



## June 2023 CHNewsletter

- “A Protestant Pastor Stops Protesting”  
by James D. Whittaker.....1
- “Journeying With Jesus: An At-Home Retreat”.....6
- EWTN's *The Journey Home* schedule.....7
- Prayer List.....8
- Partners in Mission.....9

# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

Journeys Home

## A Protestant Pastor Stops Protesting

By James D. Whittaker

My faith journey to the Catholic Church took me through several different denominations and several different states. I was brought up in a Southern Baptist Church in Sophia, West Virginia. My grandfather was one of the founding members of that congregation. The founding members hand built that church by laying the foundational cinder block walls. It was there that I learned Bible verses, attended vacation Bible school and Sunday school. My love of God was formed through this congregation.



### Letters to Billy Graham and Watching Bullwinkle

I heard God speaking to me at an early age while at my grandfather's church. I wanted to know more. My curiosity concerning all things Christian was hard to satisfy. I wrote to Billy Graham many times in those early years. I came forward one Sunday at that Southern Baptist Church and gave my life to Christ, because I felt God nudging me. In the Methodist tradition of my adult life, we would call that prevenient grace. God was wooing me toward him. I was baptized at ten years of age by full-immersion baptism.

My most difficult years as a Christian were my adolescent time, between 10 and 16 years of age. My mom and dad had stopped going to church, so

my grandparents took me to church on Sundays. But sometimes, I stayed home to watch Bullwinkle instead.

My faith was revived when the young woman who would become my wife asked me to attend youth group with her at her Freewill Baptist Church. At a youth event, I renewed my faith in Christ at age 16. I immediately read the entire Bible and felt called to do something for God, something like becoming a missionary. My mom wanted me to go to a regular college instead of one of the Bible institutes, so I went to Glenville State. I didn't want to be part of the Baptist Student Union, even though I was Baptist, since I wanted to have experience of different denominations. My curiosity for learning more about the Christian faith in full swing, I ended up attending the Intersivarsity Fellowship. There, at age 18, I ran into many Methodists and even met my first Catholic. He lived in the same dorm as I, and along with the many Methodists, we had daily

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

prayer together. Five of that group of seven would later become Methodist pastors.

### A Retreat Borrowed From the Catholic Church

I received my Associate degree. Dianna and I got married and moved to Huntington, West Virginia. We started attending an independent Fundamental Baptist church. We liked it because of their Bible-focused teaching. I then began attending a local Bible college in South Point, Ohio, called Tri-State Bible College. At that time, we began having children. Going to work in the day and attending school at night became difficult, due to the extra responsibility of children. In 1983, I was laid off and began attending Marshall University for my accounting degree.

Within a few years, we moved to Raleigh, North Carolina, where I focused on work. We began attending a Methodist Church in Cary, North Carolina, where we met a lot of former Catholics. In the Methodist Church, we learned about grace and a different way to look at the book of Revelation and spiritual disciplines.

The Walk to Emmaus, a Methodist retreat program, sparked a fire in my faith and took me to a new level in my relationship to God. It was a retreat created by the Catholic Church and borrowed by the United Methodists. The original (Catholic) retreat is known as Cursillo (Spanish for “the short course”). The Emmaus Retreat is a three-day retreat for adults, and I came back changed. Two years later, at a men’s retreat, I felt God calling me to full-time ministry. I resigned my secular position and began serving two small churches in Louisburg while attending Duke Seminary.

This is really where my journey toward the Catholic faith began. In my first semester at Duke, I took a Church history class, where I encountered the early Church and learned that St. Ignatius of Antioch, from the second century, said that the Eucharist is the “medicine of immortality.” My professor, Dr. Warren Smith, introduced us to this saint, saying that he was born in 35 AD and died as a martyr in 108 AD. When I heard my professor quote Ignatius concerning the Eucharist as the medicine of immortality for the soul, I knew the early Church did not believe Communion was merely symbolic.

### When Jesus Spoke, They Walked Away

Another of my professors at Duke said that a colleague of his prayed the Rosary, but praying to Mary was a mile too far for my professor. This sparked my curiosity about the Rosary. (Now, as a Catholic, I pray the Rosary every day and have done so for years.)

Yet another professor, David Steinmetz, believed the Catholic Church has the best position on the Eucharist. In the second semester of the Church history class, we were shown four views of Communion. The first was the Catholic view, or Transubstantiation. The second was the Lutheran view, or Consubstantiation. The third was the mainline Protestant view, where God is present, though we do not know exactly how or in what manner; Methodists believe in this spiritual presence. The fourth is more of a Baptist view, in which the elements merely symbolize Christ’s presence and saving work on the cross. For this reason, Baptist celebration of Communion occurs only once a quarter. At this point, Dr. Steinmetz surprised us by saying that Catholics have the best defense for their interpretation

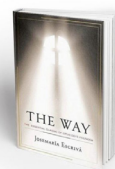
## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT BY THOMAS HOWARD

Through his prolific and highly regarded writing, Thomas Howard’s name is familiar to Protestants and Catholics alike, but many have never heard the story of his conversion to Catholicism. With grace, charm, and wit, Dr. Howard describes his journey from Evangelicalism to Anglicanism, and finally, to the Church of Rome. In a world saturated with fashionable unbelief, Howard’s testimony inspires and informs. #3053 • \$9.95

