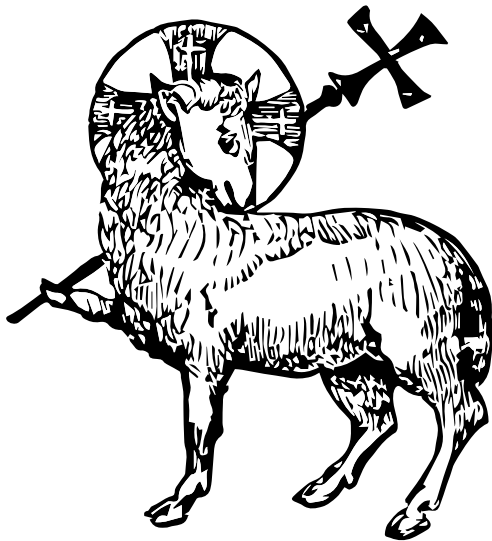


Why I Am  
Still a Catholic

Once a Sheep,  
Always a Sheep



Richard Patrick Geraghty

*Why I Am Still a Catholic  
Once a Sheep, Always a Sheep*

by

Richard Patrick Geraghty

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**About the  
WHY I AM STILL A CATHOLIC  
Series of Booklets**

by Ronda Chervin, Ph.D., Editor

(Dr. Ronda is a Professor of Philosophy,  
a Catholic writer, a Presenter on Catholic TV and  
Radio and a Dedicated Widow)

In the year 2016 I read somewhere that 60% of Catholics have left the Church or only attend occasionally!

I was shocked! Myself a convert from an atheist but Jewish background, Jesus, manifested and coming to me, in the Catholic Church is the greatest joy in my life...from time into eternity!

How could it be that so many Catholics have lost faith in a church that offers so much?

I believe it was the Holy Spirit that suggested to me a remedy.

Suppose the parish racks had little booklets written by strong believers, such as myself, describing why we are still Catholics in spite of many of the same experiences which have alienated other Catholics! Such a series of booklets could attract wavering Catholics or be given by strong Catholics to family and friends who have left us. In this way our series was born.

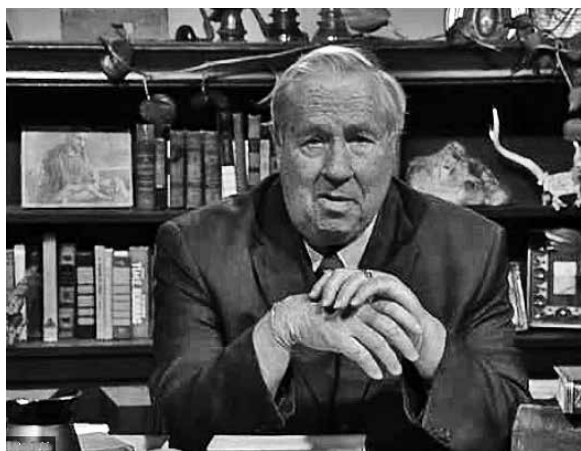
So, now I address all wavering Catholics, and all those who have left the Catholic faith, and beg you to give us one more chance. Could it hurt to say a little prayer, such as this?

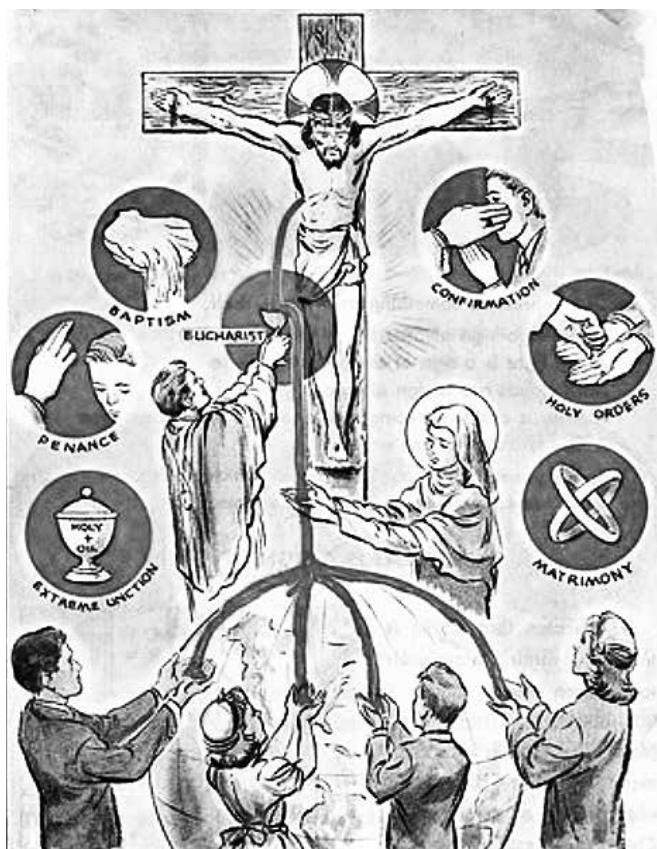
*Jesus, if you are really the Son of God, and you want me to receive fullness of grace through the Word and Sacraments in the Catholic Church, open me to the witness of the writers of these booklets. As they tell me why they are still Catholics, please tell me why I should still be a Catholic!*



