



November 2023 CHNewsletter

Deep Theology, Deep Grace by John Bacon.....	1
A Note from JonMarc.....	4
Joyful Journey Updates.....	6
The Souls of the Faithful Departed.....	8
Convert Saint Spotlight.....	9

THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

Journeys Home

Deep Theology, Deep Grace

By John Bacon

In the fall of 2010, my friend Clayton and I discussed my recent mission work in the Andes Mountains as we drove our van to the Ozark Mountains in Arkansas. The previous summer, after completing my freshman year of studies at Ouachita Baptist University, I had spent ten weeks as a short-term church-planting missionary in rural Peru. Clayton had spent time on a similar assignment in the past year. As Southern Baptist Christians, we had inherited the assumption that adventure, evangelism, and bold faith were ordinary components of the Christian life.



My passion for mission and evangelization had started in the summer of 2003, when as a seventh-grade boy, I traveled from Little Rock, Arkansas to Memphis, Tennessee for a week-long mission trip. During that time, I had the opportunity to put

on Vacation Bible School for children in inner city housing projects, pray with families in hospital waiting rooms, and feed the homeless. I was even volunteered to preach to two hundred homeless men! I was too nervous to remember any of what I said, but it ended with thunderous applause and the intoxicating feeling that I had been used by God to aid people in their belief that Jesus is able and willing to save them, no matter what they are going through.

I rode the van from Memphis back to Little Rock with my Bible across my lap, praying that God would allow me to serve him like that for the rest of my life. More than anything, I wanted to live a life of evangelical commitment—obeying and proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom. Never in my life had I experienced the sense of joy and purpose that I did while serving others in Jesus' name. I desperately hoped that God would allow me to serve him for the rest of my life and that he would use me to bring others into communion with him.

As a college student, my adolescent dream to be an evangelist and missionary began to find fulfillment. Clayton and I discussed our shared studies in Bible, theology, and missions, as well as our similar experiences in the Andes. To my left in the van, I noticed a pretty blonde girl, eyes beaming with excitement as she discussed her recent return from Niger in Africa, where she,

...Journeys Home Continued...

too, had been a foreign missionary. In less than a year, that college senior, Lauren, would become my wife. We had a mutual passion for Jesus Christ, the Gospel, the Scriptures, and evangelism, so it was easy to fall in love, believing that God had a purpose and calling for our new life together. Excited to join in His mission, we had no idea that this desire would eventually draw us into the Catholic Church.

My ten-week missionary endeavors did not result in the expected church-plant. The experience was, nonetheless, invaluable for my own formation. My ambition for the salvation of the people there revealed gaps in my theological formation. I had been raised to bring people into the "Church," yet I had very little theological clarity as to what the "Church" was. Secondly, what are the boundaries of theological belief that determine whether or not a body of believers is actually Christian? Third, I realized that, although my background had laid much emphasis on initial conversion, it had less emphasis on ongoing conversion. I had pastoral intentions, yet very little pastoral training for helping people follow Christ across the long journey of life.

Returning to college, I put myself in the shoes of the people that I had attempted to evangelize. They were frequently proselytized by Evangelicals, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses, but they had cultural ties to Catholicism. If I were a villager in Peru, how would I adjudicate the competing claims to orthodoxy between these churches? My senior year, I took a course in American Christianity and was astounded by the proliferation, not only of varying denominations, but even cults in America. Having trained for foreign missions, I was deeply sensitive to religious syncretism. Indeed, even in the Old Testament, the people of God had attempted to blend Judaism with Canaanite practices (God was not impressed, as the prophets told them). I now looked at Christianity within my own cultural context and wondered if, as a foreign missionary, I was not a pot calling the kettle black. How much of Christianity in America was distinctly Christian and how much was just my

own cultural values with a bit of Christianity sprinkled on top?

There were two axes that I could measure my own Christian upbringing against: history and universality. How did my understanding of the Bible and my own practice of the Christian life compare to that of Christians in other places and other times? Since Christianity proclaims the incarnation of God in time and space, it locates itself within history as an actual reality, accessible by faith. If the Church is the Body of Christ in time and space, then surely the Church as a recognizable, apostolic body did not vanish following the last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

From Newman to Early Church Fathers

At the time, I had no inkling that I was looking for "one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church" (I had not at this time even encountered the ancient Nicene Creed), nor was I aware of the conclusion that I would eventually share with Saint John Henry Cardinal Newman: "And this one thing at least is certain; whatever history teaches, whatever it omits, whatever it exaggerates or extenuates, whatever it says and unsays, at least the Christianity of history is not Protestantism. If ever there were a safe truth, it is this" (*An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*,¹). I had, however, decided, that if I discovered something that had been consistently true of Christianity in the past, then I would conform myself to that norm, rather than stubbornly clinging to my own familiar expectations. Setting out on a grand adventure for theological truth, my wife, Lauren, and I moved in 2013 from Arkadelphia, Arkansas to Birmingham, Alabama, where I would begin studies at Beeson Divinity School.

Beeson Divinity School is an interdenominational, evangelical Divinity School with a strong emphasis on the Protestant Reformation. I thoroughly enjoyed the academic rigor and ecumenical camaraderie of Beeson. There I was given the opportunity to learn from Baptists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Lutherans and observe how their theological beliefs

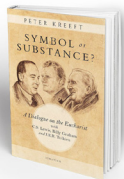
RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

SYMBOL OR SUBSTANCE?