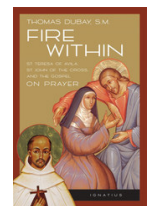


Reflecting Josemaría Escrivá’s belief that God can be found in professional and everyday settings, *The Way* blends passages from sacred Scripture with anecdotes drawn from Escrivá’s life and work, snatches of conversation, and selections from his personal letters. The direct, conversational writing style and its deeply felt humanity are among the book’s main attractions and beautifully convey the belief that the human is not foreign to the divine and that the fully Christian spiritual attitude can be described as unity of life. #3239 • \$16.00



### FIRE WITHIN BY FR. THOMAS DUBAY

This book is the fruit of Fr. Dubay’s many years of study and experience in spiritual direction, and in it he synthesizes the teachings on prayer of the two great doctors of the Church on prayer—St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila—and the teaching of Sacred Scripture. #3003 • \$19.95



because they believe exactly what the Bible says — a literal interpretation. Anyone deviating from a literal interpretation has to explain why the literal interpretation is wrong.

Such an astute observation by a Church History professor would shake any Protestant up a bit. Where would one begin to prove anything less than a literal interpretation of this passage? Could one point to anyone of that era who believed Jesus was not being literal? Were Protestants “walking away” from the teaching because, like those biblical followers who walked away from Jesus, they, too, considered it a “hard saying”?

The professor was referring to John’s Gospel, chapter 6, where Jesus says, “This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die.” He goes on to say, “...if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.” So much is at stake here that it sounds like a passage a person wouldn’t want to misinterpret. What kind of food is this bread? “The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

The world has never stopped murmuring, right along with those early followers. But Jesus did not back down; He did not reword with a changed meaning. Instead, He said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

We cannot just write off this discourse. A Christian, by definition, should want to heed what Jesus says: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.”

The actual verb Jesus used for “eat” means to gnaw. People were so offended that many disciples left Jesus at this time, and he didn’t shout out to them that this was a parable or symbolic. Instead, he looked at his twelve remaining disciples and asked, “Are you leaving me too?” It is heartbreaking! Jesus stands there, and He faces rejection, even though He is God and has come to save them. He is laying out for them how to be made fit for eternity, but they want nothing of it. They want more of last night’s fish and biscuits.

We know from Church history that the early Christians were considered cannibals because they ate the body and blood of Jesus Christ. This is part of the reason why Christianity was considered repulsive to the Romans.

It was difficult for me to process just how underutilized this chapter of the Bible is in the Protestant tradition. I felt the full meaning of this passage had been kept hidden. It is pretty clear here that Jesus meant what he said literally. I was surprised that I did not know the rich tradition of the Church regarding the Eucharist. We had shortchanged the significance of this sacrament in many Protestant churches. It would be some years before I actually yearned for the Eucharist, but I was well on my journey, thanks to this course on the history of the Church.

## Startling Revelations

Duke is an academic institution that prides itself on academics, so that I found myself throughout the four years of Divinity School frequently receiving nudges or even being pushed toward the Catholic faith through their rigorous studies. I studied the Pauline epistles and had to write a 40-page paper on a small passage of my choice. I purposely chose a passage where I might get answers through my study to what I considered a difficult passage. In 1 Corinthians 15:29, it says, “What do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead?” I expected to find an answer. I researched in the library, bought commentaries, and talked to my professor. No one could tell me what it meant. At times, I suspected that I had been given incomplete or vague answers because the real answer was a Catholic one. I later discovered that the Catholic answer was that, while it is confusing and not clear, according to the Navarre Study Bible, it probably was an early form of praying for the dead, in view of their eventual resurrection, that was not practiced by the larger Church. This then opened me up to praying for the dead, even by way of the truncated version of the (Protestant) Bible. The Catholic Bible, which retains the books thrown out by Protestants, gives an even fuller picture of interceding for the dead in 2 Maccabees 12:39–45. I was beginning to realize that my own Protestant tradition did not point out things that conflicted with the Protestant understanding of the Bible. In other words, some things were ignored.

One of the most startling moments was yet to come. When I took Advanced Methodist Theology from world-renowned Methodist scholar Geoffrey Wainwright, I was told that the basic premise of Methodist theology was Catholic. To be sure, there were some changes made to call it Protestant, but the theology definitely was not the anti-Catholic theology devised by John Calvin. Methodists do not preach “once saved always saved,” even if some in the pews believe that theology. I was dumbfounded and tried to argue against the premise that Methodist theology was basically Catholic. But I finally gave in and accepted that I had come to love Catholic theology.

## What You Practice Is What You Believe

When I assimilated these eye-opening moments at seminary with the practice of morning prayer in the Anglican tradition and with the Book of Common Prayer, I was again nudged toward the Catholic faith during these four years. Nevertheless, my journey was not complete. In fact, this was only the beginning. My eyes had been opened to some theological truths of the Catholic faith. But it was the practice of spiritual disciplines that moved me even closer. This part of my journey lasted about six years.



...Dr. Steinmetz surprised us by saying that Catholics have the best defense for their interpretation because they believe exactly what the Bible says—a literal interpretation. Anyone deviating from a literal interpretation has to explain why the literal interpretation is wrong.



