



June 2024 CHNewsletter

When Fairness to the Church Leads You Home by Chris Kellam	1
A Note from JonMarc: Ora et Labora by JonMarc Grodi	4
Echoes of the Apostles: St. Justin Martyr by Jim Anderson	5
The Convert Martyrs of Uganda by Matt Swaim	5

THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

Journeys Home

When Fairness to the Church Leads You Home

By Chris Kellam

It was 2018, and I was catching up on life with a college friend. For a brief time after graduation in 2016, we had both been youth ministers at separate churches in Jacksonville, Florida—he at an Episcopal Church, I at a Presbyterian one. He had left his job to return to grad school, and I was excited to hear how it was going. After a few minutes of casual conversation, he hit me with a bomb: “Well Kellam... I’m on the road to Rome.” When he said this, I thought he was telling me about a study abroad program of some kind and congratulated him. He quickly clarified that he was in the process of converting to the Roman Catholic Church and would be confirmed as a member that upcoming Easter. I was taken aback. What was he talking about? Didn’t he know that Catholics become Protestants, not the other way around?



Unsure how to wrap my head around this decision, I began asking him questions about why he was doing this. Somebody knowingly and willingly embracing Catholicism, in my mind, was akin to embracing Mormonism—or worse. It was just so obviously wrong. Even more confusing was that we had gone through the same undergraduate program together: Bible teaching. We had spent years learning to study, interpret, and teach the Bible, and if there

was one thing I thought I knew about Catholics, it was that they did not know the Bible. If they did know it, they would reject their beliefs and practices regarding the pope, Mary, the sacraments, purgatory, praying to the saints, a works-based salvation, and more. This had been the case with every person I knew who had been part of the Catholic Church at some point; when they began to learn the Bible, they walked away from the Catholic Church and its false teachings. My friend, however, already knew the Bible very well and was doing the exact opposite, and was convinced that in doing so, he was following Jesus. The more we talked,

Continued on page 2 ➡

the more it became clear he had arrived at his decision through extensive study, and I would not be able to show him his errors in this one brief conversation.

Clarifying Misunderstandings

About a year later, my friend moved back to Jacksonville, and we began having more regular conversations about theology and Catholicism. Each time we talked, our conversation typically followed the same pattern. I would bring up a Catholic doctrine any good Protestant knew was false and ask him how he squared it with Scripture. He would then explain what the Catholic Church *actually* taught on the topic and how it did not contradict Scripture. In addition, he would usually direct me to the writings of the Church Fathers who backed up the Catholic teachings.

For example, I had always heard of purgatory as a “second chance” at heaven for those who die without being saved, or a way to finish paying for your sins in the next life. The selling of indulgences (which free souls from purgatory) during the early 16th century is largely what sparked the Reformation. It seemed to me that purgatory and indulgences were clearly anti-biblical and an affront to the Gospel. However, my friend explained to me that this is not what purgatory is. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* summarizes the meaning of purgatory when it states that “all who die in God’s grace, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven” (CCC 1030). Purgatory is not a second chance at heaven for unrepentant sinners, but a state of purification for those who die in a state of grace but still have some level of attachment to sin. As Revelation 21:27 states regarding heaven, “Nothing unclean shall enter it.” How can a person enter heaven, the presence of the all-holy God, and still have impurity in their soul? Therefore, between death and entry into heaven, the forgiven but imperfect soul must somehow be purified. This purification is what

the Catholic Church calls purgatory. Explained this way, I reluctantly acknowledged that it at least made sense and was built upon biblical principles. In addition, the writings of various Church Fathers show that, from early Christian history, this doctrine was believed. St. Augustine, for example, writes, “Temporal punishments are suffered by some in this life only, by some after death, by some both here and hereafter, but all of them before that last and strictest judgment. But not all who suffer temporal punishments after death will come to eternal punishments, which are to follow after that judgment” (*The City of God* 21:13).

I wasn’t ready to embrace the doctrine, but I had to admit it wasn’t as terrible as I thought. It made a lot of sense, and properly understood, it didn’t contradict the Bible. Furthermore, there was more historical weight for Christians believing that doctrine than not, which put me on the wrong side of history. I quickly moved on to the next topic.

These conversations continued for about two years as I worked at my church. During this time, I learned that Catholics don’t have a works-based salvation, they don’t worship Mary, they believe the Bible, and on and on. Over the course of these conversations and my own study, I learned some important things: first, what I knew of the Catholic Church and its teachings was incorrect. Most of what I had been taught about the dissent from Catholic doctrines was based on misunderstandings and misrepresentations of what the Catholic Church actually teaches. As I kept telling my friend after each of my misunderstandings was corrected, “While I don’t agree with what you believe, I can at least see where the Church is coming from.” I don’t know how many times I used those words. I also didn’t know how much trouble I was in by beginning to be “fair” to the Catholic Church, as G.K. Chesterton says.

The second thing I came to see in a new and deeper way during this time was that everyone reads the Bible through some kind of theological lens. The Bible is not a systematic the-

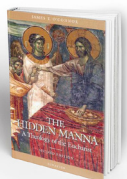
RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

THE HIDDEN MANNA: A THEOLOGY OF THE EUCHARIST

FR. JAMES T. O’CONNOR

In this in-depth study, Fr. O’Connor lets the breadth and richness of the Church’s Tradition speak for itself. Both historically and theologically, the author treats the Real Presence, Transubstantiation. the Eucharist as pledge and foretaste of heaven, as sacrifice, as the Sacrament of Sacraments.

