



JEFF LUKICH

AUTHOR, SPEAKER

Jeff Lukich is the author of *The Long Way Home: A Catholic Return to Faith*, a guide for Catholics who have drifted from the Church and wonder whether, or how, they can find their way back. Raised Catholic, Jeff spent nearly forty years away from the sacramental life of the Church before finding his way home. Writing from the perspective of an ordinary Catholic revert, Jeff blends personal story, encouragement, and practical guidance for others who are away from their faith. His work speaks especially to Catholics who have been away from the Church, those who love someone who has, and parish leaders who want to welcome people home with truth, compassion, and understanding.

Jeff is a retired state government executive who spent more than thirty years in public service and leadership, including senior work in child welfare. He is also a longtime endurance athlete and coach. An active parishioner, Jeff serves as an acolyte and altar server and volunteers in multiple ministries at his local parish. He lives in Georgia with his wife, Mary Beth.

CREDENTIALS

- Returned to the Catholic Church in 2022 after 40 years away
- Active parish minister and altar server
- 30+ years in public child welfare, State of Georgia
- Retired Chief of Staff, Georgia Division of Family and Children Services
- Graduate, Presbyterian College, South Carolina

AVAILABILITY

- Available: 10:00am-5:00pm ET
 - Can be available on weekends and make exceptions to availability as needed.
- Time Zone: Eastern Standard
 - (Atlanta, Georgia)
- Available via phone or video call

EXPERTISE

- The Catholic return journey – fear, hesitation, and the first steps home
- Why Catholics leave — and what holds them back from returning
- Faith, identity, and belonging in the Catholic Church
- Supporting a loved one who has drifted from the faith
- How retirement and life transition can become a doorway back to God
- The role of the sacraments in spiritual renewal

DOWNLOADS & LINKS

- [Headshot](#)
- [Book cover](#)
- [Manuscript](#)
- [Website](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)

WATCH, LISTEN

Jeff joins The Cordial Catholic to talk about his miraculous Christmas Eve return to the Catholic Church, all of the factors and facets that led up to that experience, and how others can follow in his footsteps.



Jeff joins Catholic ReCon to share his reversion story after 40 years away from the faith.



TO BOOK AN INTERVIEW, CONTACT:

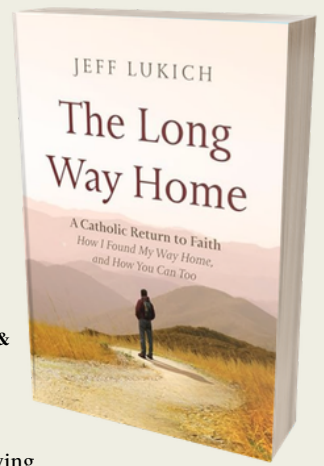
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ABOUT THE BOOK

- Published November 14, 2025
- Paperback
- 144 pages
- Resource Publications (Wipf & Stock)
- ISBN: 979-8-3852-5325-8
- [Click for more](#)



There are an estimated 13 million former Catholics in the United States — and many of them never fully stopped believing. They simply stopped coming home. *The Long Way Home: A Catholic Return to Faith* is for anyone who was born and raised Catholic, drifted away, and now wonders how — or even if — they can find their way back. Part personal memoir, part practical guide, the book traces Jeff Lukich's own return to the Church after forty years away: the fear and hesitation, the awkward first steps, and the quiet moments when he began to sense that God was calling him home.

Along the way, Jeff reflects on why so many leave and what keeps them from returning — fear of judgment, uncertainty about where to begin, old wounds left unaddressed. Each chapter weaves personal experience with honest reflection and practical encouragement for others walking a similar path. The book speaks to those who have been away for years, as well as those who have already begun returning but still feel uncertain or out of place. It also offers a compassionate resource for family members, friends, and parish leaders who want to support returning Catholics with grace and understanding.

The Long Way Home is a reminder that no matter how far someone has wandered, the door is still open. God never stopped calling.

WHY IS IT RELEVANT?

