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ALONG *the* WAY

Lessons for
an Authentic
Journey of Faith

Randy Hain

Foreword by Tom Peterson



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Contents

Acknowledgments . . . xv

Foreword . . . xvi

Introduction . . . xix

Part One: Surrender, Priorities, and Truth

Chapter 1 Conversion . . . 2

Chapter 2 Fruits of the Faith . . . 8

Chapter 3 Priorities . . . 12

Chapter 4 Why Become Catholic? . . . 21

Part Two: It Was a Lot to Take In

Chapter 5 Reconciliation . . . 28

Chapter 6 Evangelization . . . 33

Chapter 7 Stewardship . . . 41

Chapter 8 Ecumenical Outreach . . . 51

Chapter 9 The Blessed Mother . . . 55

Chapter 10 The Saints . . . 60

Part Three: Struggles and Lessons Learned

Chapter 11 Noise . . . 64

Chapter 12 Time . . . 68

Chapter 13 At My Worst . . . 72

Chapter 14 Being a Man of God . . . 76

Chapter 15 Parenting . . . 81

**Part Four: Authenticity, Courage, and the
Integrated Catholic Life**

Chapter 16 Boredom . . . 86

Chapter 17 Human Respect . . . 91

Chapter 18 Courage . . . 96

Chapter 19 Catholic Authenticity . . . 100

Chapter 20 Joy . . . 105

Chapter 21 Making a Difference . . . 109

Chapter 22 The Integrated Catholic Life . . . 114

Conclusion Where Will This Journey Lead Me? . . . 121

Endnotes . . . 123

CHAPTER 4

Why Become Catholic?

A Journey Toward the Truth

“All that compelled me toward Rome can be understood as a growing conviction of the Truth of the Church and its inherent beauty.”

IN THE FIRST three chapters I shared my surrender and conversion and explored a shift in life priorities, but a big unanswered question is simply: Why did I become a Catholic? As much as I love my wife and children, they were not the main reason. Was it a midlife crisis? No, turning forty can be traumatic, but that wasn't it. I ultimately joined the Catholic Church because I was seeking the Truth, even though I didn't realize I was on such a journey at the time. From that early summer of 2005 when the idea of considering the Catholic Church was first suggested, I have been drawn to the history and tradition of the Church. The early Church Fathers and their writings have had a profound effect on me. Growing up as a Southern Baptist, I was never exposed to the clear fact that the Eucharist was always at the center of worship from the early days of the Church or to the primacy of the Bishop of Rome. I have also learned that being Catholic is much more than knowing the catechism, the Bible, attending Mass, and memorizing important prayers. It is a living Church, with more than two millennia of history and tradition, that possesses the four marks of the True Church founded by Christ: it is one, holy, catholic, and

apostolic. In the Catholic Church, I have the fullness of the faith that no other religion can claim or offer.

The Catholic Church is not only the Truth, it is also beautiful. The beauty of our faith is revealed through its sacraments, prayers and devotions, holy Mass, art, music, architecture, and the mysteries of the Eucharist. All that compelled me toward Rome can be understood as a growing conviction of the Truth of the Church and its inherent beauty.

The search for Truth can begin in many different places. I came from a place of deep appreciation of the Bible as the word of God when I was a teenager. As I grew older, I began to doubt the authenticity of the church I was attending. My doubting and teenage rebellion eventually left me spiritually arid for twenty-three years, as I explained in chapter one. When I began exploring Catholicism in the summer of 2005, I drew comparisons to what I had learned as a boy. How could these Protestant churches proclaim the Bible as the ultimate authority and yet reject the explicit teaching of Jesus on the Eucharist in John 6? How could I read Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17 and not wince as I considered that we were part of 30,000 Protestant denominations all claiming to "do things the Bible way?" How could I ignore the fact that many of our fellow Christians held opposing viewpoints and all used the Bible to justify their positions? Also, I thought, didn't the Truth exist prior to my Reformation-birthing denomination? If so, where was it now?