BY DR. PETER KREEFT

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

#3251 • \$16.95 (limited supply)

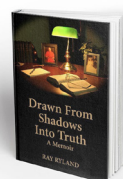


DRAWN FROM SHADOWS INTO TRUTH

BY FR. RAY RYLAND

The late Fr. Ray Ryland's journey of faith is a spiritual and intellectual adventure! From poor Oklahoma farm boy to naval officer to Protestant minister to Harvard-trained lawyer to married Catholic priest, Fr. Ryland shares his journey to full communion with the Church.

#3153 • \$15.95



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.

#3053 • \$9.95 (limited supply)



translated into pastoral praxis. I was introduced to the early Church Fathers, and my mind was blown. I was overwhelmed by the beauty, integrity, and profundity of the theology and devotion of the early Church.

Exposure to Justin Martyr, a second century Christian apologist, demonstrated to me that the Church had a common liturgy, centering on the Eucharist. While still at Ouachita Baptist University, it had struck me that, if the Scriptures were a grand, epic narrative of salvation, then our Sunday gathering should be some type of liturgical reenactment, rather than a mere assortment of songs. The rich symbolism and imagery of Scripture, especially the book of Revelation, had convinced me that the Church's worship on earth should pattern itself off the heavenly liturgy of the angels and saints. Through Justin Martyr, I discovered that the early Church had such a liturgy, which was rooted in the Scriptures and centered in the Eucharist. Testifying to the Eucharistic liturgy that the Church observed on every "Lord's Day" (Sunday), he writes:

We call this food Eucharist; and no one else is permitted to partake of it, except one who believes our teaching to be true and who has been washed in the washing which is for the remission of sins and regeneration, and is thereby living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nourished, is both the flesh and blood of that incarnated Jesus. (First Apology, 66)

The early Church witnessed to a reality even greater than what I had hoped for. I longed for a liturgy that presented the redemptive work of God in Christ, according to the Scriptures. They offered a liturgy that presented the saving mystery of Christ because it actually participated in that mystery. The Eucharist was no mere symbol, but the actual Body and Blood of Jesus Christ (see John 6:51–58; 1 Corinthians 10:16–17).

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, a second century bishop, who was taught by St. Polycarp, who in turn was taught by the Apostle John, built upon what I discovered from St. Justin Martyr. If Justin Martyr introduced me to the early Church's worship, then Irenaeus introduced me to the apostolic harmony between Church governance, worship, and faith, according to the Scriptures. He writes:

"The true knowledge is the doctrine of the Apostles, and the ancient organization of the Church throughout

the whole world, and the manifestation of the body of Christ according to the succession of bishops, by which successions the bishops have handed down the Church which is found everywhere; and the very complete tradition of the Scriptures[.]"
(Against Heresies, 4, 33, 8)

I was discovering a church whose witness, worship, and design were inherited from the Apostles, overflowing with beauty, and crowned with the glory of the martyrs. This Church could trace its origin to the Apostles themselves through this line of bishops. The Church that I discovered was intellectual yet devotional, speculative yet dogmatic, diverse yet unified, and organic yet organized.

Let the Little Children Come to Me

I was like a newborn child, filled with wonder and drinking deeply of the early Church's young, deep faith. In the midst of this joy, my wife and I discovered another joy: her pregnancy with our first son, Ezekiel.

Space does not permit to share the full story of how and why Lauren and I knew before we met that we would have a son named Ezekiel. The fact that we did, and the meaning of the Hebrew prophet's name—"God is my strength"—suggested to us that God had a special purpose for this boy. We wondered what future adversity called for such a strong name.

The imminent arrival of my firstborn son increased the urgency of the baptism question: should babies be baptized or not? My education in biblical theology taught me not to discount the many biblical depictions of water, Spirit, and rebirth (see Exodus 14, 2 Kings 5, Ezekiel 36:25–26, John 3, Romans 6, Titus 3:5). I began to see and understand the early Church's belief that baptism is a sacrament, through which God grants us new life, incorporating us into Christ. As Christian parents, it was our joy and duty to present Ezekiel for baptism.

Being convinced that Baptism, the Eucharist, and Holy Orders were sacraments, Lauren and I joined the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA). We fell in love with the Anglican patrimony and its liturgical celebrations of the Christian year. During our second year in the Anglican Church, tragedy struck when I received a phone call from my son's pediatrician. I was informed that my son was being admitted to the emergency room at Children's Hospital in Birmingham, and that we were needed there as soon as possible. Hospital staff hovered over my thirteen-month-old son, poking him with IVs in the attempt to prevent diabetic coma. Feeling the weight of the world on my shoulders, I felt a strong voice saying, "Don't worry; that's my son." From that moment, the adoption that we receive in Baptism became a source of deep comfort to me.

In 2017, my wife and I left Birmingham, Alabama, with two

Through Justin Martyr, I discovered that the early Church had such a liturgy, which was rooted in the Scriptures and centered in the Eucharist.

A Note from Jon Marc



Dear Friends of the CHNetwork,

As always, I hope that this newsletter finds you well and I pray that since we last spoke you have continued to walk that road Our Lord has placed before you—with firm Faith, unwavering Hope, and ever-deepening Charity!

