

From the Vatican

By Marcus Grodi

Dear members, for twenty years, the Lord has mercifully allowed my staff and me to have the privilege of working together in this apostolate, helping non-Catholic Christians, clergy and laity, “come home” to the Catholic Church. Often we are called to stand beside men and women for whom this conversion involves radical changes if not conflict and turmoil.

As many of you know, the media has reported over the past year many statements by our present Holy Father, Pope Francis, that seem to indicate that Catholics are no longer to try to bring our separated brethren home. If these statements are accurate, it made me wonder whether he would approve of the work of the Coming Home Network.

So I wrote Pope Francis a letter. And I want to share with you his response.

First, here is the main content of the letter I sent him:

Your Holiness,

My name is Marcus Grodi. I was a life-long Evangelical Protestant and a Presbyterian pastor for ten years, before my family and I entered the Catholic Church in 1992. All the traditional apologetics convinced me that sola Scriptura and sola Fide were unbiblical and that the Catholic Church led by the Magisterium in union with Peter is the true Church established by Christ.

My conversion, of course, required that I give up my pastorate, my ordination, and my livelihood, to become a Catholic layman.

Soon after my conversion, I started a lay apostolate called the Coming Home Network International to help other non-Catholic clergy and laity “come home” to the Catholic Church. You can find out more about our work at www.chnetwork.org. During these twenty years, we have helped hundreds of clergy discern whether God was calling them to resign their pastorate and convert. We have never pushed, pulled, or prodded anyone into the Church; yet, we have believed, given the teaching of the Church, that once they have come to “know” the truth about the Catholic Church, they need to take seriously the statement that “they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it” (LG 14; CCC 846).

Then in 1997 I began hosting a program on the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) entitled The Journey Home. For seventeen years I have interviewed over 700 converts and “reverts” to the Catholic Church. You can find out more about this program at www.chnetwork.org/media/journeyhome/.

I have loved and tried to follow Jesus Christ my savior for over sixty years, forty years as an Evangelical and now twenty as a Catholic. I just want to be faithful to Him and His Church.

However, during the twenty years I have led this apostolate helping non-Catholic, mostly Evangelical Christians, I have not heard one pope, cardinal, or bishop state publicly that our separated brethren still need to “come home.” Many cardinals and bishops have affirmed my television program and the work of our apostolate, but few have been willing to publicly affirm the work we do in helping non-Catholic clergy and laity “come home.” I was also quite surprised that the Synod on the New Evangelization mentioned nothing about evangelizing our separated brethren.

Ever since the beginning of your pontificate, the media has presented quotes that seem to indicate that you do not believe that our believing separated brethren need to “come home” — “for the sake of their salvation.” For example, the recent quote from your meeting with Brian Stiller seems to confirm this: “I’m not interested in converting Evangelicals to Catholicism. I want people to find Jesus in their own community. There are so many doctrines we will never agree on. Let’s not spend our time on those. Rather, let’s be about showing the love of Jesus.”

My question, your Holiness: Do you confirm the work that my apostolate and I have been doing for twenty years, or are we running contrary to how the Church and you have come to understand “salvation outside the Church”? Should we quit trying to help non-Catholic Christians “come home” to the Church, and instead

encourage them "to find Jesus in their own community"? Should we encourage Evangelical pastors to remain where God has already planted them, guiding their congregations in their faith and love of Christ, in the midst of a world in great confusion?

This is a crucial issue for our work. Every week, two-to-five new Protestant ministers contact us with questions about the Church. Most do not continue pursuing the Church, but many become convicted and are forced to discern a life-changing decision. For example, a forty year old Presbyterian pastor (family of five) says he now "knows" the truth about the Catholic Church and wonders what God is calling him to do. His wife and children are not interested in converting. He has no training or experience in anything but the pastoral ministry. He is also concerned that if he resigns to convert, his conservative Presbyterian congregation will not understand — and they will not have his leadership to fight the battles of their denomination which has recently voted to ordain and marry homosexuals. If he stays in his position, he can look for ways to share with them what he has discovered about the Catholic Church; if he resigns, he will lose whatever credibility he now has with them.

My apostolate and I are not "Feenyites." We are committed to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, and are fully willing to be submissive to the Magisterium in union with You. But it has become difficult to understand the trajectory of the Church's teaching concerning our baptized separated brethren, and if our apostolate is not in-line with the Church, then we either need to modify our mission or cease to exist.

I look forward to your guidance, and would gladly meet with you to discuss our work.

Your Servant in Christ,
 Marcus C. Grodi

Founder/President, The Coming Home Network International

Then, after several months, we received the following response:

Dear Mr. Grodi,

His Holiness Pope Francis has received your kind letter, and he has asked me to thank you in his name. He appreciates the concerns which prompted you to write to him.

In this regard, I trust that you understand that not all reports or interpretations of His Holiness's words or intentions are to be given the same weight, and that his statements are naturally to be understood in the light of authoritative Catholic teaching on the Church's unity and the goal of ecumenism.

The Holy Father sends prayerful good wishes for your efforts to promote the truth and credibility of the Christian message, which, as he has said, "would be much greater if Christians could overcome their divisions and the Church could realize 'the fullness of catholicity proper to her in those of her children who, though joined to her by baptism, are yet separated from full communion with her'" (Encyclical Evangelic Gaudium, 244). To you and your colleagues he sends his blessing.

Yours sincerely,
 Monsignor Peter B. Wells
 Assessor

I couldn't agree more with the assessment of this response than that given by Monsignor Frank Lane, one of the new members of our Board: "This is great. Certainly your concern and worry over this last year or so can be put to rest. Your mission continues!!"

And I want to thank all of you for your continued support and especially your prayers — for the staff and I could not do this work without you! ■

EWTN'S THE JOURNEY HOME on television and radio, hosted by Marcus Grodi, president of CHNetwork



TELEVISION

Mondays at 8 PM ET — Encores: Tuesdays 1 AM ET, Fridays 1 PM ET
The Best of the Journey Home: Monday-Thursday 1 PM ET

RADIO

Mondays at 8:00 PM ET — Encores: Saturdays 7 AM ET, Sundays 1 AM ET, Sundays 5 PM ET
The Best of the Journey Home: Monday-Thursday 12 AM ET

January 5

Rick Rosen*
 Convert from Judaism

January 12

Cole Matson*
 Former Presbyterian

January 19

Joshua Bowman*
 Former Episcopalian

January 26

Gary Zimak*
 Revert

*Schedule is subject to change.