## About the Author

**I was born in 1932 in New York City**, the son of parents from the West of Ireland. At the age of fourteen I left home to become a postulant in the Marianists, a religious congregation of priests and brothers whose headquarters was in Dayton, Ohio. Graduating from the University of Dayton, I got an MA in English from Ohio State and a Ph.D in philosophy from the University of Toronto. After teaching in various high schools where I learned my trade, I taught pre-theologians in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, wrote books about philosophy, and am presently teaching in The Eternal Word Television Network in Birmingham, Alabama.







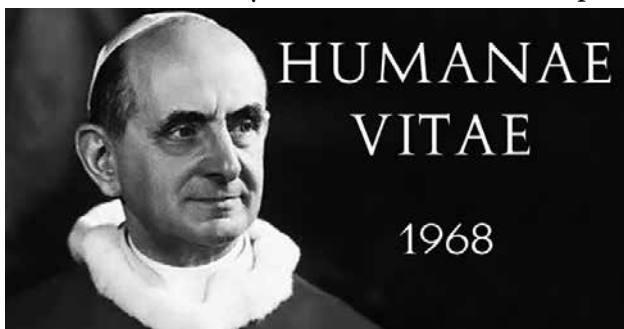
**I** am still a Catholic because I am still Richard Patrick Geraghty. I think the basic reason for this identification of myself with the Church is due to the fact that my father and mother came to New York City with little more than their faith. But The Faith they had. They were baptized. Added to that the Blessed Mother and her Son were more real to them than our neighbors next door. To that imprint add the impression the nuns made on me especially by teaching the Baltimore Catechism. Catholics say their prayers, confess their sins, go to Mass at least every Sunday,



and follow the Pope. It would have been hard for me not to be a Catholic, a pre-Vatican II type of course. There weren't any other type. There were good Catholics, mediocre Catholics, and bad Catholics.

At the age of eighty-three I still hold there is no other kind. But to explain myself, let me tell you about the closing of Vatican II in 1965. At the time, I was a religious in a congregation of Priests and Brothers who were euphoric about what was called “The Spirit of Vatican II”. The Church seemed to be opening herself to the prospect of joining the world in the search for freedom and justice for all. Fine. But soon there grew a split within a congregation that had once been noted for its family spirit. It had been a plain fact that priests, teaching brothers and working brothers had been indeed a “Band of Brothers”. We were proud to be so. But there then arose differences about the meaning of “The Spirit of Vatican II”. The result was what was called “defections”. A few members of a conservative bent left, saying that the congregation they had joined was not the same one they were in. Many more members of a liberal bent left, saying that that the congregation was too confining. I was shocked that we could fall apart so quickly — and so bitterly. Something was going on that I was not prepared for.

I was so preoccupied with the dissolution of this family that had taken me in as a fourteen year old that I took little notice of an event that happened in 1968. Pope Paul the Sixth issued the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* upholding



the traditional view of marriage and condemning artificial contraception. I was surprised that The Catholic Theological Society of America publically rejected the Pope’s teaching. I



had been taught that the Pope was infallible in teaching faith and morals. Since there was no outcry by the priests on the faculty or by the bishops, I was not overly concerned. I would let the higher-ups decide the matter. Of far more concern to me was the collapse of my congregation.