## A Note from Jon Marc



This edition of the CHNewsletter is about the concept of spiritual retreat—the practice of taking time away from our normal work, routines, and responsibilities to reconnect with God. Like me, you are probably a busy spouse, parent, and professional whose knee-jerk reaction to the talk of making a retreat is “Wouldn’t THAT be nice! I need a *vacation!*” But try as we might, we can never quite catch up enough such that a retreat (or vacation) seem like anything less than an imprudent indulgence on our parts—there is simply too much work to do.

But there is a certain sense in which “retreat” is not optional or extra to the Christian life. It is in fact foundational and necessary, and indeed the integrity of our whole active Christian life of work and responsibility depends on whether we regularly “retreat” to be with God. To understand what I mean about this concept as a whole, to navigate our very real and legitimate objections and concerns, and to chart a practical path for carving out “retreat time” in our lives, let us consider first the primary and quintessential retreat to which every Christian is obligated: Sunday.

Throughout Sacred Scripture, but of course made most explicit in the Ten Commandments, we are exhorted by God Himself to keep the Sabbath day holy. We are not just to make it the day we go to the church building and participate in Holy Mass, but the day on which we put aside our work, celebrate, worship, and *rest*. This obligation to *rest—to not do—is* something we often find to be the greatest challenge, and yet our reluctance points to a deeper truth that the Sabbath is precisely there to protect:

Unless the LORD builds the house,  
those who build it labor in vain.  
Unless the LORD watches over the city,  
the watchman stays awake in vain.  
It is in vain that you rise up early  
and go late to rest,  
eating the bread of anxious toil;  
for he gives to his beloved sleep.  
(Psalm 127:1-2)

Rest is often our biggest challenge because we so easily forget that this isn’t about our work, but rather about God’s gifts.

We are tempted to think that we can make it without God, that we can save our own souls and build the kingdom without His help. But when we step out in obedient faith, not just going to Sunday services but really trying to set the Sabbath day apart as something holy, we recognize the great gift we have been given

in this commandment. The Sabbath is not a flight—a retreat—*from* reality; it is a retreat back to reality—the reality that without God we can do nothing, that it is His kingdom we are building, and that it is only by His grace that we build. It is only in the Lord that our human efforts will be blessed and will bear fruit.

With this in mind, we begin to see not just the importance of the commanded “sabbath day,” but indeed of the incorporation and preservation of *Sabbath time* throughout our lives. Every week must have a Sabbath day, but every day really should have a Sabbath hour as well, whether it be getting up early before the kids to read the bible or pray the Liturgy of the Hours, going to daily mass, taking a break at work to say a rosary, or spending time in prayer before bed to examine and converse about the day with God.

Even the hours of our workdays should have a few Sabbath “minutes” to make sure we don’t forget the real purpose of our work. As I write this article, I have a timer set for 25 minutes, after which I take a five minute break. Why? Because I have found that if I let myself continue writing for much longer than that, without standing up briefly to walk around, take a breath, and most importantly to recall and practice the presence of God, I will inevitably begin to write in circles, become anxious, and ultimately lose both my progress as well as my peace. We must make and fiercely guard times in which we can pause and rest in God, or else the cares and concerns of daily life will inform and condition our relationship with Him—rather than the other way around.

All of this brings us back to the notion of “making a retreat” in the typical sense. It is certainly a worthwhile goal to occasionally take longer times aside from our normal lives to reconnect with God in a deeper way; visit a monastery, make a pilgrimage to a holy site, or perhaps even just go camping and spend prayerful time away from electronics and noise. Certainly, consider attending one of our CHNetwork Retreats or Pilgrimages!

But if such a retreat does not seem feasible right now, if you are in a busy season of life or perhaps in the midst of a time of crisis in your spiritual journey, don’t despair. We all must embrace the small opportunities for “retreat” that God has given us and allow Him to open up additional doors in His time. The best place to start is with the sabbath day which we have been commanded to make holy. By all means, take your family to mass, but don’t stop there. Look for ways each week to more and more fully set this day apart for God with your family. Pray, celebrate, worship, and don’t forget to retreat—to rest with God, for it is in making this act of sacrificial faith that we rediscover the deepest meaning of work, prayer, and of the sacraments of the Church: this isn’t about our work, but about God’s gifts.

In Christ,

  
JonMarc



# Joyful Journey Updates

## From Graham

[My wife and I] are former Southern Baptists who entered the Church this Easter. We are thrilled to be Catholic, and to have found our parish community here in Charlotte, NC. My four-year-old daughter will be baptized later this summer, and we hope to add another child to our family in the near future.

CHNetwork was a big influence on my early days of research into the Church. *The Journey Home* program was a real inspiration to me with all of the different conversion stories.

I wish I could thank Benedict XVI for his writings that were truly educational to me, and I need to send a note to Brant Pitre and Scott Hahn about their work as well. ■

## From Yasmin

Germany, entered the Church this Easter

As I approached the altar and knelt down before receiving the Lord for the first time, I was actually trembling!