Time, Repetition, and Eternity

This month, on November 26th, we Catholics will celebrate the solemn feast of “Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.” Established by Pope Pius XI in 1925, it served as a sort of gauntlet thrown down in response to an increasingly secular and modernist culture. It is appropriately celebrated on the final Sunday of the Church’s liturgical calendar, with the following Sunday marking a new (liturgical) year and the beginning of the (liturgical) season of Advent. On this month’s climactic feast we declare Christ the Lord of all that is—the LORD of the spiritual world and material, the LORD of the far off and the nearby, the LORD of the large and small, and the LORD even of all time—past, present, and future.

God in his mysterious providential wisdom has caused us to live in time, and yet our lives flow through many concentric circles of repetition—days, weeks, months, seasons, and years. I believe this is a great gift. Our lives pass through a series of beginnings, middles, and endings—as if they are many iterative rehearsals that cohere into the one great journey of our lives. With the ending of each new day, week, month, year, or liturgical season, we are prompted to pause and reflect: What graces and blessings have we been given? Which ones did we embrace and receive with gratitude? Which did we take for granted? And if this were our last time around, would we be ready to meet the LORD Jesus, King of the Universe?

Mercifully, as we look forward to the end of the liturgical season we nevertheless find ourselves at the beginning of a fresh new month. What will we make of it?

Thanksgiving and the Eucharist

With this topic of time and repetition in mind, and with the Thanksgiving holiday coming up soon, I wanted to reflect briefly on a connection between giving thanks and the Holy Eucharist as sacrament.

As you probably know, the word “Eucharist” actually comes from a Greek word meaning “to give thanks”. This may strike some people as a little odd because while “thanksgiving” is something I give to God, the Eucharist—the Body and Blood of Jesus, sacrificed for our redemption and given mysteriously as food for spiritual nourishment—is God’s great gift to me. Right?

Part of the connection between the Sacrament of the Eucharist and “giving thanks” is due to Christ’s sacrifice and institution of the Eucharist being a fulfillment of the “Toda” sacrifices of ancient Israel. These were sacrificial meals celebrated in thanksgiving for someone having been saved from death or illness.

There is another connection, though, that simply comes down to a fundamental paradox regarding all of God’s gifts and our thanksgiving

for them: they are always out of order. God is always continually pouring Himself out into gifts innumerable, but we become aware and appreciative of only a very few of them. It is precisely when we begin to give thanks that we become more sensitive to the many gifts we’ve been given, and it is then that those gifts can become more fully effective in our lives.

There is a whole invisible world of grace present in the sacraments of the Church, but much of that grace lies dormant in recipients who have either grown complacent or perhaps never really grasped the gifts they were being given. What could be more powerful than Christ’s gift of his own body, blood, soul, and divinity as spiritual food in the Holy Eucharist? Nothing, surely. Yet even in the case of this sacrament of sacraments—the Eucharist—part of our journey is to become fully open and available to the graces Christ seeks to give us.

Gratitude is what melts our stony hearts and makes them fertile soil for God’s grace. In obedience and gratitude to Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, for the great gift of salvation and redemption, we celebrate the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. It is in doing so that the gift for which we give thanks bears the full fruit of conversion in our hearts.

As we celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday later this month, perhaps we can keep in mind these mysterious connections between our gratitude and our ability to “taste and see” many, many gifts.

Pray for the Holy Souls in Purgatory

When my family was still relatively new to the Catholic faith, my father made it a point to begin researching his family tree. Why? Because he was now learning and realizing as a Catholic that many generations had passed since either side of the family had been Catholic. Hence, there had been many generations of our family that had not had anyone to pray for them.

As Catholics we believe that faithful Christians who die in a state of grace, but who have not yet been fully sanctified this side of heaven, experience a final “purgation” after death in preparation for entrance into heaven.

This is not the time or place for an apologetic on Purgatory (you can do some searching on CHNetwork.org for that). But as this month is dedicated to the Holy Souls in Purgatory, I wanted to take this opportunity to remind you to pray for your loved ones who have died—especially those who may not have had many people praying for them up to this point. Jesus is the LORD of time, remember? Our business is simply to pray for them.)

As always, know that wherever you happen to be on your spiritual journey we are praying as a team (together, daily!) for you and for your intentions. Please keep us in your prayers as well.

“May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercies of God, rest in peace. Amen”

In Christ,

JonMarc Grodi, Executive Director

The Souls of the FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Each November, the Catholic Church asks us to remember to pray for the souls in Purgatory, who died with faith in Christ and are awaiting final purification before entering the joys of heaven.

For those of us who don't come from Catholic backgrounds, many of us feel a special concern for our loved ones who have gone before us, who gave us strong foundations of faith, but who were not in full communion with the Church. We entrust them and all the departed to Divine Mercy, knowing it was often through their witness that we learned to ask the questions that led us to the Catholic Faith. God used those men and women—many of them baptized Christians—as instruments of grace in our lives that would lead us to greater grace in His Church, and for that we are eternally grateful.

We asked some of our members to share examples of mentors and loved ones who made powerful impacts on their faith journeys, and whose souls they continue to pray for:

"I'm thankful for my maternal grandfather, a faithful Presbyterian elder and electrical engineer. He and my grandmother gave their children a strong Christian upbringing, and he was always gifting Bibles to them and his grandchildren ... I have a like-new Revised Standard Version that he gave me on my first birthday when I was baptized in my parents' Presbyterian church. He was there for my baptism, and wrote the following message in my Bible: "To Howard, on the day he was presented to the Lord. From his granddaddy, Patrick."

