

Conversion a Process Tuesday within the Octave of Easter April 23, 2019 **Acts 2:36-41;** Jn 20:11-18 (It is important that we spend some time each day contemplating the Word of God, I really mean Christ, not the Bible.)

We are reading from the Acts the Apostles, although today's reading begins on the day of Pentecost. Many theologians wonder whether there was really any time between the resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Spirit. Luke is the one who says there was a forty day period between them, but **really the resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Spirit are one single reality, transforming reality.**

Now Peter's address to the people cause them to have a change of heart. And they say, well, **"What are we to do?"** And he says, well, **"Repent."** Now this word, as I have said many times, is *metanoia* in Greek, and it refers to a total change of heart and mind, a new perspective on life.

"And be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Now the problem is this: the impression given by this reading is that this process happened instantaneously for three thousand people; now that's extremely unlikely. On the road to Damascus Paul, who already was an incredibly determined person, determined to carry out the will of God as he understood it, is changed remarkably and you could say even instantaneously, although not really; it took some time, several days. But he already was a person of this intense determination and dedication. **To take ordinary people who have heard the message once and to imagine that they are transformed and baptized and receive the Holy Spirit all at once, as I say, is somewhat unlikely.** And if it actually did take place, then the question would be: how faithful were they afterwards? because what is meant here, this idea of **repentance or conversion, is a process that takes a long time for it to really last, for it to be really a change of one's life.**

You could think about this. Anything where you have really changed your mind very quickly, well, you can quickly change it back. **A real profound change takes time.**

The saints talk about this. They say **there's a period of cleansing, cleansing of the soul from self-will, egoism.** This may take a while because we tend to be pretty much centered on ourselves. And to start to neutralize that deliberately, willingly, voluntarily takes some time. Then of course there is another stage of **illumination, where the light of Christ really starts to fill the mind and spillover into one's manner of speaking, manner of living.** Then **further on there's real union.** As I say, this takes some time; **it's a process.** Luke here in the Acts of the Apostles presents it as something that happens all at once, but experience has shown us that **anything that happens all once is rather superficial.**

So for us **it is important that we spend some time each day contemplating the word of God. And by Word of God I really mean Christ, not the Bible.** The Bible can help us find Christ, but it's Christ who is the Word. And **gradually the Word of God will take center place within us, because this is what we are meant for.** This is what we are created for. And as the Word of God takes central place, **the Holy Spirit will illumine our minds to understand exactly what God really wants us to do** with the remainder of our days on earth, thus bringing us all to glory.