I experienced awe...wonder...gratitude...relief...joy...peace...tenderness... and indeed [I was] also overwhelm[ed]. I so clearly feel myself to be in a whole new spiritual reality and my heart and soul, if not also my body, are rocked by receiving the Lord in the Eucharist. The Easter Vigil celebration where I was received exceeded anything I could have ever imagined. It was so rich and powerful, and I will never forget the moment of my first approaching the Lord's Table and receiving Him in the Eucharist. Words cannot describe this experience. I am deeply humbled by it all. ■

## GO TO GALILEE WHERE I WILL MEET YOU

Seth Paine, Web & New Media at CHNetwork



Before I became Catholic, going on retreats was an important part of my spiritual walk. As a teenager I went on youth retreats. People talk about the mountaintop experience that marks so many retreats. I remember having that experience at almost every retreat I went on growing up. We were surrounded by Christian friends, sang music together, had as much fun as a child can have, and learned about our

faith together. It was a time of bonding with my friends as well as a time of personal growth. In my 20s, I joined a young adult ministry at my church and went on retreats with them. The retreats were set in beautiful camps in New Hampshire and Maine. There were talks and times of worship, and like the retreats of my youth, I would meet and develop deeper friendships with others.

When I became Catholic in my early 30s, a part of me thought I would not be going on any more retreats. Shortly after my confirmation however, my priest encouraged me to go on a Cursillo retreat. In some ways it was different from the retreats I went on as a Protestant, but in some ways, it was exactly the same. I met people from around the Archdiocese of Boston and had some powerful experiences. The following year, I was on the team for the next men's Cursillo.

After we moved to Ohio for my job with The Coming Home Network, a friend of mine told me that the priest wanted to bring the ACTS retreat to our parish. He wanted me to go with him on the retreat at another parish in the area to evaluate it. Always ready for a new retreat experience, I said yes. That experience was even better than my Cursillo experience, and we now have a yearly ACTS retreat for men and another for women. I served on two retreat leadership teams, and last year I was asked to join the ACTS counsel, a group in charge of guiding the future of the retreat at our parish.

I have not mentioned the four months of the weekly Ignatius retreat experience I had or the number of weekends I have spent at a local monastery with a good friend of mine.

One of the things that drew me into the Catholic Church was the realization that I would always be going deeper in my faith, that I would never reach the bottom or get to the point where I had no more growing to do. In going on these retreats, I realized that growing deeper did not mean that I would stop doing the things that helped me to grow early on. I hope different kinds of retreats will always be a part of my Christian life. Retreats are necessary, withdrawing for a time is good, and Jesus always meets us there. Go and be open to God using the others to help you grow closer to Him. ■

## 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 5

**Kerstin Pakka**  
Former Evangelical  
Protestant

Monday, June 12

**Becky Carter**  
Catholic Revert, Former  
Evangelical Protestant

Monday, June 19

**Sr. Diana Marie  
Andrews, O.P.**  
Former Latter Day Saint

Monday, June 26

**Fr. Sean Loomis**  
Former Episcopalian

Schedule is subject  
to change.

To access the full archive of past Journey Home programs go to [chnetwork.org/journey-home](http://chnetwork.org/journey-home)

### BEFORE YOUR RETREAT

- Create a powerpoint with beautiful works of art or photography that captures the best of Holy Spirit-inspired creativity and the natural works of God.
- Create an audio playlist with instrumental music, hymns, or prayers.
- Create a YouTube playlist that includes the *Chaplet of Divine Mercy* in Song and/or the Holy Rosary. The Coming Home Network has hundreds of videos to choose from, especially the *Deep In Christ* series which would be a good fit for a day of retreat.
- Determine whether you have options for Mass & Confession near you and/or options for Adoration and plan to add these to your retreat.
- Secure a *Magnificat* or app for your phone for the Mass readings of the day. You will begin the day with the Morning Offering/Intentions and Morning Prayers and end your retreat with the Evening Prayers, Examination of Conscience, and Extemporaneous dialogue with God.
- Choose one creative work to do with your hands that does not require new learning. Make it something you enjoy, something that you have mastered and will not become frustrated by doing.
- Notify those who may want to contact you that you will be unavailable except in an emergency during the day of the retreat.
- Make sure the rooms you will be using are in order and cleaned to the degree that they will not be distracting to you.
- Set aside those things you will need, including your Bible, books by saints or faithful theologians, Rosary, *Magnificat*, statues, crucifix, kneeling cushion (if desired), sacred images, prepared snacks, beverages, easy meals, candle (lighter or flameless candle), any apps you may need, and a clean notebook and pen/pencil.
- Select your spiritual reading (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, encyclical(s), apostolic letter(s) or other devotional materials).
- If you would like to schedule confession or spiritual direction for this day, contact your local parish/priest with plenty of advance notice for planning purposes.

Create a schedule that works for you. The following retreat schedule is a suggested schedule only. We have chosen 33 moments, one for every year Jesus walked this earth. Feel free to add any devotions that are important to your walk with Christ.

**[ 1 ]** Turn off or silence your phone and all electronics. Use these only during times of playlists/prayers/songs. Most of your day will be spent in silence. Acknowledge that there will be inconveniences in this day's journey with Jesus Christ. Recognize that there will also be times of closeness to Christ. Do not anticipate what the day will bring, but set aside preconceived ideas about what the inconveniences will look like or how/when the consolations will occur. You have planned the day, but Jesus is the Master Planner of this day.

**[ 2 ]** Light your candle and Recite—**"I said to my soul be still."** – T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*

**[ 3 ]** Ask yourself why you want to make a retreat. Spend some time contemplating this question as it applies to this moment in your life. Let the Holy Spirit help you to pose and answer the question. Narrow it down to one sentence or one phrase. Keep this in your mind throughout the day, but be ready to hear Christ's reason for calling you to make a retreat. Be ready to take His reason and make it your own.