In the ensuing twenty years I was a conservative Catholic teaching philosophy. While I taught that abortion was certainly against the natural law binding all human beings, not just Catholics, I was still not sure about artificial contraception. When I finally came to teach philosophy at a seminary in California, I figured I had to make a decision. I took down from my shelf a small book written by Pope John Paul the Second, looked at the index, and saw that the Pope backed everything taught by the earlier Pope. While I was far from having a complete understanding of the whole issue, I went with the Pope, a decision inspired mainly by Fear of the Lord. I was not about to start my own church as many bishops, priests, religious and academics seemed to be doing. After making that decision, I was delightfully surprised to see how all the texts from Aquinas and even from Aristotle pulled together showing that artificial contraception was indeed against the natural law, a truth not just for Catholics, but



for all men and women in all places and at all times. I experienced that faith, which the dissenters call blind, did lead to understanding just as the Church said it did. Having finally gotten my two wings of faith and reason to beat in harmony, I started flying a lot better. I was of one piece with the Church again.

But I was not of one piece with my religious order. At age fifty-seven I decided to leave it because I thought my superiors were still operating in “The Spirit of Vatican II”, which by

this time I knew was a phony spirit dreamed up by liberals to obscure what had really gone on in that Ecumenical Council. Its real message was for Catholics, both clergy and people, to repent of their sins and then to go out and tell the modern world to do likewise. There was really nothing new in this message. What was new was that the call was addressed to Catholics who had reached a certain degree of respectability and prosperity in society, thus fostering an attitude of good Catholics being like social workers trying to eliminate poverty and injustice before being missionaries preaching that perfect peace and justice came only in the next life after we died on the cross in this life, thus following the example of Our Master. No, Catholics are missionaries first and always.

More, that most religious and single people have the opportunity to live closer to the disadvantaged than families can. It would not be wise for the normal family to settle themselves in the midst of a slum in the hope of doing some



good to their neighbors. The family needs a certain amount of safety and security unattainable in the slums. Religious and single people can take the risk. They do so, however, to witness to the Gospel, not to be the leaders in social rehabilitation.

If they happen to become such leaders, it is because they are missionaries, missionaries with the special gift to survive in the urban jungle.

About the same time, I restarted a habit I had picked up as a freshman in college. It was reading Newman. The dean sat us down, informing us that we would be doing a semester's course in Cardinal Newman's *Idea of a University*. Although I knew little about the author and had never read a book whose argument extended over three hundred pages, I got hooked. He answered questions I didn't know I had.

One of those questions was the relationship between being a Catholic and being a college graduate. If college was going to be four more years like high school learning facts and passing examinations in them, I was not interested. I would of course put up with doing my homework and getting by. But I was certainly not interested in being on any Dean's List. I would reserve my competitive drive for perfecting my jump shot in basketball.



When Newman agreed that the goal of a university education was not to pass examinations in memorized facts, I was delighted. Nor was the purpose to get a job. I agreed. I was already assured I had one. When I graduated, my superiors would send me out to teach in the many grade and high schools throughout the nation staffed by the congregation. Nor was the purpose to get holier. That puzzled me a bit. I thought learning theology and philosophy automatically made one wiser and holier. Newman, however, argued that a graduate so trained could be a rogue as well as a saint. What then was the purpose? It was to attain a philosophical habit of mind. If attaining that habit enabled me to argue like Newman, I was all for it. I admired the way he presented the views of his opponents as the height of common sense. Then he would take them apart piece by piece and then show the right way to think about the matter. If having a philosophical habit of mind enabled me to argue that way, I wanted one just like Newman's. I took him as my mentor.

I read every thing of his that I could get my hands on, even his sermons, especially his sermons. They showed that

my hero was as humble a sheep as a sheep ever was. He would place himself and his listeners before God the Creator, thus showing that we were nothing until He made us something. We owed our very existence to Him. Then Newman would remind his listeners of how forgetful we were of this basic fact. We were indeed unprofitable servants. Once we acknowledged it, we were then in a position to love Him for putting up with the lot of us. Fear of the Lord preceded love and wisdom. Having been an altar boy and a religious in formation, I had gotten used to being around sacred things, thus developing a shiny shell difficult to penetrate. Newman pierced it!