Millions of Americans were raised Catholic but no longer practice the faith. Pew Research has estimated that there are more than 13 million former Catholics in the United States, making lapsed Catholics one of the largest religious groups in the country. For many, leaving was not dramatic. Life got busy. Questions went unaddressed. The years passed. And the longer they were away, the harder it felt to return.

At the same time, something seems to be happening. Dioceses across the country are reporting increases in people entering the Catholic Church, with some media outlets and Catholic commentators describing it as a kind of Catholic revival. Much of the attention has focused on younger adults, converts, and OCIA numbers, but the same hunger for meaning, stability, and sacramental life is stirring in Catholics who have been away for years and are beginning to wonder whether it is time to come home.

Jeff's story speaks directly to that moment. He was away for forty years, not angry, not hostile, just lost. He believed in God. He prayed. But the sacraments, the structure, and the parish community had faded from his life. What brought him back was the slow, patient work of God calling him home. His book does not require readers to have it all figured out before they walk through the door. It meets them exactly where they are, with honesty, practical guidance, and hope.

WHO IS IT FOR?

- Catholics who have drifted and feel a quiet pull to return but don't know where to start
- Family members and friends of fallen-away Catholics who want to understand and support their loved ones
- Parish priests, deacons, and ministry leaders seeking a compassionate resource for outreach

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- You were away from the Catholic Church for forty years. What was your spiritual life like during that time — were you entirely disconnected, or still reaching for something?
- What finally brought you back? Was it one moment, or more of a slow pull?
- You describe standing outside St. Mary's as a grown man and feeling like that little boy again. What does that kind of emotional return feel like — and why do you think the Church holds that kind of power for people?
- Fear comes up a lot in your story — fear of judgment, fear of not belonging, fear that too much time had passed. What would you say to someone carrying that same fear right now?
- You write that God had been calling you home long before you recognized it. Looking back, where do you see the fingerprints of God in that forty-year journey?
- What surprised you most about coming back?
- You describe the sacraments as something you once saw as limitations. How did your view of them change?
- There are roughly 13 million former Catholics in America. What do you think holds most of them back from returning?
- What do you want parish priests and ministry leaders to understand about what returning Catholics are feeling when they walk through the door for the first time?
- You wrote this book for fallen-away Catholics — but who else do you think needs to read it?
- What would you say to someone who is sitting in the pew for the first time in decades, not sure they belong there?
- What changed in your life — practically, spiritually, relationally — after coming back?
- Your wife Mary Beth is part of this story. How did your return affect her, and what does it mean to share this faith journey together?
- If someone is reading this book and still isn't sure they're ready to go back — what's the one thing you'd want them to walk away with?

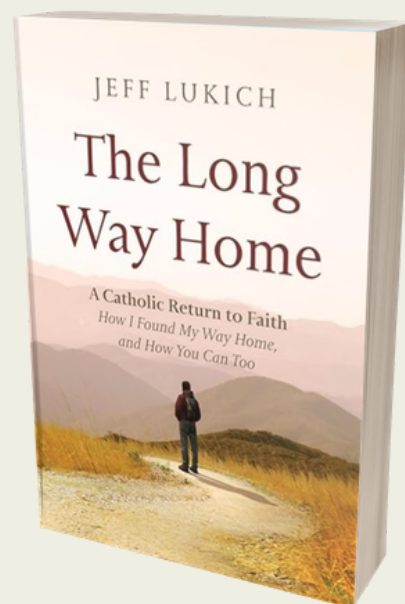
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ENDORSEMENTS



"There is no story more compelling than that of someone finding their way back home — especially when, over time, they didn't even realize they were lost. *The Long Way Home* is part heartfelt testimonial, part practical guide: an honest, real-life account of a wanderer rediscovering his spiritual roots. It's a journey that will both inspire and equip you to begin your own."

— **Lon Roberts, Author's Friend and Professional Colleague**

"Reading Jeff's story is like looking through a window into someone's soul and seeing the immense satisfaction that comes from pursuing a deeper relationship with Christ and the Catholic Church. Use this book as a roadmap to return to — or discover for the first time — the fullness of faith offered to those willing to ask, seek, and knock on the door."