His inscription in my Bible deeply resonated with me, allowing me to see both the presentation of Jesus in the temple and His baptism with the Spirit in the Jordan in my infant baptism. It was like I had been set apart for the Lord by my parents and my grandfather."

–H.H.

"I'm grateful for all my fathers of yore who held to the Catholic and Apostolic Faith before our lines succumbed to the Reformation. While attending my first Mass for the Solemnity of the Assumption after my Confirmation, I came to believe my presence there was an answered prayer for them."

–J.B.

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

"I'm grateful for my first sponsor in AA, Nick M. He showed me what love looks like in real-time, first person. He demonstrated great wisdom at a time when I demonstrated immense foolishness."

–J.L.

"I am grateful for my 20 year old 'nephew' Isaac. It was his death that finally kicked me off the fence ... Isaac's parents pioneered the journey to the Catholic Church where his dad is now a priest. But while his parents' faith and journey were inspirational, watching Isaac and his oldest sister grow in faith and passion for Catholicism convicted me most."

Their devotion to Catholicism and their growth as faithful and fearless campus leaders during their university years blew me away. It is ultimately what made me decide I couldn't just 'peacefully co-exist' with Catholicism. I needed to become Catholic."

–A.S.

"I am grateful for my little aunt, Tante ... she was about 4'10", but full of life, love, and laughs. She was a charismatic Catholic. I was just 18, had left the Catholic Church, and was proud of my new-found Protestantism. I asked if she would like to pray together, and we knelt by my bed. Her simple prayer still rings in my heart, 'Lord, please save the whole world!' But I was prideful and did not see that prayer for the beauty and trust it contained. I thought, 'How ridiculous! God's not gonna hear a prayer like that!' Then I proceeded to speak an eloquent and wordy prayer that would impress God! She passed away a few years ago, but now, 42 years after our little time of prayer, when I pray the rosary and I get to the Fatima prayer, 'Lead all souls to heaven ... ' I think of my aunt. She was wiser than I knew."

–M.D.

Please join our entire CHNetwork family in praying that all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, would rest in peace.



Leslie A.

Looking back over my 45-year spiritual trek (which traversed Presbyterian, Baptist, Lutheran, "non-denominational," Mennonite, and Pentecostal territories), it always had as its driving force a hungering and thirsting for more and more of His Presence.

The Presence I longed for was not found in its fullness in any of those denominations, however. Each one seemed only to have "a piece of the pie." When I discovered Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist, I literally cried for joy. Then, I cried out to God that I should not die before I had the opportunity to consume the "Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity" of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

It is now one year since my confirmation, and I still shed joyful tears. There is no doubt that I am home, and He is nearer than I ever imagined possible. Yet, as I plumb the unfathomable depths of the riches of His glory and grace within His Church and the immense "great cloud of witnesses" (especially Mother Mary), I realize that I've only just begun this joyful journey! ■

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

"May the Lord, who is good, grant pardon to everyone who has resolved to seek God, the LORD, the God of his fathers, though he be not clean as holiness requires." *2 Chronicles 30:18-19*

Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust. / Teach me the way I should go, / for to you I lift up my soul. *Psalms 143:8*

"In full consciousness of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the Church in its pilgrim members, from the very earliest days of the Christian religion, has honored with great respect the memory of the dead; and 'because it is a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins' she offers her suffrages for them." Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 958

November 28th is
Giving Tuesday



Your generous gift this #GivingTuesday helps us share the truth and beauty of the Catholic Church with those making the journey home!

chnetwork.org/givingtuesday

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, Nov. 6

Lawain McNeil

Former Church of Christ minister

Monday, Nov. 13

Dr. Erik Baldwin

Former Calvary Chapel and Reformed

Monday, Nov. 20

Dr. Brandon Vaidyanathan

Former Hindu

Monday, Nov. 27

John Leyendecker

*Former Agnostic
Original Air: 01/20/20*

Monday, Dec 4

Matt Gerald

Former Methodist Protestant

Schedule is subject to change.

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

PARTNERS IN *Mission*

Anna Lee

Compass Donor since 2022—1 Year

I grew up in Protestantism and was active in lay ministry from very early on in my adulthood. I have always loved studying Scripture and have had a never-ending desire to seek out the church we read about in the Bible. Among various Protestant denominations, the lack of unity and authority to interpret the meaning of Scripture no longer felt quite right in my search for the truth.

I started to look outside of Protestant denominations and stumbled onto the Coming Home Network during an online search for reference materials about the Catholic Church. Not only did I soak in over 100 hours of *On the Journey with Matt, Ken and Kenny* podcast episodes in a matter of a couple of months and read countless conversion stories, but meeting people in the online community is really what has made a difference in my journey. The wealth of knowledge, encouragement, book recommendations, and pastoral care has been overwhelmingly valuable.

After nearly a year of study and discovering the spiritual richness of the Mass and Catholic prayer disciplines, there was nothing left to do but come to the fullness of the faith. I was received into the Church at the Easter Vigil in 2023.

