

Reflections

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The Second Conversion

The Church invites us Christians to a permanent, perfect and definitive conversion. It is a challenge for all of us. It motivates us to review our own road to conversion, our personal progress toward sanctity.

What does conversion mean to us? It is a serious, profound and total change which encompasses the entire person. It is a change of mentality, an interior change, a change of interior attitudes which leads us to also transform our entire exterior life.

The first conversion. A first conversion exists in the life of each Christian. We were all converted on the day of our Baptism. Through grace and divine strength, God radically changed our life. He called us to live as redeemed persons, as dear children of God, but we did not participate much in that conversion.

Second conversion. Therefore, in the life of every authentic Christian, there should be a second conversion. One must become aware that being Christian is more than experiencing customs, traditions and even Christian routines. One must make a very personal decision to live a Christian life, a dedicated life, a generous and committed life – through personal conviction and not only because of the decisions of Popes as in Baptism.

This definite conversion is to return, to open one's entire being to God and to our brothers and sisters. The best expression for this conversion is confession, the sacrament of reconciliation and conversion. Our Lenten confessions should be definitive steps toward a sincere and radical change.

Radical conversion. Perhaps we have a very simple concept of what conversion is: to go from a situation of atheism or moral corruption to faith or to a righteous life. It is true, conversions of this type exist: a radical change of journey, the decision for a new life. We have a well-known example of this in St. Paul. Other examples are St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius of Loyola, Charles de Foucauld, etc.

We can even say that the history of the Church is the history of its conversions and renewals, the history of its great converts throughout the centuries.

Also at the present time, we find movements which motivate radical conversion: for example, the Cursillo Movement, the Charismatic Renewal Movement, etc.

Permanent conversion. But there is also another way, a more common way of conversion. It has to do with persons who do not change their lives in drastic ways, so instantaneous. They do not make such spectacular changes.

We all know that conversion normally does not take place from one day to the next. It is a long process of change, a permanent conversion. It consists in small conversions, daily conversions.

They are persons who elevate their lives without ceasing. Each year they can be seen as more generous, more profound, more surrendered. They are the men and women of small conversions, of "daily conversions." I suppose and hope that all of us belong to this type of converts.

The fire of conversion. We could express these two forms of conversion through an image: conversion is like a fire. Let us recall the words of Jesus: "I came to set the earth on fire" (Lk 12, 49), and all of the converts have been attracted by that fire of Jesus: For some it is like a fire which suddenly embraces them and everything changes. For others, undoubtedly the great majority, the fire is discrete, slow, interior but constant; it is a fire which illumines, warms, purifies; it revives permanently and extends itself.

Let us ask Mary and Jesus to awaken in us a great desire to change, and let us also ask them to give us the grace of a permanent transformation.

Questions for reflection

1. Am I in the first or the second conversion?
2. On what concrete point can I strive to change?
3. Do I know the lives of the great converts?

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