#3035 - \$21.95

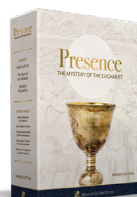


PRESENCE: THE MYSTERY OF THE EUCHARIST

PARISH EDITION DVD SET

Presence explores the radical mystery of God’s love expressed in the Eucharist and shows how, in this sacrament, God is really present to help and strengthen us at every step of life’s journey. This parish DVD study dives into the story of God’s love for his people in Scripture and the Church’s teaching on the Eucharist.

#3731 - \$39.95

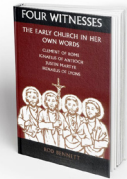


FOUR WITNESSES: THE EARLY CHURCH IN HER OWN WORDS

ROD BENNETT

With all the power and drama of a gripping novel, Rod Bennett takes readers on a journey of discovery of ancient and beautiful truths through the lives of four great saints of the early Church — Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus of Lyons.

#2595 - \$21.95



ology book or a catechism explaining every point of doctrine, but the story of salvation history. It must be interpreted, and the truths it teaches about God and the world are not always as plain as one might think. The denomination one is part of generally determines how one interprets the Bible and provides the lens through which it is read. It slowly became clear that the Catholic/Protestant debate is not a matter of the Bible's teachings *versus* the Catholic Church's teachings, but who is interpreting the Bible the right way. How could we solve this problem?

The Baptism Dilemma

While working at the Presbyterian church, I also began working toward a Master of Divinity degree through Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, with hopes of continuing a career in ministry and Bible teaching of some kind. At this time, my interest in the Catholic Church was still primarily one of curiosity and fairness—I wanted to be sure that, as a teacher, I was accurately representing those with whom I disagreed. Additionally, I found that I was in a perfect position to learn more about the Catholic Church through my classes and personal study. One topic I kept encountering that gave me trouble was baptism.

I had grown up in Non-denominational and Reformed Baptist churches, so working at a Presbyterian church was the first time in my life that I was part of a church that baptized babies. I wrestled with the extremely broad range of beliefs and practices surrounding baptism within Protestantism. Because baptism is viewed by most Protestants as a secondary theological issue, these differences are significant enough to cause Christians to worship in separate churches while not considering each other as heretics. This approach is often summarized with the phrase, “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.” The more I studied baptism, though, the more I questioned if it could really be considered a “non-essential” tenet of Christianity. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus gives the Great Commission to the apostles: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” How are they to accomplish this mission? By baptizing and teaching. If baptism is what Jesus clearly commanded his followers to do in the making of disciples, isn't it important that we get the questions of who, what, when, where, why, and how regarding it right? How could there be so many vastly different opinions on the most important outward sign of being a Christian?

My problems only deepened when, through my studies, I was faced with the reality that, before the Reformation, the consensus view of baptism held by Christians through all Church history was the Catholic position—baptismal regeneration. Two examples from St. Justin Martyr and St. Augustine illustrate this reality:

“Then they are led by us to a place where there is water, and they are reborn in the same kind of rebirth in which we ourselves were reborn: In the name of God, the Lord and Father of all, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they receive the washing of water. For Christ said, ‘Unless you be reborn, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven...The reason for doing this, we have learned from the Apostles.’” (St.

Justin Martyr, *The First Apology*, 61:14–17)

“This is the witness of Scripture too... If anyone wonders why children born of the baptized should themselves be baptized, let him attend briefly to this... The sacrament of baptism is most assuredly the sacrament of regeneration.” (St. Augustine, *On Merit and the Forgiveness of Sin, and the Baptism of Infants*, 2:27:43)

The testimony was overwhelming that this was what the early Church believed about baptism. I re-examined the New Testament teaching and found that nowhere does it describe baptism as a symbol of human action, but God's. In addition, it is never defined as being merely symbolic. On the contrary, each text (see Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21; Colossians 2:12) describes something taking place in baptism, namely God's action of regenerating, forgiving, adopting, uniting with Christ, and incorporating the baptized into the Church.

If baptismal regeneration was the correct interpretation of the scriptural passages on baptism, then it could not be a secondary issue, for through it we become God's children and are forgiven of our sins. And for the first 1500 years of Church history, there was agreement about the nature of baptism. Again, I found myself on the wrong side of Church history with little ground to stand on. Ulrich Zwingli, one of the Reformers, recognized this but still said the following: “In this matter of baptism—if I may be pardoned for saying it—I can only conclude that all the doctors have been in error from the time of the apostles.” (Zwingli, *On Baptism*). I could not bring myself to make the same claim.

Foundations Shaking

Convinced of baptismal regeneration by the biblical and historical data, I thought my main theological dilemma had been solved. But this theological shift surprised me, because I now agreed with the Catholic Church on an issue I previously believed the total opposite. It didn't cause me to consider becoming Catholic myself, since there were Protestant denominations that held this view of baptism. However, the underlying questions about authority and the interpretation of Scripture had begun to shake the foundations of many of my other long-held beliefs, as well.

My change of mind on baptism was simultaneously exciting and unsettling. The excitement stemmed from the result of discovering something new and being deeply convicted of its truth after studying it for so long. As time went on, however, it unsettled me because it caused me to wonder: if I had been wrong about baptism, could I be similarly wrong about other doctrines, especially Catholic ones? And how does the Church determine which doctrines and practices are the essential ones? Who decides that?

