when translated into Pentecostal terminology, means “a word from the Lord.” While I was coming home from a trip to the beach near my home in Virginia in 2018, I drove by St. John the Apostle Catholic Church. As I drove by and noticed it was a Catholic church, I very clearly heard the Lord issue a simple command: “Go to that Catholic church.”

I could not deny that it was the Lord, but I had no idea why I was supposed to go there. With my many anti-Catholic beliefs, I was not considering becoming Catholic. All the same, I knew I was supposed to go. I shared this with my wife, and she asked to go with me. The next Saturday evening, we went to Mass together. While I was somewhat lost in the liturgy, I could tell something powerful was happening. I just didn't have a frame of reference to make sense of it.

A friend of mine who had converted to the Catholic Church heard about my visit and encouraged me to read Scott Hahn's book, *The Lamb's Supper*, before going to Mass again. I ordered it, read it in four days, and the next time I went to Mass, I wept all the way through it. I felt like a color-blind person who had gotten his special glasses—“Mass Glasses”—and I could see what, just a few days earlier, had been hidden from me. As I drove away from Mass the second week in a row, I had two thoughts. First, “I need to become Catholic!” But second, “Oh

no! Oh God! How can I become Catholic?! I don't believe in Catholicism!”

The second “L”—*LEARNING*—happened in the months that followed that initial experience of the Mass. I discovered that I had learned nearly everything I knew about Catholicism from anti-Catholic apologists, former Catholic and anti-Catholic ministers, and former Catholic and anti-Catholic congregants. I needed to learn what the Catholic Church taught and believed *in her own language* and on her own terms, without the baggage that so often accompanied the perspectives of non-Catholics. I spent the next several months reading the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and innumerable Catholic theology books, listening to hours of teachings and lectures by trusted Catholic voices, and attending RCIA classes at St. John the Apostle parish.

The third “L”—*LISTENING*—happened as I discovered the innumerable conversion stories that had been written by dozens of people just like me—seminary-trained Evangelical Protestants of every stripe who had left it all and joined the Catholic Church. I read their stories of conversion, of sorting through their theological difficulties, and of letting go of their claims of personal infallibility, finally trusting that Jesus had founded a Church—the Catholic Church—which, I discovered, was the very same Church I had wondered about during my study of Acts 15. To my joy, I discovered that this Church was, indeed, still in the world after 2,000 years!

The fourth and final “L” is something I never dreamed would be possible: “LOVE.” I have come to *love* the Catholic Church. This is because I have heard God's voice call me to enter into worship with the Catholic Church. I have learned, from the Church herself, what she really believes and teaches, and I have listened to others who have made the same journey home to full communion. In fact, I regularly tell people that, although I was a Christian before, following Jesus and walking in as much light as the Lord had given me, the Catholic Church has told me the truth in the best way I have ever heard it told. Speaking of *love* for the Catholic Church, I'll end with a quote that I have come to treasure from G.K. Chesterton who, when explaining his own conversion to Catholicism, observed: “It is impossible to be just to the Catholic Church. The moment men cease to pull against it, they feel a tug toward it. The moment they cease to shout it down, they begin to listen to it with pleasure. The moment they try to be fair to it, they begin to be fond of it.” ■

Kenny Burchard, his wife MaryJo, and their son Victor all came into full communion with the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil Mass in 2019. They are parishioners at St. John the Apostle Church in Virginia Beach, VA. Since his conversion, Kenny has become the Director of Development for The Coming Home Network, and is featured on the CHNetwork podcast, On The Journey with Matt, Ken, and Kenny.

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