As someone who has utilized online community message boards for nearly two decades, I was blown away by the amount of content the Coming Home Network offers at no cost. I feel that any Protestant seeking information about the Catholic Church

will find true, orthodox answers by caring staff who advance their mission in the spirit of Christian love. The available resources and support don't end at conversion. I am now working my way through the 60-plus episodes of JonMarc Grodi's podcast, *Deep in Christ*, as he teaches about Christian virtues with various special guests.

When I became Catholic, one of the considerations was how to shift my charitable giving from non-Catholic faith-based organizations. I believe in the mission of this apostolate and hope to see it continue for years to come, which is why I support the Coming Home Network as a monthly donor. Anyone who chooses to partner with me in the support of this apostolate can be confident that your resources are being used to bring souls to a deeper understanding of faith, and you are helping countless people grow in their love for Jesus Christ and His Church. ■

In addition to being a new convert to the Catholic Faith, Anna Lee is one of our newest monthly COMPASS donors. To join her in supporting the CHNetwork with a one-time or monthly donation, visit chnetwork.org/donate or return the envelope enclosed with the newsletter.

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.

The CHNetwork is able to automatically deduct monthly donations directly from your credit card, checking, or savings account. If you would like to set up an automatic monthly donation, please go to chnetwork.org/compass

Or complete the "monthly gift" section on the enclosed envelope and mail it to:

CHNetwork
Attention: Ann Moore
PO Box 8290
Zanesville, OH 43702

PIONEER

PATHFINDER

GUIDE

NAVIGATOR

\$10/month

\$25/month

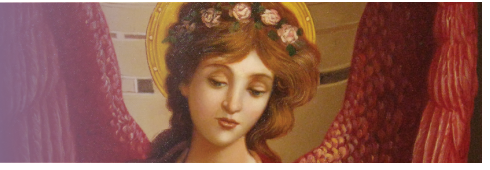
\$50/month

\$100/month

CHNetwork.org/Compass

Please contact Ann at 740.450.1175 or ann@chnetwork.org if you have any questions or concerns.

Prayer List



Clergy

- **For Elijah, a Methodist seminarian** who was received into the Catholic Church on the Feast of Corpus Christi and is in the process of rethinking his entire future.
- **For Gary, a former Baptist pastor** who with his wife was welcomed into full communion with the Catholic Church this Easter Vigil and is currently developing a program of evangelism for their incredibly fast-growing parish.
- **For David, an Anglo-Catholic priest** who wants to enter into full communion with the Church but struggles with some of the things taking place in the hierarchy of the Church, including the German bishops.
- **For Sergio, a Christian Reformed preacher** who is struggling a great deal with feeling that he may have moved too quickly when he left his ministry to enter the Church while still working through many issues—doctrinal, personal, and vocational.
- **For Jeff, an Episcopal priest** who has been on a journey toward the Church for a number of years and is praying for an opportunity to enter the Catholic priesthood through the Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter.
- **For 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 Grant, a non-denominational minister** who, after some struggle, was welcomed into the Catholic Church at the end of May, that the Lord will guide as he seeks to lead and care for his family.
- **For Hunter, a Protestant seminary student** who is quickly becoming convinced that Catholicism is true, that the Lord will help him to navigate his next steps and lead his family home.

- **For Walter, a former Assemblies of God pastor** who with his wife was welcomed into full communion with the Church at the Easter Vigil this year and is developing a parish ministry to serve families who have dependents with intellectual disabilities.
- **For Paul, an Episcopal priest** who wants to become Catholic and is looking for a teaching position that could support his family should he leave his position in the Episcopal clergy to enter the Church.
- **For Ken, a Baptist pastor** who is drawn to the Church and seeking wisdom and guidance on how best to proceed in an environment where very few of those who know him will understand what he is coming to believe.
- **For Drew, an Anglican priest** who finds himself, once again, feeling drawn to the Catholic Church and has begun to share this with others in his circle, that he will find answers to the questions that remain for him.

Laity

- **For Michael, a Lutheran in Tennessee**, that our Lord Jesus would guide his journey and relieve his wife of her skepticism.
- **For James, a former Agnostic in Iowa**, that the Holy Spirit would bless, anoint and guide his OCIA (formerly RCIA) journey.
- **For Joe, a Non-denominational Evangelical in Florida**, that as he and his wife explore the Catholic faith all obstacles they encounter will be cleared away by God's loving grace.
- **For Mike, a member of the Churches of Christ**, that the Lord would give him the courage to talk to his wife about his desire to become a Catholic Christian.
- **For Chris, a Non-denominational Evangelical in Washington**, that God would guide him to a faithful Catholic in his area who will assist him on his journey into the Church.
- **For Jameson, a Lutheran**, that as he seeks the Kingdom of God, our Lord Jesus would guide him Home to the most holy sacrament of the altar.
- **For Dennis**, that, as he reads about the experiences of others who have journeyed to the fullness of the faith in the Catholic Church, he may be granted the grace to begin his own journey.
- **For Brandon, a Charismatic in Texas**, that the Holy Spirit would continue to help him to discard all of the untruths he was taught about the Catholic Church.
- **For Lyle, a Lutheran in South Dakota**, that the controversies in the Catholic Church would not be an insurmountable obstacle blocking his journey to full-communion with the Catholic Church.
- **For John, a Pentecostal in Oregon**, that our Lord Jesus Christ would continue to guide and direct his reading as he continues to soak in the truths of the Catholic faith.
- **For Janna, who is asking questions**, that she finds a priest who can be a spiritual guide for her continued journey.
- **For Yasmin, a convert from Evangelicalism**, that the Holy Spirit would guide her discernment regarding her vocation in life and direct her to a community where she could possibly live as a lay person involved in ministry as she considers a change of residence.
- **For Terry, a Baptist**, that she will be able to come home to the Church this Easter.
- **For Barbara, a Baptist/Reformed**, that the Lord would heal her and her children from the negative experiences they suffered within their former church.
- **For Melanie, a Catholic**, that she be blessed with good health for her and her family.
- **For Alicia, an Anglican**, that she would receive healing for her health issues and provision to secure the care she needs.



