

Conversion - Fruit of the Kerygma

The Gospel has been proclaimed; now it needs to be accepted. More to the point, Jesus as Lord needs to be accepted. Conversion is that acceptance. We will explore the various thresholds and characteristics of conversion, with an eye as to how this grace can be fostered and strengthened.

- **What is Conversion?**

- Pope St. John Paul II
 - Conversion is total and radical which neither limits nor hinders God's gift
 - It gives rise to a dynamic and lifelong process which demands a continual turning away from 'life according to the flesh' to 'life according to the Spirit' (cf. Rom 8:3-13).
 - Conversion means accepting, by a personal decision, the saving sovereignty of Christ and becoming his disciple.
- Mission of the Redeemer (1990) 46.
 - "It is necessary to awaken again in believers a full relationship with Christ, mankind's only Savior. Only from a personal relationship with Jesus can an effective evangelization develop." - speech to bishops of Southern Germany, Dec. 4, 1992.
- Pope Benedict XVI - Homily at St. Paul Outside-the-Walls, Feast of Conversion of St. Paul. 25 January 2012
 - Regarding conversion of St. Paul: it was first and foremost a work of the grace of God who acted in his own inscrutable ways.
 - The transformation he experienced in his life is not limited to the ethical level – such as conversion from immorality to morality – nor to the intellectual level – such as a change in his way of understanding reality – but, rather, is a matter of the radical renewal of his being, similar in many aspects to a rebirth.

- Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. Deus Caritas Est 1.

- **Thresholds (Sherry Weddell)**

- Initial Trust - “Can I trust you?”
 - Positive association with Jesus Christ, the Church, a Christian believer, or something identifiably Christian
 - Not the same as active personal faith. Need some kind of bridge of trust in place, or will not move closer to God.
 - Does not indicate whether or not someone has ever really prayed or whether they have ever had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

How to cross threshold:

- form authentic personal relationships
- cannot evangelize what we do not love!

- Spiritual Curiosity - “What’s this all about?”

- Intrigued by or desiring to know more about Jesus, his life, and his teachings or some aspect of the Christian faith
- Begins to ask questions
- Range from mere awareness of a new possibility to something quite intense
- Not yet open to personal change, but can set stage for further growth
- Essentially passive, but more than mere trust

How to cross threshold:

- curiosity should be directed toward Person of Jesus Christ
- tell stories about Jesus’ life & own personal relationship with Him

- Spiritual Openness - “Can I change and do I want to change?”
 - Open to the possibility of personal and spiritual change
 - Not yet a commitment to change
 - Feel they may need or want to change and grow
 - The faith relied upon so far in life doesn’t adequately answer the important questions as they now encounter and understand them

How to cross threshold:

- witness to your own change
- show how God is working in their life
- ask if you can pray for their openness
- invite them to pray

- Spiritual Seeking - “Is this right for me?”
 - Move from being essentially passive to actively seeking to know the God who is calling him or her, being more intentional
 - Engaged in an urgent spiritual quest, seeking to know whether can commit to Christ in his Church.
 - Questions and concerns are much less casual, less theoretical, and more personal
 - Has decided that a new life of deeper, more active faith is both possible and desirable
 - also realized that being a disciple has real and serious implications—it requires decisions which change one’s life forever
 - Looking for more information and assurance, want to know exactly what being a disciple means in a concrete and real way

How to cross threshold:

- introduce to works of mercy
- teach about different prayers and practices
- help to confront and wrestle with personal sin

- Conversion (Intentional) / Intentional Discipleship - “Will I make a deliberate and intentional decision to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ?”
 - This is the decision to "drop one's nets," to make a conscious commitment to follow Jesus in the midst of his Church as an obedient disciple and to reorder one's life accordingly.
 - Positive commitment not just to the idea of being a disciple, but to actually living as a disciple
 - Life-changing decision which may require a significant adjustment in one's vision, values and lifestyle
 - Accompanied by great enthusiasm and determination, but nonetheless requires the support (and sometimes the patience) of family, friends and the faith community.

How to cross threshold:

- pray & be aware of the devil
- try to remove obstacles
 - personal sin
 - wounds

- **Characteristics**

- Jesus is Lord
 - 1 Corinthians 12:3
 - Philippians 2:11
- Hunger for prayer
 - Luke 11:1
- Love of Scripture
 - 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 - Hebrews 4:12
 - Luke 24:32
- Desire to be with like-minded brothers and sisters
 - Hebrews 10:24-25

- Got to tell someone
 - Luke 10:1-2
 - Romans 10:14-17
 - Matthew 28:16-20
- Joy
 - Galatians 5:22-23

- **Holy Spirit**
 - Gifts
 - Various lists
 - Fruit - Galatians 5:18-25
 - Rediscovering sacraments
 - Power of God
 - Conform us to Christ - holiness
 - Do what He did/does - mission

Practical Practice: PRAYER JOURNAL

“They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.” [Acts 2:42-47]

We encourage you to reflect on four themes. Each of these is a key element of the life of a disciple, as seen in the passage above from the Acts of the Apostles.

Please see the additional section following NOTES for the Journal reflection prompts.

Handout: *Threshold of Conversion* compiled by the Archdiocese of Denver, based on the book *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* by Sherry A. Weddell. *Journey of Discipleship: Moving Through the Thresholds of Conversion*. Archdiocese of Boston.

Resources:

- 1) *Threshold of Conversion*. Archdiocese of Denver. www.archden.org/eflm
- 2) *The Ultimate Relationship* booklet by Relit/Michael Dopp www.ministry23.com
- 3) *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* by Sherry A. Weddell. Out Sunday Visitor Publishing Division.
- 4) *Journey of Discipleship: Moving Through the Thresholds of Conversion*. Archdiocese of Boston.
https://www.bostoncatholic.org/uploadedFiles/BostonCatholicorg/Offices_And_Services/Offices/Sub_Pages/LFFPS/Faith_Formation_of_Youth_and_Young_Adults/WYD/Thresholds_of_Conversion_Phases_Of_Discipleship.pdf

Video Break: “The Game Plan” by the Archdiocese of Oklahoman City.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cedt_htsvgQ

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Prayer - “He [Jesus] was praying in a certain place, and when He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray.’” (Luke 11:1)

- You might want to reflect on one or more of the following:
 - How did I first learn how to pray? How do I pray now?
 - How do I most often pray?
 - Mass / Rosary / other devotions
 - Praise / Thanksgiving / Adoration
 - Where do I most often pray &/or where do I most like to pray?
 - How do I most struggle with prayer?

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Sacred Scripture - “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

- You might want to reflect on one or more of the following:

- Do I have a favorite Scripture verse &/or book of the Bible
 - What is it?
 - Why that one?
- Do I pray with the Scriptures?
 - How? / When? / Where?

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Community - “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20)

- You might want to reflect on one or more of the following:
 - What ‘communities’ am I part of?
 - Who are some of the people with whom I share about my life?

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Holy Spirit - “To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.”
(1 Corinthians 12:7)

- You might want to reflect on one or more of the following:
 - What are some of the ‘gifts’ of the Holy Spirit that I have?
 - Are there gifts that I would like to have?
 - What is some of the ‘fruit’ of the Spirit that I experience?
 - Is there some fruit I’m still desiring?