I had done enough basic study of Catholicism up to this point to have moved past the common misconceptions of it, but I still had the “I-don't-agree-with-where-you-are-but-I-see-how-you-got-there” attitude toward it. Nevertheless, discoveries up to this point led me to share some of my findings with my parents and older brother. In talking about what I had learned about Catholicism, I expressed frustration that so



A Note from Jon Marc



Dear Friends,

Ora et Labora—"prayer and work"—is the ancient motto of Saint Benedict of Nursia (c. AD 480–550), summing up his rule for monastic life. It expresses at once a practical need for balance between these two domains of life, and at the same time, presents to us a puzzle, whose solution is an essential part of our journey toward Christian maturity and transformation in Christ. What is the relationship between our prayer and our

work? As a college student noted to me recently after a talk I had given, "Prayer sure feels like work, most of the time." Most of us, I'm sure, can relate. I think the key here is that while our lives must necessarily contain both of these elements, ultimately a "balance" between them is perhaps the wrong way to understand their relationship. Rather, one of the them truly has priority—and it is in "putting first things first" that both our prayer and our work will draw us closer to Jesus Christ.

Humans have had a difficult relationship with their work (and their prayer) since the Fall. Originally, in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve enjoyed perfect union with God and each other, not to mention perfect internal order and harmony within themselves. Would there have been "work" in the garden? Certainly not "work" as we often experience it: drudgery, struggle, frustration, doubt. On the contrary, while man was tasked with "tilling and keeping" the garden, one can hardly conceive of this "work" as being something disconnected from his leisure and prayer—his relationship with God. Man would have gone about his "work" with perfect trust and confidence in God's providence. His work would have been a source of joy, peace, and fulfillment—accepting the invitation to be a co-worker/sub-creator with his God. Just as God's labor of creation before his "rest" on the seventh day could not have entailed a change in God's perfection or a disruption of His glory, so too, man's labor in the garden would not have been an interruption in or hindrance to his happiness and intimacy with the Lord.

The original temptation, which led to the original sin, was in one sense simply the introduction of doubt into Man's relationship with God, and thus the temptation to grasp—to "work"—at what man already received as a *pure gift*. Man had no need to earn God's love or to secure His providence. He had no need to "work" to secure his future. Like the prodigal son and his elder brother in Our Lord's parable, the Father says of Man: "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours"—and yet Adam and Eve are tempted to doubt this fact and to grasp at the "knowledge of good and evil."

One of the effects, thus, of the original sin was not only to drive a wedge between man and God (and indeed between man and other fellow human beings) but also to introduce an inner disintegration between man and his own soul, his own body, and the work of his hands. Since the Fall, "work" is now a point of struggle and temptation. Left un-transformed by the Gospel, it tends to lead us away from God and further into our

own rebellion. The quest of the people of God in the Old Testament, and now for Christians, has been to learn to lay down the merely human "work" that separates us from God and instead, to pick up the cross of Christ and to follow Him—to receive our "work" again as a gift, a gift that will heal us and bring us back to union with God.

Returning to our original question about the relationship between "ora et labora," we begin to see what is at stake: either we make prayer the foundation of our lives and allow it to transform and elevate our work, OR our (merely human) "work" will begin to erode and displace our relationship with God. It will go one way or the other in the end. It is for this reason God gave us the Sabbath day and commanded us to keep it holy. Every week we are commanded to lay down our "work" and to focus on worship, rest, and being with God and other people. The Lord's Day is God's gift of time and space through which we can rediscover the reality that *all of life is gift* and that the Lord is a good and provident Father. It is the day in which we pre-eminently put our faith into practice by offering up our desire to work, act, and grasp at life—and instead to simply rest in God and receive from Him.

Now the holy irony here is that keeping the Lord's Day holy—takes work! It takes work not just in the preparation, but in the carrying out itself. It is difficult to sit still, to make time, to be silent, to focus our minds, to pay attention. It is hard work to bathe, clothe, and get little children to Mass on time! It often takes a seemingly herculean effort of will and self-discipline to make ourselves slow down and to be present with God and with other people. It is precisely this denial of self and picking up of the cross through which Christ will heal and transform our hearts. The key here is to recognize that while "[prayer] always presupposes effort" (CCC 2725), prayer is most essentially not *our work*, but rather *God's gift to us*; our sometimes strenuous effort to make time for and enter into prayer is a result of the Fall that is still being undone. It takes "work" to "Be still, and know that [He is] God," (Psalm 46:10) but it is good and holy work.

The *Catechism* reminds us that "**We cannot pray 'at all times' if we do not pray at specific times, consciously willing it.**" (CCC 2697) It is through this conscious and deliberate prayer at specific times—the Holy Mass, Sunday prayer and leisure, and a daily rhythm of committed prayer—that we create (or more accurately, allow ourselves to receive from God) the opportunities to learn to pray at all times, so that everything in our lives—indeed all of our "work"—can then slowly yet surely be drawn up into our prayer and become part of it.

As always I want to thank you for and encourage you in your continual "labor" of prayer for this apostolate and the many men and women who are on the journey home to the Catholic Church. May the Lord hear our prayers and bless us with grace of perseverance in both our *Ora* and our *Labora*.

In Christ,

JonMarc Grodi

Echoes of the Apostles

ST. JUSTIN MARTYR

by Jim Anderson

One of the greatest benefits of reading the early Church Fathers is their witness to the beliefs and practices of the earliest Christians. The writings of St. Justin Martyr, the patron saint of Catholic apologists, are a fascinating window into the early Church. Justin was born c. AD 100 to a pagan family in Flavia Neapolis, the present-day Nablus, on the West Bank. After exploring several schools of philosophy, he was converted to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, c. AD 132, through the witness of an elderly Christian man while walking along the seashore. St. Justin began to travel around the Roman Empire teaching the truths of Christianity, eventually settling in Rome and founding a Christian school. Around the year AD 165, after debating with the Cynic philosopher Crescens, Justin was denounced to the Roman prefect. Along with six companions, he was beheaded for his faith in Christ.