As I dug deeper into my research, I began to long for consistency, unity, and authority rooted in Truth, which was deeper and more historical than what I experienced as a youth. This period of study, countless conversations with priests and deacons in our community, and the subtle guidance of the Holy Spirit eventually led me to the Truth of Catholicism. Consider the clarifying words of *Lumen Gentium*: "This is the one Church of Christ which in the Creed is professed as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, which our Savior, after

his resurrection, commissioned Peter to shepherd, and him and the other apostles to extend and direct with authority, which he erected for all ages as ‘the pillar and mainstay of the truth.’”⁷

Is my experience different because I am a convert? I think most converts would say being Catholic is a privilege. There is an almost palpable sense of excitement and enthusiasm about our newly discovered faith. It is as if one’s life is completed, made whole by the experience of becoming Catholic. Many things I was struggling to understand began to make sense in light of the Church’s teaching. I wonder if part of the reason for this is many converts I know perceive joining the Church as a wonderful gift at the end of a long journey in search of the Truth. Yet I have been puzzled to discover that a fair number of Catholics do not share this enthusiasm or experience. It seems they have lost touch with what is special about being Catholic. The faith of their youth or somewhat distant conversion has turned into a passive Catholicism in their adult years.

Fortunately, there are many lifelong Catholics whom I admire, respect, and appreciate for their deep-seated faith and love of the Church, and many of them are my mentors. I have learned from their experience and wisdom and owe them my love and gratitude.

Still, I ask myself why the Catholic Church attracts thousands of new converts each year and yet also has thousands leaving the Church each year. And why don’t all Catholics feel the joy and passion that we converts feel in our practice of the faith? We long to be able to share our “discovery” and our excitement about the Church with those for whom the Church is already “home.” With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I continue to hope that my message provides help and inspiration to *all* Catholics: converts, lifelong Catholics, and reverts alike, who are seeking to more fully embrace their faith.

One of the key reasons that some of us may not fully appreciate the gift of our Catholic faith is familiarity. Years of familiarity with the culture of the Church may actually begin to breed apathy. Many of us are indeed proud to be Catholic but may see our faith as more

of a passive rather than a dynamic part of our identities. Maybe we have taken all the classes, know the Catholic lexicon, and know the ins and outs of the Church. But in the midst of all this formal training or experience, is it possible we have missed the life-changing power of the gospel?

When familiarity hardens into apathy, it is not uncommon to look for something new and exciting or different to break the perceived monotony. One way this manifests itself is the move toward relativism. This move reduces the role of Truth in one's life and elevates the idea that ultimate Truth is the truth that "works for me." This leads to "cafeteria Catholicism," a description used by author and convert Dr. Peter Kreeft to describe those who mistakenly believe you can be an authentic Catholic and also live in opposition to the teachings of the Church.

I fully accept the teachings of the magisterium, but I realize that my full understanding of these teachings is a journey that may take me a lifetime to complete. When we begin to doubt the Church's teachings, we become susceptible to the influence of other "churches." If you can question one thing, you may soon question everything. This counterproductive pursuit will only take us further from Christ and the Church he founded.

"Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. And whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me"

LUKE 10:16

Another reason some of us may not fully appreciate and embrace our Catholic faith is a lack of sound knowledge and understanding of what Christ is teaching through his Church. It is hard for people to defend or even fully understand their faith unless they take the time to study it. "Therefore, from the day we heard this, we do not cease praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understand-

ing to live in a manner worthy of the Lord, so as to be fully pleasing, in every good work bearing fruit and growing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:9–10).

One of the greatest pieces of advice I received early in my journey of faith is to stop, reflect and ask myself these questions on occasion: Am I lukewarm in my faith? What am I missing in my life? Do I have questions that need to be answered? Do I want to more fully appreciate my faith and don’t know how? Is God truly first in my life, or is he competing for a share of my time? Am I ready to make a firm commitment to change my heart and my mind about how I view the Church and get back on the right path? What is God calling me to do? I often pray and reflect on my answers to these questions, and the process helps me stay on track. As a convert, I have also found the following habits to be enormously helpful in my faith journey. Hopefully, these will be helpful for you as well.

- **Vibrant prayer.** All of us need to take our burdens and questions to the Lord in prayer to seek guidance and answers. Start and end every day in prayer. We can spend time in adoration before the blessed sacrament, pray the rosary, do the Jesuit Daily Examen, pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet, meditate on Scripture, etc. I have learned from my own experience that a vibrant prayer life is essential to a vibrant faith life.
- **Surrender and convert daily.** I learned early on in my journey into the Church that my surrender to God’s will and ultimate conversion was not a one-time event. I must always put his will before my own and experience a “dying of self” in order for Christ to be in charge of my life.
- **Accept and study the faith.** As I stated earlier, accepting the teachings of our Church is necessary, but so is the knowledge that my full understanding will take time. Trust that two millennia of Church teaching is much more reliable than what you or I might

conjure up on our own. Go to a parish Bible study, take apologetics classes, read the Bible and catechism. Read great Catholic authors such as Dr. Peter Kreeft, Dr. Don DeMarco, Scott Hahn, Father Robert Barron, G.K. Chesterton, Dr. Edward Sri, Pope Benedict XVI, and Blessed John Paul II. Understanding our faith enables us to defend it to others.