Convert Saint Spotlight St. Andrew Dũng-Lạc

On November 24, the Church celebrates the memorial of St. Andrew Dũng-Lạc, martyred in Vietnam in the 1800s—a seemingly ordinary convert Saint who showed quiet extraordinary zeal. He was born as Ahn-Tranh Dung to a poor Vietnamese family. After they moved to Hanoi in his youth, his life was changed under the tutelage of a lay catechist, a privilege usually reserved for the wealthy. Ahn Trahn would be greatly influenced by this teacher, eventually converting to Catholicism and taking the name Andrew at his baptism.

After his conversion, Andrew went on to become a catechist himself and was eventually ordained a priest in 1823. That same year, the emperor of Vietnam banned foreign missionaries and commanded Vietnamese Christians to renounce their faith by publically trampling crucifixes. In the midst of this, Fr. Andrew’s preaching and simplicity of life continued to lead many others to be baptized and live a life in Christ. This work led to his arrest in Hanoi, though he attempted to circumvent the growing persecution. Upon being ransomed by his parishioners after his first arrest, Fr. Andrew changed his name to “Lac” and moved to a different region to evade the authorities. He was saved from prison on more than one occasion, receiving help from Christian communities around Vietnam. However, Fr. Andrew could not escape the era of persecution in the country, despite his best efforts. Eventually, after being arrested and ransomed multiple times, Fr. Andrew Dũng-Lạc would be tortured and beheaded, dying a martyr’s death in 1839.

Stained Glass window at St. Paul Catholic Church in Westerville, Ohio

He was canonized in 1988 by Pope St. John Paul II. **St. Andrew Dũng-Lạc, pray for us!**

IN MEMORIAM

Please join us in praying for these and all members of our Coming Home Network family who have gone on to their eternal rest over the past year.

John Bonella
Kathleen Brooks
Damian Colicchio
John Connolly
Al Connors
Atanacio Cristobal
Mary Charles
Richard Dreslinski
Adele Druktenis
Kristine Louise Franklin*^
Richard D. Gaarden
Clare Genzlinger
Robert George
Lawrence Gignac
Margaret Greer
Antonia M. Groszkowski
Carlton P. Hermann
Lucille Jaskolski

Mary Kampschaefer
Fr. Ian Ker*
Frederick A. Kochan
Donna Koeck
Pat Mackey
Mary Ann Mackin
Rose Mary Mantelli
Joseph Martino
James McIntyre
James A. McIntyre
Joseph McMonagle
Marilyn McNutt
Myron Moskowitz*
Mary Lou Muehleis
John Murtagh
Leonard Netzel
Joseph Niedbala
Patricia Ninfo

David O’Connell
Loras Otting
Janice Papotto
Tony Prom
Michael Ralph
Patrick A. Reardon
George Reilly
Angela Rudolf
Emily Ruffner
Ruth Ryland*^
Helen Salin
Francis Scanlan
Janet Scaralia
Peter J. Scharler
Lisa Selby
Robert Smith
Donald State
Theodore Stepanek

Fr. Fred Taggart
James C. Timlin
Bill Tyree
Kevin Vost*^
John Walker
Barbara Watts
Frances Wilkerson
John W. Yanta
Donna Youngblood
David A. Zampino*^

* Appeared on *The Journey Home*

^ Written testimony at chnetwork.org/story



“Let us help and commemorate [the dead]. If Job’s sons were purified by their father’s sacrifice (cf Job 1:5), why would we doubt that our offerings for the dead bring them some consolation? Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them.”

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

healthy sons and a bright future. I had received my Master of Divinity degree from Beeson Divinity School and had been ordained a priest in the Anglican Church in North America. We drove south to Panama City Beach, Florida, where I would serve as a curate for church-planting. As a way to get to know and serve my community, I also became a police chaplain for the Panama City Beach Police Department. Church-planting brought everything we loved about evangelization and missions into a more historic form of Christianity. However, one of the darker chapters of my life was just beginning.

As a police chaplain, I rode along with police officers to provide spiritual accompaniment, pastoral care, and a listening ear. One fateful night, a man arrived at the police station, after hours, at the same moment that I arrived for a scheduled ride along. When the officer asked the troubled man what we could do for him, with haunted eyes and constricted voice, he explained that he was having difficulty breathing because of the demons that had just entered him through his and his uncle’s voodoo curses on each other.

The Battle Belongs to the Lord

Here I was, a Christian minister with increasingly Catholic beliefs, educated in a Protestant Divinity School. I had never had a class on exorcism. Yet in my classes, I saw very clearly that Jesus exorcized demons frequently. As a priest, I had the duty and honor of representing Christ in his compassion to deliver. Training or not, I had faith (and, so I thought, priestly authority)! With no explicit formula, I prayed with the man as best as I knew how and laid my hands on him. He improved, but I did not.