So at the beginning of adulthood I entered life with two stamps on me. One was the desire to be an Imperial Intellect. I would be a man standing on my own two feet, the ways of a child behind me. The other desire was the awareness of being an unprofitable servant, more goat than sheep. Deep down I had a small but persistent voice telling me: "Geraghty, walk softly on sacred ground. For all its imperfections the Flock is still the God-appointed means of saving the lot us, not only from hell in the afterlife, but from hell in this life." Being an Imperial Intellect was a fine thing. Being a good sheep was better.

As I said above, I finally got my head straight about the glory of marriage and the evil of contraception. Now, lest you think I was just some intellectual pondering great issues, let me rid you of that impression. Few men think more about women than a religious who has vowed himself not to marry. At least this was so with me. I had an empty space in myself which I was supposed to fill with the prospect of seeing God face to face in the Beatific Vision. That vision would take up all the little joys I had and all the disappointments I had suffered and complete them. There would be no more flies in the ointment. In the meantime I moved along like a marine en-

gaged in the self-sacrifice of war and yearning for a wife back home. I discovered that a religious trained to live in community did not do very well living outside of community in fighting the world, the flesh and the devil. In getting permission to live outside of my community to pursue my studies, I became my own superior. It was the 1960's, the time of The Sexual Revolution. The movies I saw and the novels I read were very explicit. While I still went to daily Mass, my attention was not as it should have been. Daydreams abounded. Then after about four years, I realized I had not fulfilled my Easter duty by going to confession. I had forgotten it! When I started reading Newman's sermons again, I finally woke up. That was the background behind my effort to rethink the Pope's condemnation of artificial contraception. Fear of the Lord entered my soul once again. It was disturbing to think that a respectable gentleman like myself could end up in hell if I did not start flying straighter.



After five years teaching philosophy at a Catholic college, I did not get tenure. Instead of concentrating on getting myself published in journals, I yielded to the pleading of the

priest in charge of student housing. Since I admired him, a former submarine commander in the Pacific theater of World War Two, I volunteered to be Head Resident. My job was to prevent the young men and women from destroying themselves with drinking and sneaking into each other's rooms at night to do what they should not be doing. I was to act in place of their parents over their children away from home for the first time. But when it came time for getting tenure, the priest could not convince the committee to give it to me. I was given another year and then let go. The ex-Commander was very sorry about that but assured me that the Blessed Mother would look over me. I heartily agreed. He was a man after my own heart!



At the age of fifty-eight, I left not only the college but my religious congregation as well. I resolved not to live under its banner any more as it pursued the path of "The Spirit of Vatican II." I was fortunate enough to get a position as a layman teaching in a Catholic seminary whose administration was still interested in hiring an unreconstructed Thomist

like myself. To make a living I had been preparing myself to teach Latin or English in some public school due to the efforts of one of my sisters, a Superintendent of Schools in Hicksville, Long Island. But I got a reprieve. After I had sent out over sixty Curriculum Vitae's looking for employment in a Catholic institution and getting no reply, I resigned myself to teaching in a public high school. But out of the blue, a friend told a friend who told me that there was a Catholic seminary out in California looking a philosophy professor schooled in St. Thomas Aquinas. I applied and was sent an airline ticket to pay a visit. I went and got the job. After I told my other sister, a contemplative nun, about my good luck, she saw fit to straighten me out. She had assaulted heaven praying for that brother of hers. She had no doubt about the practical power of prayer.