**[ 4 ]** \* Pray the Morning Offering

**[ 5 ]** Pray the Morning Prayer found in the *Magnificat* or from your app, adding your intentions/petitions to the Intercessions

**[ 6 ]** \* Watch CHN Retreat Video #1

**[ 7 ]** \* Retreat Prayer #1 from *Retreats At Home* resource (Extinguish your candle after praying)

**[ 8 ]** Eat: break your fast (breakfast)

**[ 9 ]** \* Read from a spiritual book, encyclical, or watch a video.

**[ 10 ]** Walk through nature (or just stretch your legs) and play your music playlist or spend your nature walk in silence.

**[ 11 ]** Make time for Mass & Confession and/or Spiritual Direction. If you are not Catholic, seek Christ in a way that is familiar to you.

**[ 12 ]** Sit with your powerpoint of beauty, setting it to play the presentation as you meditate on the creativity of the Holy Spirit.

**[ 13 ]** Spend an hour creating something with your hands. Play instrumental music. Let your mind wander with Christ as your companion. Invite Christ to enter



into this time of play and creativity.

[ 14 ] Eat lunch

[ 15 ] Pray the Rosary

[ 16 ] \* Read for one hour—Bible, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, spiritual reading, etc.

[ 17 ] Light your candle. Create a written prayer request list: What are your anxieties, what discourages you? What angers you? Who do you need to forgive? Do you suffer from health issues, financial difficulties, or spiritual crises? Name each one and lay each of these like wrapped gifts at the foot of the Cross. Do you have a decision to make? Something you need to discern? Ask for wisdom from the Holy Spirit so that you can make a prudent decision. Do not try to make these decisions on your own. Let Christ lead. Now, look over your written prayer request list and quiet your heart. It is time for extemporaneous prayer. Talk to Jesus about each thing on your list. Punctuate your time in prayer with silence, listening carefully as Christ speaks to you. Highlight or underline those things that rose to the surface during prayer and jot down anything Jesus had to say while you talked together. Extinguish your candle.

[ 18 ] If there is time, return to your creative project and listen to instrumental music or work in silence.

[ 19 ] Do at least 10 minutes of manual labor—not because it is needling you. The goal here is just to do something humbling, something that requires you to set aside your titles, goals, thoughts, self-indulgent behaviors. Mop a floor. Clean a toilet. While you work, talk to Christ. Ask Him to teach you something about offering up the work of your hands and how that simple act of love can be an efficacious prayer. Remember Mother Teresa would retreat to bathrooms to clean toilets just to be with Jesus in an act of humility.

[ 20 ] \*Watch CHN Retreat Video #2 and listen to a message from Ken Hensley and Kenny Burchard.

[ 21 ] Rest until 3:00pm

[ 22 ] \* Pray the *Chaplet of Divine Mercy* at 3:00pm

[ 23 ] \* Retreat Prayer #2 from Retreats At Home resource.

[ 24 ] Take time to acknowledge your sins before Christ. If your sins are minor/venial in nature, ask for Christ to forgive, grant mercy, and offer grace. Be sure to offer these things at your next Mass or consider doing an act of charity as you offer up this sin to the Cross of Christ. If your sins are serious in nature, determine to go to Confession the first time it is available if you were unable to schedule Confession for the Day of the CHN Retreat. If you are not yet Catholic, lay your sins down in private prayer between you and Jesus, asking for forgiveness, mercy, and grace, and

promise to name these sins in your first Confession, or lay them down when you are baptized. Commit to leaving these sins in your past and begin relying on grace to help you avoid sin and the near-occasion of sin.

[ 25 ] Do 10 minutes of manual labor—See #19

[ 26 ] Read Sacred Scripture, perhaps seeking out a Psalm that speaks to you today. Reread the passage again, practicing inner listening. If you are familiar with *Lectio Divina*, utilize this method as you meditate on the passage you have chosen. Be present with the Holy Spirit and the passage. Choose a line or a phrase that would be edifying if committed to memory. Then memorize that part of the passage.

[ 27 ] Take a 15-minute walk (this is a good time to pray the Rosary if you haven't already, or continue your extemporaneous conversation with God. Let the conversation flow easily. Don't overthink what you say to Christ.)

[ 28 ] \*Watch CHN Retreat Video #3

[ 29 ] Sit with a fresh page in your notebook or journal. At the top, write JMJ—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—the Holy Family. Then write down the theme of your retreat as it unfolded today, capturing what you have heard Jesus saying. Are there any action-items that you need to complete after the retreat in order to fulfill something Jesus has said today. Is there an element of this day that you would like to continue practicing after the retreat. Include the piece of Scripture that seemed to captivate your heart/mind today. Give Jesus a few more minutes without talking to see if there is anything more He would like to say before your day of intimacy with Christ concludes.

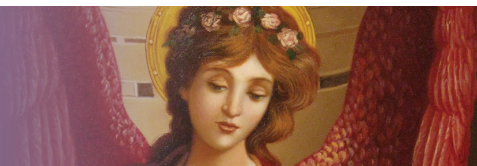
[ 30 ] Tell Jesus that you love Him and thank Him for this day of retreat. Let Him tell you how much He loves you. Sit with these thoughts for as long as you feel led. If you are not used to experiencing love from others, you may feel the need to hurry this moment along. Resist that impulse. Thank Jesus Christ for the work of this day and the moments that He ordered well.