- **Actively practice the faith.** Go to frequent reconciliation, attend daily Mass, frequently go before the blessed sacrament in adoration, observe all holy days, participate in the sacraments, and make sure your family is doing the same. Defend all life, from conception to natural death. Act with love toward all, as Christ taught us.
- **Privileged, not entitled.** We are all privileged to be part of the body of Christ in the Catholic Church, but privileges are earned, not granted. It requires dedication, obedience and practice. We must work to earn this privilege and to fully understand the gifts we have been given as Catholics.

All of us can benefit from considering where we are on our faith journeys and reflecting on the Truth and beauty of the Church. In today's world, I am grateful that Church teaching is clear and uncompromising, and this is one of the components I find most attractive about our faith. In the early days of my conversion, the attraction to the Truth and the work of the Holy Spirit drew me into the Church and my surrender to Christ. Today the desire for Truth drives me forward in my journey as I continue to grow in my faith.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT *ALONG the WAY*

“We are all on a journey. Randy Hain’s book is an insightful and engaging look at his journey as a Catholic that is filled with helpful observations and lessons. *Along the Way* is an excellent road map for lifelong Catholics, converts, reverts, or anyone simply seeking the Truth that can only be found in the Church. This is a book I recommend reading more than once and giving a copy to everyone you know.”

—**Matthew Kelly**, *The New York Times* best-selling
author of *Rediscover Catholicism*

“Life is a journey, especially for Christians. We are sojourners on a pilgrimage toward heaven. As Randy Hain illustrates so beautifully in *Along the Way*, it is up to us to make this one-time trip a truly authentic one. If we want to make the most of these earthly travels we need to put Jesus and his Church in the driver’s seat. This book is a must-have manual to help us do just that.”

—**Teresa Tomeo**, syndicated Catholic talk show host
and best-selling Catholic author

“Whether you are a lifelong Catholic or a seeker trying to make sense of life’s greatest mysteries, let Randy Hain’s phenomenal book *Along the Way: Lessons for an Authentic Journey of Faith* be the road map for your spiritual adventures. Hain, a convert with a commitment to living a fully integrated and authentic life, addresses many of the faith’s most challenging issues head on with honesty. Randy shares his own obstacles and tribulations, but he also delivers tremendous tools and suggestions for making the most of this life we’re given. As someone who is ‘along the way’ to my desired eternal destination, I’m thrilled to have a spiritual guide like Randy Hain to help me make the most of this journey.”

—**Lisa M. Hendey**, founder of CatholicMom.com and
author of *A Book of Saints for Catholic Moms*

“Besides liturgical renewal, the greatest lasting effect of the Second Vatican Council on the part of the laity is perhaps the rediscovery of the Universal Call to Holiness. It is a recognition that the greatest destiny that we have as Catholics is not to an earthly power and prestige, but to our ultimate home, in heaven.

“Despite this rediscovery, in the years since the council, there continues to be a great lack in the awareness of this call on the part of many laity, and many of the works of ‘popular theology’ seem to miss the target in addressing this call. Either they veer off into ‘theological mumbo jumbo’ that does not address the real-life situation of twenty-first-century Catholics, or they fall into the even deadlier trap of mixing in questionable practices and sources that, at best, cannot be called Christian.

“Into this void, Randy Hain’s latest, *Along the Way*, weaves an appropriate amount of biographical details with solid, faithful catechetical teaching that reaches across the plain of socioeconomic divide to help all Catholic Christians who are struggling to live their lives in the public square in an authentic and true manner. Punctuated by excellent ‘action items’ that give concrete steps to putting our faith in action, Mr. Hain helps us all to recognize how Jesus truly does walk with us along the path of our pilgrimage of life while simultaneously helping us to also make him known to our brothers and sisters in Christ, that we might truly become a leaven for our society.”

—**Father Kyle Schnippel**, director of vocations,
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

“*Along the Way* is a wonderfully comprehensive approach for growing in your relationship with Christ. Like Michelangelo seeing the final image in a piece of marble, so God sees you as complete in him. Randy’s sound advice and insight will help you along the way.”

