

## WHAT'S BRINGING SO MANY CATHOLICS HOME? (PART 2)

### Interview With Campaign Founder Tom Peterson

By Andrea Kirk Assaf

ROME, MAY 5, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://Zenit.org)).- When God chooses a methodology to bring fallen away Catholics back to the Church, he can certainly choose to spread the success from one country to another.

That seems to be his plan with a campaign started by Tom Peterson, an American former advertising executive, who has put his expertise and experience at the service of the Church through the creation of the Catholics Come Home ad campaign and [Web site](#).

ZENIT spoke about the future of the campaign with the founder and president during his recent visit to Rome to address a conference on "Church Communications: Identity and Dialogue" at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.

[Part 1](#) of this interview was published Monday.

ZENIT: What kind of good fruit has been born from this particular trip to Rome, during which you've been inundated by interview requests and have been networking with so many international Church communicators? Do you feel that now perhaps your initiative has taken on a new role of showing in a very simple and emotional way the positive face of the Church in the midst of all the negative connotations and publicity out there today?

Peterson: Holy Scripture, in the words of Jesus, is called the "Good News." In our faith journey, our loving Father in heaven, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit have given us good news. But the secular world wants to tell us a different story, the evil one wants to get us depressed, he wants us to focus on negativity, he wants us to not see the light at the end of the tunnel, to live in darkness. What I think I've learned on this trip is that there is much good news to share, and while the secular press, the media, and the evil forces of our world want to bring us down by focusing on people who are not living Christ-like lives, we, as the body of Christ, as baptized Catholics, must share the good news with the world. When we do, miracles happen, and hearts change.

There is a saying, "The longest distance in the world is the 18 inches between somebody's mind and somebody's heart." When I came to this conference I was a bit humbled because there were professors from all over the world presenting -- brilliant minds of academia. I felt led to come here with a message that is very simple: "God loves you." And to communicate that, there are creative ways in which we can touch people in the general public with that very simple message. We should imitate Jesus who went out of the temple to go where the people are. And where are they? They are watching television, using the Internet; through the modern means of mass communication, we can bring this gospel, this good news of Jesus to a world that is in need of hope and healing. When we do, we see great fruit!

Amazingly, people have approached me from countries like Spain and Germany and others around the world and have said: We would love this in our community, would you bring this to our country? And I am very blessed and humbled by the fact they would like to see this in their native languages, in Portuguese, in Spanish, in French, Italian, and so forth, and we would love to serve their needs. Obviously we have a small staff, and a limited amount of ability, but God will provide if it is his will for us to expand, and what we have learned in the United States is a great template for us to now modify culturally so it falls on more fertile soil, record the voiceovers in the native tongues, in the native language of that community, replace some of our scenes that are more U.S. specific, and replace them with things that are more appealing to each country.

For example, the good folks in Australia would want us to show St. Mary MacKillop, their new patron saint, and the image of Pope John Paul II holding a koala bear etc... images that Australians would embrace and say "That's my Church family. So there are scenes we can modify, so the message falls on more fertile soil in various local communities.

ZENIT: What is the future of Catholics Come Home?

Peterson: We have just updated our Web site as of December, so that it's more interactive, more sincere. We have utilized web 2.0 technology, made the navigation more friendly, we have more teachings on the key moral and social issues of our day that people are looking for, such as information on infertility, contraception teachings, teachings on abortion and life, teachings on marriage and family, on annulments. As a result of the Web site enhancements in December, our traffic has gone up, so people are spending now as much as six minutes or more on the site, viewing more than four pages, so it is about triple of what it was the month before.

What we are doing is taking the same strategy and same technology of [catholicscomehome.org](http://catholicscomehome.org) and we are going to do the same with <http://www.catolicosregresen.org/>, so that everything we have in Spanish and its different dialects is more appropriate for each country. As an example, in the United States in our "Epic" ad we have taken out a few scenes and put in an Ash Wednesday scene and a scene of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The Spanish-language testimonials talk about how Our Lady is constantly calling us home to her Son. They use terms like "familia" in the voice over in the testimonials. One Hispanic gentleman talks about how he was with a professional baseball team and they work on Sunday, and how he used that as his excuse to miss Mass.

Our commercials in English, Spanish, and Polish aired in Chicago -- our Polish language "Epic" ad also aired on PolSat in Chicago with the blessing of Cardinal George in the Archdiocese of Chicago. We learned that millions of people in Poland saw the Catholics Come Home ads in Polish during Advent and the Christmas holidays, since the PolSat signal was transmitted to Poland via satellite. One of my friends who is Polish and from my parish was visiting family in Poland and saw these ads on secular television there. So the Holy Spirit took us international before we even planned on it! This was a side benefit, it was a gift from God.

ZENIT: What have you learned from embarking on this holy adventure?

Peterson: The main thing I have learned is that there is this beautiful hidden world out there that exists. As Catholics we are given the gifts of the Holy Spirit through the holy sacraments of baptism and confirmation, we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, but too often the secular world lures us away. God has a purpose and a plan for all our lives. We have a unique function in the body of Christ. When we say "yes" to God and in doing his will in leading a sacramental life, the scales fall from our eyes, much like they did with St. Paul, and this new hidden world comes to life. It is full of color and adventure and peace and joy. What we have been missing by leading lives as "part-time" Catholics becomes very apparent to us -- we can now see why others have joy. If we just take a step toward God and turn to him like the prodigal son, the loving Father-God comes running to us, and showers us with his graces.

So I encourage everybody to say "yes" to God, to partake of the wonderful sacrament of reconciliation, to start reading the Bible, to beg God to allow us closer to him. God will honor that prayer, and you will have an adventure, you will have a purpose and a calling in life, and discover a new world of hope and peace with Jesus.