In his *First Apology*, written c. AD 150, he describes the Mass as it was celebrated in his day, bearing many similarities to ours over 1,800 years later:



“[At] the place where those who are called brethren are assembled, in order that we may offer hearty prayers in common for ourselves...and for all others in every place...having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the presider of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying, ‘Amen.’ And when the presider has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion.”
[*First Apology*, chap. 65]

St. Justin further testifies to the established understanding of both baptismal regeneration and the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist: “And this food is called *Εὐχαριστία* [Eucharist], and no one is permitted to partake of it, except those who believe that what has been taught us is true, and have been washed [baptized] for the remission of sins and unto regeneration, and thus live as Christ handed down. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.” [First Apology, chap. 66]

Having written the following almost 175 years before the time of Constantine, St. Justin also provides a strong witness against the assertion that Constantine imposed Sunday worship upon Christians: “But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead” [First Apology, chap. 67].

There are certainly a multitude of other examples in his writings that illustrate the consistency and continuity of the Catholic Church’s practices and teaching throughout the centuries. Ultimately, St. Justin Martyr (and all the Church Fathers) have passed down a lasting witness of how Scripture and Sacred Tradition were faithfully lived out by our ancient brothers and sisters who still had the voices of the Apostles echoing in their hearts.

St. Justin Martyr, pray for us.
Feast Day: June 1

CHNetwork team members will be at the *Defending the Faith Conference* at the **Franciscan University of Steubenville July 27–29**. Be sure to stop by and say hello if you plan to attend!

Joyful Journey Updates

Cynthia C., a former Evangelical minister

Has it really been almost 4 years since I've touched base? Well here I am...still loving everything about being a Catholic! It still amazes me every time I remember the way I was guided into the Church. I continue to dive deeper and deeper. I cantor, read scripture and plan to lead RCIA! The Coming Home Network retreat I attended early on in my journey gave me so much courage. Leaving the ministry in the Evangelical world and entering into the Catholic Church, I felt like a stranger in a strange land. But I continue to be amazed...AMAZED...at all God and Jesus and Mary have done in my life. ■

Don, a former Church of Christ elder

Things are going quite well. It is a long haul but certainly worth it. In other great news, one of our adult daughters has attended Mass with us twice in the past week and is asking questions and watching *Ascension Presents* videos on YouTube. We have four adult daughters and all are expressing curiosity which is exciting as we raised them as Protestants. While one has attended Mass, the others are open to it (even our son in law!).

Also, I have found some enriching Catholic community in a local chapter of Benedictine Oblates. I've attended these monthly meetings since September and appreciate the

fellowship. All in the group seem to be seasoned, faithful Catholics. And at 55 years of age, I'm one of the youngest in the group. I am still discerning becoming a novice and eventually an Oblate. ■

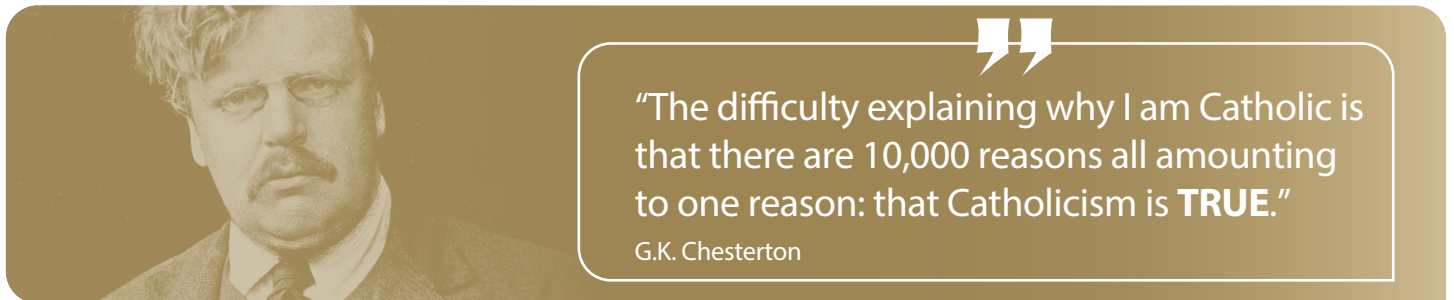
From Janis J., Former Anglican

Words cannot express how helpful everyone at EWTN and the Coming Home Network has been to me since I discerned that God was guiding me to the Catholic faith. Everyone online has been so nice and supportive. I was very excited to receive my Confirmation and my First Holy Communion at the Easter Vigil! Since I left the Anglican Church in December 2022, I had not had any host or wine. When the time came for me to take the Eucharist at the Easter Vigil, I was overwhelmed. ■

James S., former Presbyterian

The Easter Vigil was wonderful—lived up to the hype for sure. The readings, the psalms, the rites, all leading up to reception of the Eucharist for the first time. What else can I say but I've come home! All of us confirmandi were giddy as kids afterwards despite it being so late. Truly a night I'll remember for a long, long time. Thank you for all you and your ministry have done for me and those like me. It's been such a blessing to have so great a resource to lean on during this time. ■

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



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, June 3

Alan Webb

Former Mainline Protestant

Monday, June 10

Matt & Rachel Sheils

Former Salvation Army Officers

Monday, June 17

Monica Anyango

Catholic "Revert"

Monday, June 24

Lee & Valiree Sondeno

Former Pentecostal Music Ministers

Monday, July 1

Fr. Ken Geraci

Catholic "Revert"

Schedule is subject to change.