[ 31 ] Pray the Evening Prayer found in the *Magnificat* or from your app.

[ 32 ] Conclude your retreat. Go in peace with Christ.



# Prayer List



## Clergy

■ **For Michael, an Anglican priest** who very much wants to become a Catholic priest of the Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter, that the Lord will make the way clear for this.

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

■ **For Rob, a Lutheran pastor** who was received into the Church with his wife and sons this Easter Vigil and already has a job with a local Catholic parish, that the Lord may continue to lead and bless this new Catholic family.

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

■ **For Dustin, a Presbyterian pastor** who finds himself drawn powerfully to the Catholic Church, that the Lord will give him wisdom and grace as he continues to reveal his thoughts to his wife and soon to the leadership of his church.

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

■ **For Darshak, a former Protestant pastor** who entered the Church in 2020 but continues to deal with an extended family that strongly opposes his decision to become Catholic, continues to struggle to support his family and now has serious medical problems.

■ **For James, a Baptist pastor** who has come to the conviction that the Catholic Church is Christ's Church and the historic Christian Church and wants to become Catholic and is struggling to

find a way to lead his wife to see what he has come to see.

■ **For Sergio, a Christian Reformed preacher** who is now attending Mass with his wife and working through many issues, doctrinal, personal, and vocational.

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

■ **For Jeffrey, an Anglican priest** who wants to become Catholic but has several difficult personal hurdles that would have to be cleared on the way.

■ **For Wieslaw, a former Evangelical pastor** who was received with his wife into the Church this year and is asking for prayer for their son Kamil and his wife and daughter, Natalia and Maja, that they will all be united in one Church.

■ **For Austin, a Baptist pastor** who is on the road into the Catholic Church, that the Holy Spirit will go before him to soften the hearts of his wife and family.

■ **For John, a Baptist pastor** who has been attracted to Catholicism for some time but is turned off by some of the things he sees happening in the Church.

## Laity

■ **For Joey, an Episcopalian in North Carolina**, that our Lord Jesus would guide his journey and heal his wife of the pain caused by an accident.

■ **For Gerard, an Interdenominational Christian in Massachusetts**, that his friends and family would be accepting of his journey to the Catholic Church.

■ **For Robert, a Lutheran in New Jersey**, that his hunger for the truth would guide him Home to the Holy Eucharist of our Lord Jesus.

■ **For Otis, a Freewill Baptist in Georgia**, that he would find brothers and sisters in the Catholic parish in his area who would support and guide him.

■ **For Kimmo, a Lutheran in Finland**, that the grace of our Lord Jesus would

grant guidance for him, his wife, and children as they journey toward the Catholic faith.

■ **For Shaun, an Episcopalian in New Jersey**, that he would find healing in the fullness of the faith found in the Catholic Church.

■ **For James, a Presbyterian in Florida**, that, as he learns more about the Holy Eucharist, the Holy Spirit would give him a hunger for our Lord's Body and Blood.

■ **For Micah, a former Atheist in Wisconsin**, that he would respond to a pull he feels towards the Catholic Church in his journey back to God.

■ **For Robert, a former Catholic**, that he would truly find his home in the Catholic Church after a 50-year absence. For Fred, an Episcopalian in Alabama, that God will give him discernment as he journeys to full-communication with the Catholic Church.

■ **For Jo, a Non-Denominational Evangelical**, that her son and his family will be reunited as a family once again.

■ **For Patty, a Baptist**, that family and friends will receive the news of her family's conversion without difficulty.

■ **For Nancy**, that she will have discernment in her journey and for support from her family. For her son to return to the church.

■ **For Jenny, a Mennonite**, that she will have good health.

■ **For Lisa, an Evangelical**, for courage as she seeks to return to the Church.

■ **For Judith, an Episcopalian**, for insight and clarity as she seeks to find the right spiritual path.

■ **For Robby, an Anglican**, for greater wisdom and knowledge as she discerns becoming Catholic. For consolation after a beloved priest had to leave her parish. For faithful shepherds to guide her in RCIA.

■ **For Claudia, a Methodist**, for physical and mental good health. For healing of the heartache over the suffering in our world. For healthy and happy families.



# COMPASS

## SUPPORT THE CHNETWORK!

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

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The Coming Home Network International

*The Coming Home Network was established to help non-Catholic Christians, clergy and laity, to discover the truth and beauty of the Catholic Church and to make the journey home.*



By Steve Neubeck  
 Donor since 2010 - 13 years

Growing up in a devout Catholic family, my faith was an integral part of my upbringing. Attending Mass regularly, going to Catholic schools, praying the rosary together in the evening, and my father's active involvement in the Holy Name Society, all contributed to the firm foundation of my faith.

As a lifelong Catholic, I was inspired to learn that not only members of non-Catholic churches, but even non-Catholic clergy were coming home to the Catholic Church. Even more encouraging, these converts were spreading their stories of conversion far and wide and became some of the most passionate advocates for Catholicism.

In the mid-90s, I attended a Catholic men's conference where Scott Hahn shared his compelling story of conversion and introduced us to other men who had gone through similar journeys. He talked about Marcus Grodi who, I learned, had founded The Coming Home Network, and dedicated it to helping clergy and laity from non-Catholic backgrounds find their way home to the Catholic Church. From that point on, I began subscribing to the CHNetwork's monthly newsletter, which became an important source of learning and inspiration.