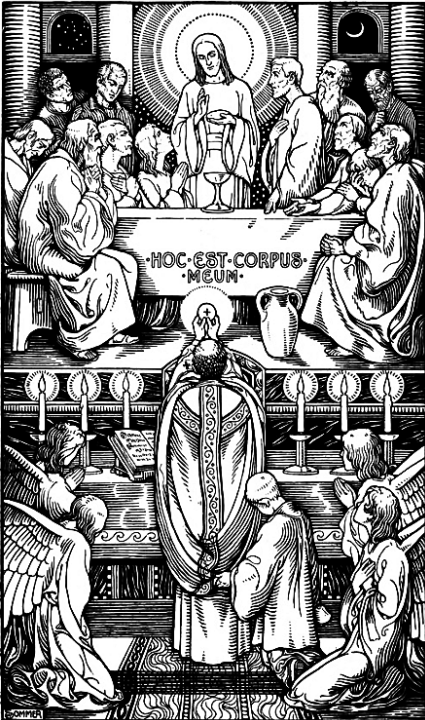
My Ph.D degree would come in handy since I was now determined to teach not only the glories of celibacy and marriage but the intrinsic evil of artificial contraception. What made this venture interesting is that I was layman on a one-year contract renewable each year by the administration. I had never felt that kind of insecurity, one that is quite common for many lay folk in the world. While religious are moved about from place to place, they are still assured of physical survival.

For two years the administration and I got along fine. But then they were swept out of office by the Cardinal and replaced by an administration more in tune with his concern for being socially relevant. I now had the experience of a layman at war with an administration armed with the power to eliminate me at the end of each year. I had never worried



about the future; things seemed to take care of themselves. But I started to think more about the future as the tug of war continued.

In the process, I discovered a new element in the struggle. The administration was intent on ordaining men with homosexual inclinations, arguing that as long as they vowed not to be sexually active, they would make fine priests. I was doubtful about that. But even more to the point, priests and religious were introduced into the faculty who chipped away at the doctrine that bread and wine could be transubstantiated into the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. While the administration could generate a lot of fog about the homosexually inclined being good priests, they did not have the barefaced effrontery to ague outright for their view of the Eucharist. Instead, in my eleventh and last



year there, they began to manipulate the liturgy of the Mass about when to stand, when to sit, and when to kneel. Kneeling was cut to a minimum. In that way the administration could keep check on those who were complying. Those who complied would be ordained. Those who did not comply would either leave of their own accord or be refused ordination because they were disobedient, altogether too rigid.

When I attended Mass with the students



on week days, which was compulsory for them but not for the faculty, I would receive Holy Communion. But instead of returning to my accustomed place, I would go to the back of the church and kneel down for my thanksgiving. While I didn't want to scandalize the students, I could not just stand there in my place as prescribed by the Cardinal and the Rector. It would be a sell out of my faith in the Eucharist akin to the early Christians giving a pinch of incense to the gods.

The tug of war continued. There is such a thing as "Death By Administration". The rector formed a Faculty Senate, ostensibly for giving us a say in running the school. He even sat at our meetings. Were we not all Christian colleagues working for the common good? How could anyone object? Policies would be set. I would object but be outvoted every time. I was a warrior alright but not a very happy one. I could see that the chiefs were trying to get inside my classroom, something they had been unable to do up to this point. Over time they would begin to fill my file with note how Dr. Geraghty refused to comply with the regulations passed by the whole senate. It would only be a matter of time that an overly patient senate would have to take action against a radical non-compliant, me. My peers could not understand why I was so stubborn. It was only a matter of time before the goat was separated from the sheep and driven out into the wilderness.

Then a friend (who happens to be an editor of this



booklet) was slated to teach pre-theologians at Mother Angelica's Eternal Word Televisions Network (EWTN) in Alabama asked if I could take her place there for a month, I eagerly complied. I had heard of that place in the Deep

South where this contemplative nun with a high school diploma founded a global television network, which the bishops and academics had been unable to do. While she had lecturers on the program, she allocated three separate hours to televising the Mass of the day, an hour to the recitation of the Rosary, and more hours televising Papal Masses and Funerals when the occasion arose. EWTN was a parish church on television meeting the needs especially of the old and infirm and other pre-Vatican II types praying for the salvation of their children and grandchildren. Among her achievements was a congregation she founded, The Missionary Friars of the Eternal Word. I was privileged to teach its Pre-Theologians.