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



Fr. George Foley
Donor since 2022 - 2 years

I was ordained to the priesthood in November 1958, and have served in God's Church for sixty-six years in many capacities—parish priest, leprosy hospital chaplain, mission priest in outlying rural areas, and even a military and prison chaplain for four years. When I was a younger man, I left the country of my birth and emigrated to America. Thanks to the faithful witness of my dear, late Catholic mother and Father, I have always loved the Catholic faith as did all of my now-departed five siblings. I have given my life to the Church which I love. Through good times and hard times, I have enjoyed every minute of my years in ministry.

I discovered *The Journey Home* television program many years ago on EWTN, and have been a regular viewer even to this day. However, the unique ministry of The Coming Home Network—which helps many non-Catholic ministers to come home to the Catholic Church—became very personal to me in 2016, in my final year of priestly ministry in Texas. An Episcopal priest in a nearby town contacted me on the telephone and told me he was leaving his pastoral ministry and coming into the Catholic Church. He asked me to hear his first confession! I was so blessed, and so shocked to have such a thing happen. He is now an ordained Catholic priest in a parish in Missouri.

Since my retirement, I have felt that I should put the rewards of my labor to work, to be used to assist those non-Catholic ministers coming into the Catholic Church. And like that Episcopal priest whose journey led him into the Church and to Holy Orders, perhaps my gifts will help others to follow in my footsteps; to teach and preach the Doctrines of the Catholic Church which I taught.

I hope my testimonial will inspire readers to support The Coming Home Network. We cannot take any of this earthly treasure with us to the heavenly home we hope to occupy for eternity. Like those stewards, entrusted with gifts in Matthew 25:14-30, may we put God's resources to good use in helping others find their way home to the Church. ■

Fr. George Foley is a retired Catholic priest in Mansfield, Texas where he was the pastor of St. Jude Catholic Church. He began supporting the ministry of the Coming Home Network with an annual gift in November 2011. To join him in supporting our mission, return the enclosed envelope, or give online (chnetwork.org/donate).

CHNETWORK STAFF, ADVISORS, & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President/Founder
Marcus Grodi
(former Presbyterian pastor)

Executive Director
JonMarc Grodi

Ministry Membership & Pastoral Care Coordinator
Jim Anderson
(former Lutheran)

Office Manager
Ann Moore

Studio Manager
Bill Bateson
(former Secularist)

Director of Pastoral Care
Ken Hensley
(former Baptist minister)

Director of Outreach
Matt Swaim
(former Methodist)

Developer of Web & New Media
Seth Paine
(former non-denominational)

Director of Development
Kenny Burchard
(former Foursquare pastor)

Communications Coordinator
Rakhi McCormick
(former Hindu)

Pastoral Care Coordinator
Melissa Slagle
(former Baptist)

Ecclesial Advisor & Chaplain
Msgr. Jeffrey N. Steenson
(former Episcopal bishop)


Financial Advisor
Kevin Lowry
(former Presbyterian)

Spiritual Advisor
Br. Rex Anthony Norris
(former Anglican)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS


Marcus Grodi (President)
Msgr. Jeffrey N. Steenson (V. President)
Kevin Lowry (Treasurer)
Donald Brey (Director)

 CHNetwork
P.O. Box 8290,
Zanesville, OH
43702-8290

 740.450.1175

 info@chnetwork.org

Find us on Social Media

 The Coming Home Network International

 CHNetwork

 ComingHomeNetwork

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.

PARTNERS IN *Mission*

JOIN US ON OUR NEXT DEEP IN HISTORY PILGRIMAGE TO POLAND

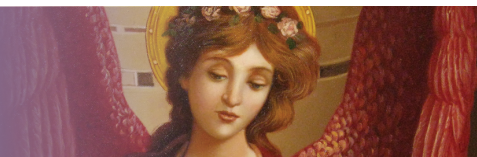
SEPT. 2-13, 2024

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

Find complete details, including a full itinerary and registration forms, at chnetwork.org/poland.



Prayer List



Clergy

■ **For Paul, an Evangelical minister** who faces the prospect of finding an entirely new way to support his large family when he leaves his current position to enter the Church.

■ **For Ralph, an Evangelical pastor** beginning to explore Catholic teaching and seeking resources and instruction from the Coming Home Network.

■ **For Houston, a Methodist pastor** who resigned his ministry last year, began working in another field, and entered the Church in December 2023 through the reception of the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion.

■ **For Tim, a Lutheran pastor** who finds himself drawn to the Church and wonders how he will make a living 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 and beginning to contemplate the reality that the Holy Spirit is drawing him to leave his pastoral ministry to become Catholic.

■ **For Nathan, an Assemblies of God pastor** who is convinced that he will need to become Catholic and struggling with the effect this will have on his family and his ability to support them.

■ **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 Kelvin, a former Baptist minister** who is reading widely in Catholic theology and apologetics and seeking answers to his remaining questions.

■ **For Thomas, a former Episcopal priest** recently welcomed into full communion with the Catholic Church and discerning his future as a Catholic.

■ **For Elijah, a 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 James, a Lutheran chaplain** who wants to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church and is working to navigate the steps involved in becoming a Catholic chaplain.

