

"In the beginning
was the Word,
and the Word was
with God, and the
Word was God."
~John 1:1

The Lord's Flock *Growth* DIGEST PASTORAL GROWTH SERIES



“ CONVERSION “

Fr. Titus Mananzan, SVD

February 25, 2015

The summary of Christ's teaching: **“The Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the Gospel.”**

Lent is the time for conversion.

What is conversion? It is total commitment to the Lord. All our effort, energy and spirit must be focused on God. It is not just about repenting and turning away from our sins, but turning towards God and letting the power of God well up in us.

Mother Teresa → All her effort, energy and spirit was focused on God. She spent her days praying for at least four hours and doing works of mercy for the poor.

St. Paul → Before he was converted, St. Paul killed Christians. He wanted to eliminate Christians from the face of the earth. When he met Jesus, his life made a hundred and eighty degree turn. He began serving and preaching about Jesus. At one point he said: *“...I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me;...”* (Galatians 2:19-20)

So, what is the power of God? It is unconditional love because we would never be converted unless we experience the unconditional love of God.

1 Corinthians 15:1, *“...by the grace of God I am what I am...”*

So, it was God's love that gave strength and energy to St. Paul to preach the Good News. It was also what changed him.

We should all ask God for His unconditional love so that we too may experience conversion and spend all our energy for the Kingdom of God.

In Psalm 63:3, King David said, *“For your love is better than life;...”*

This Lenten season, we should experience God's unconditional love and be able to say, *“Lord, your love is better than life.”*

Stories of Conversion:

1. Fr. Titus' Story → When he was younger, he attended the LSS just to escape his Theology class. He told the Lord that if He did not hear Him that time he would leave the seminary. He experienced God that day. While the passion of Jesus was being described in detail from the medical stand point, he was moved to tears. That was his point of conversion.
2. The Hired Killer → When he was growing up, his father abused him. His father even threw him out of a window while his mother just stood by and did nothing. When he turned sixteen, he became a first class hired killer. Before the Martial Law, he killed numerous government officials, which landed him in a prison cell.

During a seminar, God showed him that He loves everyone, even sinners, and caused him to cry like a baby. His life changed that day. When he was given a copy of the Bible, he said, "I'm about to die but first I want to know Christ who died for me." From then on, he read the Bible. He read it so much that he memorized it. He then joined the prayer group in prison. In 1978, President Marcos, who occasionally gave amnesty to prisoners on his birthday, released the list of that year's amnesty recipients. Rogelio Flores was one of them. Before he was released, he said, "I will offer the rest of my life preaching how good God is." He is now a preacher, so captivating he can hold an audience for two and a half hours.

When we experience God's love, it will lead us to change.

During this Lent, our devotion is not only to Jesus, but also to the Father. Why? Because in John 3:16, it was the Father who sent His Son because of His overwhelming love for us. When sin became so rampant that we could not pay for it, the Father sent Jesus to pay for our sins, instead of flooding the world like He did during the time of Noah. Why? Because we can never pay for our sins because we are only human. We have offended God and it would take someone Divine to pay for our sins for us.

The Father did not just watch Jesus die on the cross. Thunder rolled as darkness covered the earth. The Father moaned while Jesus was dying.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep and the Parable of the Prodigal Son were Jesus' revelations to us that our Heavenly Father is not harsh, but loving and merciful. He loves us despite all of our sinfulness.

Conversion is being able to see God as a loving God, and not a punishing one.

The way a person looks at God depends on the influence of the father in the family. If children see their biological father as someone compassionate, then they will also see their Heavenly Father as compassionate.

The real test of conversion is entrusting ourselves completely to the unconditional love of God.

Conversion is making God our ultimate security. It means knowing oneself to be secure in the hands of God. Conversion means change of securities. When we say "Amen," it means "I believe," knowing oneself to be secure.

Matthew 6:33, "*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides.*"

Seek God first and He will take charge of our family, business, and everything else in our life. We must be secured in the hands of God alone.

When we surrender to the Lord and open our hands to Him, the Lord will gaze at our hands. He will take away all the things that are not good for us and replace it with beautiful things.

Matthew 6: 21, "*For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.*"

Faith is the courage to accept that God loves us, even in times of trials and sinfulness. We must trust that, in God's wisdom and love, He will only desire what is good for us. We just need courage to accept this unconditional love of God. We must keep in mind that we are secure in God's eyes.

Romans 8:32, "*He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will He not also give us everything else along with him?*"

Conversion also means giving up all our other gods (prestige, power, etc.) and discontinuing

our search for securities other than the Kingdom of God. Our unending search for securities other than the Kingdom of God always leads to sin.

“It is no longer I that live but Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20) is a statement of full conversion.

Psalm 23: 1. *“The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack.”*

In the words of St. Therese, “God alone suffices.”

Conversion means being led where the Holy Spirit wants to go.

Sometimes, we may not be in control of the circumstances, but we are always in control of our responses. Therefore, we must be watchful of our reactions to these circumstances.

Conversion is also a grace. Grace is a gift that is freely given. We do not deserve it, nor can we repay it. Jesus was crucified because of our sins and yet we are still called children of God. That is grace. During this Lenten season, let us try to discover the grace that was given to us by God - especially the grace of God dying for us because He loves us.

A successful life is living out God’s unconditional love for us, responding to God’s love, and surrendering ourselves totally to Him.

Conclusion: If we have already experienced conversion, we are sustained only by the unconditional love of God that wells up in us. This gives us the confidence that, even if we fall into temptation and sin at times, God’s love for us will never change. Why? Because **God is love.**

Questions for reflection during this Lent:

1. Can I imagine for myself a new future, new possibilities and a more meaningful life with the Lord?
2. Will I let the Holy Spirit guide me?
3. Am I willing to entrust myself to Jesus and find in Him my security, recognition, and acceptance?

Transcribed By: Sis. Jen Ilagan

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ERRATUM:

1. The talk on the Growth Series on February 11, 2015, entitled “Becoming a Person of Integrity” was transcribed by Sis. Jane Boholano.
2. This talk was given by Bro. Bobby Rodriguez.

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 & Friends in this season.

SPEAKER: SIS. TECHIE M. RODRIGUEZ

MARCH 21, 2015, SATURDAY, 1PM-6PM

at The Lord's Flock Heritage Worship & Spiritual Formation Center
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SIMBARKADAHAN

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**SPIRIT EMPOWERMENT
 SEMINAR**

March 22
**SOR'S 35TH SPIRITUAL
 BIRTHDAY**

MARCH 31 - HOLY TUESDAY

*T.U.P.A. PLAY (7:00PM)

APRIL 01 - HOLY WEDNESDAY

*RECOLLECTION - DAY 1

7:30-9:30PM

SPEAKER: FR. ZENKI MANABAT

APRIL 02 - MAUNDY THURSDAY

*RECOLLECTION - DAY 2

9AM-12NN

SPEAKER: FR. JERRY ORBOS, SVD

*VIA CRUCIS

3:30-6:00PM

APRIL 03 - GOOD FRIDAY

*RECOLLECTION - DAY 3

9AM-12NN

SPEAKER: SIS. TECHIE RODRIGUEZ

*GENERAL ASSEMBLY (6:30PM)

APRIL 05 - EASTER SUNDAY

*EASTER CELEBRATION w/ MASS

9AM-12NN

*SIGNS & WONDERS SPECIAL (11AM)

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