The police officers marveled at the demonic man’s inexplicable transformation of psychological state. I, however, was plunged for months into paranormal activity that I did not understand. My senior pastor was concerned for my well-being and attempted to help me. My Anglican friends back in Birmingham were connected with the SSPI (Society for Special Pastoral Intervention) in the ACNA and said that I need to train with them in spiritual deliverance and exorcisms. I drove up to Birmingham, Alabama, for training in spiritual warfare.

I experienced much relief and am profoundly grateful for the care and compassion of the Anglican clergy who prayed with and for me. I was also deeply startled to hear from Anglican exorcists that demons were “triggered” by the Hail Mary and feared her intercession. This struck me as odd. Why were we Protestant Christians unsure of doing something that makes hell perpetually nervous? Just a year ago, I had received a beautiful Benedictine prayer book, but had shied away from

praying the Hail Mary prayer in it. If, however, the demons actually feared the Virgin Mary, and if the blessing of her name was a perpetual reminder of that moment when the Word was made flesh in her womb, beginning the salvation of mankind, then maybe it was time to join St. Gabriel and proclaim the Virgin’s praises.

Part of my training at the SSPI was to study the spiritual gifts more and to discern what my personal spiritual gift might be. One of the discernment tools was a thought experiment: if I could have any three Christians of any time mentor me, who would they be? As an Anglican church-planter, I remembered the three British missionary bishops that I admired the most: St. Patrick of Ireland, St. Columba of Iona, and St. Boniface of Mainz. I prayed that God would show me which saint to study and emulate. Two weeks later, an experience convinced me that St. Boniface of Mainz was with me. I was so overwhelmed and confused that, while I did not address Boniface, I did ask God to please use that saint’s example to guide me. I then sensed God saying to me, “You feel comfortable here. Don’t get used to it.” Twenty-four hours later, I learned that Hurricane Michael was turning towards the Florida panhandle. In the dark of the night, my wife and I, with our three boys, fled back to Birmingham. Hours later, we learned that the hurricane had hit the part of Bay County in which we were planning to plant a church.

My diocesan bishop graciously released me from that assignment. Through a series of dramatic occurrences with clear messaging, my wife and I discerned a call to an Anglican church plant in western Montana. In 2019, we moved to Missoula. We loved Montana, yet ministry was difficult. My vision of pastoral ministry was different from that of my colleague. During this time, I asked St. Boniface of Mainz to pray for me. I learned that Boniface, like myself, had discovered a desire to be a foreign missionary at the age of twelve. Like me, he was shaped by Benedictine spirituality. Like me, he experienced disappointment and pain in his conflict with fellow missionaries, who claimed the Celtic missionary legacy, yet lacked sound discipline. Like me, Boniface’s first missionary effort was unsuccessful. Boniface’s solution? To unite more closely with Rome, so that his mission would be not of his own authority, but that of Christ’s vicar on earth—the Pope.

Schooled by Saints

I did what I could to ignore the striking difference between Saint Boniface and myself—unity with the Bishop of Rome. If Christ had actually set apart Peter as the prince of the apostles, then the apostolic succession in which I located my priestly authority was not what I thought. If the Catholic Church’s claims

...Journeys Home Continued...

about the Petrine office were correct, then it would require me to pursue reconciliation with the chair of Peter, even at the expense of my ministerial office.

I connected with someone who I expected to be an ally against reunion with Rome, an Orthodox priest. As I spoke with Fr. Daniel Kirk, he and I both had the same anxieties. As pastors, we felt that our parishioners faced grave challenges, not only against chastity and sexual morality, but against human dignity itself, and that our respective traditions were powerless to provide sufficient solutions to people in the pews. Our churches had stopped “developing” doctrine since our respective communions broke with Rome. We had sixteenth and eleventh century answers for twenty-first century problems. Though not Catholic (yet), we were both looking to Pope St. John Paul II’s Theology of the Body for guidance to modern man’s most pressing questions about identity, love, and desire. The fact that we were looking to the papacy for answers made us think more deeply about the Catholic Church’s claims that the papacy is a divine institution of Christ, rather than a political invention of the medieval Church. We also discussed the famous work of St. John Henry Cardinal Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, which he wrote during his own journey to the Catholic Church. Father Daniel, recognizing that I was asking the same questions he was, took a risk and invited me to a Catholic men’s group.

When I attended this group, I encountered men from a variety of trades and backgrounds, engaging at various levels with a discussion from St. Thomas Aquinas, praying the Divine Office of the Church, and singing beautiful Marian hymns. Here was a group where nothing had to be held back. Meanwhile, as I was planting an Anglican Church, I faced resistance from certain parishioners, who pitted my Catholic interpretation of Anglican theology against the Anglican Church’s own formularies of belief (the Thirty-Nine Articles).

My parishioners did not cause me to doubt my Catholic beliefs. They did, however, cause me to doubt the integrity or consistency of holding Catholic beliefs in the Anglican Church. As I became increasingly convinced of Catholic views on the Sacraments, of the Communion of Saints, and of the divine institution of the Papal office, I realized that two roads lay before me: I could either maintain my ordained office as an Anglican priest, all the while requesting my parishioners to trust my private judgment over their denomination’s teachings, or I could resign my position and submit to the teaching authority and institutional unity of the Catholic Church.