■ **For Adam, a Christian Reformed pastor** who has come to the decision he must become Catholic and is beginning to work through the implications for his vocation, his family, and his ability to earn a living.

Laity

■ **For Eliza, a Presbyterian**, that she be confirmed in the Church if it is God's will, that her fears be lessened and her discernment strengthened by the Lord toward His truth, and lastly, that she would receive a strong formation in her faith.

■ **For Anna, an Anglican**, that she and her husband will walk on the same path in their faith journey.

■ **For Erin, an Assemblies of God member**, that there may be family unity in the faith.

■ **For Boyd, an Anglican**, that she may find new employment and for the health of her daughter.

■ **For Miranda, an Episcopalian**, that she may be granted clear discernment, a loving transition from her former denomination into the future, and courage

to grow in her faith as she seeks a closer relationship with God and growth in community.

■ **For Paul, a former Catholic** who is on the journey back home to the Church, that the grace and love of our Lord Jesus who guide him to the sacraments of grace.

■ **For Timothy, an Evangelical**, that his wife would become open to his interest in the Catholic faith and that the Lord would open her heart as well.

■ **For Harry, a former Catholic**, that he may be granted the grace to return to our Lord Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

■ **For Jeff, an Evangelical and Reformed brother**, that his desire to understand the true Gospel and God's plan of salvation will draw him to full-communication with the Catholic Church.

■ **For a Jewish brother in Israel**, that his love for the Messiah would bring him rejoicing into the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church founded by Yeshua.

■ **For Larry, a Pentecostal**, that he would get helpful advice that will assist him to overcome the false things he has been taught all his life about the Catholic Church.

■ **For Tony, an Independent Baptist**, that our Lord Jesus would open his heart to accept all that is true about the Blessed Virgin Mary.

■ **For Dave, a Non-denominational Evangelical**, that the Holy Spirit would guide him to a deeper relationship with Jesus and his holy Church.

■ **For Thomas, an Inter-denominational Christian**, that he may find love and truth in the Catholic faith of his youth.

■ **For Alejandro**, that, as he journeys back home to the Catholic Church, his faith would become ever more strong in the promises of our Lord.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6

The Ugandan Martyrs: Conviction, Conversion, and Courage

by Matt Swaim



Relics

Matthew Malumba,

Martyr: Uganda

Killed May 27, 1886 by dismemberment

Charles Lwanga,

Martyr: Uganda

Killed June 3, 1886 by burning

THE STORY OF THE UGANDAN MARTYRS is a powerful account of heroic faith in the face of persecution. All of them were young men, some of them teenagers. And all of them knew that their conversion to the Catholic faith would likely cost them their lives.

In 1879, the king of Buganda, Kabaka Mukabya, invited French Catholic missionaries into his kingdom. He had no interest in Christianity himself; he was more interested in the educational opportunities the missionaries might bring. What the Kabaka did not expect was that the message of the Gospel would have such a powerful impact among his people.

When Mukabya died, and his son, Mwanga, claimed the throne, he allowed the missionaries to continue their work, but he quickly became angry with the way that the conversions were affecting his royal

court. Mwanga wanted the young men and boys who served in his court to submit themselves to immoral acts with him, and because of their newfound faith, these young converts refused to participate.

The head steward of the palace, a 25-year old convert named Joseph Mukasa Balikuddembe, pleaded with the king to not force these acts upon his pages and servants. In response, the furious Mwanga had Joseph beheaded, and his body burned.

Witnessing this martyrdom, a young catechumen named Charles Lwanga, who was in charge of some of the royal pages, felt compelled to approach the missionaries, from whom he urgently requested and received Baptism, despite having seen one of his own friends and fellow court attendants die that very day. St. Charles Lwanga was baptized on the same day that St. Joseph Mukasa was martyred: November 15th, 1885.

Mwanga's attempt to intimidate through violence was ineffective; even more young Ugandans from his court sought catechesis and baptism. Christian teachings against sexual vi-

olence, polygamy, and inhumane treatment of prisoners only made Mwanga more and more angry with these new Christians. The tide was turning toward the Gospel in his kingdom, and he chose to act swiftly and decisively against it.

On May 26th, 1886, Charles Lwanga, who had only himself been baptized a few months earlier, baptized a group of young pages, including a boy named Kizito, who was only 14. Later that day, Mwanga returned to his compound after an unsuccessful hunting trip, and looking for the attendants of his royal court, found that many of them had left to go pray together. Outraged, Mwanga locked down the palace, summoned all his pages, and commanded each of them to admit whether or not they were Christians. Those who were, answered in the affirmative, including the 14 year-old Kizito, who had been baptized only hours before.

Mwanga condemned them all to death. The young men were tied together and marched 37 miles to a wooded area. As they marched, Charles Lwanga, who had catechized many of them, led them in prayer and reminded them of the catechism lessons he had taught them. Kizito, the youngest of the group, kept up their spirits with songs, and even laughter.

When they reached the execution site on June 3rd, the prisoners were rolled into straw mats and fed into a fire. In all, sixteen young convert men were martyred that day, including Charles Lwanga, who had baptized many of them. As he was being burned, Lwanga is reported to have said to his executioners, "It is as if you are pouring water on me. Please repent and become a Christian like me."

In 1920, Pope Benedict XV formally beatified a large group of these martyrs who died under the reign of Kubaka Mwanga, and in October of 1964, Pope Paul VI canonized them. Their feast is celebrated on June 3rd, the date that Charles Lwanga and his companions were marched to the fire.

