

We are at the fourth installment of a preaching series on Conversion. Copies of the three preceding homilies, and today's, are on the usher's table in the back. Today we will learn about the purpose and the length of conversion.

Paul writes in today's Epistle that the distinguishing mark of Jesus' Messiahship is resurrection from the dead. It is through the resurrected Jesus that we are brought into intimate communion with God. Through faith, we receive the resurrection life of Christ which God yearns to give everyone. The purpose of conversion is resurrection life. Jesus proclaims in John's Gospel: "*I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*" (10:10b). Also from John: "*Very truly I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes the One who sent me has eternal life...*" (5:24a). Again, "*My sheep hear my voice...I give them eternal life, and they will never perish.*" (Jn 10:27-28). And again: "*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*" (Jn 3:16).

Conversion is not for those seeking a conventional life, but for those desiring new life. Conversion is not band-aids on deep wounds but healing and wholeness for every wound. Conversion is not getting all the answers but falling into the depths and heights of God's unspeakable Being. An early Church father—a thoroughly orthodox bishop instrumental in formulating the Nicene Creed wrote words that astound. St. Athanasius wrote: "*God became a human being, so that human beings might become God.*"

Jesus came for conversion: our conversion "from error into truth, from sin into righteousness, from death into life." Jesus continues to come through the power of the Holy Spirit, to change the old person into the new person. As Paul's writes in 2nd Corinthians 5:17: *So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!* (cf. Ephesians 4:21-24).

Of course, one does not become holy all at once. The new resurrection life which is ours through Christ must saturate and heal every part of our being; this takes time, as we learn to trust God with our lives, as we turn over more of our being to God's healing touch. Part of the difficulty is that we are not always willing to be healed, sometimes unaware that our emotions and spirits need God's healing. However, the desire for God pleases God and our merciful Lord will use our least willingness to begin the healing towards resurrection life which is God's purpose for us.

This brings us to the 8th and last dimension of conversion. Our conversion is eternal, without end. You may wonder, 'Will there never be a time of rest, when we can simply know we have the fullness of God's life within us?' No, because of who God is. We believe God is infinite, eternal—no end to God's nature, God's love, mercy, healing, hope. We will spend our being moving always deeper into the Being of God. Since there is no end to God's Being, we will always experience more of God through all eternity. We will never know an end to God's love for us and for all because there isn't one; we will never know an end to God's healing for us and all, because there isn't one. God's desire is to expend all of God's Being in loving us, treasuring, gracing, enfolding us. Since there is no end to God's Being, to God's eternal desire for us, we will always know more of God's love, mercy, peace, hope for ever.

In the Revelation to John, after the visions of the end times, God says, "*See, I am making all things new.*" (Rev 21:5). God is in the present tense: *I am making* all things new. God begins with us now, as we are: with all our fumbles and follies, all our mistakes and sins. God begins now, and God's desires for us all are without end. God yearns to give you anew each day, each moment the resurrection life of Jesus Christ, because God loves you beyond reason, without end. And what joy you will know, joy without end.

I close this series on conversion with words from the almost last lines of the Bible: '*It is I, Jesus...the bright morning star.*' *The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.'* *And let everyone who hears say, 'Come.'* *And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes, take the water of life as a gift. The one who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.'* *Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!* (Revelation 22:16-17, 20)