One day Mother scolded on television the Cardinal on the West Coast for his liturgical innovations. It was Cardinal Mahoney, my former superior. I admired the guts of the old lady. When pressured to make a public apology, she made an hour long one which was an even stronger attack than the original. She was not nice in a Church whose leadership had employed the strategy of being nice so that it could be perfectly inclusive in its struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil. Mother was not interested in “A Nice Church”. She wanted “The True Church”, the one that taught that God had actually entered human history two thousand years ago as a baby conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Blessed Virgin Mother. The baby was to grow into a man who would allow Himself to be crucified by Pontius Pilate, an agent of the Roman Emperor, when He could have summoned legions of angels to make him King of This World. The lesson? The Kingdom comes fully only the next world after we die. In this world life is a fight be-

tween the Church Militant coupled with the Church Suffering against the Powers-That-Be so that all the faithful will be in the Church Triumphant after they die, not before. Mother was a true warrior with a soft spot for the afflicted at the bottom of the pile.



A certain Michael Voris has continued the Crusade fighting for “The True Church” and unmasking “The Nice Church” which stated with “The Spirit of Vatican II”, an invention of liberal journalists, not of the Holy Spirit. He has named one of his studios after Mother Angelica. Before he reverted to his

Catholic roots, he was a prize-winning journalist none too careful about his moral life despite the pleadings of his mother to start practicing the faith again. When she got cancer of the stomach, she offered her sufferings up to Christ and his Mother. They worked. We now have Michael live, twirling his pen as he exposes lies and errors in the *Vortex*. Working

with him is a woman of Vietnamese descent who was a Protestant with a law degree from Oxford who eventually became a Catholic. There is also a Cradle Catholic who was once part of a religious

theVortex



order, now defunct, and is recently married. He handles the straight theology and science. Finally there is a Brit, a former atheist who seems to handle everything plus the technology of the studio. The combo form a formidable spiritual and in-

tellectual board who are out to save Cardinals and Bishops from being too nice in their guidance of the flock. They don't



want them to use the power of lying and cheating themselves and others into hell. They simply want them to teach what Christ has commissioned them to teach so that the destined can all get to heaven and avoid hell.

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I should say a word about my wife, who died in 2012. I did not leave my congregation in 1988 to marry. But the feeling of loneliness got to me more than when I lived in a community. I asked a kind lady how one went about this dating business. She gave a few tips and off I went. But it soon became clear to me that the women I met were supremely domestic types, widows who would not mind having another husband. I was far from being the domestic type. After a few dates, I figured that I would not be doing these women a favor by marrying them. So I resigned myself to be lonely in the Paradise that is California and teaching the seminarians. And then I met Becky by accident.

We talked at length the first time we met. I learned that she had been born and raised an atheist, was never married, and was in childcare. She especially loved babies. She was also curious about Catholics and had even gone to a Mass a few times with some Catholic friends. I found out that it

was as natural for her to be an atheist as it was natural for me to be a Catholic. Parents make their imprint early. At the same time, she loved the Christmas scene of the Babe in the Manger.

The spark between us was magnified when she learned that I taught philosophy in a Catholic seminary. But I only realized that the spark was lit when she telephoned and suggested we have a picnic at one of the California Missions. I figured she would be the woman for me. After six months preparation in the Parish Church, she became a Catholic and we got married.

At the wedding, the seminarians came, trumpets and all. Her friends, mostly unbelievers, were impressed by the fact that there were seven priests in the procession as we went up the aisle. It was not just up to me to be loving to their Becky. Holy Mother the Church would see to it that I followed through. The ladies, who had no very high opinion of either the Church or men, heartily approved.

She had a fondness for rings, the feast days of the year, and holy images. For advent she got a replica of Noah's ark, complete with about forty portholes to be filled one by one with a lion, a zebra, a cow and the rest. When the ark was loaded, Christmas would be here. Of course we had a tree and a Manger. At the same time she could listen to me philosophize and then make suggestions. She was a natural. She was affectionate.



Early in our marriage I was sitting in my rocking chair untying the boots I wore after riding my motorcycle. She sat on the floor and untied them for me. Surprised at first,

I leaned back and let her do it. I would never have let any man do that. Indeed, they would not even have thought of it. Becky did it and became even more my Queen. She knew instinctively that to rule was to serve.

In the last five years of her life she got very sick, losing a breast to cancer and two legs to diabetes. She was bitterly disappointed, figuring that since she was thirteen years my junior, she would be taking care of me. One day she had more trouble breathing than usual and so allowed me to call for an emergency ambulance. By the time it arrived, she was breathing better and decided to stay home. I suggested that since she had already missed a check-up, she take the ride to the hospital. With some reluctance she agreed. I gave her a little kiss and off she went. Since I had a bad leg, she did not want me to go with her. She called that night, telling me that they would examine her the next day. Then she would be home again. The next day when the home nurse was bandaging my leg, I got a call from the hospital telling me that Becky died while being examined. It was hard to believe. She would not be coming home again.