Catholics were not the only ones who suffered persecution under Mwanga's rule; several Anglican converts were martyred as well. As with the Catholic martyrs of Uganda, the Anglican calendar also observes their feast on June 3rd.

The courage of Sts. Joseph Mukasa, Charles Lwanga, Kizito, and their companions is extraordinary. For all who follow Christ on the path of conversion, there is a cost. Sometimes that cost includes confusion or opposition from loved ones, or even having to start one's life over from scratch. But the courage of the Ugandan Martyrs, who requested baptism knowing it would almost certainly cost them their lives, is a powerful witness to all of us who are praying for the strength to follow God's will, however difficult it may seem to us in the moment.

MARTYRS OF UGANDA, PRAY FOR US!

many Protestants didn't understand Catholic theology. I explained to them various Catholic beliefs such as why they have priests, what they really believe about Mary, and where they find their basis for the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist in Scripture. Hesitantly, they listened to me.

My parents raised my siblings and me with a commitment to teach us to know and love God. I owe my faith to them more than anyone in my life. The Second Vatican Council states in *Lumen Gentium* that, "The family is, so to speak, the domestic church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children" (LG, 11). My parents exemplified this in both aspects described: word and example. We had family devotions together every night, memorized Scripture, sang hymns, and faithfully attended church. There wasn't anything explicitly hostile towards the Catholic Church in the practice of our faith, but we were informed and convinced of our Protestantism, so there was a natural bias and negative outlook towards Catholicism.

After several months of conversations, I realized that I was scaring them when they sent me a concerned, loving email, expressing caution about a few Catholic beliefs. They told me that it would be easier for them if I became Anglican. I reassured them that I had zero intention of becoming Catholic and that I was primarily concerned with fair and honest conversations between the two sides.

My older brother and I have always loved discussing theology, so when I told him that I believed in baptismal regeneration, he created a group chat with some other friends who also liked debating theology to discuss the topic. We went back and forth for a couple of weeks, and after the discussion had run its course, one of them jokingly asked what topic we could discuss next where everyone could gang up on me. I responded, "Well, I'm okay with relics, icons, and prayer to the saints." As you can imagine, the conversation quickly moved there.

I had been only half serious, still firmly in the "understanding but not embracing" stage regarding these practices. I had not yet prayed a Hail Mary or venerated an icon myself, but I was starting to wonder why I shouldn't. So once again, I found myself defending the Catholic Church, even though I reassured others (and now, myself as well) that I was not, and would not, become Catholic. I simply wanted the Catholic claims to be taken seriously, because then I could accurately and fully evaluate them, and then, once and for all, reject them.

As I tried to find Protestant engagement with Catholic beliefs, however, I repeatedly ran into the same basic anti-Catholic argument: where is that in the Bible? The problem with this question is that it completely misses the point of the Catholic/Protestant divide. As mentioned before, doctrinal disagree-

ments cannot simply be solved by asking, "What does the Bible say?" because, as St. Vincent of Lerins says, there are as many interpretations of Scripture as there are interpreters (*The Commonitory of St. Vincent*, II, 5). So how are we supposed to solve interpretive disagreements?

The breakdown of the principle of *sola Scriptura* was complete for me when two realities became obvious. The first was that Scripture itself doesn't teach *sola Scriptura*. The second was that before one can determine how to interpret the Word of God, they must know *what the Word of God is*. Which books belong in the Bible? On this question, like so many others, Christians disagree. The Bible itself does not give us a list of books which are inspired by God. This means that one must go outside the Bible to determine the canon. However, if only the Bible is an infallible authority, then any outside group determining the canon by definition is fallible, and therefore they could have gotten the list of books wrong.

This twofold crisis of the dismantling of the Protestant structure of authority and the problem of the canon promptly moved me from "fair, but contentedly removed from the Catholic Church," to seriously wondering and worrying if it was right. Its threefold authority structure of Scripture,

Tradition, and the Magisterium seemed to provide the only reasonable solution to these problems. With this structure, questions like that of the biblical canon can be answered. This is because the Church is guided by the Holy Spirit through its divinely instituted teaching authority, the Magisterium.

I was now acutely aware of the impact the answer to these questions would have on my current job, career, school, and life. Not knowing how much longer I'd be able to continue working at my church while questioning so many fundamental tenets of Protestantism,

I knew I needed to figure out if Catholicism's claim to be the authoritative interpreter of Scripture was true. However, with a full-time job and taking seminary classes, I wasn't sure how much time I'd have to dedicate to this level of study. Then, COVID hit, and everything shut down.

The Final Stage

Suddenly, like everyone else, I found myself stuck at home with a lot of extra time on my hands. I focused my study on the question of authority and the canon of Scripture. I saw that the Catholic Church's claims to authority affected not only its uniquely Catholic dogmas, but also Christianity as a whole. If *sola Scriptura* is true, then foundational beliefs like the Trinity and the deity of Christ could be called into question because the orthodox formulations of such doctrines required Ecumenical Councils to formulate them. Furthermore, how could I trust the Bible itself unless the Church is guided by the Holy



I was inconsistently relying on the Catholic Church for the Bible itself, for fundamental doctrines like the Trinity and the nature of Christ, but was throwing out other beliefs simply because they were Catholic.

...Journeys Home Continued...

Spirit to get the books contained in it correct? As St. Augustine said, "I would not believe in the Gospels were it not for the authority of the Catholic Church" (*Against the Letter of Mani Called "The Foundations,"* 5:6).