—**Jeff Cavins**, creator of the *Great Adventure Bible Study Series*, author of *My Life on the Rock*, *Walking With God* and co-editor of the *Amazing Grace™* series of books. He is the director of the Archbishop Harry J. Flynn Catechetical Institute in St. Paul, Minnesota.

“Randy Hain delivers a deeply personal, powerful account of his conversion to Catholicism—and his reasons for his devotion to the Church. *Along the Way* is a convincing read. Hain wants his readers to experience a true ‘conversion of soul.’ He moves from his entry into the Church to his evolution as a new Catholic. He candidly shares his struggles and provides the reader with timeless lessons throughout the book. The Atlanta-based businessman also relates how his newfound Catholic faith has affected his work and family. He shares lessons learned as an executive—especially keeping his priorities in check: God first, family second, and work next. Hain writes for men, women, parents, business people, and anyone who wants to deepen his or her spiritual life. Above all, he calls his readers to live their Catholic faith with courage, to embrace an ‘integrated’ Catholic life, and to rejoice in all that the Lord has for them.”

—Patrick Novecosky,
editor-in-chief, *Legatus Magazine*

“*Along the Way: Lessons for an Authentic Journey of Faith* provides practical thoughts and ideas on how to integrate our spiritual lives into our day-to-day activities. Randy takes us on his journey and shares with us as he learns to use simple techniques that seamlessly blend faith, family and work. For those who think they don’t have the time or the tools to put Christ into all aspects of their lives, this book is for you!”

—Father Francis G. McNamee, pastor,
Cathedral of Christ the King, Atlanta

“In this book we read the sincere words of a pilgrim for our time who knows all too well the temptations of money, power, and success. His spiritual journey to a renewed faith reveals the transformative and healing powers of the Catholic Church. At turns warm and insistent, humble and provocative, this book is a good compass for all of our restless hearts that need a map back to our source and end.”

—Phillip M. Thompson, JD, PhD, LLM,
executive director of the Aquinas Center
of Theology at Emory University

“Randy’s work in *Along the Way* will no doubt yield great benefit to many who are looking for insight and perspective into their journey of faith. Randy’s style is clear, direct, interesting, and most importantly, practical. If you wrestle with the challenges of learning how to live out your Catholic faith in the midst of the overwhelming busy-ness of modern life, this book will no doubt provide you with the necessary perspective and encouragement to take your next step of faith.”

—**Dan Burke**, executive director, National Catholic Register; author of *Navigating the Interior Life—Spiritual Direction and the Journey to God*

“Lay people can evangelize in ways we priests find impossible. So it is with Randy Hain. A former Southern Baptist, Randy combines a passion for Christ and his Church with the practical mind of a successful businessman and the ability to communicate with clarity and from the heart. *Along the Way* is an indispensable guidebook to walk in the way of Christ the Lord, who is himself the way to eternal life. Highly recommended!”

—**Father Dwight Longenecker**, author of *The Quest for the Creed*, blogger, broadcaster, and pastor of Our Lady of the Rosary parish in Greenville, South Carolina

“Just as Pope Benedict XVI proclaims a year of faith, Randy Hain writes of his Catholic faith with the white-hot intensity of the newly converted. *Along the Way* is reminiscent of Saint Paul’s power and passion. Paul meant it when he wrote, “To me, life is Christ” (Philippians 1:21). These words take form and shape between the covers of *Along the Way*. The integrity of the testimony, the authenticity of the message, the urgent need for this message now all join together in making Randy Hain’s new book a must-read. Following after his award-winning *The Catholic Briefcase* (2011), the book complements and continues its theme of living the integrated Catholic life. ‘If but ten among us lead a holy life, we shall kindle a fire which will light up the entire city (Saint John Chrysostom).’”

—**Sister Timothy Marie, OCD**, co-editor of *Spirit of Carmel Magazine*, Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles

“As Christians, we are all disciples on our own way to Emmaus in search of Jesus Christ. In his book *Along the Way*, lay Catholic writer Randy Hain provides valuable insight to help assist us as we each continue this journey, wherever we may be on that road. Like a good teacher, Randy brings our rich Catholic faith and practical applications of the Sermon on the Mount alive for us. He shows examples through prayer, Scripture, and devotions of easy ways in allowing God and the Holy Spirit to become a part of our work and family life each day. Regardless if you are a cultural, habitual, or committed Catholic, Randy’s suggestions, recommendations, and lessons learned in *Along the Way* will help strengthen your resolve to finish the journey.”