— **Betsy Orr, Founder, Heritage, Georgia**

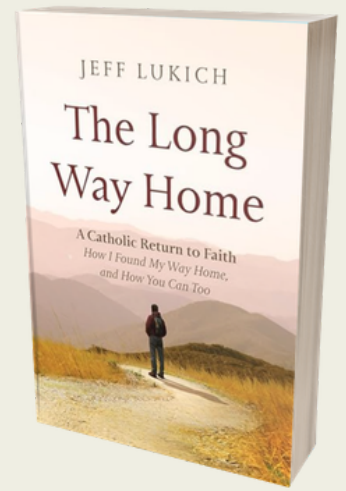
"In *The Long Way Home*, Jeff Lukich shares his story of coming back to his faith and the Lord's Church in a winsome, vulnerable, and attractive manner. This allows Jeff to gently lead and guide any reader considering a return to their Catholic faith. Jeff has offered pastors and church leaders a great tool to accompany Catholics as they consider returning home to the Lord's church."

— **Father Mark White, St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Washington, Georgia**

"*The Long Way Home* is a heartfelt reminder that each of us experiences a unique and deeply personal journey with our Heavenly Father. Jeff's relatable story of faith encourages us that in our quiet acts of trust, receptivity, and pursuit, we discover the depth of God's love. For anyone with a loved one who has drifted away, Jeff's journey offers hope and reassurance that it's never too late to take the first step back home."

— **Jennifer Murphy, Founder, Inspire & Transform Consulting**





FROM CHAPTER ONE: RETURNING TO MY CHILDHOOD CHURCH

The week after Christmas 2024, I made my way back to St. Mary's Catholic Church, the small church in the South Carolina low country where I grew up. Two years after returning to the Catholic Church, I found myself sitting in a pew at St. Mary's, the same church where my faith had begun. I didn't expect it to feel so meaningful, but it did. As I knelt there, I realized something important—God had been guiding me home long before I even knew I needed to return.

This trip wasn't spontaneous. I had planned it.

My family had spent the week between Christmas and New Year's on the South Carolina coast, not far from Charleston. It should have been a relaxing trip, but in reality, it had been a long, noisy, chaotic week. The kind of week that reminded me how much I love my family, but also how much I sometimes needed time alone.

So, I had planned a quick overnight trip back home to Georgia, telling everyone I needed to check on the house, which was true. But the bigger truth was that I had planned my drive home so I could attend Mass on Sunday morning at St. Mary's. I needed this. I needed to come back.

The rain was coming down hard as I pulled up to the front of St. Mary's. I sat in my truck for a moment, watching the water streak down the windshield, blurring the edges of the blue-gray building in front of me. It looked just as it always had. The windows on either side of the church stood out, just as they had when I was a boy. I could still picture the scene from years ago—the families from the parish stepping out into the sunlight after Mass, standing in small circles, talking, catching up, my mother among them. My friends and I were waiting impatiently for the adults to finish so we could leave.

And now, I was back. It had been over forty years.

I stepped out of the truck and pulled my jacket tighter against the cold rain. As I approached the church and placed my hand on the door, I paused, then pushed it open. It was the smell that hit me first, just as it had when I was a child. A mix of old wood, incense, and something else, something familiar, something unchanged.

I took a few slow steps inside, letting my eyes adjust to the lighting. A few people were already seated, scattered in the pews. Would I recognize anyone after all this time? I stood near the back, hesitating for a moment.

Where do I sit? The answer came without thinking. The same place I always sat as a child.

I made my way up the aisle and slid into a pew near the end, settling into a spot where, for years, I had sat beside my mom and brothers. The wooden pew creaked a bit as I knelt to pray. I clasped my hands together and lowered my head, but instead of words, all I felt was a wave of emotion.

Fifteen years. That's how long it had been since my mother passed. And the truth was, we weren't close when she died. There were things left unsaid and never made right between us. But one thing was certain—no matter our differences, the greatest gift she ever gave me was bringing me into the Church. Even when I drifted away, that foundation was always there, waiting for me to return.

