



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE US SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Contemplation: Be a Moment for Others

Thrown from his horse and struck blind by a great flash of light, Saul of Tarsus then heard the voice of Jesus Christ, admonishing him for his oppression of the early Christians. Soon after, he would dedicate his life fully to Jesus Christ. We remember this event on the road to Damascus as the conversion of St. Paul. For most of us, our conversions are far less dramatic than Paul's. Conversion takes a lifetime, the sum total of many small "moments of conversion" rather than a single flash of light.

The word conversion has its root in the Latin *conversus*, meaning "to turn around". When we are converted our hearts turn towards God, but for this to happen, our hearts must be open to finding Him in the people and events of our lives. Our stubborn hearts are easily distracted by the pleasures and troubles of our material lives, but from time to time, God slips through in an encounter with a person, in an event that has special meaning in our lives, or sometimes just in a feeling that washes over us.

We don't always recognize our moments of conversion when they are happening. It is sometimes only years later that we are able to look back on an event, maybe even a very bad experience, and understand how it set us onto a path leading towards God.

Just as each of us can find God in the people and events in our lives, so also we are the people in the lives of others; the actors in their events. How well do our actions point them towards God? Do we demonstrate His love by our own gentleness, by our selfless giving, by our friendship? Do we imitate Christ? Do we always see others as more important than ourselves? "Sometimes," St. Vincent taught, "*all it takes is a gentle word to convert a hardened person; a harsh word, on the contrary, is capable of upsetting a soul and causing in it a bitterness that could be very harmful to it.*" [\[CCD XI:56\]](#)

Every person is made in the image of God, the *imago dei*, unique and unrepeatable, including us. It doesn't matter whether others see us that way, it matters that this is who we are. When we act according to God's will, when we love the way He taught us, we can become a light of hope, an instrument of His will. We can be, for others, a moment of conversion.

Just as we sometimes reflect on our lives, "re-reading" moments and seeing that God was there with us all along, so, too, can the neighbors we serve. It may not be during our home visit. It may not even be next week or next year. But if we are truly acting according to God's will, then He is speaking through us, in our words and in our actions. One day, we can be the neighbor's moment of conversion, not through our effort, but through our faith; not through our will, but through our hope; not through our plans, but through our love.

Contemplate

How can I better be God's instrument as a moment of conversion for others?

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