G.K. Chesterton powerfully describes this discrepancy with an analogy of an ornate priestly procession going down the street, laden with their canopies, headdresses, staffs, scrolls, images, candles, relics, and more. He writes:

"I can understand the spectator saying, 'This is all hocus-pocus... I can even understand him, in moments of irritation, breaking up the procession, throwing down the images, tearing up the scrolls, dancing on the priests and anything else that might express that general view... But in what conceivable frame of mind does he rush in to select one particular scroll of the scriptures of this one particular group (a scroll which had always belonged to them and been a part of their hocus-pocus, if it was hocus-pocus); why in the world should the man in the street say that one particular scroll was not bosh, but was the one and only truth by which all the other things were to be condemned?" (*The Catholic Church and Conversion,* Ignatius Press: 1926. 39-40)

I realized that, as a Protestant, I was inconsistently relying on the Catholic Church for the Bible itself, for fundamental formulations of doctrine like the Trinity and the nature of Christ, but was throwing out other beliefs simply because they were Catholic. It was apparent that the Catholic Church's threefold structure of authority—Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium—was necessary to have confidence in the sources and truths of our faith. Through this means, Christ's promise to lead His Church into all truth through the Holy Spirit is ensured, and protection from error is guaranteed.

I also found, through the New Testament and onwards through the writings of the Church Fathers, that the early Church was centralized, hierarchical, and universal, not individually governed or congregational. The Catholic Church was the only Church that still could claim continuity with the early Church in both form and doctrine and the only Church that had ongoing means by which it could be protected from error through its Magisterium and Apostolic Succession. The biblical, historical, and epistemological weight of the Catholic Church's position was overwhelming.

When COVID restrictions began to lift, I attended Mass when possible, but I wasn't yet ready to swim the Tiber. I didn't have any more doctrinal hang ups, but I still had a fear that I might have missed something or not studied enough. And, if I did take the plunge, what if something down the road changed my mind again?

Amid this uncertainty and fear, however, the knowledge that God is a God of truth and promises to lead us into the truth if we are honest and obedient, gave me the comfort and courage I needed to step out in faith. In addition, I had begun praying the Rosary, and I'm convinced that the intercession of Mary, who always points us to her Son (John 2:5), helped calm my fears and strengthen my trust in God's guidance.

Thus, at the end of summer 2020, I stopped protesting the Catholic Church. I began telling my family, friends, and church of my decision to convert. These were some of the most difficult conversations I've ever had, and joining the Catholic Church led to the loss of some relationships. Becoming Catholic, of course, does involve the denial of some Protestant distinctives and the acceptance of one's incompatibility with it, but I see my entrance into Catholicism as an embracing of the fullness of Christianity, not a conversion to a different religion. I learned to love Jesus, the Bible, truth, and what it means to follow Him from the countless Protestants in my life, and because of them I had the courage to continue to do so into His Church.

Once I had decided, I did not want to wait to be confirmed and receive the Eucharist, but thought it would be wise to go through RCIA first. I enrolled in the RCIA class at the local parish, had my first confession after a few months, and was joyfully confirmed at the Easter Vigil in April 2021. My confirmation saint was St. Ignatius of Antioch, an Apostolic Father whose writings were instrumental in my journey.

The most common question I've received, of course, is why I converted. I always have trouble answering this question, though. How can I pick one thing? Over the course of my journey, I became convinced of the truth of the Catholic faith one piece at a time. To be sure, the question of authority and interpretation is foundational and the most important, and ultimately what it came down to for me. The truth of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is itself a singularly great reason to convert. The beauty of the liturgy, the grace of the sacraments, the deep historical roots, the communion of saints... I could go on. But in my moment of decision, it was because I knew it was true, and I knew that, no matter the cost, I had to surrender to the Truth.

The second most common question I've received, due to the nature of my conversion primarily involving theological study, is whether my conversion has been beneficial for my spiritual life and relationship with the Lord, and not just an intellectual conversion. This question is also difficult to answer because it drives an unnecessary wedge between the mind and heart in one's walk with the Lord. Ask any married man and he will probably tell you that the more he gets to know his wife, the more he loves her. It has been no different for me upon entering the Church. To know God is to love Him, and to grow in my knowledge of Him and His love for me, more fully and deeply than ever before, within the Catholic Church has been transformative. ■

Chris Kellam was born and raised in Colorado, and now lives in Jacksonville, FL, where he met and married his wife Taylor after entering the Catholic Church. They have one son and another baby on the way. He has a Masters Degree in Theology from Ave Maria University and teaches theology at a Catholic high school.

The Coming Home Network International
PO Box 8290
Zanesville, OH 43702-8290

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

O most holy Heart of Jesus,

FOUNTAIN OF EVERY BLESSING, I ADORE YOU,
I LOVE YOU, AND WITH A LIVELY SORROW FOR
MY SINS, I OFFER YOU THIS POOR HEART OF
MINE. MAKE ME HUMBLE, PATIENT, PURE,
AND WHOLLY OBEDIENT TO YOUR WILL.
GRANT, GOOD JESUS, THAT I MAY LIVE IN
YOU AND FOR YOU. PROTECT ME IN THE
MIDST OF DANGER; COMFORT ME IN MY
AFFLICTIONS. GIVE ME HEALTH OF BODY,
ASSISTANCE IN MY TEMPORAL NEEDS,
YOUR BLESSING ON ALL THAT I DO, AND
THE GRACE OF A HOLY DEATH. AMEN.

Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus—June 7



THE
COMING HOME
NETWORK
INTERNATIONAL