She used to worry about being overweight. When we married, she looked fine to me, which was about one hundred and sixty pounds. Previously, she had been over 260 pounds but under the discipline of Over Eaters Anonymous, a Twelve Step Program, she had lost around 100 pounds. After we met, she started to gain weight again, which I hardly noticed. Her smiling rosy-cheeked face was the thing. But she noticed it and began to worry about it. I used to try to kid her out of her mood, saying that in the next life we all get our bodies back again. But they would be glorified bodies. She was not amused. But now she knows I was right. At the end of the world we will all get our bodies back again—glorified. Bodies are important not only in this life but in the next life as well.



In conclusion, I repeat that I am still a Catholic because I am still Richard Patrick Geraghty. At the beginning I was a Geraghty who had been stamped with the faith of his father and mother. They in turn had been stamped by their parents, the process continuing back to the days of St. Patrick. He had been stamped by ancestors stretching all the way back to the Stable in Bethlehem where angels, shepherds, kings and even oxen and asses beheld The Baby. That's the real history of it. We can be sure, however, that everybody who has even been created has been given an identity which can get them into heaven if they choose to live by it. However unpromising the start seems to be, God sees to it that everybody is offered the grace to do the right



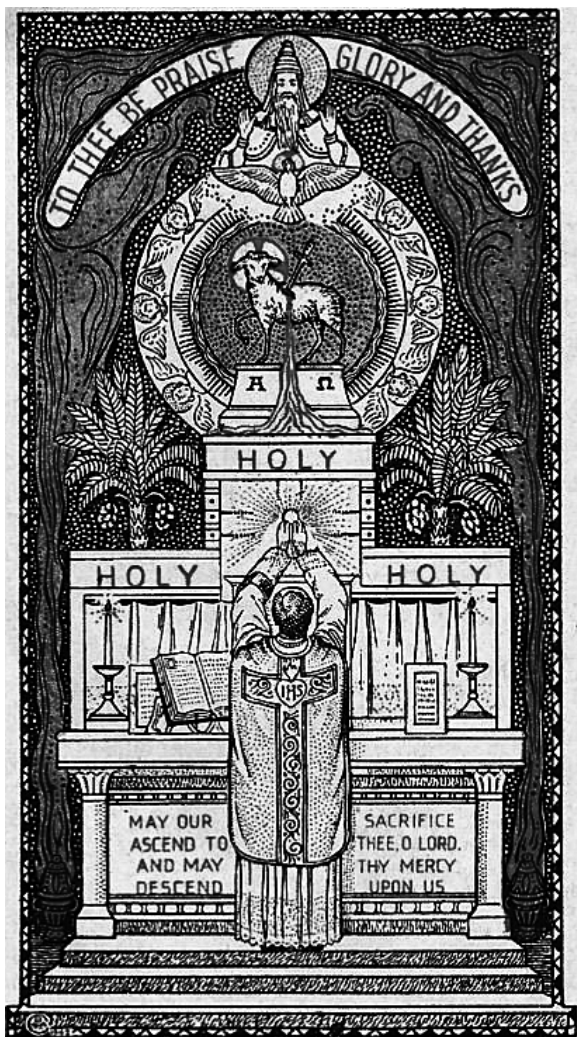
thing. All they have to do is to admit that they are sinners and wish to repent. Whether they are conscious of it or not, Holy Mary, the Mother of God, prays for such sinners during their lives and at their deaths. How do we know all this? We say the “Hail Mary” don’t we?



My parents did not have to be told that life is a vale of tears (and joys), through which the Blessed Mother will lead us to the final goal of seeing God face to face, an encounter where all sorrows will be washed away, the residue being eternal, unalloyed, unmitigated, and absolute joy. I find myself saying the prayer even more than I used to. Although not a sheep in the class of Cardinal Newman, I hope enough of him has rubbed off to make me a half way decent sheep.









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