In 2010, I made my first donation to The CHNetwork and have supported their mission every year since. But it was not until 2018, after the death of my wife of many years, that I felt moved to increase my giving to a regular monthly donation. In the course of my journey, I met a wonderful Christian woman named Donna. **Through sharing the conversion stories and Catholic teachings that I had learned from the CHNetwork, she too decided to convert to Catholicism, and we were married.**

The CHNetwork's mission is especially important because of the unique challenges that pastors, non-Catholic clergy, and Protestant ministers face when considering the possibility of converting to Catholicism. The CHNetwork provides a safe haven for these individuals to ask questions, find guidance, and receive support as they embark on this life-changing journey.

I hope readers will consider joining me in supporting The CHNetwork. Through their resources, they have helped many people, including my dear second wife, come home to the Catholic faith. Whether it be a one-time gift or a monthly contribution, we can help ensure that this valuable apostolate continues to serve the needs of those who seek the truth and beauty of the Catholic faith. ■

*Steve Neubeck has been a regular donor to the CHNetwork since 2010 and a monthly donor to COMPASS since August of 2018. To make a one-time or monthly donation, visit [CHNetwork.org/compass](http://CHNetwork.org/compass)*

**“The most beautiful and stirring adventure that can happen to you is the personal meeting with Jesus, who is the only one who gives real meaning to our lives.”**

Pope St. John Paul II, *Address to the Representative of the Italian Military 1979*

I remembered when my Christian ethics teacher, Dr. Stanley Hauerwas, proclaimed to the class that the Catholic Church “has so much stuff” that helps in living a life devoted to God. I didn’t really know what he meant, but the Methodist Church is very open to different types of spirituality, and who has the most different types? The Catholic Church. So I learned to work up a personal rule of life based on the Benedictine tradition, including how to use my imagination to visualize Scripture by way of Ignatian spirituality. I found the Catholic prayer book, the *Divine Office* (also known as the Liturgy of the Hours) and discovered *lectio divina* (“spiritual reading”). Where did I learn these? Mainly from Methodist retreats.

One retreat program, called “Courage to Serve” practiced *lectio divina*. We would read, pray, meditate, and contemplate. This is a practice made popular by the sixth century monk, St. Benedict. We practiced *lectio divina* at a retreat, where we worshiped, prayed, and learned together for five days. I found myself praying the *Divine Office* daily. These practices were moving me closer to becoming Catholic without my even knowing it. I finally realized that I had arrived at a point where I needed to go to a Catholic Mass.

### **In Search of a Mass**

In 2012, I remembered studying the book of Acts in seminary and being told that the Catholic Church was meeting daily and breaking bread just as was described in the book of Acts. I was startled. How could the Catholic Church be doing something so popular in the Bible and earliest Church, something that Protestants were not doing? I decided that I had to attend a daily Mass and see this for myself. I researched and found the closest Catholic Church and went to their 7 AM Mass. I sat in the very back. St. Michael’s parish in Cary, North Carolina is a large church, which permitted me to stay far away from most people. It all felt so natural, the bowing and praying, but I was lost without knowing the words of the laity’s responses. What I did see and personally experience was the beauty of the Mass. I loved the worship and prayers. I found the words to the Mass and would attend occasionally. I ventured out to an occasional service, including the Christmas Eve midnight Mass, when I took my wife with me. I dabbled with the service for about three years, reading books on what was going on in the liturgy.

I was busy serving the Lord in pastoral ministry, so my learning about the Catholic faith was more of a hobby. It was my search for a deeper spiritual life that brought me to two things that had a profound effect on me: The Two-Year Academy and the Ecumenical Franciscans.

### **Looking Deeply, the Truth Surprised Me**

Around 2015, God gave me a great desire to grow spiritually. This led me to the Two Year Spiritual Academy in Birmingham, Alabama, put on by Upper Room, an arm of the United Methodist Church. The two-year academy meets for a week once a quarter for two years. You pray, worship, and learn for those five days. You begin your day with prayer, and you end it with prayer. The night was called the Great Silence, when we could not talk to anyone after night worship, which ended around 9 PM, until after the morning worship was over by 8 AM. I loved this learning environment, but I found this was also filled with a lot of progressive ideology that seemed to be against biblical teaching.

I wanted to live more like one would in a monastery, so I researched and found the Ecumenical Franciscans. This is a group open to all denominations that seeks to live as St. Francis of Assisi did. They operate on the principles of obedience, poverty, and chastity. I worked hard and became a novice after six months. We did not live in a monastery, but we did seek to live like St. Francis. Unfortunately, the group seemed to be more of an activist organization, and this made me realize that what I really wanted could only be found in the Catholic Church. Once again, I was startled by the truth. While I was much more open to the Catholic spirituality, I had not anticipated that I would actually be drawn to the Catholic Church.

### **Crisis of Faith**

My faith crisis came just as I was being drawn to the Catholic Church. My call to Christian ministry had been to make a difference in the United Methodist Church. I had made a difference in the two churches I served, but I had hoped to be one of many agents that would stem the tide of secularism flooding

**“Withdraw yourself from people and spend at least [a] quarter of an hour, or a half-hour, in some church in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Taste and see how sweet is the Lord, and you will learn from your own experience how many graces this will bring you.”**

St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori



the denomination. In August 2015, it became evident that the leaders of the Methodist Church were welcoming practices contrary to Christian teaching for the past 2,000 years. For once, I could see how the Catholic Magisterium and having a Pope was a real advantage. My concern had been “Why a Pope?” Is this necessary? Would it not be simpler to not have a Pope? I was familiar with Matthew 16:18, where Jesus tells Peter, “You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my Church.” I finally confronted the fact that Jesus had set up the Church this way.