—**Joseph J. Krygiel**, chief executive officer of Catholic Charities Atlanta

“Much more than one man’s journey—in *Along the Way*, author Randy Hain openly shares his ‘ordinary’ life of struggles and searching which ultimately results in his surrender to Christ and a fulfilling Catholic life. Hain presents a crisp road map to illuminate a pilgrim’s path, leading the way to authentic Truth found in the Catholic Church.”

—**Donna-Marie Cooper O’Boyle**, EWTN TV host and author of numerous Catholic books, including *Rooted in Love: Our Calling as Catholic Women*

“*Along the Way* is the handbook for everyone who is journeying—and struggling—along the path of conversion. Randy Hain guides each of us and reminds us of the importance of not giving up or considering ourselves done with conversion. He also brings a healthy dose of real life and practical advice (and maybe a bit of humor). Not only will you enjoy reading this book, you’ll find yourself a better person for it!”

—**Sarah Reinhard**, author of *A Catholic Mother’s Companion to Pregnancy: Walking with Mary from Conception to Baptism*, and online at SnoringScholar.com

“Randy Hain’s conversion to the Catholic faith after twenty-three years of drifting without any faith practice is a testimony to God’s infinite love for finite man. How God pursues us and waits for decades even when we deny his very existence, living a hedonistic lifestyle, he still waits! From Southern Baptist to agnostic, hedonist, and workaholic, Randy Hain captures the true meaning of life and peace that can only be found in a deep relationship with the one who created us! Randy has found the source and summit of everyday existence where few dare to pursue.

“*Along the Way* is a road map clearly and concisely written not just for converts and Catholics but for any Christian seeking a closer walk with the Lord. No matter how busy a schedule we keep, Randy shows how to prioritize and organize our days to make time to be with the Lord, the most important aspect of our lives. It’s good for the soul, from cover to cover.”

—**Edward J. Daccarett**, publisher, Christian Action News; and general manager, Prince of Peace Catholic Radio

“*Along the Way* provides readers with a real and practical road map to the Catholic Church, revealing its beauty, value, and relevancy for a meaningful and purpose-filled life. This is a must-read for anyone exploring the Church or for those who are seeking more than what modern culture offers for personal fulfillment.”

—**Kate Sell**, Catholic strategist and development professional; owner, KLS Strategies, LLC

“*Along the Way* delivers on its title. This highly accessible book will not only show you that your challenges, reservations, and struggles along your faith journey are not unique, the book will also provide you with the tools, guidance, and inspiration to keep going on your way. Reading Randy Hain’s faith journey is at once familiar and humbling. His challenges along the way are the former, the degree of his commitment to apply his new found faith the latter. Truly inspiring!”

—**Andreas Widmer**, author of *The Pope and the CEO* and co-founder of the SEVEN Fund

“Randy Hain is a man on a mission. He’s a good friend and kindred spirit when it comes to integrating faith and work, but there’s something truly remarkable about his writing. Randy has an astonishing gift of blending real-world experience, solid Catholic teaching, and a deep humility. The result is this book, where he discusses the journey of life and faith in a way that will leave a mark on our souls. *Along the Way: Lessons for an Authentic Journey of Faith* is a treasure, filled with practical and spiritual insights. Read, love it, and live it.”

—**Kevin Lowry**, chief operating officer, The Coming Home Network International, and author, *Faith at Work: Finding Purpose Beyond the Paycheck*

“Randy’s ability to immediately disarm people and relate to their circumstances comes through in the first paragraph of this book. Converts, reverts, and lifelong committed Catholics will no doubt see themselves in the pages of Randy’s work, as his experiences and personal development mirror what so many of us wrestle with in our search to find out why we’re here. He and I have walked what might to outsiders seem like very different paths, but as I read *Along the Way*, I felt like I was re-reading my own journey toward the truth.”

—**Matt Swaim**, producer, *The Son Rise Morning Show* on EWTN Radio, and author of *The Eucharist and the Rosary* and *Prayer in the Digital Age*

“Even a pagan like Socrates knew that ‘the unexamined life is not worth living.’ Augustine showed us how to make such an examination in God’s presence. And Randy Hain shows us how to do it in the modern world, as a spouse and parent.”

—**Mike Aquilina**, EWTN host and author of more than thirty Catholics books