



THE SECOND CORNERSTONE OF THE MISSION: METANOIA

Metanoia is defined as a transformative change of heart; especially, a spiritual conversion.

Our Church teaches us through our baptism and confirmation that we have been made holy and without blemish. However, these initiations have not eliminated the vulnerability, which resides within our human nature to sin.

It is the redemptive struggle that each of us is called to and with the help of Jesus Christ, to overcome and succeed within this human battle of Christian life.

We are told within the Catechism of our Church that this is the travail of conversion; a metanoia directed toward holiness and eternal life to which the Lord never ceases to call us.

Baptism is our first conversion, but in today's world, those who are the baptised, who should know, do not necessarily know. As the gospel writer proclaims (in Mark 1:15): "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the Gospel".

This warning is sent to those who do not know, however, very sadly, it is those who should know that need to be reminded of this proclamation. That is why for the baptised, our second conversion, our metanoia, is so necessary. It is through faith in the Gospel and through baptism where we give up and reject evil; where the door opens to eternal life, enhanced and made imminently possible through the gift of a new life, a metanoia.

It must always be understood that this second conversion that we refer to, is a work of all the Church, an on-going endeavour. But one that is not just the work of us but more properly of God, as psalm 51 tells us: "this endeavour of conversion is not just a human work. It is the movement of a contrite heart, drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first."

We have always a need to repent within this path of second conversion. St. Ambrose says it best, "there are water and tears: the water of baptism and the tears of repentance".

In this Mission we focus on the interior conversion, wherein, it is the heart that is the main focal point. There must be an interior repentance, which results in an exterior manifestation. That is why our Cornerstones are simple but calculated to produce a cause and effect; a simple progression that builds one after the other.

First comes the proclamation of the word (in this Mission it is done through dedicated talks and media and through preaching at masses of consecration). This action appeals to

the softness of the heart to allow just enough light to enter so the person may, in that split second, plead with God for direction and hope. At that moment, their hope guides them to make an act of consecration where they commit to God and trust that through the Holy Spirit, He will hear and accept their act.

This produces through this act, a gift of the Holy Spirit, the grace and possibility of conversion. That second conversion, which allows the love of God to be felt by His child; and the heart of that child opens, unprotected, defenceless, possibly for the first time and feels the embrace of its Father. It is at this point where the process of repentance occurs. The more we confess, the more we repent, the more is revealed to us and we are fed within this metanoia, with the food of God that nourishes a soul that was, until this time, malnourished.

It is here that the Mission begins to help the person understand what is happening to them and why it's happening and suggests through its three steps of spiritual growth (its three levels of the Mission) and its suggested daily spiritual exercises, ways and means of growing spiritually through, among other things, understanding our faith and its principles.

When the heart opens, the dialogue with God can begin. A relationship can be formed through prayer from the heart (the Mission's third Cornerstone). It is then that this ongoing interior conversion manifests itself through visible signs, gestures and works of penance (the Mission's final Cornerstone of Good Works).

In Lamentations 5:21, it says: "restore us to thyself, o Lord, that we may be restored." And so it is, it is the call of God, which is the author of conversion. It is first and foremost a grace of God. One that helps us to realize and then hopefully freely accept, the need to dramatically change our life; a flight to the son-ship of God, a burning desire to know, love and serve God our Father with all of our heart through the path given by Jesus. It is a time where we exorcise sin and through our daily life stop offending our Father. We, with a sincere and contrite heart, turn from evil and thus sin. It is done with the hope and trust in God's mercy.

The Fathers of the Church have given this process a defined progression: **animi cruciatus** (affliction of the spirit) and then followed by **compunctio cordis** (repentance of heart).

Our hearts, as moulded by the world of today, are wounded, selfish and hardened. It can only be God who gives us a new heart. In making our hearts return to Him, God gives us the ability, desire and steadfastness to begin again. Everything from this point is about love (which is the pursuit and reason of the name of this Mission, For the Love of God Worldwide). It is in suddenly realizing our Father and His infinite love that our heart is not only opened but also quaked by the realization of our past and how it must offend God. It is thru the pondering of these offensives that perhaps for the first time in our lives, we fear the loss of God through our foul acts of sin.

In John 19:37, the human heart is converted by looking upon Him whom our sins have pierced. And as St. Clement of Rome wrote: "let us fix our eyes on Christ's blood and

understand how precious it is to His Father, for, poured out for our salvation, it has brought to the whole world the grace of repentance.

The church teaches us that interior penance must come above all, in three forms: fasting, prayer and almsgiving, which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God and to others.

Efforts to reconcile, tears of repentance, concern for the salvation of a neighbour, the intercession of saints and the practice of charity, are all pathways to obtaining forgiveness of sins.

Conversion is accomplished in daily life by concern for the poor, the exercise and defence of justice and right, admission of faults, fraternal correction, revision of life, examination of conscience, spiritual direction, acceptance of suffering, endurance of persecution for the sake of righteousness and taking up one's cross each day and following Jesus is the surest way of penance.

Daily conversion and penance find their source and nourishment in the Eucharist. It is a remedy to free us from our daily faults and to preserve us from mortal sins.

Reading Sacred Scripture, the divine office, and the praying of the Our Father, every sincere act of worship or devotion revives the spirit of conversion and repentance and contributes to the forgiveness of our sins.

Spiritual exercises, penitential liturgies, pilgrimages as signs of penance, charitable and missionary works; these are all paths to enable us to become the prodigal son.

Of course this path of conversion is an on-going one in the life of every person, but in the Mission we seek to help the individuals find their answers through prayer and good works and to keep them close to the Church through a renewal of their parish life.

As such, we offer many different paths to each individual as we have previously discussed but the beginning step is where consecration opens the door to conversion. Because many people in their misshapen world would never have come to the understanding of their need for conversion, if it had not happened through first their calling to consecration; it is in consecration that a grace awaits all of mankind, the grace of conversion. A gift to all who happen to allow, if only for a moment, the Holy Spirit to move them just enough to be able to say: "yes Father and I am sorry, please forgive me and help me Lord, please help me!"