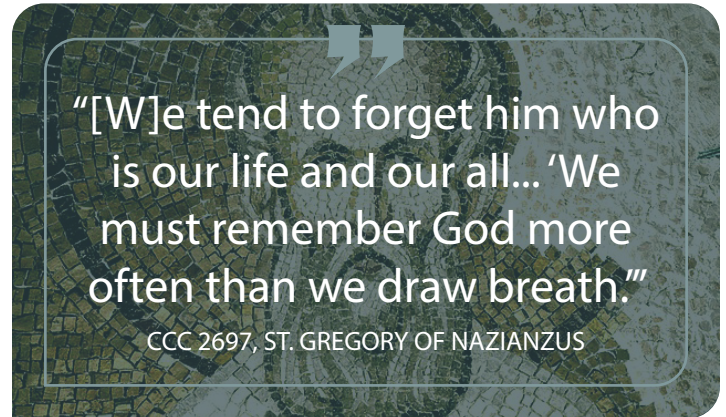
I now realized that I could not change the Methodist Church. In fact, my battle revolved around what I would do if the church moved to approve what I considered to be unbiblical practices. Would I be able to continue to be a pastor? How was I going to be able to make a living? If I weren’t a Methodist pastor, where would I go? This was my crisis of faith. I questioned my call to ministry and even to Christianity. For the first time, I realized I had to become Catholic. The question was when. I had staked my whole life and that of my spouse Dianna on being a Methodist minister.

I scheduled a meeting with Monsignor Doug Reed at St. Michael’s in Cary, and we talked. I told him I was being called to the Catholic Church and asked him to tell me what I needed to know. I also told him I thought it would be years before I could make that move. He asked me to consider seminary. I went home and prayed about it. If I was going to make that move, it needed to be immediate, since my age would be an issue. After discerning, God was allowing me to make the choice, since he could use me either way. I decided I could not tell my wife that I was going back to school for a third time. I knew the timing was not right financially, so I vowed to learn more about the Catholic faith in the meantime. Everything was softening my heart. I was in the midst of reading 39 books for the Two-Year Academy, so my progress was slow. By 2016, both my wife and I were going to Mass here and there, as time allowed.

### My Announcement

Several things happened about this time. I began going to the “That Man Is You” program at St. Michael’s. I had become convinced that the Catholic faith was correct, but I wanted to meet real Catholics in love with Jesus. What I found was incredible. This was the best men’s program I had ever been privileged to join. By the end of the first year, I was praying the Rosary, and by the end of the second year, I was consecrated to Jesus through Mary — as a Protestant. In 2018, I announced to my wife that I was going to become Catholic. It was not a passing fad. It was something I felt God calling me to do. What I did not realize is that I had been on this journey, but she had not. This is when she informed me that she could not become Catholic.

I told her I would go to the Protestant church with her, but my church was going to be the Catholic Church. I had not accounted for her reaction, but it is understandable. I had been on a journey now for over a decade, and she had no idea that I would ever actually want to become Catholic. It was still several



years before I could retire from ministry. I could not enter the Church at the moment for financial reasons. I began praying the Rosary, daily asking Mary to intercede on behalf of my wife, that she would become Catholic with me.

One year later, she did a search on the internet that said, “My crazy husband is going to become Catholic, what can I read for help.” One of the books that came up was Scott Hahn’s Rome Sweet Home. By now, I had a collection of conversion stories and many books on the defense of the Catholic faith, so of course I had the book. Dianna really identified with Kimberly Hahn, and her story deeply touched her. The next thing I knew, she was researching RCIA classes. She checked out nearby St. Michael’s parish. Their program was on a Sunday, meaning she would have to miss Sunday services at my appointed Methodist churches. I was still a pastor, and I now was only two years away from retirement. A pastor’s wife can’t miss a year of Sundays without raising a lot of questions.

She discovered that Our Lady of Lourdes parish in Raleigh had a Tuesday night class, and that was also the night I had free. We signed up for RCIA there in 2019. COVID-19 hit in 2020 and disrupted the RCIA class. We finished in June, but Dianna and I could not enter the Church until I laid down my sacramental authority or until I retired. I retired in June 2021 and entered the Catholic Church on August 15, 2021, the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, at Our Lady of Lourdes.

We thank Father Pat Keane and Deacon Bryon Champagne for their help in our journey. Dianna and I continue to go to both Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Michael’s. It has been a great journey. We love the Catholic Church. ■

*James Whittaker attends Mass at St. Michael’s parish in Cary, North Carolina, while still keeping connections at our Lady of Lourdes parish in Raleigh. He is involved in the Knights of Columbus and That Man Is You (TMIY), a Catholic men’s group. He always looks forward to sponsoring those in RCIA. Married to Dianna, they have two grown children, Laura and Andy, and five grandchildren. They love walks in the park, gardening, and daily Mass.*



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



## SACRED SCRIPTURE SPEAKS

And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and **rest a while.**” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.

(Mark 6:31)