Joining the Catholic Church would be not only financially disastrous, but it would also be, in effect, burning to ashes my singular childhood dream: to be a preacher of the Gospel. After months of prayer, study, consultation, and discernment, I embraced the painful truth that I could either throw my vocation and livelihood at the feet of Christ or place my office above obedience to Christ’s call for unity—a call made possible by the unity of the one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. I chose obedience, in the faith that God accepts our sacrifices and can raise life from ashes.

The choice was not easy. Lauren was understandably leery

about throwing our expected future away for a belief that Jesus chose Peter as the head of the Apostles. However, our Catholic priest in town suggested that she ask St. Joseph for prayer. Lauren was not sure about this whole invocation-of-the-saints thing. But she knew that her husband was becoming a full-blown papist, so desperate times called for desperate measures. She asked Saint Joseph that very night to pray for our finances, given the gravity of the situation. The church-plant received a donation on our behalf for several thousand dollars the next day.

On April 3rd, 2021, my wife and I, along with our four sons, were received into the Catholic Church. Saint Boniface sponsored my entrance into the Church and St. Joseph sponsored my wife’s arrival. Surrendering my childhood dream of the pastorate was painful, but whatever plans God had for me were only attainable through obedience to revealed truth, not despite it. Lauren expresses gratitude on a weekly basis that we were brought into the Catholic Church. We both believe that we have finally come home.

Although I had stepped down from the priesthood, I did not step away from the mission field. On the contrary, I entered a “new evangelization.” Weeks after being confirmed, I was hired as the Director of Religious Education for Saint Matthew’s Catholic Church in Kalispell, Montana. I began my journey within the Church by teaching religion class to middle schoolers, boys and girls who are at that stage of life where I first discovered that my life could only find fulfillment through an adventure of obedience to Jesus Christ.

During my tenure at Saint Matthew’s Catholic Church, I was invited by Divine Mercy Academy in Belgrade, Montana, to become the head of the school. Divine Mercy Academy is both Catholic and classical and is deeply committed to Pope John Paul II’s vision of Christian humanism. Serving as the head of Divine Mercy Academy allows me to prepare young evangelists for a life-long vocation of witness in a modern world. Only God could weave together the various chapters of my family’s life into this integrated calling. The journey home to the Catholic Church has brought my entire family into a New Evangelization. ■

*John Bacon and his wife, Lauren, were raised Southern Baptists in Arkansas. Together, they were raised with a passion for Scripture, for the Gospel, and for spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. While serving as an Anglican priest and church-planter, John came face to face with the reality of spiritual warfare and the anthropological crisis of secular modernity. Encountering the intercessory power of the saints and discovering the evangelical and pastoral genius of Pope St. John Paul II led John to consider the Catholic Church’s claim that it is a divine institution. John and his wife live in western Montana with their four sons, where he serves as the head of Divine Mercy Academy, a classical Catholic school, and runs a podcast entitled *Thirty Minute Theology*.*

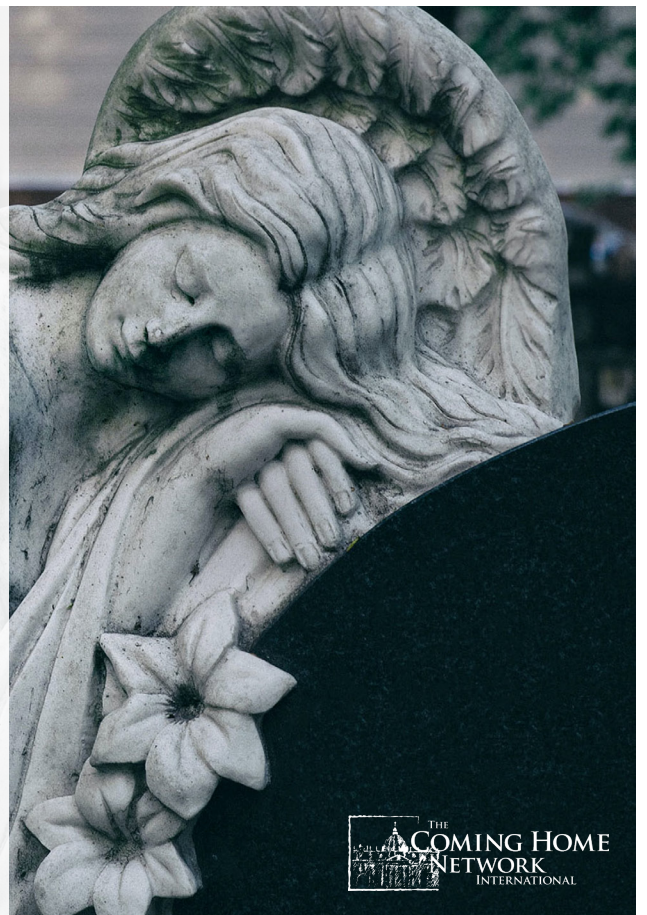
The Coming Home Network International
PO Box 8290
Zanesville, OH 43702-8290

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

COLLECT FOR ALL SOULS

Listen kindly to our prayers, O Lord, and, as our faith in your Son, raised from the dead, is deepened, so may our hope of resurrection for your departed servants also find new strength.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen



 THE COMING HOME
NETWORK
INTERNATIONAL